



Monthly Bulletin
Tendai-shu New York Betsuin
Karuna Tendai Dharma Center

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Meanderings

To Save Sentient Beings: The Perspective of a Hospice Volunteer

Sando Reiner Kopp

How often have I asked myself during meditation: Where are those sentient beings and who needs my help most urgently? Can I honestly repeat this pledge every week without really doing anything?

I guess you can interpret “saving” in a broader sense as reducing the suffering of others by sharing resources and supporting them physically and emotionally. However, there are people who are fighting for their lives in countries like Africa and India and who, more than anybody, else deserve our attention and help. Unlike the typical U.S. hospice patient, they are young, often in their twenties and have immature children. It is estimated that in sub-Saharan Africa 6,000 people are dying daily of AIDS or opportunistic disease such as TB. There are more people dying than are born. There are more funerals than weddings.



Caregiver and child in South Coast Hospice, South Africa.

In October 2005 I joined a Community Hospice team which visited our Hospice partners in South Africa. I am grateful to Shosan Phil DiSorbo for offering me this opportunity. Our objective was more to observe and witness rather than actively care for the victims. It turned out that our sheer presence affected the patients as well as the caregivers. Both felt that the outside world cares about them and acknowledges their suffering and respects the tireless work and dedication of those who are battling the pandemic. The Community Hospice South Africa Organization is in an essential supporting role for those who are on the front line of saving sentient beings. Hospice in Africa is not only an “end of life” caregiver which helps their patients die in dignity and peace, but it also takes care of surviving children. Because of the high cost of medication, the government of South Africa *(continued on page two)*

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can only treat 800,000 of the two to five million victims. More importantly, transmission of the HIV virus to babies during birth and nursing can now be prevented by treating mothers during that critical time period. With an infection rate of 20–30% of pregnant women, the task for the South African government is overwhelming and outside help from other countries is needed. Prevention is difficult, too, since the affected population is both uneducated and poverty stricken, and sex education has shown only very limited results.

Our Community Hospice and many other U.S. based hospices are part of a larger network of private and government organizations which provide financial help to African hospices. Last year we raised approximately \$140,000 through Community Hospice and St. Peters Hospital employee payroll deductions, private donations and fundraisers. Our African partners are Tapologo, north of Pretoria; South Coast Hospice in Port Shepstone; and Island Hospice in Zimbabwe.

Our effort is unique since we provide, besides financial help, training for their professional staff. Our nurses and social workers travel at their own expense. We also provide financial help directly, circumventing the usual corruptive practices. We even went so far to avoid import taxes by carrying \$4,000 of medication and vitamins plus two laptops in our luggage. \$2,000 was raised in a church fundraiser by one staff member and travel companion only three weeks prior to departure.

What I learned on this trip was that there are selfless and dedicated people in the U.S., as well as South Africa, who commit themselves to a cause of saving others and who deserve to get our support to continue their humanitarian work.

Tapologo is a faith-based Hospice and has support from the Catholic Church. One of the supporting parishes is in Saratoga Springs and from it Father Frank Sullivan joined us on that trip.

South Coast Hospice is funded entirely through private donations and therefore more vulnerable. They have just enough money to operate for three months and constantly have to secure funds to continue their work. It is a management nightmare; however, they have done this for more than twenty-two years and the number of patients and caregivers grows every year. Presently they serve 800 with palliative care and have a small hospital for those who need pain management. Their patients are spread over a large rural area and caregivers need cars. The one I was riding in had the inscription: “This car was donated by the people of Japan”. It made me proud, and I was hoping that our Buddhist friends in Japan have helped to provide some funds. Our group spent two weeks in the field accompanying the native caregivers on their outpatient visits.

Freedom Park is a squatter camp in the Tapologo Diocese. It is typical of hundreds spread all over the country. Twenty thousand people are living in windowless twelve by sixteen-foot tin shacks without water, electricity or garbage removal. Most of the residents are woman and children. They were attracted to this area from other areas and countries because of the 45,000 miners in the diamond mines. The women are surviving by prostitution, and, not surprisingly, the HIV infection rate is a staggering 48%. Hospice recruited their caregivers from that camp. Most of them were themselves HIV positive. Their T-shirts had the logo “Use Condoms – They May Save Your Life”. This was unique for a Catholic organization but not for this one. Bishop Dowling has a known reputation for challenging the Catholic dogma. He has many supporters in European health organizations and was selected by *Time* magazine as one of the outstanding personalities in 2005.

Squatter camps also have children and orphans. Education is a prerequisite to get out of this camp and to find employment. Since neither the government nor the local community provides a school, the Hospice started the first one in Freedom Park. The tribal community, although they have an income from the diamond mines, will not provide education or medical care since inhabitants were not born in the local community and often do not speak their language.

