



DHARMA TEACHER ORDER

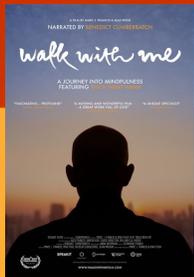
VOLUME IV, ISSUE I

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Costa Rican Adventure

**Cathy Hill reporting—
Pearland, TX Sangha**

A movie about the life of Thích Nhat Hanh “Walk with Me” is coming to Regal Cinemas Galleria in Poughkeepsie on Sunday November 19 at 3 p.m.—One showing only. Buy your ticket in advance.



Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh turned 91 on October 11, 2017. Happy Birthday to Thay!

This summer, Phap Nghiem (Thay’s sister) and I spent two wonderful weeks in Costa Rica visiting Richard and Adrienne Baksa. As you know, they have been running the Buddhist Correspondence Course for thirteen years. At some point in the future, the administration of the Course will transfer to Phap Nguyen Buddhist Congregation in Pearland, Texas. We are in the process of learning how to take over some of the duties related to the Course and will be performing a few of these tasks very soon. The Baksas graciously opened their lovely



home to us, cooked delicious meals for us, and spent endless hours patiently teaching us the intricacies of running the Course. We thoroughly enjoyed the weather, which never went

above the 70’s, as well as the breathtaking view of the mountains from the Baska’s patio. Quite a relief after the heat wave we are having in South Texas! Phap Nghiem and I did take one day off, and went on a lovely tour of seven towns in the beautiful Central Valley of Costa Rica. We enjoyed our stay so much that we are already planning our next Costa Rican adventure!



Novice Ordination



Bathing the Baby Buddha...(Do you see Him?)

Sunday, May 14, 2017 was a memorable day for Cathy Hill. First the congregation celebrated Mother's Day and the Buddha's birthday, and then Cathy's ordination as a novice monk! Her daughter flew in for the festivities from the Netherlands, her brother from Atlanta, and a dear family friend from England.

The ceremonies were beautiful. Children from the congregation, dressed in lovely costumes, slowly and gracefully approached the altar with ten different gifts for the Buddha. Other highlights included several people taking refuge, three nuns taking additional precepts, and Cathy's ordination. Cathy said it was a privilege to take the ten novice precepts in front of the whole community.

The entire Dharma Teacher Order offers our congratulations to our dear sister from the Texas Sangha, Cathy Hill.

Update...A message from Ven Trí Hoàng:

Dear Phap Chan,

Most grateful for you and other friends to help Phap Nguyen Temple to recover from the storm & flood. Very moving to see the helps from everywhere in the U.S., as well as abroad. Very thankful for your pray and donation. Thanks to these helps, we are step by step recovering our temple. Now the buildings are dry, we have removed the damaged walls and started to put the new sheetrock in those places. We hope to finish the dining hall this week. There are two more buildings to go. We will be there hopefully after a few weeks. The activities of the temple are resumed. At lunch, people can sit wherever they can. Some retired temple members have come to help with reparation, the others come after their works. It is great to see people with different skills come to help. We managed to repair the refrigerator. The car is running with yellow warning sign, but it is OK since we do not use it for the long distance. The books are almost dry. We try to restore the old books. If people continue to help us in this way, I am sure we will have a new temple next year. Our large Buddha is not leaning, He is still sitting straight and smiling in the garden.

Once a again, we greatly appreciate your care and generosity. May you all be well and happy.

With Loving Kindness,

Bhikkhu Thích Trí Hoàng



Pearland Sangha Members cleaning up after Hurricane Harvey

CT Sangha Reporting

Zen, Shin, and Psychotherapy

Wisdom, Compassion, and the Mind

Rev. Dr. Mark Unno Saturday, Aug 12, 10:00 – 3:00, w/lunch break

W. Hartford Unitarian Universalist Church, 433 Fern St, W Hartford, CT 06107

Zen and Shin comprise two of the largest developments of East Asian Buddhism. Most people know of Zen, but many have not heard of Shin, one of the largest developments of Mahayana Buddhism, and the largest school of Japanese Pure Land. In this workshop/retreat, Mark Unno will lead us in an exploration of the intersections, resonances, and differences between key features of Zen, Shin, and Psychotherapy, with a focus on the interplay of Wisdom, Compassion, and the unfolding of the Mind.

