



One Heart- One Mind

The Newsletter of the

SANGHA LODGE: 20 Victoria St Lewisham NSW 2049

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Meditation & Dhamma Teaching

7.30pm every Monday night.

- Join with others in sitting practice.

7.30pm every Wed night.

- Meditation evenings include a Dhamma talk followed by around half an hour of guided sitting practice. Beginners or more experienced meditators are equally welcome.
- There is no charge for the teachings although donations are welcome as this is Sangha Lodge's only means of support.

Dana Days

Dana Days are held on the first Sunday of each month. Attendees bring food to offer to the Sangha and to share with each other. This is a great way to show respect for the Sangha and enjoy a delicious meal with others in the lay community.

Please note that we must start promptly at 10:30am in order for the Sangha to finish eating by noon. The next Dana Day will be Sunday 1st June 2014

Association News

Wheelchair Access

Upcoming Retreats

Bhante Personal Retreat

Page 4

Food Fair

Reserve the Date

Page 7



Visakha Puja

Being on his retreat, Bhante is not able to write his usual Dhamma teaching for this issue of the newsletter. He did however request that something on the message of Vesak would be appropriate, given that we will be celebrating this special festival on May 4

The following is an extract from a talk given by Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo, translated from the Thai by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. The full version of the talk is available at <http://www.accesstosight.org/lib/thai/lee/visakha.html>

Puja ca pujanianam
Etammangalamuttamam

Homage to those deserving homage:
This is the highest blessing.

Today, Visakha Puja, is an extremely important day in the Buddhist tradition, for it was on this day that the Buddha was born, and 35 years later awoke to

the unexcelled right self-awakening, and another 45 years later passed away into total nibbana. In each case, these events took place on the full-moon day in May, when the moon is in the Visakha asterism, which is why the day is called Visakha Puja.

Every year when this important day comes around again, we Buddhists take the opportunity to pay homage to the Buddha as a way of expressing our gratitude for his goodness. We sacrifice our daily affairs to make merit in a skillful way by doing such things as practicing generosity, observing the precepts, and listening to the Dhamma. This is called paying homage to the virtues of the Triple Gem: the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. The Buddha is like our father, while the Dhamma is like our mother — in that it's what gives birth to our knowledge of the Buddha's teachings. At present our father has passed away, leaving only our mother still alive. Both of them have been protecting us, looking after us, so that we've been able to stay free and happy

up to the present. We're thus greatly in their debt and should find a way of showing our gratitude in keeping with the fact that we are their children.

Ordinarily, when people's parents die, they have to cry and lament, wear black, etc., as a way of showing their mourning. On Visakha Puja — which is the anniversary of the day on which our father, the Buddha, passed away — we show our mourning too, but we do it in a different way. Instead of crying, we chant the passages reflecting on the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. Instead of dressing up in black, we take off our pretty jewels, go without perfume and cologne, and dress very simply. As for the comfortable beds and mattresses on which we normally lie, we abstain from them. Instead of eating three or four times a day, as we normally like to do, we cut back to only two times or one. We have to give up our habitual pleasures if we're going to show our mourning for the Buddha — our father — in a sincere and genuine way.



In addition to this, we bring flowers, candles, and incense to offer in homage to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. This is called *amisa-puja*, or material homage. This is a form of practice on the external level — a matter of our words and deeds. It comes under the headings of generosity and virtue, but doesn't count as the highest form of homage. There's still another level of homage — *patipatti-puja*, or homage through the practice — which the Buddha said was supreme: i.e., meditation, or the development of the mind so that it can stand firmly in its own inner goodness, independent of any and all outside objects. This is the crucial point that the Buddha wanted us to focus on as much as possible, for this kind of practice was what enabled him to reach the highest attainment, becoming a Rightly Self-awakened Buddha, and enabled many of his noble disciples to become arahants as well. So we should all take an interest and set our minds on following their example, as a way of following the footsteps of our father and mother. In this way we can be called their grateful, loyal heirs, because we listen respectfully to our parents' teachings and put them into practice.

