



# UU Sangha

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Journal of the Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship

Summer 2008

## UUBF CLERGY AT GA CREATE SANGHA BY EXAMPLE

By Rev. Wayne Arnason, UUBF Board President

**E**ncouraged by the GA Planning Committee to offer a program for local congregations' needs and interests, the UU Buddhist Fellowship invited a panel of UU Buddhist clergy to discuss the different ways they approach their complex religious identities, their teaching roles, and the impact of their Buddhist practice on their congregation's life. In the midst of a busy GA with lower registration than previous years, some seventy interested people came to hear the presentations.

UUBF President Wayne Arnason moderated the panel, framing questions to three Florida



UU clergy that were based on his own experiences as a parish minister who "came out" as a UU Buddhist in the middle of a

long term ministry. Each panel member had a unique story to tell.

Rev. Marni Harmony had a twenty year ministry in Orlando prior to her retirement, during which time she gathered practitioners drawn to the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh and the Community of Mindfulness. As her own practice evolved, she sustained an encouraging teaching role for all forms of Buddhist practice but did not seek to identify the congregation as a base for any particular tradition. Rev. Sara Zimmerman,



she is responsive to how people wish to learn and understand more. Rev. Meredith Garmon came to the Gainesville church in a community with his wife LoraKim Joyner in 2006. A student of

ministry. As seekers engage with her sermons, her presence and her sitting group, it becomes apparent, and she

is responsive to how people wish to learn and understand more.

Rev. Meredith Garmon came to the Gainesville church in a community with his wife LoraKim Joyner in 2006. A student of



Ruben Habito, Roshi, of the Sanbo Kyodan School of Zen, Rev. Garmon has created the UU Zen Center of Gainesville and leads an actively gathered



sangha with a distinct web presence through the congregation's web site.

All the clergy present agreed that their Buddhist identities have never been a focus of conflict in their congregations. Members and visitors alike are curious to understand how they came to Buddhism as a practice within Unitarian

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## Notes from the Editor

**G**reetings. Here is your summer issue; we hope it has arrived before the autumnal equinox. Wayne Arnason leads off with a report on the panel he moderated at General Assembly, "My Minister Is a Buddhist?" If you weren't at GA (or even if you were), you can watch the video made by our Secretary and Past President Sam Trumbore.

Karen Karos, a member of the Mindfulness Practice Group at the UU Church of Annapolis, joins us with her reflections on the Street Retreat in Annapolis a year ago. Still more ripples from the presentation by Roshi Bernie Glassman and Sensei Eve Myonen Marko, Zen Peacemakers, at our 2007 Convocation, and still more reasons not to miss our 2009 Convocation.

Andy Agacki is back with the story of his lay ordination in Bright Dawn. Andy is a leader in the Buddhist UU Group at First Unitarian Church in Milwaukee.

Saddharma (True Dharma) Frank Tedesco leads the UUBF at the UUs in Clearwater, Florida. After years of studying the dharma in different lineages, Frank completed a Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies at Dongguk University in Seoul with research focused on death, dying, abortion and rebirth in Mahayana traditions. See [www.truedharmaworks.org](http://www.truedharmaworks.org) to learn more about his activities in Asia. Here Frank gives us his observations and reactions to the sad controversy surrounding Terri Schiavo. His photographs give a real sense of being present in that moment.

Phyllis Culham, one of the facilitators of the MPG of Annapolis (and the editor's wife), reports on a Hungry Ghost Ceremony which we held to acknowledge the individual and collective fear and suffering which inevitably followed the shooting and deaths in the Tennessee Valley UU Church. The reactions of our Sangha to the ceremony should interest you.

We also offer you a letter from inside, a response to the UUBF outreach to the incarcerated, in cooperation with the Church of the Larger Fellowship. Please read it and think about it. It's important.

We would like to hear from you. What you do as UU Buddhists? And we would like to have your artwork and poetry. The editor would especially like to hear from UUs doing prison dharma work and UUs working with the dying. Perhaps future issues could include round table discussions of UU involvement in those good works.