Rev. Dr. Mark Unno is Associate Professor of East Asian Buddhism in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Oregon. He is an ordained priest in the tradition of Shin Buddhism, a long-time practitioner of Zen Buddhism, and has been Visiting Professor in the Psychotherapy Program at Kyoto University. He has published books and articles on Classical Japanese Buddhism, Comparative Religion, and Buddhism & Psychotherapy. He is a regular contributor to Buddhist journals such as *Tricycle*, *Buddhadharma: The Practitioner's Quarterly*, and *Lion's Roar*. His Buddhist essays can be found at: <http://mtunno5.weebly.com>

This will be a one-day workshop including meditation and chanting. Free and open to the public.

We will break between 12:00-1:00 for a potluck lunch. Please consider bringing a vegetarian dish to share.



CT Sangha Reporting, continued

Buddhist Global Relief Walk to Feed the Hungry

On September 24, 2017, Lao Lane Xang Temple in Willington, Connecticut hosted Buddhist Global Relief's Connecticut Walk to Feed the Hungry. The event began with a short talk by Bhikku Bodhi, explaining that other walks around the country were held in public parks where participants walked in pairs or small groups, chatting and keeping up a normal walking pace. Here in Willington, the walk was unique, single file, slow, a form of meditation that took us across the lawn and into the forest. We were instructed to consider those who

would benefit from our efforts, the girls able to stay in school with donations of food to their families, the children able to receive a daily meal in Haiti, schools in impoverished regions that would be supplied with supplies, teachers and administrators, to name just a few. And so we stepped along the path, one foot-fall following the next, all following the monks and nuns that led us. After the walk we enjoyed a lunch together, and then were again blessed and inspired while listening to Bhikku Bodhi describe Buddhist Global Relief as one the few Buddhist organizations whose mission is global compassion for those in need. Richard Z, Bobbie, Janet, Jeff, Tom, and Craig from our Connecticut DTO took part in this wonderful experience. For more information,



CT Sangha Study Group with Dr. Zipoli

¿Qué pasa con la sangha de Miami?



Hay varias noticias que queremos comunicarles a las otras sanghas del DTO. Primeramente, queremos anunciar que Noble Silencio ha estado guiando un grupo de práctica de Tai Chi para la comunidad que ha tenido éxito. Un buen grupo de participantes se están beneficiando de la práctica del T'ai Chi todos los sábados con la guía de Noble Silencio. Este grupo crece cada día más, y aunque a veces se unen a la sangha para la práctica de meditación los Domingos, casi siempre tienen mayor asistencia al T'ai Chi. Esperamos así ayudar sus prácticas de meditación privadas a la vez de ayudarlos a mejorar su salud y bien estar.

¡También comenzaremos un nuevo curso de estudio budista en Español! Tenemos dos nuevos estudiantes que se demuestran dispuestos al estudio: Ales smith y Lenin Caraballo. Les deseamos perseverancia en su aprendizaje y que tal pueda beneficiar sus prácticas espirituales.

En adición, nuestro hermano Teo Castellanos ha comenzado un grupo de meditación llamado Mud & Lotus Zen en el campus central de la Universidad de Miami. Ahí esperamos llevar la práctica de meditación y budismo a los estudiantes de la universidad. Por favor sigan el grupo en Facebook para brindarles nuestro apoyo: www.facebook.com/mudandlotuszen

Les mandamos muchos saludos y cariño a nuestras Sanghas del DTO y nuestros pensamientos y apoyo a la sangha de Texas que se vió afectada por el ciclón Harvey.

