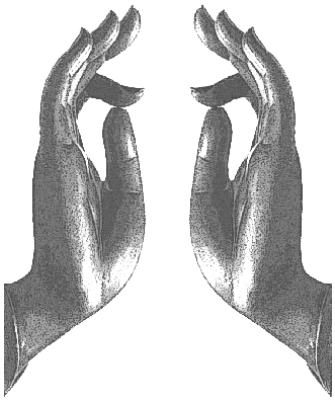

ONE HEART-ONE MIND

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF ENGAGED BUDDHISTS

OCTOBER 2011

Sangha Lodge:
20 Victoria St
Lewisham NSW 2049
Ph/Fax: (02) 9590 3617
office@engagedbuddhists.org.au
www.engagedbuddhists.metta.org.au

Please note: Friday is a day of silence at Sangha Lodge, please call or visit at another time.

Meditation and 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 6th November

LIFE IS DIFFICULT...FOR EVERYONE

"It's not about you.
It's about us.
Life is difficult .....for everyone."

With these words of the Buddhist teacher Jack Kornfield, I would like to welcome you to this issue of our little newsletter. The Buddha himself of course expressed this vision in the first of the Four Noble truths; that of the reality & all pervasive quality of Dukkha (suffering & unsatisfactoriness) in our lives. Human beings often forget things and frequently because of our personal experience of suffering, we forget that of others. We are, each of us, caught up with our own individual attachments of various kinds and these attachments help us to overlook or neglect the very real suffering of others. Yet if we but pause and reflect even a little on the world around us and our fellow human beings, even our own family and friends, our eyes and hearts will begin to open. We will see the reality of our shared experience of dukkha.

This experience of seeing the commonality of dukkha is also the first step to healing ourselves and others. Kornfield continues, "As you go through this difficult time, sense how many other people on this earth are facing the same problems: loss, conflict, divorce. Feel your common humanity with them. When you can awaken sympathy, courage often follows." As we open our hearts and minds to the suffering of others so we also begin to truly deepen our own experience and to be able to hold it in balance. We begin to be able to accept the reality of our situation and to know in Kornfield's words, "As you become intimate with your suffering, your heart grows tender." With this new tender heart we can truly begin to be open and responsive to the experience of others and to work with our own suffering in a new and beautiful way. "You may not see it now, but this very difficulty will strengthen you. Your heart will grow wiser, your spirit stronger. You already know this. You can even begin to see the ways that this is true."

Each of us has many encounters every day with unsatisfactoriness and suffering. These may range from the seemingly trivial and relatively harmless to the catastrophic and destructive, yes, even to an encounter with death itself; either that of another or one day our own. How we learn to work with these experiences, these parts of our lives, skilfully or with foolish grasping, aversion or anger and hatred will determine our "re-birth" into the next moment & the next & the next.

Jack Kornfield goes on to say, "Right now, how can these difficult emotions and thoughts and sensations become your path to liberation? Loss and betrayal tear open the heart. Look through this gate for the wisdom that lies there. What matters now? What would the wise ones do now?"

Who do you consider to be "the wise ones"? For those of us attempting to follow the path of the Buddha we recall all our spiritual ancestors in the Noble Sangha as well as living noble friends and teachers. Making this recollection and again knowing and understanding that we are connected to these noble ones we can find some strength, comfort and courage. "The warrior in your heart says
stand your ground. Feel the survival of a thousand years of ancestors in your muscles
and your blood. You have all the support you need in your bones." says Kornfield.

We have just had the official opening of our new retreat centre, Vejjasala, at Wingello in the Southern Highlands of NSW. A great bow of thanks you to all who made this possible. We would not and could not have done this without a very real sense of being a part of a great tradition of healing and wholeness. The Buddha's personal experience of dukkha, his willingness to work with it, to enter into it and to depth it completely and then his experience of liberation and Nibbana and his great generosity in sharing this way of liberation with all suffering beings should give us great support, encouragement & confidence.

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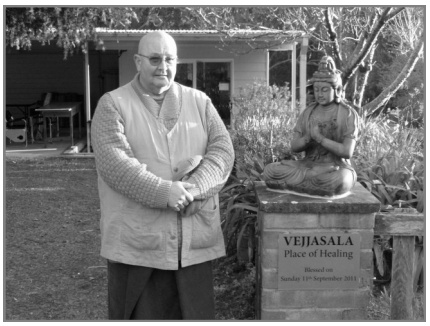

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION OF ENGAGED BUDDHISTS

Our Annual General Meeting will be held at 1pm on Sunday 6th November 2011 (following Dana day). The business for this meeting will be:

* Presentation of Annual Report and Financial Statements
* Election of a new Management Committee for 2012

All are welcome to attend. Voting is limited to paid-up members. Members who have been members of the Association for more than one year are entitled to stand for committee.