Gassho, Robert Ertman, Editor

## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP

### President

Wayne Arnason (Zen)  
West Shore UU Church  
20401 Hilliard Blvd.  
Rocky River, Ohio 44116  
(440) 333-2255 (office)  
email: Bergthor AT aol.com

### Secretary

Samuel A. Trumbore (Vipassana)  
(518) 463-7135 (office)  
email: strumbore AT uumin.org

### Treasurer/Publisher

Richard Swanson (Zen)  
PO Box 8434  
Essex, VT 05451-8434  
email: rswansonvt AT gmail.com  
(802) 875-5992(cell)

### Editor

Robert Ertman (Mindfulness, Zen)  
c/o UUCA  
333 Dubois Rd.  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
(410) 533-4203 (cell)  
email: robertertman AT msn.com

### Directors:

Catherine Senghas (Zen)  
Arvid Straube (Vipassana)  
Judith Wright (Tibetan)  
Meredith Garmon (Zen)

**Web page:** <http://www.uubf.org>

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Universalism. Among the four ministers present, two were raised UU and two came to our tradition as adults. Two had the experience of “coming out” to their congregations as they found teachers and received precepts or took vows, while two others were called to their congregations with their Buddhist identities and practices as a part of their settlement packets.

All the ministers present engage in or lead a regular sitting practice in their congregations, sometimes under the banner of the congregation’s adult education program, sometimes as a distinct sangha, and one under a unique identity as a UU Zen Center. Several also reported that the congregation hosts or rents to other Buddhist teachers or sanghas.

All the ministers agreed that what is most important about their Buddhist practices is not the way that they institutionalize their leadership but how they live their practices in their ministry. Insofar as their parishioners recognize and appreciate the ways that Buddhism has informed how they serve and engage their roles as UU ministers, both Buddhism and UU’ism are enriched.

During the General Assembly, UU Buddhists also connected through the display table that we once again shared with the UU mystics. Rev. Sam Trumbore managed the table, and UUBF members took turns at the table, chatting with interested people, offering advance registrations for the next Convocation in March 09, and selling DVD’s of the presentations at the 2007 Convocation. We are already planning and hoping for a significant presence at the Salt Lake City General Assembly in 2009.

*A video of the workshop made by Sam Trumbore is available on the UUA website at <http://www.uua.org/events/generalassembly/2008/112314.shtml> and will be available on the UUBF homepage later. The accompanying photos are from Sam’s video.*



## AN IMPORTANT LETTER FROM INSIDE

*In cooperation with the Church of the Larger Fellowship, we sent the last issue to some prisoners who had expressed an interest in Unitarian Universalism and in receiving the UU Sangha. We added a special invitation to write to us about meditation inside and to send us their thoughts, poetry, and questions.*

Dear UU Sangha:

Our prison is a sacred space for the alleviation of suffering. We have a life sentence with no release date or parole. We also have a mental disability called "Aspergers Syndrome", which allows us to achieve enlightenment almost effortlessly. "Asperger Syndrome" meant inevitable Buddhahood, and "Life Sentence" became the true mission of our sangha. You might be thinking, "How can they be mindful if they have lost their mind?" Well, we practice meditation in concrete boxes surrounded by razor-wire and large scale suffering. Our question is, "How can we afford not to be mindful?"

We wanted to thank you for working with the UU Church of the larger Fellowship Ministry for Prisoner Members. We also wanted to ask about how to incorporate physical aspects of life into our practice. There is a difficulty with being out of shape and physically inactive. What would you suggest for the unmotivated sangha to develop their physical health? We do not have any equipment or weights, and space is severely limited. Also, we wanted to know what Qigong is. There are not too many informative books in our concrete box. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Christopher

*If you have any answers, questions, or comments, please send them to the editor. Thank you. And we repeat our invitation to the incarcerated to write to us.*

## Still on the Streets of Annapolis

By Karon Karos

I'm better than you. A key phrase I heard growing up was "Look out for number one." I am number one. I heard that phrase so many times from my parents. Most days I believe I'm better than you. The street retreat turned that belief inside out.