En paz y compasión,

Miami Sangha

Translation into English:

What is happening with the Miami sangha? There are several news items we want to communicate to the other sanghas. First, we want to announce that Noble Silence has been guiding a Tai Chi practice group for the local community that has been very successful. A good group of participants have been benefiting from the practice of Tai Chi every Saturday with Noble Silence's guide. This group grows every week, and although sometimes they join the sangha for meditation practice on Sundays, they have greater assistance to Tai Chi. We hope to help their private meditation practices at the same time as improving their overall health and well being. We'll be starting a new Buddhist study course in Spanish! We have two new students who are ready to learn: Ales Smith and Lenin Caraballo. We wish them perseverance in their learning and that this knowledge could benefit their spiritual practices. In addition, our brother Teo Castellanos has started a meditation group called Mud & Lotus Zen in the central campus of the University of Miami. We hope to bring the practice of meditation and Buddhism to the students of the university. Please follow the group on Facebook to give them our support: www.facebook.com/mudandlotuszen We send our greetings and affection to all Sanghas of the DTO and our thoughts and support to the Texas sangha that was affected by Hurricane Harvey. In peace and compassion, Miami Sangha

Virginia Beach Sangha

Jeffrey G. Butts Jr. Reporting

One year ago this month, our Virginia Beach sangha became the latest DTO sangha, joining a flourishing network of other sanghas spread throughout the country. Although we have an existing sangha thriving here, members of our sangha welcomed the development of the Dharma Teacher Order.

In our inaugural year last year, we had the honor of being visited by Venerable Thich Tri Hoang. He shared his time entreating us to the Dharma and introducing us the Dharma Teacher Order and its mission. Upon his departure, we were set with the colossal task of initial implementation of the DTO into our existing Sangha--that meant spreading the word and gaining interest, getting volunteer coordinators, establishing meeting times, etc. With the aid of early interest, we had enough momentum to get things unpacked right away. Indeed it was miraculous that within only a couple of weeks after Venerable/s visit that we were held an interest meeting and eventually held our first class.

Summarily, through our first year of study, we read through powerful and easy-to-read books by Thich Nhat Hahn, and an insightful book on the history of Buddhism, perused through a profound anthology of stories of women in Buddhism, and more. In April, we traveled together to attend the annual three-day DTO Spring Retreat at a beautiful retreat center in New York, meeting some of the most endearing people on the planet. At home, we have had some very courageous and creative presenters in our classes who have given sublime and personalized instruction on the reading material. Each of us have chosen to bring our own personal experiences into the presentations; it has allowed us to grow even closer to one another.

Now in our second year, we aspire to continue to study and practice the Buddha's teachings in an effort to strengthen our understanding of the Dharma in our everyday lives. We commenced our first meeting of this year in the early part of September and will advance this month to our second and third presentations on the *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* by Sogyal Rinpoche. We've gotten off to a big bang of a start and class attendance continues to increase.

On a technical note, one of the very unique aspects about this entire experience this year is that we have continued to build upon our in-class moments by fine-tuning our class formats, but perhaps also more interesting and noteworthy, we have considered how one can experience our class online--we have developed an online Google Drive archive storing all of our presentations and summaries, our class practice and chants, the class schedule and photographs, copies of the DTO newsletters, and more. In many ways, it has proven effective in our class feeling more accessible, traceable, and substantial.

We are very excited for the entire network of our DTO brothers and sisters and look forward to continuing to grow and share with you on this path. And we simply can't wait 'til the next spring retreat!

Metta

DTO - Virginia Beach, Virginia

Dong Hung Temple | Buddhist Education Center of America

New York Sangha Reporting by Maeve Eng-Wong

What does it mean to be a teacher in the Dharma Teacher Order? Many of us have studied together for years. We have read the same books again and again and shared our ever evolving and deepening insights about the Dharma together. Some of us in the New York Sangha have been together for eleven years. It has been a gift to be with people who are dedicated to studying, practicing and sharing the Dharma. It has also been a joy to bring the teachings into the secular world. With the new research on meditation, particularly on mindfulness, a whole new group of people are interested in gaining the benefits of practice. People who are not necessarily interested in being Buddhist, but who are most definitely interested in decreasing personal suffering.

This has allowed many of us in the NY Sangha to venture out and begin teaching in other arenas, finding ways to teach the ancient wisdom of meditation practice in a secular way to people who are interested in developing the skills to be present to their own lives. For the last six years, I have led a meditation group in the community where I live. Some of the same people who came to the first meeting continue to attend now. We are mostly women, mostly non-Buddhist, very open-minded and committed to sitting together. We started sitting for about ten minutes the first year and now sit easily for forty-five and could do more if we had the time. We try to keep our time together to about one hour bi-monthly so that people feel free to leave or stay after that time. For the first couple of years, people asked many questions about whether or not they were “doing it right” (we are all afraid of the same things!). Now people are very still during the sitting and ask few questions about the process. They now own their own practices. Instead of being “the one who knows”, I am just one of the gang, a friend along the path. It is amazing how people feel free to talk and connect about anything and everything once our sitting time is over. Simply creating the opportunity for people to sit together is in itself an act of kindness. The experience changes you and the people around you.

