



TENDAI BUDDHIST INSTITUTE

SHINGI

Monthly Bulletin

Tendai-shu New York Betsuin
Karuna Tendai Dharma Center

PO Box 323
Canaan, NY 12029 USA
518-392-7963
Tendai@msn.com
www.tendai.org

©2006 Tendai Buddhist Institute

Jushoku's Meanderings

Who is Buddhist? Essentially, anyone who claims to be a Buddhist is a Buddhist. There are no criteria that must be met, no quizzes that must be passed. Refuge is a demarcation for those who have made a commitment to the Buddhist Path. In many traditions certain teachings are restricted to those who have received refuge, but to be honest, refuge in some of these traditions is a pro forma ceremony. In our tradition, as in some others, refuge is taken very seriously. We encourage people to take refuge which includes vows to follow the Five Precepts and to make a heartfelt commitment to the Buddhist Path.



Monshin Naamon offers refuge to sangha members during a service at Jiunzan Tendaiji.

There are certainly major differences in commitment and spirit among those who claim to be Buddhists. Some folks consider themselves Buddhist if they wear a mala or juzu. Perhaps they fill their homes with Buddhist images and attend a few Buddhist events a year. Some people have a regular sitting, chanting or other practice. They may spend hours each day so involved. Can we say with any certainty that the person who sits meditation every day for two hours is more or less a Buddhist than the person who does not? No, the criteria I use is what does the person do with their lives? As I stated during a recent dharma talk, one's Buddhist practice is not meditating, chanting, or performing ceremonies. From my point of view the only Buddhist practice that truly determines whether one is following the Buddhist Path is whether they approach their life with *Karuna* (compassion) and strive for *Prajna* (wisdom). Ideally they should use *Upaya* (skillful means) in their interactions. If one sits hours a day and still acts as a self involved, ego-centric person they may be practicing meditation, but they are not practicing the Buddhist Path. That doesn't mean they are not a Buddhist. For most people there will always be a gap between intention and practice.

The other important conception regarding the Buddhist Path is whether a person truthfully follows the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the Three Refuges. These are not merely key words for the purpose of ceremony. *(continued on page 2)*

Jushoku's Meanderings Continued from page one

They are concrete and meaningful actions by which we conduct our lives. The Buddha and Dharma can be accomplished with a small amount of interaction with other people. *Pratyekabuddhas*, for example, become awakened by their own contemplation of Dependent Arising. However, there are extremely few *pratyekabuddhas*. They are found only in early Buddhism and is not consistent with the Bodhisattva Path.

The Third Jewel, the Sangha, requires other people be involved in one's spiritual life. The Sangha is one's spiritual community. Originally, the term meant association of renunciants and lay people within a single community. The term developed after the Second Buddhist Council so that by about 200 C.E. sangha became a less restricted concept. There was further evolution of the term, yet sangha was always seen as essential to the Buddhist Path. Sangha is not a loose amalgam of people who attend retreats periodically, or sign up to an online web site, but a real community of people who laugh and cry together, aid and assist one another. The sangha is the sticking point for many people. For some people it poses a challenge because there is no sangha nearby or a person belongs to a group that does not emphasize the sangha. Some people feel that they are more advanced or beyond the need for a sangha. This is part of a delusion that separates people from other sentient beings.

I think of the earliest teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha and the various teachers and practitioners coming into the modern era. They all emphasize the need of sangha. The scholar Carithers writes, "No Buddhism without the sangha, no sangha without the discipline." (*Buddha: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press 2001) It is sangha that has insured that the Buddhist Path is available to all of us today.

The Tendai Buddhist Institute is dedicated to the real mean-

ing of sangha. We have consistently emphasized and promoted the sangha of lay and ordained practitioners as an equal partner with the Buddha and the Dharma. Local sangha have been created near Jiunzan Tendai-ji. We have trained competent leaders of those sangha and provide many opportunities for the development of new sangha. The sangha can be messy, because people's lives can be messy. The sangha can sometimes be frustrating because we all live in a state of *dukkha* (discontent). It is the sangha that keeps us devoted to our practice of *Karuna* and permits us to learn and grow together.