It's been almost a year since I spent 24 hours on the streets of Annapolis with 4 other sangha members and a retreat leader. I'm amazed that daily I reflect on the retreat. The reflection takes a couple of turns. Sometimes arrogance kicks in. I did something that makes me better than others. I'm proud to have taken part in a situation that most people would find offensive or too difficult to imagine. It's sort of like a mental "pat on the back." There's humility too. The retreat was a 24 hour shortcut to my character defects and strengths. Part of me would like to do another retreat for 3 days. Part of me never wants to do another again. The retreat leader mentioned that there are always feelings of ambiguity about any situation. That's for sure.

We did a number of "exercises" during the retreat. The most powerful for me was begging for alms. One of my character defects is arrogance. I will often struggle unnecessarily rather than ask for help. Begging for money knocked the swagger right out of me.

Early in the first day the leader shared that he had been unable to beg for his first 2 or so retreats. His statement gave me a sense of being 'off the hook'. Traditionally I measure my behavior against that of a respected friend, teacher or leader. His early experience validated my feeling afraid to beg for money. It also helped me forgive myself for not being able to ask for money.

Before the begging we sat in a circle and talked about the exercise. We shared our fears of asking perhaps to be turned down. We shared ad-



vice; be receptive; allow people to be generous. Sound out the ways you think about asking for help. The talk helped ease my fears. We each made a plan of action and chose a street to cadge. We broke up individually to beg for money. I sat quietly on a side street and allowed myself to fail. Why couldn't I beg? I couldn't do it. I was unable to ask strangers for money. My mind whirled with thoughts; I had no sense of desperation. There was no real need for money. Rationally I knew that I could survive without food or drink for 24 hours.

It felt uncomfortable to ask. I wanted to hang on to my safety. Normally I would have charged right through my difficulties. Begging would have become a competition. Gathering at least as much money as the others would have been the primary goal. Then I had to accept that it was unpleasant not ask for money. I was letting my friends down. I was not "better than you" if I couldn't ask for money.

I did something different for me. I took a gentler approach with myself. Shed a tear or two. I quietly reflected on my notions of independence and self support. These are misconceptions by the way. Shutting myself off and losing out on others' generosity keeps me separate. When I'm asking for, giving or receiving help I feel happy and connected. The way to happiness is through helping others. Maybe the way to others' happiness is allowing them to help me.

Results...It's become less of a burden to ask and accept assistance. This came in handy when my Dad passed away 3 months ago. I had no trouble reaching out and asking for what I needed. Others were openhanded. They did my laundry, made phone calls and picked up things for my mother. These are all things "I could have done." I like to think those who helped were as comforted by their contribution as I was by their donation.

Lately I've approached panhandlers with a lighter heart. I don't always give them money. When I hand out it's 5-10 dollars not change or a dollar. And the gift is more mindful. I watch myself projecting a story onto the people I gift. Then I attempt to let the story go. I don't ask them what they'll do with the money or why they are on the street. It's none of my business. It's enough to just give expecting nothing in return.

*Photo courtesy of Wendi Winters*

## FINALLY, A LAY BUDDHIST MINISTER!

By Andrew S. Agacki

After two years of study, I was inducted as a Lay Buddhist Minister by the Rev. Koyo Kubose, my Sensei. Carrying on the work of his father, the late Rev. Gyomay Sensei, Koyo Sensei formed the Bright Dawn Institute to further develop the idea of an American Buddhism. It is under the auspices of the Institute that I now have



full authority to do anything any other minister of any denomination can do.

The Retreat began Thursday evening, May 22<sup>nd</sup>. My wife and I arrived at the Bright Dawn Home Spread, and were warmly greeted by members of the American Buddhist Sangha of Chicago. It was a great joy to meet people I had only 'met' through e-mails and newsletters, these past 12 years(?). How time flies!