Gardening working bee at Vejjasala – 8th October

Fran Poulton who is head of the Garden team at Vejjasala is organizing a garden working bee at Wingello on Saturday 8th October. She and her husband Ron have done tremendous work in the gardens but they badly need more helpers. Saturday 8th October will be the last chance to clear and burn off before the fire season begins. Fran says, "I want to clear away ground fuel round the cottage, the shed and the telecom line, and get started on weeding the enclosed vegetable garden."

Please help if you possibly can on this day. You can contact Fran at raghnall@westnet.com.au or by phone on 0411 043 621. We can arrange for you to stay overnight if that works best for you but we need to know in advance so please let Fran know if you can come and whether you want to stay.

Fran is also looking for mesh onion bags and orange bags to store bulbs in as well as the little SPC type plastic scewcap jars or any smallish plastic screwcap jars.

Membership Renewal

September is our month for membership renewal. Membership renewal forms will be appearing at Sangha Lodge and on the website. Membership remains at $30 a year and entitles you to vote for the Organising Committee and after being a member for a year, to stand for a committee position. Our existing members work hard to keep Sangha Lodge functioning and to make meditation support and Dhamma teaching available to all. With the opening of our retreat centre at Vejjasala we need our existing members more than ever and more committed supporters. If you haven't formally joined as a member please consider doing so and if you're already a member please renew as early as possible.

With much metta to everyone,

Sue Toohey

Raffle results

Our annual raffle was drawn on the Vejjasala Open Day.

- First Prize – the Return ticket to Malaysia donated by Reliance Travel was won by Grace Yen.
- Second Prize – a selection of flowering plants, from Jim Teoh was won by Shienny from Ermington.
- Hong Chai Tan won the third prize and very generously donated it back to support Vejjasala.

Thanks to everyone who supported the Raffle, sold raffle tickets and particularly to our sponsors, Reliance Travel. Reliance Travel has been voted by consumers the No.1 Travel Group in Malaysia and they would be very happy to arrange your next holiday or business trip, either within Australia or overseas. You can contact them at their Sydney Office at 3/171 Clarence Street, Sydney on (02) 8297 2933 .

Invitation to the End of Year Picnic

As a way of thanking everyone who contributed to the Food Fair we would like to invite you to an end-of-year picnic. Once again we'll be having our picnic in the Cumberland state forest – the same spot as last year. The Cumberland state forest is a beautiful location for our picnic, offering well marked walking tracks, an educational display, a nursery where you can purchase native plants and a café for those who can't do without an espresso!

Date: Sunday November 13
Time: 11:00 till 3:00
Place: Bellamy Picnic Area,
Cumberland State Forest
5 Castle Hill Rd, West Pennant Hills

The Association will be providing satays , a sausage sizzle on the BBQ, some salads and fried noodles. Please bring drinks and any other foods you'd like to share.

Maps and directions are available on the website
http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/304737/CSF-Map-Jan-2011.pdf

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Visiting Teacher—Wed 26th October—Prof. Karen C. Lang

Karen C. Lang is Professor of Buddhist Studies and Indian Religions and Director of the Center for South Asian Studies. As a member of University of Virginia's Religious Studies Department since 1982, she has taught graduate and undergraduate courses on Buddhist history and philosophy, including seminars on Buddhist and Hindu Ethics, Jainism, Mahayana Budddhism, and Buddhism and Gender, as well as reading courses in Sanskrit, Pali, and Tibetan.

Her research interest is in Buddhism in India, Sri Lanka and Tibet; the relationship between early Buddhist, Jain and Hindu texts, Indian philosophy and the relationship between gender and religious discourse and practice.

She is in Sydney as the Visiting Professor under the University Buddhist Education Foundation (UBEF) in University Sydney. Prof Karen is the third holder of this visiting professorship.

LIFE IS DIFFICULT...FOR EVERYONE

...continued from Page 1.

Opening the new centre though is just the very beginning. Now is the time to begin the journey toward wholeness, healing and liberation of heart and mind by actively sharing with others and opening our hearts to others in great loving-kindness, compassion and generosity at the new retreat centre Vejjasala. What will you do to be of help to yourself and others?

