

The Dharma Rag

Volume 12, Issue 1

~ January 2009 ~

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Coming Up for Springs Mountain Sangha

—In January

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Springs Mountain Sangha's Monthly Newsletter: The Dharma Rag

Editor: Lee Overmann. Published every month, mostly.

We encourage submissions of articles related to Buddhism and the Way, event announcements, letters to the editor, reviews, poems, recipes, and other sharings from all readers! Send them by e-mail to SMSDharmaRag@hotmail.com, or, submit them by snail-mail to P.O. Box 25277, Colorado Springs, CO 80936-5277. The deadline for the next month's publication is the third Friday of each month; submissions may be lightly edited by a loving hand. Please visit our Web site at www.smszen.org!

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Dharma Talk

Risking Everything

In the introduction to his book, *Risking Everything: 110 Poems of Love and Revelation*, Roger Housden mentions “disillusionment, that paring away of what hides the truth.” This autumn, it’s been interesting to watch the leaves fall and the bright colors fade away from the landscape at the same time that we have faced hard realizations about the state of our nation and the world. Certainly, there’s a bone-hard rightness about seeing what had not been seen, and about coming to terms with the loss of illusion—and, of course, with loss itself. I’ve noticed in myself and in others a sense of unsteadiness, but paired with a willingness to meet the challenge of responding: we can do this. But an important mistake is made when people equate disillusionment with awakening. That “paring away” is necessary, but not by itself sufficient! Housden quotes a poem by Robert Bly:

There are more like us. All over the world
 There are confused people, who can't remember
 The name of their dog when they wake up, and people
 Who love God but can't remember where
 He was when they went to sleep. It's
 All right. The world cleanses itself this way.

It is not only for us that this cleansing, this purification happens. “The world cleanses itself this way,” not only with the loss of illusion but with the loss of what we thought we knew, whether it is true or not! For something new to appear, we surrender to what *is* by giving up our claim to have held the truth. At the beginning of ceremonies, Springs Mountain Sangha recites a gatha of purification:

*All the ancient twisted karma
 From beginningless greed, hatred and ignorance
 Born of my body, mouth and thought
 I confess openly and fully.*

This is not only a confession of what I knew I was doing, but also of what I didn't know I was doing! I am willing to look it all in the face, publicly, so that something new can

happen, because the ceremony, our practice, is not essentially about purification. It's about awakening.

I woke up Christmas Eve remembering words from the Gospel of St. John:

“In [God] was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”

Or, in a more modern translation,

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

The life was the light of people, from the beginning. Is this different from what our Zen ancestors say? Life, life itself is the light we seek. The light shines in darkness. Not some general darkness, I think, but the particular darkness of our own days and nights—the times when we don't know, when we maybe don't hope, don't believe; in our times of confusion, even delusion. That is where the light shines. Not some other place inhabited by other, wiser people.

And the darkness comprehended it not, or has not overcome it. The latter translation is probably more accurate, but how wonderful they are, worn layered! Our darkness cannot comprehend, cannot completely hold or see the light. In some way, the light and the dark must not completely understand each other, because they must each exist for new life to occur, “like front foot and back foot walking.”

It seems ridiculous to even mention that one must pick up one foot altogether in order to walk; but I notice that this means risking my entire balance, risking falling, for that moment, over and over again. I think nothing of it, most of the time. But when I do notice it, when perhaps there's one of those deep cracks in the red rock that I'm about to step over, I sure do notice. I celebrate the landing of that next step.

May there be many such moments—for you, for us—moments to celebrate the appearance of a point of light, moments to be held cleansed also in the dark. May you walk in beauty and bring the beauty of your own expression to our world, which is itself both achingly beautiful and achingly hungry for beauty.

Sarah Bender, December 26, 2008

Special News and Updates

At
Liz's
house

533 Crystal Hills Blvd., Manitou Springs

December 31 from 8 PM to midnight

Bring *hors d'œuvres* or wine; bring a guest or three! For information or to RSVP, contact Donella at donella.berry@att.net.

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The Springs Mountain Sangha presents

New Year's Day Sit

January 1

At the Woman's Club

From 9 AM to 4 PM

It's a great way to start the new year!

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Voices

What Kind of Buddha Am I?