This visit was an emotional experience for me which I will never forget. It seems that here we are living on a different planet! Our main concerns often seem to be who wins the game or do we have enough popcorn and beer to keep us occupied while watching it. Nobody likes to be reminded that there are others who are fighting for their life; it is to upsetting. Staying uninvolved becomes an art supported by official government policies such as promoting abstinence and promising to form a commission to study HIV in Africa. This is the reason that fighting the pandemic is mainly made possible by private foundations such as The Elton John Aids foundation, Global Fund, Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, Bill and Melinda Gates, Soros and Kaiser Foundations and many others. We just received the good news that Grammy-award recipient and rock star Seal gave a concert at Sun City, South Africa’s Las Vegas, and donated the entire proceeds of \$125,000 to our partner Tapologo Hospice. I do not know Seal but I bow to him.

Here is an opportunity for our Sangha members to participate in an important task to save sentient beings and to meet others who in tireless and committed ways can be examples to us.

Gassho



Jiunzan Tendaiji and Mahasangha

July Events

❖ **Class and Morning Service**

15 8:30 a.m., Morning Service

9:00 a.m., Sutra Study Class. This month we will be examining the 6th chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*

❖ **Meditation Meetings and Other Events**

Every Wednesday 6:30 p.m., discussion, Meditation Service and pot luck dinner

5

12

19 This evening begins a series of discussions entitled *Mahayana—Philosophy and Context* that will run through August

26 Continuing the discussion *Mahayana—Philosophy and Context*

July 23 10:30 a.m., Mahasangha Sunday—Sangha member Sando Reiner Kopp and Carol Heaney, Executive Director of the Community Hospice will speak on Hospice care for victims of HIV/AIDS in Africa. See *Meanderings* in this issue for more details.

August Events

❖ **Class and Morning Service**

There will be no class or Morning Service this month as many people are away traveling on vacation. We will resume on September 9 at 8:30 a.m. when we will examine the 7th chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*.

❖ **Meditation Meetings and Other Events**

Every Wednesday 6:30 p.m., discussion, Meditation Service and pot luck dinner

2 Continuing the discussion *Mahayana—Philosophy and Context*

9 Continuing the discussion *Mahayana—Philosophy and Context*

16 Continuing the discussion *Mahayana—Philosophy and Context*

23 Continuing the discussion *Mahayana—Philosophy and*

Context

30 Continuing the discussion *Mahayana—Philosophy and Context*

Announcements

❖ The annual Doshu/Soryo Gyo, the training period for those who have been ordained or are working towards ordination was completed on July 2. Three candidates received Doshu-tokudo: Chion Ernie Lissabet from Virginia, Shoken Pia Trans from Denmark, and Higashi Sangha member Myotei Dan LeBlanc. At the same time, Seigaku Jenny Henderson received Soryo tokudo and received the lineage name Shingaku—Summit of Truth. Congratulations to all!

❖ The gyoja thank Okuyama sensei for traveling from Japan to participate and observe this year's Doshu/Soryo Gyo. We were especially impressed by his participation in the daily prostrations.

❖ Gojun Terada is returning to Japan on July 23. He will return to the Center in early September. Thank you for all your hard work and inspiration.

❖ “*Calming the Mind—Discerning the Real: the Experience of Tendai Buddhist Meditation*” will be presented at the Adirondack Lake Center for the Arts in Blue Mountain Lake, N.Y., on Thursday evenings, July 6 through August 31. Each session will include basic meditation instruction, a talk on some aspect of the practice of meditation and its integration in daily life and two periods of Tendai Buddhist meditation, including practices to calm and focus the mind, contemplation, walking meditation, chanting and visualization. Basic instruction will be offered at 6:15 p.m. and is especially useful for those new to meditation. The evening's talk will be at 6:30 p.m., followed by meditation from 7-8 p.m. The meditations are open to all, new-comers as well as experienced practitioners in all traditions. You may come for a single time or for the entire session. The sessions will be presented by Indian Lake resident Seishin Jack Fitterer

❖ Shingaku Jenny Henderson is planning on traveling to China, Mongolia, Tibet and Nepal.

❖ Sangha members are invited to submit articles, announcements and photos for inclusion in the September issue of *Shingi* to seishin@tendai.org by AUGUST 15.