The following Friday was devoted to classes by Koyo Sensei, giving instruction and sharing experiences on conducting weddings and funeral/memorial services (my wife, Patty, serving the role of future bride and relative of the deceased). With years of experience, Koyo Sensei, a past professor of psychology, proved extremely insightful. I have already been asked to perform a wedding next year for two friends, and Sensei's talk greatly relieved, and terrified me. Another invitation to teach some classes in Buddhism at the Whitefish Bay High School, will be *much* less daunting!

While eating dinner, Richard, owner and caretaker, noticed that the turkey vultures had come back. They had wintered in the barn, and



he wasn't sure they would return. I snapped a picture of four of them standing on the top of the barn, and newly dubbed it 'Vulture Peak.'

Saturday was 'open', and we were given a tour of the Home Spread. Located a few miles

outside of Plymouth, Wisconsin, the site was purchased 10 years ago from the High Wind Association (now Plymouth Institute), a 'green' community and alternative energy development and training center. Some geodesic domes, still standing in a small ravine, are reminders of their past presence. Of all the pictures I took, I didn't want to get close enough to a small patch of Wild Parsnip to snap a picture ... a simple touch will cause severe burns and blisters! After dinner, we all pitched in and dug a hole to plant a tree in Koyo Sensei and his wife Adrienne's honor. After decades in Skokie, Illinois, they have moved to California to be near their extended families.

What a wonderful time! Jim, an avid astronomer, had come all the way from Michigan to be there. At one point, he had us all go out in the late afternoon to watch Skylab pass overhead. Later that night, when my wife and I didn't want to sleep yet, we wandered out on the porch and watched as Skylab ran across the sky again!

Sunday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, was fraught with anxiety. After a wonderful breakfast, my wife and I took a short walk while everyone else prepared for the ceremonies. First, Koyo Sensei, dressed in a black robe, conducted the Ti Sarana ceremony for a Sangha member. It is in this ceremony that a lay member formally takes refuge in the 'Three Treasures' (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) and receives his Dharma name. On the altar is a ritual razor that the Sensei uses to symbolically shave the head of the novice, while repeating the name *Namu Amida Butsu* three times, followed by a Dharma Talk. A snip of the recipient's hair is attached to their certificate.

After we all congratulated Dave for his commitment (and new responsibility), Koyo Sensei appeared, resplendent in his father's ceremonial robes. The Kansho (calling bell) sounded. John (my Dharma Brother) and I were led to three chairs before the altar. In honor of our classmate in Sao Palo, Brazil, unable to attend because of time and 'red tape', we left a chair empty. Koyo Sensei began by explaining the significance of the items on the altar. The ritual razor would be used again. Incense would be offered. But then he removed an old *okesa* from a box. This stole,

worn and stained, belonged to his father ... it was the original *okesa* worn by his father's Sensei, the Rev. Haya Akegarasu. He told the story of when his father gave him the *okesa*, he said how sweat-stained and worn it looked. His father told him that he received the Dharma Sweat of his teacher, and was passing it on to him ... as he passed it on to us ... and the ceremony began.

We all recommitted to the Three Treasures in an exchange with Sensei. Then the two of us individually offered incense to Gyomay Sensei with a *gassho* while holding Gyomay Sensei's *Ojuzu* (mala). Our heads were ritually shaved while Koyo Sensei recited the Nembutsu, and after we were both seated, Koyo Sensei gave a Dharma Talk. Afterwards, we received our own *okesa*, and a certificate. A closing Benediction was then read by all.

A catered lunch was served in our honor, but soon, we all began to go our separate ways. Many of us will meet again, next year, and the Second Lay Minister Induction, in Coarsegold, California.

Two months ago, I told my UU Church's R.E. children that Buddha lived two *thousand* four *hundred* years ago. Such a long time! Ah! Not *so* long! A generation is 20 years. Dividing 2400 by 20 equals 120. That means there are *only 120 people between then and now!* It's almost like being able to reach out and touch him!