For the last four years, a friend and I have been teaching the children in the community yoga and mindfulness during gym time in the local school. Each year, we did a couple of marathon days reaching children in grades K-12. The first year of teaching felt like we were herding cats! It was very difficult for the children to be quiet and follow the yoga instructions and guided meditation. We were exhausted, just keeping the kids in the room! The second year felt a little better and by the third year, the kids were amazing, showing us their yoga moves and gaining the ability be quiet while in a large room amidst all their closest friends. They were better and we were better!

This year we were awarded a grant to teach mindfulness skills and yoga to children in transitional grades with the goal of teaching the children skills to better manage their stress during times of change. We were also asked to offer the teachers an afternoon of yoga and mindfulness as part of a superintendent’s conference day. After our offering at the conference day, we were asked to return on a more regular basis to work with the teachers as part of a wellness program. All skills were taught in a secular way loosely following the Mindful Schools and MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction) curricula.

It is the training I have had through the DTO that brings richness and deep understanding to the work. The flexibility and open-minded atmosphere offered within the DTO allows us be present and helpful in a multitude of ways. As you advance in your practice, consider taking your practice out of the halls and off the cushion to the areas of your life that you hold closely. Your presence alone could be a catalyst for positive change in a world that is craving compassionate action.





An Editorial (of sorts)

by Janet Reale

The newsletter “editor” is on the Board of Trustees of her local library and, as such, is “encouraged” to attend book readings and signings so I went to one a few weeks ago by Larry Littany Litt, a local author. His book was *Mad Monk Improper Parables: Wit, Wisdom, Humor, Laughter and Practical Advice*.

I did not reveal anything about my Buddhist background until after he had finished with his reading as I was determined not to impinge on his spontaneity and showmanship and just wanted to sit back and enjoy. After the reading, I congratulated him on his reading, which I loved, gave him my card and told him a little about “our own mad monk,” Linji, founder of our lineage. Larry certainly looks the part of a monk, not necessarily a “mad” one. This tickled my funny bone, seemed entirely fitting and somehow seemed characteristic of the paradoxes and ironies in Buddhism. Things are not always as they appear.

If you ever heard Alan Watts’ delivery and loved it (as I did) you may have realized that Alan Watts was a “spiritual entertainer” (a self-described one at that but also a former Episcopal priest) and I found similarities in his delivery and Larry’s. Both authors/speakers provided a sense of comfort and ease in teaching something spiritual and amusing at the same time. Basic humanitarian values (Buddhist-style) made palatable and easy-to-digest by wit, mirth and always with the underlying foundation of wisdom.

Larry’s stories were original tales that came to him after a period of amnesia caused by trauma. His stories, centered around Bodhidharma (Dolma in Korean), were spiritual and funny at the same time, proving once again to me that the hidden advantage of Buddhism is the humor and laughter we can experience when we consider the foibles of our human condition and our sometimes delusional self-concept. No one ever tells you about this; it would seem that the ideal is to regard Buddhism pedantically with a certain exaggerated reserve which in truth distances us from the teachings. I believe, however, that a less-recognized bonus value of the study of Buddhism is learning to laugh at ourselves, our affectations, our delusions. This laughter may well be a tool to our awakening. It also tills the ground of our rigid intellect for the reception of the Buddhist teachings which, of course, are very serious. What could be more serious than reducing our suffering leading us to liberation? However, the path can indeed include quips and even belly laughs, after all, the Dalai Lama finds humor in his daily life and is always laughing even after experiencing so much unspeakable suffering so there must be something to it. Author Larry Littany Litt is on to something.

For a sample video clip from the book signing; left click to open:

<https://www.facebook.com/Hunter-Public-Library-422150974656190/>

Just for fun



Do you have one that doesn't come with attachments? I'm Buddhist.