By Victor

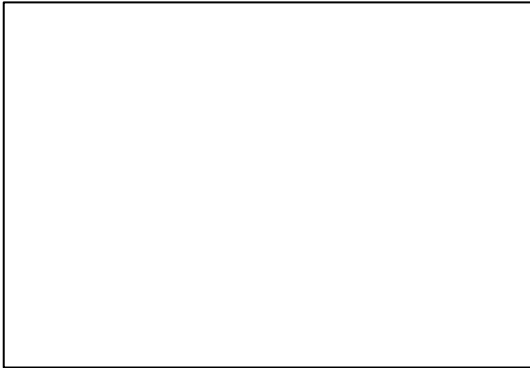
Early morning, still dark. I manage to pull myself out from under warm covers to sit and meditate. Incense seems to warm the cold room. There is a faint hum that is only heard in the still morning air, or perhaps that's the only time I am quiet enough to notice it. Thoughts come and go, and I wonder, "What kind of Buddha am I?"

I notice some movement out in the hallway. My wife is busy getting ready for her daily commute. Our cat is waiting patiently for me to emerge. He knows what kind of Buddha I am.

The scale of my life seems to somehow lack "Buddha magnitude". I am the kind of Buddha who can be glimpsed in little day-to-day interactions. I work from my home programming computers. I am the kind of Buddha that someone is counting on to solve a technical problem. I am also the kind of Buddha that often fixes one problem while inadvertently creating several more.

I am the kind of Buddha who worries about being productive but drops everything because the cat wants his belly rubbed. I am the kind of Buddha who is interested in things like organic crops and reducing waste and now woofs down a meal without giving a single thought about the lives sacrificed for my nourishment.

I am the kind of Buddha giving one person attention and acting indifferently toward another. I am the kind of Buddha selfishly pursuing my own needs and desires while knowing that Enlightenment is a team sport. I am the kind of Buddha trying



to do many things and trying to be many people. I am offering words of encouragement and stringing together expletives. I am practicing music and writing this essay and ... hold on a moment, the cat wants his belly rubbed again.

My ears are kind of big and my belly is ample, but other than these traits I don't much resemble any Buddha on an altar. Oh yes, then there's that little smile!

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Sangha Business

Steering Committee Activity

The Sangha Steering Committee met on December 14, 2008. Present were Clay, Frank, Robert, Elizabeth, Andrew, Victor, Lee, Ann Carlisle, and Steve Doyle.

Officer Elections. As the first order of business, we elected the officers of the Steering Committee by consensus: Clay is chair, Frank vice-chair, Robert treasurer, and Elizabeth secretary.

April 2009 Retreat. Benet Pines is not available for the April retreat, though it will be available in September to support the October retreat. Other local groups have held retreats at the Holy Cross Abbey in Canon City, which would be a longer commute for daytrippers. Frank observed that the April retreat would include a precepts ceremony, and a longer commute would make it more difficult to attend. Victor concurred the location should be convenient for friends and family. As the Women's Club is also not available in April, Robert contacted Franciscan Retreat Center. Some of the prices at have gone up; the last time we held a seven-day retreat there, we were able to break even (with subsidies), but this time, with higher costs and two teachers, the real cost will be higher. Robert also noted the ratio of fulltime to part-time participants would make it difficult to do a seven-day retreat; he therefore recommended a five-day retreat with subsidies. Through consensus, we then decided to hold a five-day retreat at Franciscan Retreat Center during the week of April 8–12, 2009.

Resident Teacher. Clay reviewed our recent discussion about whether the Sangha is heading in the direction of becoming a Zen Center. In that discussion, Joan offered two characteristics that distinguish a Zen Center from a Zen Club: a resident teacher and a permanent location. Clay then asked what we want or expect of our resident teacher, adding that Sarah had

described what she does in preparation for her extended practice period. Clay recommended the Steering Committee generate a list, which would then serve as talking points for further discussion with Sarah. Clay summarized this discussion topic in four ideas: we need to free up Sarah's time by establishing teacher liaison(s), ask her for her financial needs, encourage the Sangha to step up to provide service, and get feedback from Sarah on how we can help her further.