I have seen the myriad stars race across the sky, the Dharma carried on wings to Vulture Peak, and the tiny, red flowers of moss nestled in a rotting log on an ancient, sacred hill ... nothing will ever be far away, again.

Gassho.



## The Cries of the World— Did Terri have a Mind Stream or Not?

By Frank M. Tedesco, Ph.D.

**T**he Woodside Hospice House in Pinellas Park, Florida, where Terri Schiavo spent the last five years of her life is about five minutes from my home and about fifteen minutes from UU Clearwater where I lead weekly UUBF meetings. It is a 72-bed residential facility run by the non-profit Hospice of the Florida Suncoast. Woodside is a quiet, clean and efficient place that is open and active 24/7, with well-manicured lawns and hedges, a labyrinth, an outdoor chapel in a grove of oaks through which you can see into the backyards and screened-in swimming pool rooms of the suburban neighbors behind the property. An elementary school is down the street, with banks and convenience stores within short walking distance.



The photos accompanying this article are by Frank Tedesco

When the sad and contentious Terri Schiavo brouhaha grabbed national headlines in the spring of 2005, I was taken up by the ethical and religious debate and the warring passions virtually exploding on my doorstep. I felt thoroughly frustrated by my inability to resolve to my own satisfaction what was going on with her. I had no chance to observe her or have any

personal interaction with her even though she resided nearby. (This was a year before I became an authorized, badge-bearing hospice volunteer chaplain.)

Was she or was she not “here”? (whatever that means) I asked myself continually as if it were a “kong-an” or Seon (Zen) conundrum. Had Terri’s “consciousness,” “spirit,” or karmically-determined mental continuum already left her body? Could she or would she ever regain consciousness and return to social functioning as a wife and daughter? It was mind-boggling to sort out the “facts” from the hype and intense emotions surrounding her state. It was appalling, too, that her family’s intensely private and sensitive concerns had become a public spectacle for politicians at all levels and all stripes to score points..

Was Terri diagnosed accurately as in a “permanent vegetative state,” or was she “minimally conscious” as certain doctors, her parents and the crowd outside the hospice contended? And if she was PVS, would it be considered murder or euthanasia or, for a Buddhist, a violation of the first precept to allow her to die by ending medical intervention? Was there a vestige of rare and precious human consciousness clinging, as it were, to her “name and form?” Were her husband and the courts depriving her of her chance for Buddhahood? How would a Buddhist meditation master have assessed her condition? Or a master of the sub-





tle pulses and channels like the Dalai Lama’s physician?

What could I do as a “socially engaged” Buddhist do-gooder? I didn’t know either side of her family personally so couldn’t easily plant a seed of hope or curiosity about these Buddhist alternatives (not that the good Catholics would have cared to listen to a believer in metempsychosis!). I did have some indirect contact with her attending support staff and medical and legal eagles embroiled in her case, though. Many of the people I met who worked with her were very guarded and sworn to confidentiality before and even after her death. I knew her husband’s lawyer from a Reiki-like spiritual healing association but he had little to shed about her state of consciousness. He strictly supported her “right to die” and her husband’s right to allow her to die by removing feeding tubes. He was extremely cautious about saying anything extraneous to the legal arguments his opponents might jump on. He also had a legitimate personal concern. His life as well as his young son’s were threatened by “pro-life” extremists. For some, so-called “compassion” for Terri’s troubled life did not extend to those who thought differently. A few wished husband Michael and his supporters damnation and even death! I could not feel the impact of the venom the pro-life protesters expressed until I visited the street outside the hospice and walked among the “righteous ones.” It was a bizarre adventure

to walk back and forth among the protestors, sometimes sharing water and snacks. I amused myself imagining myself a kind of an advance scout, a peaceful guerrilla penetrating behind the line of the “enemy camp” murmuring Sanskrit and Sino-Korean mantras with my mala in order to pacify bellicose aggressors. In the recesses of my memory I recalled the great Venerable Mahaghosananda who led lines of monks and laypeople on annual dhammyetra (“pilgrimages of truth”) between the warring factions on the minefields of Cambodia beginning in 1992. Only here in Florida there was only one warring faction who at times tried to charge the doors of the hospice to “liberate” Terri before her husband and a local “activist” judge condemned her to slow and painful starvation (and under constant, meticulous care and nary a bedsore in five years!). It seemed to matter little to the protestors that dozens of other people were close to dying in the hospice and that their families, too, were sorely aggrieved and disturbed by the shouts and bull-horns of the demonstrators.