The verse from the Mangala Sutta that I quoted at the beginning of the talk, *Puja ca pujaniyanam etammangalamuttamam*, means "Homage to those deserving homage: This is the highest blessing." There are two kinds of homage, as we've already mentioned: material homage and homage through the practice. And along with these two kinds of homage, people aim their hopes at two kinds of happiness. Some of them practice for the sake of continuing in the cycle of death and rebirth, for the sake of worldly happiness. This kind of practice is called

vattagamini-kusala, or skillfulness leading into the cycle. For instance, they observe the precepts so that they'll be reborn as beautiful or handsome human beings, or as devas in the heavenly realms. They practice generosity so that they won't have to be poor, so that they can be reborn wealthy, as bankers or kings. This kind of skillfulness goes only as far as the qualifications for human or heavenly rebirths. It keeps spinning around in the world without ever getting anywhere at all.

The other reason that people can have for paying homage is so that they will gain release from suffering. They don't want to keep spinning through death and rebirth in the world. This is called *vivattagamini-kusala*, skillfulness leading out of the cycle.

In both kinds of practice, the aim is at happiness, but one kind of happiness is the pleasure found in the world, and the other is the happiness that lies above and beyond the world. When we pay homage to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, it's not the case that we have to take the results of our practice and try to push the Triple Gem any higher. Actually, what we're doing is to give rise to goodness that will benefit ourselves. So in searching for goodness for our own sakes, we have to keep yet another point in mind, as the Buddha taught us: *Asevana ca balanam panditanañca sevana*, which means, "Don't associate with fools. Associate only with wise people." Only then will we be safe and happy.....

If we associate with bad people, we'll meet up with trouble and pain. If we associate with good people, we'll meet up with happiness. This is a way of giving a protective blessing to ourselves. This sort of protective blessing is

something we can provide for ourselves at any time, at any place at all. We'll gain protection wherever, whenever, we provide it. For this reason we should provide a protective blessing for ourselves at all times and all places for the sake of our own security and well-being.

As for things deserving homage: whether they're the sorts of things that deserve material homage or homage through the practice, the act of homage provides a protective blessing in the same way. It provides happiness in the same way. The happiness that lies in the world, that depends on people and external things, has to suffer death and rebirth; but the happiness of the Dhamma is an internal happiness that depends entirely on the mind. It's a release from suffering and stress that doesn't require us to return to any more death and rebirth in the world ever again. These two forms of happiness come from material homage and homage through the practice, things that can either make us come back to be reborn or free us from having to be reborn. The difference lies in one little thing: whether we want to be reborn or not.....

Whether we give material homage or homage through the practice, if we pull the focal point of the mind out and place it in our actions — i.e., if we get attached to our good actions, as in practicing virtue, generosity, etc. — then that's called *vattagamini-kusala*, skillfulness leading into the cycle. The mind isn't free. It has to become the slave of this or that thing, this or that action, this or that preoccupation. This is a long, drawn-out cause that will force us to come back and be reborn. But if we take the results of our good actions in terms of virtue,



generosity, etc., and bring them into the mind's inner foundation, so that they're stashed away in the mind, without letting the mind run out after external causes, this is going to help cut down on our states of becoming and birth so that eventually we don't have to come back and be reborn. This is vivattagamini-kusala, skillfulness leading out of the cycle. This is the difference between these two forms of skillfulness.....

So, to summarize: Cutting down on states of becoming and birth means retracting our awareness inward. We have to take the mind's foundation and plant it firmly in the body, without getting attached to any outside activity at all. We have to let go of every thing of every sort that follows the laws of events, arising and passing away in line with its nature. We do good, but don't let the mind go running out after the good. We have to let the results of our goodness come running into the mind. We pull in every thing of every sort to stash it away in our mind, and don't let the mind get scattered outside, getting happy or sad over the results of its actions or anything else external. We do this in the same way that the bael fruit keeps the trunk, branches, flowers, and leaves of the bael tree curled up inside the seed. If we can then prevent outside conditions of soil and water from combining with the inside potential of the seed, it won't be able to unfurl into a new bael tree.

Whoever practices in the way I've discussed here is paying homage to our lord Buddha in the correct way. Such a person will be endowed with blessings providing happiness throughout time.

Healing Meditation Retreat, April 2014

It is a dark and stormy night as we leave the public road and wind our way down the little forest path that leads to Vejjasala. We see a glimmer of light and there, like a benevolent innkeeper of old, is Venerable Tejadhammo holding aloft a lantern – well, actually a torch – to welcome the travellers. I am lucky enough to have a yurt, or kuti, on the edge of the bush. It has a comfy bed and is lit by a solar light. A delicious supper awaits us, prepared by Chris and Jan who, with great generosity, travel all the way from Blackheath and look after us throughout the weekend.