Finally, to end on a lighter note Kornfield says,
"If you can sit quietly after difficult news; if in financial downturns you remain perfectly calm; if you can see your neighbors travel to fantastic places without a twinge of jealousy; if you can happily eat whatever is put on your plate; if you can fall asleep after a day of running around without a drink or a pill; if you can always find contentment just where you are: you are probably a dog."
But is it just possible you might be a buddhist on the way to wholeness, healing and real cettovimutti (complete freedom of heart/mind)?

with much gratitude and metta,
Bhante Tejadhammo

OPEN DAY AT VEJJASALA

About a dozen AEB members travelled down to Vejjasala on the Saturday before the open day to help prepare for the opening, spending the day in last minute cleaning, arranging furniture for the expected guests and flowers for the Shrine Room, preparing food and clearing the gardens of wombat pooh! That Saturday was very cold and we prayed that the weather would improve for Sunday as the weather forecasters had promised. While Saturday night was frigid, Sunday morning began to warm up as visitors began to arrive.

As well as our own members and supporters we had invited all those who had been visiting teachers at Sangha Lodge during the previous year, many of whom came bringing large groups of supporters. We had also invited our new neighbours from Sunnataram and Santi Forest Monasteries who also brought groups of followers and the Tzu Chi Charitable Foundation sent a group of 12 delegates. In all about 200 people came from all over Sydney and the Southern Highlands, including 12 ordained Sangha members. This outpouring of support and interest was very heartwarming.

The program began in the Shrine Room with a welcome from Bhante Tejadhammo and chanting of the Refuges and the Precepts. Tan Santi, the German born monk from the Lao Monastery at Wedderburn spoke, encouraging us to find the peace and healing that epitomized the spirit of Vejjasala within our own hearts and minds. Tan Santi and Bhante Tejadhammo knew each other as monks in Thailand and fifteen years ago Tan Santi attended the opening of the Asssociation's premises in Lewisham to offer a blessing on that occasion, so it was wonderful to once again have his joyful presence at a very special day for the Association.

Lunch followed - in the Dining Room for Sangha members and outside for the many guests. There was wonderful food in abundance and our thanks go to all who prepared and offered food.

After lunch we reconvened in the gardens to listen to the formal opening speeches. Bhante spoke very movingly of the inspiration of his own teacher in bringing this long held dream of a place to nourish and heal the sick into being. Ven Zheng Yun from the Chinese Buddhist Association, from whom the Association bought the property, spoke of his happiness in being able to hand the property on to another Buddhist group. Brian White, President of the Buddhist Council and Sue Toohey from the Association also spoke, inviting all those present to make the purpose of Vejjasala known to all. The formal speeches closed with the Theravaddin monks and nuns chanting the Metta Sutta (Suta on Loving Kindness) in Pali, followed by Ven Zheng Yun leading the Mahayana Sangha in most beautiful chanting of the Sutta in Chinese.

A small plaque was unveiled at the base of the Buddha image near the entrance to the building commemorating the opening and blessing of Vejjasala on 11th September, 2011.

In the late afternoon the youngest and friendliest of the resident wombats joined us in strolling around the grounds.

That evening one of our members summed up the feelings of many of us when she wrote, 'Congratulations on the great achievement in bringing into being this wonderful Healing Centre. The Vejjasala has such a good feeling, and the great weather today was a tangible blessing on the place and what it offers. The oneness that you, Bhante, and several of the Sangha spoke of, suffused the congregation, and there was such a feeling of joy.

The organisation was faultless and no doubt the result of the enormous energy and self-less effort you had all put into it. The chanting out there in nature was the epitome of a very beautiful and moving occasion. I loved the words of the Dedication and may the Vejjasala be all that to everyone who comes there.

An Afternoon of Mindfulness & Insight

An Afternoon of Mindfulness & Insight

with Lynne Bousfield, Grahame White & Steven Smith

Saturday 29 October 2011
At Vejjasala 219 Forest Rd, Wingello, New South Wales

Vipassana (Insight) meditation is the development of understanding or "insight" through the cultivation of mindfulness. The understanding we develop equips us to help ourselves with our lives, to find happiness by knowing where to look. Insight through mindfulness, transforms confusion and painful emotions into mental stillness, composure and clarity. Mindfulness practice trains capacities like resilience, self-reliance and discernment so as to understand and respond to life with greater meaning and potential.
The afternoon is offered to celebrate the opening of Vejjasala, founded by the Association of Engaged Buddhists as a residential retreat centre for those living with serious illness. Vejjasala is located on a serene and beautiful property in the Southern Highlands. The afternoon is open to everyone, regardless of meditation experience and is an opportunity for teacher led and group supported meditation practice and as an invitation to visit Vejjasala.
The afternoon has been inspired by friendship, the beautiful state of mind we all cultivate through meditation practice and in the spirit of which a Vejjasala operates. The three teachers, friends for 35 years, have been instrumental in founding meditation centres and developing meditation practice in Australia, Burma and Hawaii as well as supporting local community development in Burma, home to their lineage. They are committed to carrying the teachings of the Buddha from traditional and monastic settings in Burma into everyday life.