“Dae-ja dae-bi kwan-se-um bosal, dae-ja dae-bi kwan-se-um bosal, dae-ja dae-bi kwan-se-um bosal” —Great Love, Great Compassion O Revered Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva Who Sees and Hears the Sufferings of the World— I call upon you to ease the pain of all the discom-forted beings among this noisy crowd and-within the walls and rooms of the hospice, so



where they will go, their loved ones benumbed with grief, many rounds of 108 beads on my Korean mala I recited under my breath while passing among the placards and demonstrators, hearing the Catholic rosary, hateful signs, jubilant with announcements that the governor, the senators, even the president would intercede on their behalf of their beloved Terri's cause (or so they proclaimed) and despondent and wailing when the law did not support them. Dae-ja dae-bi kwan se-um bosal, dae-ja dae-bi kwan se-um bosal, om mani pema hum, om mani pema hum... Oh Precious Dharma Jewel the Buddha in the Perfect Lotus born of the rich black soil of samsara, our ignorance of how things actually are in Emptiness, om mani pema hum, om mani pema hum, om mani pema hum. Let the peace of the Cloud of Unknowing embrace the



elders and children in this crowd, this multitude of pro-life pilgrims, advocates, media personnel and their manipulators...om mani pema hum, om mani pema hum, om mani pema hum...one breath at a time, breathing in slowly and stepping, stepping lightly on the asphalt, breathing out slowly, slowly, stepping lightly on the asphalt...a postcard with Terri's image superimposed on Jesus' crown of thorns thrust into my hand by a pre-pubescent teenager...om mani pema hum...om mani pema hum

Does Terri have Buddha nature or not?

## Acknowledging the Shooting in Knoxville and Generating Compassion: The Hungry Ghosts Ceremony?

By Phyllis Culham

Facilitators of the Mindfulness Practice Group of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis (MD) saw the need to acknowledge the individual and collective fear and suffering which inevitably followed the shooting and deaths in the Tennessee Valley UU Church on Sunday, July 27. Brief e-mail conversations among leaders confirmed the search for some appropriate way of welcoming these feelings into the group and working with them but did not generate any clear plan before our regular Thursday night meeting on July 31, one of our weekly sessions for "experienced meditators." The situation was complicated by the fact that our group is about 50/50 UU and non-UU. On that immediately following Thursday, we opened, as we often do, with a dedication of our practice which reads in part:

We remember you who cared  
for us and are gone.

You who are ill, you who are at war,  
Who are hungry and in pain—  
may you heal and have peace.

We especially dedicate our practice to:

At that point, those present offer names if they wish; a bell is invited after each name. As I happened to be the facilitator that Thursday, I simply observed the group following its usual habits, naming deceased and troubled friends and relatives as well as Tibetans then being detained by the Chinese military and civil authorities. When no one else was named, I, as we had planned, named some of those suffering from the consequences of the shooting in Knoxville, the families of the deceased, the injured, the terrified witnesses, and the Presbyterians

next door who had heard shotgun blasts yet admitted children fleeing with their adult leaders (although, for all the Presbyterians knew, a gunman was going to follow), then suffering the effective loss of their church as they shortly became UUA national headquarters *pro temp*. I felt terrible later that I had forgotten to list the shooter among the victims, although it was already emerging in the news reports that he had acted at least in part on fears evoked and played upon by neocon politicians and media and was suffering to such an extent that he had planned to die himself.