Work Teams. Clay reviewed the Work Teams we're establishing: Practice, Retreat, Communications, Finance, and Search. Sangha members can be on the teams, not just Steering Committee members. We discussed how to synchronize Work Team operations with each other. Lee recommended having Steering Committee members head each team; the team heads would brief the Steering Committee during regular meetings, and that way, the other team heads would hear what all the teams were doing, be able to ask questions, get involved with tasks, and so on. Lee also recommended keeping abbreviated minutes of team activity (e.g., dates and attendance of meetings, substance of discussions, decisions). Clay identified team heads: Andrew (Retreat), Lee (Communications), Robert (Finance), Linda Hodges (the ad hoc Search Team).

Web Site. Lee said she had scheduled a meeting with a Webmaster and outlined a phased approach to restoring the Web site: 1-get the current site back in business; 2-artistic update to the site's look; and 3-technology enhancements to the site. Clay moved that the money in the professional services category be authorized for expenditure on Web site upgrades. Through consensus, the Steering Committee authorized Lee to expend what is currently in the professional services budget to begin transferring the Web site to a new service provider and get it functional again.

Internal/External Sangha Communications. Clay noted the Sangha must communicate internally as well as externally. Lee said she would document the methods as part of the Communications Team effort, and that as the team gears up (i.e., as it obtains members), she will take action on the task to put together internal and external contact lists (i.e., Kathryn as leader coordinator; Pete as CC liaison; etc.).

Retreat Team. Andrew noted we have an upcoming one-day retreat on January 1. He said that as Retreat Team head, he would not be the coordinator for retreat events; instead, he will act as the "glue" in the overall retreat planning process. Clay clarified this as the bigger picture on how retreat planning is carried out; he said the Retreat Team needed more than one person on it. Andrew added that some brainstorming was needed.

Schedule Review. Clay distributed copies of the schedule he and Sarah developed. We reviewed it for several minutes. We discussed the February 9 Community Night (the preparatory meeting for the March 15 All-Sangha Meeting); the meeting focus will be on the Sangha budget, as well as the organizational direction (i.e., the idea of a Zen Center and volunteering for Work Team participation). We also moved the April 12 and May 10 Steering Committee meetings to April 5 and May 3, respectively.

We adjourned the meeting at 3:10 PM. The next Steering Committee is scheduled for January 11 from 3 to 5 PM at the Woman's Club.

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Work in the Room with Sarah Bender, Sensei

Work in the Room with Sarah will be held on Wednesday, January 14, from noon to 4 PM, and Thursday, January 22, in the evening. There will be Work in the Room at the New Year's Day retreat, January 1 at the Woman's Club.

Events and Activities

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DETAILS OF SMS EVENTS

- ★ **A New Year's Eve Party.** Wednesday, December 30, from 8 PM to midnight at Liz's house. See ad on page 3; contact Donella at donella.berry@att.net for more information or to RSVP.
- ★ **A New Year's Day Sit.** Thursday, January 1, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Woman's Club. Details TBD.
- ★ **Work in the Room with Sarah Bender, Sensei.** Wednesday, January 14, from noon to 4 PM, and Thursday, January 22, in the evening. For more information or to make an appointment, please contact Sarah at sembender@gmail.com.
- ★ **Buddhist Movie Night.** Thursday, January 15, at the Colorado College Worner Center. Starts at 7:30 PM with discussion. For more information, contact Ann at 719-593-9884 or ohbejoyfull@comcast.net.
- ★ **Precepts Class.** Sundays, January 18 through March 15, from 1:00 to 3:00 PM at Sarah's house. For information, contact Sarah at sembender@gmail.com.

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2009 RETREAT SCHEDULE

February 20–22, with Joan

April 8–12, with Joan and Sarah

October 12–18, with Joan and Sarah

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DHARMA TALKS given by SMS teachers are available on CD for \$10 each. To obtain a list of available talks and to order, please contact Andrew at remlapa@gmail.com.