One of the retreatants is a young woman in her electric wheelchair, fulfilling Bhante's wish that Vejjasala could welcome and accommodate guests with disabilities. Bruce, who has worked tirelessly at the Centre, enabled Sara's visit by opening a wall between the living room and the meditation room with ramps in place so that the wheelchair could travel easily between rooms. After supper we gathered in the meditation room. Bhante welcome us warmly an, as it was a healing retreat, briefly discussed what that would entail. I personally felt how fortunate I was to be in this lovely place and to spend time with Bhante before he leaves for a much-needed retreat of his own. With his usual care he had prepared copious notes for us, most of which were intended for us to peruse at home. I did this, and enjoyed the poems and the excerpts from Rilke.

On Saturday morning walking meditation was curtailed somewhat by the fickle weather. I am enormously delighted with the persimmon tree,

laden with fruit and greedy birds. Returning to sit, I feel that something is crawling on me, which I try to dismiss as mere imagination. But to my surprise, at lunch (where we are allowed to speak) Bruce sees a plump, furry caterpillar wandering round my chest!

In the afternoon Bhante guides us in a visualisation. We also did another exercise, looking at life, death and dying. This aroused for me painful memories of death and loss. On Sunday we continued this exercise by sharing it with a companion. The sun had come out and we sat in the garden and shed tears together; it felt like one of those moments one will tuck away in the heart: the light, the peaceful surroundings, the generosity and honesty of sharing our human story.

A period on Sunday was set aside for jobs: sweeping, tidying, dusting, all done with diligence and energy. Over and above this was the loving, generous and steady hand of Bhante. Our thoughts will go with him as he settles into his sanctuary in France.

This was my first retreat at Vejjasala, but I saw it when it was first purchased and on other occasions. Wonderful to see it now so comfortable and welcoming. The gardens look beautiful, bulbs are springing up jauntily, the ferns gorgeous, the protea tree covered in luxuriant flowers. Thanks to a dedicated group, maintenance and building continues and a thriving fenced vegetable garden is a very tasty addition. Now back home I have the notes to read and visualisations to practice. I think how fortunate we are to have a sanctuary like this.

Thank you to the dedicated people who will continue to make this a haven in our over-anxious world. *Selena Blair.*



Association News

Sue Toohey

Access for Wheelchair Users at Vejjasala

If you read this column regularly you will know that many of us have been planning and working for most of the past year to make the building at Vejjasala accessible for people who must use a wheelchair. This was prompted by two inquiries that we had around about the same time and around about a year ago from two people who were wheelchair users and who wanted very much to be able to come to a meditation retreat but who had been unable to find a meditation centre that could take them. We had to tell both of them that at that time Vejjasala – even though it might be called Place of Healing – was also not feasible for someone in a wheelchair. This prompted the committee to look at the Vejjasala buildings to see what might be possible.

It seemed at first like a very difficult proposition. The main building at Vejjasala was originally a farm house which has been extended in all directions. The floor levels constantly change, with a step up or down into most of the public spaces. The bathrooms are mostly small with no room for a wheelchair to manoeuvre.

We began by getting a ramp built to cope with the difference in level from the entrance to the Shrine room. Then Bruce Chatfield arrived at Vejjasala and we began to make real advances. Over the last few months Bruce built a new doorway out of the Smith bedroom to the deck. This not only provided another fire exit but enabled access from the Smith bedroom to the dining room via the deck. Then he opened up a doorway between the sitting room and the Shrine room and installed another ramp there to cope with the difference in levels. This really helps the sitting room

feel far more open and spacious but more importantly it provides wheelchair access through from the dining room, via the sitting room to the Shrine room.

Our retreat coordinator, Caroline Lurie, then invited Sara, one of the people who had inquired about doing a meditation retreat, to visit Vejjasala and see if she thought it would be manageable. Sara, came down with her partner and her little boy at the end of the Nalanda Weekend and in her big powered wheelchair tried out where she would have to move and pronounced that it was possible and she would be very happy if she could attend the Healing Meditation retreat with her carer.