I could correct that oversight on Sunday as we prepared for something we had never tried in the group before. We had done shortened versions of the Order of Interbeing's



Image courtesy of James D. Lochtefeld, Prof. of Religion, Carthage College. This detail from a Kalacakra (Wheel of Life) portrays the Ghost Realm of the Six Realms of Existence. The original was block printed on rice paper (in black), and then hand painted. The full image can be found at <http://personal.carthage.edu/~jlochtefeld/buddhism/wheeloflife/wheeloflife.html>

“Offering to Hungry Ghosts Ceremony” from the *Plum Village Chanting and Meditation Book* on Thursdays in the longer meeting with the “experienced.” On Sunday mornings we meet for only one hour as “Introduction to Mindfulness and Meditation” before the UUCA church service. The facilitators who would be there planned a perhaps excessively short Hungry Ghosts ceremony. We circulated via e-mail our usual announcement about Sunday’s program, emphasizing that this unique ceremony was not aimed at driving away or exorcizing anything; to the contrary, it was to invite in, to reintegrate. We added that Thich Nhat Hanh often understood the hungry ghosts not as “haunts” out of Eugene Field but as our karmic connection with those with whom we inter-are, connections which became traps because sudden death or injury, to or by us or them, had left some legacy of violence. That still might have been a bit much for many, because attendance was down that morning to probably under a dozen people.

We began with the usual dedication, and that time I remembered in my capping contribution to add the shooter to the list of victims, commenting for the “beginners” on universal compassion. I could see one Quaker member from our immediately neighboring Friends’ Meeting House nodding. Our guided meditation went a bit beyond the breath and the body for once, encouraging those who felt themselves ready to contemplate in our safe space whatever hungry ghost they might have brought with them. Our snippet from the Plum Village liturgy excerpted only segments addressed to the hungry ghosts.

We noted for the “beginners” that the true structure of the liturgy had us, in each section, acknowledge our own difficulties and imperfections and need for support and healing, followed by those of all sentient beings, only then moving on to the hungry ghosts, not treating the hungry ghosts as uniquely troubled and deficient. We tried to be mindful of that as we

expressed aspirations for the hungry ghosts we invited:

May they all be satisfied, letting go of craving,  
Moving out of darkness to be born into a Pure Land.  
May we and all hungry ghosts  
Be successful in the realization of the path.

Our extremely truncated ceremony left a little time for discussion, and the combined serious intent with utter civility of that conversation would have made any UU church proud. Beginners predictably wanted to explore more what “hungry ghosts” meant to them; some discussed how our hungry ghosts dwelled right inside us psychologically. One recently come member, whose experience as a close witness to a horrifying crime of violence was unknown to the rest of the group, leaned forward, deeply engaged, nodding along. Some referred back to my previous explanations of where Thich Nhat Hanh found the Pure Land, in a Present Moment to whose beauty we were awakened. The group wondered when some trauma or relationship might fairly be said to haunt us as opposed to merely distracting us.

Then, well, let’s call him Bill, raised a dissonant note. I had been surprised to see him there, since he had not been attending our earlier summer Sunday meetings. In a reasoned fashion but with obvious disapproval, he sought to draw a line on merely metaphorical understandings of hungry ghosts. (His involvement in Buddhism had previously been with Tibetan schools.) He claimed that trivializing hungry ghosts into intermittent irritations actually reduced the efficacy of the ceremony. It became just another attempt at therapy, not a solidly intentional attempt to deal with something/ someone truly haunting: He cogently insisted that we not doubt the impact of real tragedies—events which ripped the fabric of our selves and lives, as opposed to the daily entanglements and echoes which were part of that fabric. We needed the ceremony, he said, preserved as an instrument with real power to protect us so we