This month sangha leaders from different regions of the United States and Europe will come together. This assembly is referred to as the Doshu/Soryo Gyo. The gathering is from June 21st through July 2nd. We do this in order to maintain and develop sangha. We will have a Mahasangha Sunday gathering on July 2nd as new Doshu and Soryo receive their vows. For sangha whose leaders are attending this gathering thank you for your patience and understanding as your leaders are away. They will come back renewed and further able to lead your group.

We are also initiating a new program for intermediate practice that can be undertaken by both lay and ordained practitioners. This is described else in the *Shingi*. We invite all those who feel they would like to undertake this practice to inquire further to determine if it is the right practice for you. For everyone we encourage you to make use of your local sangha. Recognize that this essential group is a direct connection to the most basic teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. You are in a lineage that is in a direct line, and share a common bond, with those earliest sangha members.

Gassho . . . Monshin



Jiunzan Tendaiji and Mahasangha

June Events

- ❖ ***Class and Morning Service***
 - 10 8:30 a.m., Morning Service
 - 9:00 a.m., Sutra Study Class. This month we will be examining the 5th chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*
- ❖ ***Meditation Meetings and Other Events***
 - Every Wednesday 6:30 p.m., discussion, Meditation Service and pot luck dinner***
 - 7th Report on the Danish Sangha
 - 14 Coping with Frustration
 - 21 The Middle Way—a Lifestyle

28 Vimalakirti's Message

July 2 Mahasangha Sunday—Ordination of New Doshu and Soryo

Announcements

- ❖ We have returned to our old schedule for Wednesday evening meditation services. We start at 6:30 p.m. with a short lecture/discussion. The meditation begins at about 7 p.m. and a pot luck dinner concludes the evening—every week.
- ❖ The Doshu/Soryo Gyo begins on June 21. We will have a regular meeting including the pot luck dinner on that evening. On June 28 we will have the me-

diation meeting, however, we will not have a potluck because it is in the middle of the gyo.

- ❖ On July 2 we will have Mahasangha Sunday. We encourage all the sangha members from the various sangha to attend.

On that date we will have Doshu *Tokudo* (ordination) of three Doshu; Myotei Dan LeBlanc, Chion Ernie Lissabeth and Shoken Pia Trans. Additionally, we will have a Betsuin Soryo Tokudo for Seigaku Jen Henderson. It will be an exciting day for everyone. Please join us to celebrate their accomplishments.

- ❖ ***Program for Intermediate Lay/Ordained Practice***

Have you been looking for a more advanced personal practice? Perhaps make more of a commitment to the Buddhist Path? The program that is outlined below is a practice intended for people prepared for intermediate to advanced levels of practice. It is based upon Chih-i's *ssu chung san mei*, (Four Kinds of Samadhi). We find references to these meditations in the *Mo-ho chi-kuan* (The Great Calming the Mind and Discerning the Real) as well as the *Fa-hua hsua, ssu ciao i* (The Meaning of the Four Teachings) and other works. The meditations themselves were not systematized until after his death, by his disciples. In order to make these meditations and other practices available I have worked with a number of texts and created a method of performing these practices for the lay and ordained

person alike.

Like any intermediate or advanced practices, they will require commitment, discipline and patience. The person choosing this practice should have at least a year of meditation practice, and will be required to have an interview with me to determine that they are ready for this practice. The people who undertake these practices will be required to take vows relevant to the practices. A log will be kept of the meditations and other practices, periodic interviews will be necessary, and the person will be expected to attend two retreats a year. The practice is divided into one hundred day periods. However to accommodate a secular life we can adjust this to suit the individual. We would like to initiate people into this practice during the July 2nd Mahasangha Sunday, though people may begin at other times.