The retreat went very well. Sara managed all of the meditation sessions and even the yoga sessions. For the rest of us it was a real lesson in observing at first hand just how difficult life is for someone in a wheelchair – the difficulties in transport, as only specially equipped wheelchair taxis can be used, the amount of additional paraphernalia that must be transported, all the food for the special diet which Sara prepared in advance and brought with her.

After the retreat was over, Sara sent us a thank you letter. I asked her if she would mind if I quoted it in the newsletter as I thought you might like to know how the retreat affected her. Sara said Yes you are most welcome to use it and it would be good to feel that my thank-you message goes to many as I'm sure there are many who have helped along the way.

I had a beautiful time and have come back feeling deeply rested and relaxed. A bit like having a body transplant so it feels enjoyable but foreign at the moment...

It was a truly healing experience in many ways - the teaching of course, the beautiful

environment, the work of complete strangers who had gone to such effort to make it possible for me to be there and then to be amongst a group of strangers who were so open, attentive and happy to help whenever it was needed. This was a very special and deeply healing experience.

So thank you very much!

All the best to you

Sara

Coming Retreats and Workshops

The Healing Power of Words 9-11 May with Dr Beatriz Copello.

Registration may be closed by the time you read this but if there is still a week before the retreat starts you may be in luck – contact sanghalodgeretreat@gmail.com.au or ring Caroline on 9692 9540 for last minute bookings.

This workshop will focus on writing as an aid to healing. Keeping a diary has been shown to have a powerful influence on healing and psychological studies have found that expressive writing reduces stress, decreases symptoms, strengthens immune systems, and shortens recovery periods. Writing with others is inspirational, fun and beneficial. During the workshop people will have the chance to meditate, reflect on life issues and learn various techniques to put words onto paper. The workshop will be led by Dr Beatriz Copello a practising Buddhist, a psychologist with many years of experience in trauma counseling and an award-winning writer.

...Coming Retreats and Workshops

Getting Out of Your Own Way – A Yoga & Meditation retreat with Sue Toohey – Queen's Birthday Long Weekend – Friday 6 June – Monday 9 June.

In this retreat we will practice yoga, breath work, mind training, and methods for awakening the heart. The talks and meditation practices will focus on the Buddha's teaching on the hindrances – our common mental patterns of response to everyday difficulties that obstruct our joy and imprison our minds. We will learn to recognize how grasping and resentment can infect our view of the world and limit our ability to be free and happy and how we can disempower these mental habit patterns. For the body we will engage in two yoga sessions per day. We will enjoy the beautiful Dru yoga practices that are designed to release tension and stiffness from the muscles and the joints, and to increase strength and vitality in all the systems of the body. Our asana practice and our breath work will help us cultivate sensitivity and awareness of body, breath and mind - the gateway to ease of being. For the heart and mind we will practice daily meditation sessions mingling concentration and Insight practices with a mood of metta or loving kindness.

Cooking for Retreats

Since the last newsletter we have had 3 potential cooking teams (2 people on each team) volunteer to cook for a retreat this year. That is fantastic and we hope that they will enjoy the experience and encourage others to join in. That leaves one or two planned retreats or Nalanda weekends that still need cooks, so please talk to Caroline (9692 9540) or Sue (0421 973 785) if you would like to give this a try. We have recipes and menu plans available or you can work with your own favourite recipes.

Updates to Buildings & Grounds at Vejjasala

Bruce Chatfield has returned to Vejjasala from India, and having completed the new fire exit door from the Smith room onto the deck since he got back, will be working on a range of maintenance jobs. These include repairing and painting

exterior awnings on main building, oiling the deck and re-painting most of the bathrooms and the Cottage toilet. Big thanks to Bruce for his tireless building and maintenance work at Vejjasala, which is looking absolutely beautiful at present.

Bhante on retreat in France

As you read this Bhante will be undertaking a personal retreat at Sangha Retreat, near Limoges, in France. Sangha Retreat is a relatively new Buddhist retreat centre that has been established by UK Buddhists in the beautiful Limousin region of France. The retreat centre buildings are gradually being converted from old 19th century farm buildings. You can find out more about the centre on the web at <http://sangharetrear.co.uk>.