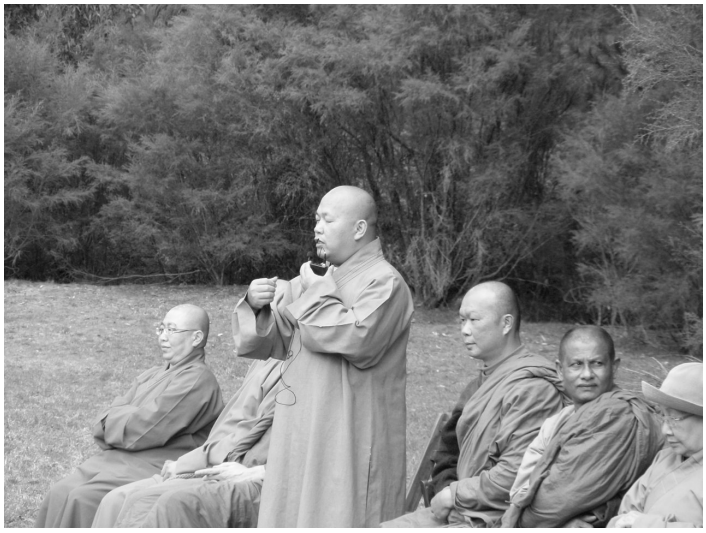
Program: The afternoon will run from midday until 5pm and will include teaching, instruction and practice sessions. We suggest a late breakfast or brunch on the way to the Southern Highlands. There will be a break for afternoon tea.

Cost: Traditionally, the teachings of the Buddha have been offered and supported by the practice of Dana. Dana means generosity, the practise of giving by extending friendship and support in accordance with one's means. Dana is a subtle and sophisticated approach to the teacher/student exchange – as such, an appropriate Dana to a teacher cannot be prescribed but requires sensitivity to its intent and awareness of how the responsibility for costs and expenses associated with providing the teachings is met and borne collectively by the participating students. On this afternoon, the teachers will offer the Dana they receive tfrom the participating students, to Venerable Tejadhammo, Vejjasala's spiritual director, to support Vejjasala's development.

Enquiries/registration: To register or for directions/further information please call 0421 973 785 or email:

sanghalodgeretreat@gmail.com

More pictures of the Vejjasala Open Day:



Vejjasala Programs

It is envisaged that programs and retreats at Vejjasala will be conducted for members and non-members; included in the program for non-members will be programs for people with special needs. Some of the programs that will be planned in the near future are: For professionals and other people working with the dying or living with the dying,

- For health professionals, such as counsellors and psychologists,
- For carers/partners of the seriously ill and dying,
- Grief and loss
- Yoga
- Chi Gong and other modes of healing.
- Art and Creativity
- Music as a mode of healing
- Writing
- Meditation activities for the local community.

Members of the Association with particular skills will participate in the conduction of some of the programs, professionals with expertise in relevant areas will be invited to conduct sessions.

The Association of Engaged Buddhist hopes to fill a need with the provision of our programs and retreats.

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. We would be pleased to publish verses members have written in the Newsletter.

Even simple activities that we do routinely can be an occasion to improve our mindfulness. Indeed it is the very fact that we do them routinely, with little thought, that makes them good candidates for our practice of mindfulness. Here are some thoughts from Thich Nhat Hahn on one such activity: drinking tea:

The cup of tea in my two hands-

Mindfulness is held uprightly!

My mind and body dwell

In the very here and now.

Dhamma Blossoms

Don't try to build your happiness on the unhappiness of others,

You will be enmeshed in the net of hatred

Do not fail to do what ought to be one

And do not do what ought not to be done. Otherwise your

burden of suffering will grow heavier. Those who meditate

and keep their senses under control never fail to do what

ought to be done. Their suffering will come to an end

Dhammapada verses 291-293

Meditation by Beatriz Copello

Lotus of light, subtle winds
from the East and West
droplets of dew that titillate
on flowers, petals, trees, leaves …
tool of the soul that reaches
the universe within. Silence.
A pervading peace
filters from the infinite
and the mind is at rest. Bliss.

Blasphemy of thoughts,
unwanted intruders
which are discarded
as they enter fluttering
their colourful wings
like summer butterflies
and demanding attention
like unruly children.

The belief is an ancient rock—
Patient, impassive, withstanding
the passage of time.
The soul rejoices
as air enters and leaves
the disciplined body —
no pain, no tiredness
no anxiety, no ambition
these giants under control …

Immersed in the experience
overpassing desires
being one with One
kindness , love, compassion
are born and will spread
like seeds ready to germinate

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 $30/year**.

The next issue of One Heart-One Mind will be published in December 2011.

Sender:
The Association of Engaged Buddhists
Sangha Lodge
20 Victoria St
LEWISHAM NSW 2049