could face monstrosities we could not otherwise assimilate. I was startled, since “Bill” had often commented happily on how different yet sensible and engaging our Order of Interbeing orientation seemed to him. The group honored his position by contemplating it seriously. As facilitator I noted that we had reserved the hungry ghosts ceremony for infrequent use: later commemoration of the anniversary of 9/11/01; the Thursday after the shooting at Virginia Tech (many of us had relatives and friends there, just as many of us had associations with the Pentagon and New York;) for the past two years, a seasonal synergy with Ash Wednesday, in which we rolled up the atonement of the speakers in the hungry ghosts ceremony (omitted in that short Sunday version) with the famous White Ashes poem of Rennyō. And now the assault on UU spiritual space at Knoxville. So I fully agreed with most of what he said. The group dismissed formally on that note, with some discussion continuing on the way out, during which one deeply involved member of the group expressed to me her guess that “Bill” was younger than our average (“only” in his mid-30’s!) and maybe hadn’t encountered all the kinds of “haunts” there were out there.

I believed on the basis of the discussion that most of the group, even the newest and least Buddhist, had left feeling better equipped to face something haunting them, at least for a while. Most spectacularly to me, our new, seriously threatened member had got something meaningful to her. She had said so. Our conversation had been as deep and serious as discussion could possibly get within our time limits. I had feared that we had done violence to the liturgy with extreme excerpting, might retraumatize our crime victim, and sound superstitious to “beginners.” None of those fears were justified. At the end I feared only that we had offered “Bill” something and then taken it back. I sure hoped that he managed to keep part of it.



# Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship

## Convocation 2009

At the beautiful and historic Mission San Luis Rey, Oceanside, California  
(north of San Diego), Friday dinner through Sunday lunch, March 27—29, 2009.

### Featuring Shinzen Young on The Science of Enlightenment



The search for awakening is not limited to a chosen few. The liberated state is as real as the sensations you are having right now. It is through the investigation of your own thoughts and feelings that you can awaken to clear insight and a happiness independent of conditions: the state of enlightenment.

Shinzen Young brings to this program a life-long involvement with Eastern cultures. He has trained extensively in Asian monasteries and in each of the three major Buddhist meditative traditions, Vajrayana, Zen, and Vipassana. He is an ordained Buddhist monk and has widely explored the psychological and scientific aspects of the meditative state and biofeedback experience. He is the director of the highly respected Community Meditation Center of Los Angeles.

Registration:

Early bird: before February 15, 2009 ... \$80  
Regular, on or after February 15, 2009 ... \$100

Accommodations, including meals, for the  
Entire Convocation  
Single room (limited availability) ..... \$220  
Double room (per person) ..... \$195  
Commuters ..... \$120

Mission San Luis Rey information and directions: <http://www.sanluisrey.org/>

Mail registration to: UUBF Registrar c/o Richard Swanson PO Box 8434 Essex, VT 05451  
email [rswansonvt@gmail.com](mailto:rswansonvt@gmail.com)

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Congregation/UUBF Group \_\_\_\_\_  
email \_\_\_\_\_

Single or  Double Occupancy  
or  Commuter  
 Yes, please assign roommate, or  
my roommate will be \_\_\_\_\_  
Deposit enclosed \_\_\_\_\_  
(Minimum deposit is the Registration Fee)

Please note any special needs or email Registrar

*Mission San Luis Rey*



**Zen**  
**is not knowing.**  
**Zen learning is seeking not knowing.**  
**Zen teaching is sharing not knowing.**  
**Zen action applies right thinking while not knowing.**  
**Zen practice is mindful not knowing.**  
**Zen living is accepting not knowing.**

Mantra By Duane Johnson  
Topeka, Kansas

Please write to us about what is  
Happening in your Sangha.

**NEW MEMBERSHIP, RENEWAL (\$20 CONTRIBUTION)  
or CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM**

NAME: (Last, First, Middle) \_\_\_\_\_

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**Something new: the e-mail edition is now in color!**

MAIL TO: Richard Swanson, PO Box 8434 , Essex, VT 05451-8434 , USA

# UU Sangha

c/o Richard Swanson  
PO Box 8434  
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Return Service Requested

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