We had an email from Bhante just after his arrival - *Just a quick note to say hello from a chilly France. I arrived safe and sound though i must say pretty tired... you forget how roughly 24 - 30 hours travel really takes it out of you especially as you age. Usually I stop on the way over for 1 night but this time went straight through...maybe not such a good idea. The weather has been cold to say the least...the morning I arrived it was 3 degrees!*

Bhante will be away for approximately 7 weeks, leaving on 15th April and returning at beginning of June. At the request of the Sangha team at Sangha Retreat, Bhante will offer some days of teaching there after completing his personal retreat.

While he is away, Molly Lim has organized an outstanding roster of visiting teachers, including Ven Sujato, Ven Khemavaro from Wat Buddha Dhamma, international Zen teacher Rev. Watanabe, Chien Hoong Gooi and Jim Teoh from the Buddhist library, Grahame White from Vipassana Illawarra and Lynne Bousefield. Be sure not to miss these exciting teachers while Bhante is away.

If you would like to make a contribution to the costs of Bhante's retreat, please talk to Sue Toohey at Sangha Lodge or if you would like to make a direct transfer see the account details at the end of the newsletter and make your donation to

the general account. Please mark your donation as 'Bhante - Retreat'.

Fundraising

Food Fair 2014 The Food Fair returns to the newly renovated Roselea Community Centre in 2014. Please put the date in your diary – Sunday 27 July, 10am – 3pm.

Lunch at the Marigold - Saturday 30 August is almost sold out thanks to the great efforts of our ticket sellers. See Lean Lee or Sue Toohey if you have yet to purchase tickets or you can order through our web-site – www.engagedbuddhists.org.au.

Don't forget that it is fund raisers like these that keep the association going – without them and the support of the community we simply could not survive. If you value the work of the Association please support these events.

With much metta to everyone,

Sue Toohey

Mindfulness in Everyday Life

Gathas are a rich and beautiful aid to help us remain mindful during the course of a busy day. Why not try writing your own as to help with your mindfulness practice? If you have written a gatha, why not share with friends to assist them. Your editor would be pleased to publish verses members have written in the Newsletter.

Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us that..."when many people on this Earth look at an empty bowl, they know their bowl will continue to be empty for a long time. So the empty bowl is as important to honour as the full bowl. We are grateful to have food to eat, and with this gatha, we can vow to find ways to help those who are hungry"

Looking at Your Empty Bowl

*My bowl, empty now,
will soon be filled with precious food.
Beings all over the Earth are struggling to live.*

How fortunate we are to have enough to eat.

Thich Nhat Hanh

Earth Gathas: Meditations for Mindful Living

Quotable Quotes

Gratitude bestows reverence...changing forever
how we experience life and the world.

John Milton

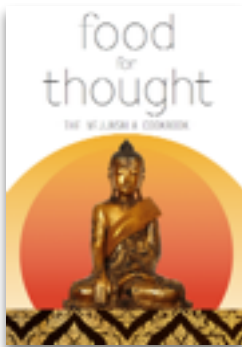
English poet 1608-1674

Food for Thought

The Association is pleased to have produced Food for Thought, a recipe book written by Jan McCarthy who does the catering for our retreats at Vejjasala. Food for Thought is an A5 (150X 210 cm) spiral bound book of 128 pages, with many photos in full colour. It features 10 chapters and over 100 vegetarian recipes. All proceeds for the sale of the book go to The Association.

Copies of the book can be bought from Sangha Lodge (see Gus Real) for \$25. You can also purchase copies by mail order. To do this please arrange and electronic funds transfer for \$30 (\$25 for book and \$5 for postage and handling) to the Associations bank account. The details of this are:

**Association of
Engaged
Buddhists
St George Bank
BSB: 112 879
Account number:
131328823**



Please put FFT and your full name in the reference box for the transaction and email a copy of the transaction confirmation along with your full postal address to Jan McCarthy at janmccarthy.1@gmail.com and Cc to kahrenwhite@primus.com.au. Alternatively, you can pay by cheque, forwarding this and your full address (printed clearly) to Jan McCarthy, 10 Carysfort St, Blackheath, NSW, 2785.

A Reader Recommends

In his teachings during on March 19, to commemorate the birthday of The Goddess of Compassion, Quan Yin Bhante Bhante recommended the following book as interesting and informative.