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SMS Weekly Schedule

We meet at Shove Chapel, 1010 North Nevada on the campus of Colorado College

Monday Evenings: 6:10–7:30 PM

- ★ **First Monday of the month:** Sutra service with 25-minute periods of sitting meditation and walking meditation between the meditation periods.
- ★ **Second Monday:** One 25-minute meditation period followed by tea and cookies.
- ★ **Third Monday:** Two 25-minute periods of meditation with opening chants and closing sharing and announcements.
- ★ **Fourth Monday:** One 25-minute meditation period followed by a talk and discussion.
- ★ **Fifth Monday:** Two 25-minute periods of meditation with opening chants and closing sharing and announcements.

Wednesday Mornings: 6:00–7:00 AM

Saturday Mornings

Summer hours (May–Sept.): 6:00–8:00 AM

Winter hours (Sept.–May): 6:30–8:30 AM

- ★ **First Saturday:** Work in the Room with Sarah.
- ★ **Second Saturday:** Four-period sit.
- ★ **Third Saturday:** Four-period sit.
- ★ **Fourth Saturday:** Four-period sit.
- ★ **Fifth Saturday:** Three sits with Way-seeking mind talk during the third period.

After the meditation, many of us walk to a nearby coffee shop for breakfast.

Sundays

We often have Steering Committee meetings, discussion groups, workshops, or socials.

***Newcomers are extremely welcome!
Please come fifteen minutes early if you would like an orientation.***

**Please check our Web site
for changes and additions.**

Other Local Groups

Wet Mountain Sangha—Pueblo

Winter Schedule

- **Wednesdays:** Meditation 6:00 PM to 7:15 PM. Please join us as you wish for the traditional 25/10/25 minutes of sitting/walking/sitting meditation. As usual, there will be sharing and announcements and tea afterwards!
- **Saturdays:** Morning meditation second and fourth Saturdays of each month, 8:00 – 10:00 AM, with four periods of alternating sitting and walking; no chants or announcements.

**We meet at the Center for Inner Peace,
740 W. 15th Street, Pueblo, CO 81003**

**Check out our Web site for more info:
<http://wetmountainsangha.org>.**

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- **Thubten Shedrup Ling (TSL)**
tslcolorado@yahogroups.com
- **Rocky Mountain Insight**
www.rockymountaininsight.org
- **Dances of Universal Peace** will be held the second Friday of each month through May from 7:00–9:00 PM at Unity Church of the Rockies, 1945 Mesa Road. Join our new leader, Bob Screws, for an evening of devotional or Sufi Dances drawn from many cultures and religions. He leads simple songs and circle dances for people of good heart and all ages. For more information, call Ann Grant Martin at 719-575-0152.

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Qigong

**With Ellie Coriell,
LPC CACIII**

Shove Chapel, Tuesday
evenings, 5:30–6:30 PM.

For more information, please contact Ellie
at 719-339-7415 or ecoriell@msn.com.

**(www.awakenedlife.org and
www.joansutherland.net)**

- **Koan Salon.** Wednesdays, 3:00–5:00 PM, at the home of Ellie Sernet (directions provided upon registration). Sign up for the salon in eight-week sessions. The cost is on a sliding scale of \$80 to \$160 per series. Register with Pasha Hogan at phogan@awakenedlife.org.
- **Meditation, Dharma Talks, Conversation.** Thursdays, 7:00–8:30 PM. Introduction to meditation is offered the first Thursday of each month at 6:45 PM. By donation. Cerro Gordo Temple, 1404 Cerro Gordo Road, Santa Fe, NM.
- **Shelter in Each Other.** Those who took part in this summer's refuge ceremony will meet quarterly to continue the conversation and camaraderie. RSVP to Pasha Hogan at phogan@awakenedlife.org.

Joan's 2009 Retreat Schedule

- **March 20–22**, Vernal Equinox Koan Retreat, Cerro Gordo Temple, Santa Fe, NM.
- **April 13–19**, Meditation Retreat, Springs Mountain Sangha, Colorado Springs, CO.
- **June 8–13**, Meditation Retreat, Ocamora Retreat Center, Ocate, NM.
- **September 13–19**, Meditation Retreat, Synergia Ranch, Santa Fe, NM.
- **October 23–25**, All Hallows Koan Retreat, Cerro Gordo Temple, Santa Fe, NM.

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Register for events

by sending an e-mail to retreats@joansutherland.net.

Join the e-mail list

by sending an e-mail to list@joansutherland.net.