If you are interested in such a practice please contact me so we can set up an interview. I hope a number of people will avail themselves of this opportunity for a more advanced practice.

Gassho...Monshin

- ❖ Submit articles, announcements and photos for upcoming issues of *Shingi* to Seishin Jack Fitterer.
- ❖ ***Complete event listings through the end of the year are on-line at www.tendai.org***

Engaged Practice: AIDS Hospice in Africa by Shosan Phil DiSorbo

There she was in the dark, with a radiant welcoming smile. She was sitting gracefully on the concrete floor of a 6 x 6 foot unlit shack. Her only thought was letting us know how much she appreciated us coming to visit her. Her hospice caregiver introduced her to us as Tandi. From a nearby village, Tandi was recently suspected of having HIV/AIDS.

Although no one would discuss it, the debilitating infections and oozing sores were dead give-aways. As a woman in Africa, she was to be ostracized and shunned. Although she contracted AIDS from her truck driver husband, she was to blame. She was thrown out of her village, never to see her family members again. A rural village church woman took her in and gave her a small bush shack to live in until death came.

Until hospice came, she had no medications or regular

source of food. Her weight loss and recurrent infections were getting worse each day. We knew that she only had a few weeks to live - a 19 year old girl suffering needlessly from a preventable, treatable disease - trapped in a time warp of poverty, stigma, and lack of health services.

It seems to me that *karuna* (compassion), *upaya* (skillful means), and *prajna* (wisdom) come together when we talk about care for the dying, and addressing the suffering related to this universal life event. Buddhists have been very active on many continents in helping to care for the dying. Not only is comfort and dignity possible, but given true compassion skillfully applied, wisdom inherently arises and the dying person can experience growth and transcendence at the very end of life in the body.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to (continued on page 4)



Shosan Phil DiSorbo holds an HIV positive child at a hospice in South Africa.

dying peacefully in the world today is occurring in sub-Saharan Africa in cases like Tandi's.

With nearly 30 million people infected, Africa is home to the vast majority of the victims of today's Global AIDS pandemic. There are over 6,500 Africans dying every day. And already there are over 10 million AIDS orphans. Tandi, although suffering as many women in Africa do from poverty, AIDS-related stigma, and isolation in a one room shack, was fortunate enough to come under the care of a qualified hospice program. She received pain medication, daily visits, and died comfortably albeit at the age of 19.

Most Africans do not have that opportunity. Many African countries do not have even one hospice. Some don't allow the use of opiod pain medicine. A colleague in rural Zimbabwe simply held a poor dying women so that her pain was a bit less excruciating.

In return, she received a blessing as the woman died in her arms.

Our bodhisatva ideal comes into play when we consider relieving the suffering related to Global AIDS. It's not happening in Canaan. Africa is 8,000 miles way. But through practice we have realized that our connectedness is universal and that we are no different than the most diseased person. We have the opportunity as persons, as a sangha, and as a Buddhist sect to choose to meaningfully contribute solutions to this problem by active service and engagement. For some of us, practice now includes mindfully working to relieve this suffering. I invite like-minded practitioners to join us, and even to consider having our sangha adopt the Africa/AIDS Partnership as an engaged sangha practice.

"Engaged" means actively working in the relative realm in a way that is based on absolute truths. Through this engaged practice, we heighten the four attributes universally (love, joy, compassion, and equanimity) and we assist others (ourselves) in moving from terrible suffering to peace.

Let me respectfully remind you:
Life and Death are of extreme
importance.

Time passes swiftly by and
opportunity is lost.

Each one of us should strive to
awaken...

AWAKEN

Take heed;
Do not squander your life.