**Bodhisattva of Compassion: The
Mystical Tradition of Kuan Yin**
by John Blofeld

This portrait of the Goddess of compassion is both an informative study by a leading scholar of Buddhism and an engaging account of the author's search for the mystical significance of the goddess. An object of joyous devotion in Chinese folk religion, Kuan Yin is revered for her saving power: it is said that anyone in distress who calls on her with sincerity will be rescued from suffering and harm. On a deeper level, Kuan Yin symbolizes the liberating energy of compassion, which is an indispensable aid in the quest for enlightenment.

John Blofeld evokes the charming presence of Kuan Yin through colorful anecdotes, personal experiences, and descriptions of Buddhist rituals and legends encountered during his travel throughout China. At the same time, he offers a learned account of the goddess's history and importance in Chinese thought and religion. He explores the origin of the Bodhisattva of Compassion in India and Tibet, in the form of Avalokiteshvara (Tibetan: Chenrezig), a

male deity who evolved into the gentle mother / maiden figure of Chinese Buddhism. Meditation and visualization techniques associated with Kuan Yin are given, and her principal iconography forms are described. illustrated with images from Chinese and Tibetan sacred art, the book also contains translations of devotional poems and yogic texts.

The Bodhisattva of Compassion is undoubtedly the most complete and illuminating picture of Kuan Yin available.

Dhamma Blossoms

Observing silence can not make a sage
of one

who is ignorant and immature. He is
wise who,
beholding the scales, choses the good
and avoids the bad.

One is not noble who injures living
creatures.

They are noble who hurt no one.

Not by ritual and resolution, nor by
much

learning, nor by celibacy, nor even by
meditation

can you find the supreme, immortal joy
of Nirvana

until you have extinguished your self
will.

Dhamapada

verses 268-272

INTERNATIONAL FOOD FAIR

SUNDAY 27TH JULY 2014

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

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Donations

You may or may not realise that Sangha Lodge is solely funded from your donations. Following the teaching of the Buddha, we do not charge for teachings or meditation evenings, preferring instead to rely on our members' generosity. Unfortunately, this often means a shortfall when it comes to meeting our weekly expenses from the donation box on a Wednesday night. It would be much easier for the Centre to function if we were able to rely on regular donations from more members and guests of the centre.

One easy way to arrange for funds to be regularly transferred is via Internet Banking. Most Banks now offer a 'pay anyone' service whereby you are able to set up a regular monthly transfer to any nominated account. If you would like to set up this kind of regular donation to Sangha Lodge you will need the following account information - Bank: St George BSB#: 112 879 Account#: 131328823 Account Name: Association of Engaged Buddhists. If you would like to make a tax deductible donation to the Building Fund please make your direct transfer to the following account: Bank: St George BSB: 112-879 Account Number: 430589986 Account Name: Association of Engaged Buddhists.

In order that we can budget our funds effectively and where appropriate supply you with a receipt for tax purposes we would appreciate it if you would email office@engagedbuddhists.org.au with the details of your regular transfer or tax deductible donation. Your Dana (generosity) is greatly appreciated by the many people who come to the centre or are served by it in the wider community (hospitals, hospices and private visits by the Sangha). Please help, even a small monthly donation can make a big difference to Sangha Lodge.

Association Membership

If you would like to become a member of the Association and thus receive this newsletter (if you don't already!), please fill in a membership form and leave it with a Committee member. You can pick one up from Sangha Lodge the next time you visit, or ring our office and get one posted to you. Membership is due for renewal each September and costs \$50/year.

For Those in Need

Please keep our brothers and sisters who are ill or struggling with some other distress in your thoughts during the day. This short prayer for freedom from suffering may help you be mindful of their needs.

Prayer for Freedom from Suffering

May all beings everywhere plagued with sufferings of body and mind quickly be freed from their illnesses.

May those frightened cease to be afraid, and may those bound be free.

May the powerless find power, and may people think of befriending one another.

May those who find themselves in trackless, fearful wilderness--the children, the aged, the unprotected--be guarded by beneficent celestials, and may they swiftly attain Buddhahood

If you know of someone who would like to be remembered by our community, let Bhante know and we can mention them in future issues of the Newsletter. Even when there are no particular friends to remember, we ask you to send thoughts of good will in general to those who are experiencing hardship or pain.