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Pacific Zen Institute

(www.pacificzen.org)

- **Sesshin Retreats, St. Dorothy's Rest:** Jan. 18–25; Apr. 4–11; June 7–14; Oct. 11–18.

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February

2009

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p>1</p> <p>Precepts Study Group Sarah's house 1:00–3:00 PM</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Meditation and Sutra Service Shove Chapel 6:15–7:30 PM</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Meditation, Four Periods, and WITR Shove Chapel 6:30–8:30 AM Followed by breakfast @ Wooglin's</p>
<p>8</p> <p>Precepts Study Group Sarah's house 1:00–3:00 PM Steering Meeting Sarah's house 3:00–5:00 PM</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Meditation & Prep for March All-Sangha Meeting Shove Chapel 6:15–7:30 PM</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Meditation Shove Chapel 6:00–7:00 AM</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Meditation, Four Periods Shove Chapel 6:30–8:30 AM Followed by breakfast @ Wooglin's</p>
<p>15</p> <p>Precepts Study Group Sarah's house 1:00–3:00 PM</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Meditation, Two Periods Shove Chapel 6:15–7:30 PM</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Meditation Shove Chapel 6:00–7:00 AM</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Buddhist Film Worner Center 7:30 PM</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Meditation, Four Periods Shove Chapel 6:30–8:30 AM Followed by breakfast @ Wooglin's</p>
<p>22</p> <p>Precepts Study Group Sarah's house 1:00–3:00 PM</p> <p>Mythopoetics Retreat</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Meditation, Talk, and Discussion Shove Chapel 6:15–7:30 PM</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Meditation Shove Chapel 6:00–7:00 AM</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>Mythopoetics Retreat with Joan Sutherland, Roshi</p>	
					<p>27</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Meditation, Four Periods Shove Chapel 6:30–8:30 AM Followed by breakfast @ Wooglin's</p>

Donate to Springs Mountain Sangha

Springs Mountain Sangha engages in three weekly sittings, study groups, retreats, residencies for our holding teachers, *The Dharma Rag*, a Web site (www.SMSZen.org), and other communication media. Contributions from members and friends are the Sangha's sole financial resource. Your contributions are tax deductible in as much as Springs Mountain Sangha fits the definition of a church for charitable giving purposes. Please share the Dharma assets!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (h) _____ (other) _____

E-mail: _____ (required for e-distribution)

Contribution Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Checks should be made out to Springs Mountain Sangha c/o Robert King, Treasurer.

Springs Mountain Sangha is a member of The Open Source, in both the Soto and Rinzai traditions.

To learn more, visit our Web site—www.smszen.org—or contact us as follows: Info@SMSZen.org (Wendy, our Webmaster) or SMSDharmaRag@hotmail.com (your editor). You can join the Sangha and newsletter list-servers by sending a request to Wendy or to Leee.

Great Reasons to Support Your Sangha

There are many great reasons to donate to Springs Mountain Sangha, and hopefully one will suit your fancy. Remember, this is *your* Sangha.

- **Donate to support Joan's work.** If you'd like to make a donation to thank Joan Sutherland, Roshi for her Dharma and to support her work, you can send it to her at P.O. Box 2368, Santa Fe, NM 87504. Or, send a donation to SMS with a note that it is for Joan.
- **Donate toward a facility.** While we benefit enormously from the warmhearted generosity of Colorado College, renting or owning our own facility would allow us to use our energies more fully. Retreats and other events would no longer require moving all the cushions, ritual supplies, food, et cetera. A facility is a long-term project; please help get it started.
- **Donate to support our operating costs.** Keeping the Sangha in business involves recurrent costs for teacher support, communications, gifts, ritual supplies, food for retreats and other events, study groups, and service activity—all the items needed for a nonprofit organization.
- **Donate to support our service activity.** The Service Committee budget supports our service work and makes possible Bodhisattva work in the larger community; send your donation to SMS with the notation "Service Committee."
- **The True Heart Scholarship Fund in Honor of Mitchell Goldbaum.** If you wish to make a gift in Mitch's memory, Mitch's sister, Joanne, has requested that gifts be made to Springs Mountain Sangha. You can just write "in memory of Mitchell Goldbaum" on the check. These funds are used for retreat scholarships.

Thank you so very much!