Nyoirin-An (Ekayana Tendai Sangha)

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

July Events

13 Shikan Meditation and Dharma Talk: *Lotus Sutra* Chapter 15 “Emerging from the Earth” (*Juji Yujutsu*).

27 Shikan Meditation and Dharma Talk : *Lotus Sutra* Chapter 16 “The Life Span of the Tathagata” (*Nyorai Juryo*).

August Events

10 Shikan Meditation

24 Shikan Meditation

Higashi Sangha

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

July Events

- 3 Spirit
- 10 Pot Luck Farewell Dinner for Dan and Jessica
- 17 Gyo Reflections
- 23 *Hongaku*—Original Enlightenment
- 30 Pot Luck Wisdom, topic TBA, led by Jisho Julia Erikson

August Events

- 7 Spirit
- 14 Bodhisattvas—The Absolute working in the Relative World
- 21 Mindfulness—Awakening in Every Moment
- 28 Attachments—Why We are Here
- ❖ *The Diamond Path*, a weekly radio show, hosted by Sansho Tamarack Garlow, had its debut on WBCRLp, June 11th. *The Diamond Path* is a show which introduces and highlights basic Buddhist concepts. If you're computer savvy, go to diamondpath.blogspot.com. Here you can download shows. WBCRLp is Great Barrington's community radio sta-

tion. Out of the area this can be heard via live stream. Go to: berkshireradio.org.

- ❖ Sangha member Fred Lazar has returned for the summer. Welcome back, Fred!
- ❖ Sangha member Jurek Zamoyski will have an exhibit of his work at Sanford Smith Fine Arts, Great Barrington in August.
- ❖ Myotei Dan LeBlanc received Doshu tokudo on July 2. He and sangha member Jessica Mayer have announced their impending move to Evergreen, Colorado! While they will both be tremendously missed, we wish them the best on their relocation. Evergreen will have a new kindergarten teacher in the fall and maybe a new Tendai sangha—in due time—led by Doshu Dan! The sangha offered them a goodbye party on July 10, as well as celebrating Sansho Tamarack Garlow's 60th birthday—all with three cakes!
- ❖ Sangha member Musho Margaret Welch lost her beloved mother, Theresa, on June 18. Margaret chose to perform the necessary rituals to keep her mother at home for a three-day period following her death. Higashi Sangha members were honored to be invited to a very special memorial service at the house during this period. Sansho Tamarack Garlow officiated this service; his first. Less than a week later, Tamarack performed his first wedding ceremony, in Connecticut.

Nishi Sangha

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

July Events

- 4 Independence Day—No meeting this evening
- 11 Gyo and the Sangha
- 18 Correct Practice—Chih'i
- 25 Gyo Study Revisited

August Events

- 1 Practicing the Six Paramitas
- 8 Spare the Rod and. . . ?
- 15 Early Buddhism—Distaff Side
- 22 Engaged Buddhism
- 29 The Four Divine Abodes
- ❖ Nishi Sangha congratulates Myoju Mary Jane Zanelli on successfully completing the Pine Bush Triathlon last month in Albany. Mary Jane trained long and hard and, despite the 90 (plus) degree heat, she and her team, The Breathless Mermaids, persevered. Way to go MJ!

Danish Lotus Sangha

- ❖ *Meditation Service Thursday, 7:30–9:30 p.m. and the last Sunday of August, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.; Meditation Service and discussion Tuesday 9:30–10:30 a.m. We are offering a reduced schedule during July and August during vacation time. Please check the calendar for dates.*

July Events

- 5 Meditation Service

August Events

- 15 Meditation Service and discussion
- 17 Meditation Service
- 22 Meditation Service and discussion
- 24 Meditation Service
- 27 Meditation Service
- 29 Meditation Service and discussion
- 31 Meditation Service



July 2006

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				<p><i>Participants in this year's Dosbu/Soryo Gyo.</i></p>		1
2 Mahasangha Sunday	3 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service <i>First Quarter</i>	4	5 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service	6 Blue Mountain Lake Shikan Meditation	7	8
9	10 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	11 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service <i>Full Moon</i>	12 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service <i>Yakushi Nyorai Day</i>	13 Nyoirin-An Meditation Service Blue Mountain Lake Shikan Meditation	14	15 Jiunzan Tendaiji Morning Service and Lotus Sutra Study Class
16	17 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service <i>Last Quarter</i>	18 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service	19 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	20 Blue Mountain Lake Shikan Meditation	21	22
23	24 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	25	26 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	27 Nyoirin-An Meditation Service Blue Mountain Lake Shikan Meditation	28	29
30	31 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	<i>New Moon</i>				


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



August 2006

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 <i>First Quarter</i>	3 Blue Mountain Lake Shikan Meditation	4	5
6	7 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	8 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service	9 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service <i>Full Moon</i>	10 Nyoirin-An Meditation Service Blue Mountain Lake Shikan Meditation	11	12 <i>Yakushi Nyorai Day</i>
13	14 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	15 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service	16 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service <i>Last Quarter</i>	17 Blue Mountain Lake Shikan Meditation Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service	18	19
20	21 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	22 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service	23 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service <i>New Moon</i>	24 Nyoirin-An Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Blue Mountain Lake Shikan Meditation	25	26
27 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service	28 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	29 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service	30 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	31 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Blue Mountain Lake Shikan Meditation <i>First Quarter</i>	<i>photo above left: Koyo, Koki and Shoken stack firewood dur- ing the annual Doshu/Soryo Gyo in June.</i>	