EVENING GATHA

Higashi Sangha

June Events

- ❖ **Meditation Service and Dharma Discussion every Monday, 6:30 p.m., East Mountian Retreat Center, 8 Lake Buel Rd., Great Barrington, MA**

5 Mara, Personification of Desire
12 The Six Paramitas
19 Spirit
26 Talk by Lois Rose - TBA, and Service led by Ansu Jane Majdelany

- ❖ Judy Culver's son, Blair, is graduating from Bard College. Congratulations Judy and Blair!
- ❖ Jessica Mayer has fulfilled the requirements for a Masters

in Education from Amherst College. She is on the lookout for a teaching job in the area, preferably in an elementary school. Congratulations and Good Luck, Jessica!

❖ On May 9th, four women from Higashi: Margaret, Jessica, Suzi, and Julia attended the Women's Interfaith Institute gathering which featured a ceremony honoring Buddha's birthday. Sensei Eve Myonen Marko was guest speaker. Eve is a founding member of the *Zen Peacemakers Order*. "For the past 25 years Zen Peacemakers have been developing new forms, methods and structures in the areas of peace-making, social enterprise and Zen practice. Zen Peacemaking emphasizes the transformation of the individual and society." The Maezumi Institute, located in Montague, MA, is the study/practice center of the Zen Peacemakers.

Nishi Sangha

June Events

- ❖ **Meditation Service and Dharma Discussion every Tuesday, 6 p.m., Friends' Meeting House, Madison Avenue, Albany, NY**

6 Faith in Awakening
13 Shila--A Sangha Discussion
20 "Correct Practice" from Chih-i

- ❖ **Please Note: Nishi Sangha will NOT meet on June 27 or**

July 4. We will resume on July 11.

Nishi Sangha celebrated Vishaka Day with a very nice ceremony which included offerings of flowers and incense and bathing the Buddha.

❖ Nishi Sangha sends congratulations and our very best wishes to the Danish Sangha on their beautiful new hondo. Of course, we all hope to visit you someday! And please come to visit us in New York.

Nyoirin-An (Ekayana Tendai Sangha)

June Events

- ❖ **Meditation Service every second and fourth Thursday of the month, Nyoirin-An meditation room in Nauheim near Frankfurt, Germany.**

8 Shikan Meditation and Dharma Talk: *Lotus Sutra* Chapter 13
22 Shikan Meditation and Dharma Talk: *Lotus Sutra*

Chapter 14

❖ On May 7 Daishin Joachim Willfahrt performed a Tendai Nembutsu ceremony with Shomyo at the tenth anniversary of his former Pure Land Sangha in Southern Bavaria. After the service Indian Raga music was performed in veneration of Shakyamuni Buddha. As there has arisen some interest in "Buddhism and Music" a public seminar will be offered in the autumn.

Danish Lotus Sangha

June Events

- ❖ **Meditation Service and discussion on Tuesday, 7:30-9:30 p.m.; Meditation Service on Thursday 9:00-10:30 a.m.**

6 We meet at 6:00 p.m. to watch *Why has Bodhidharma Left for the East?*

13 Final meeting before summer vacation. We meet again when Shoken Pia Trans returns from gyo and France on August 15.

Special Events

18 10.00 one day Lotus Sutra retreat



June 2006

Tendai Buddhist Institute

Tendai-shu New York Betsuin and Karuna Tendai Dharma Center www.tendai.org

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3 <i>First Quarter</i>
4	5 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	6 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha	7 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	8 Nyoirin-An Meditaion Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service	9	10 Jiunzan Tendaiji Morning Service Sutra Study Class
11 <i>Full Moon</i>	12 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service <i>Yakushi Nyorai Day</i>	13 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha	14 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	15 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service	16	17
18 Danish Lotus Sangha One- Day Lotus Sutra Retreat	19 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	20 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service	21 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	22 Nyoirin-An Meditaion Service	23	24
				DOSHU/SORYO GYO		
				<i>Summer Solstice</i>		
25	26 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	27	28 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	29	30	
				DOSHU/SORYO GYO		
<i>New Moon</i>						

Jiunzan Tendaiji Higashi Tendai Sangha Nishi Tendai Sangha Danish Lotus Sangha Nyoirin-An