

# leap of faith

THE NEW HOPE SANGHA NEWSLETTER

FALL 2004

Meditation Retreat September 24-26 See page 5.

## LIVING IN THE NOW

*Dear Friends,*

*I'm presently staying in a cabin on a lake at the Quaker Friends Community outside of Ann Arbor, Michigan. The weather has been beautiful, with sunny, clear days and temperatures dropping into the 40's at night. It's been a wonderful break from the North Carolina summer heat and humidity. I'm in the middle of a week long "working" meditation retreat. I've been spending my days meditating, working on this fall newsletter and having dharma discussions with many friends from the area. Sangha members from the Deep Spring Center have been kind and generous in offering a mid day meal to those of us on retreat.*

This is the only retreat that I will be able to do this year. I was hoping to have a relatively silent one and do a little organizing for the newsletter on the side. It hasn't turned out that way. There has been considerably more speaking and relating than I anticipated. There is also more to do on the newsletter than I would like to be doing. At first I found myself resisting what was happening, which means I was resisting the actuality of the present moment. I saw myself contracting around that which I was feeling aversion towards. I realized this was a good set up for suffering and was able to relate to the situation in a more aware and spacious manner. My mantra this week has been "be in the now." I have been repeating to myself "now, now, now." As I write this letter to you, it is happening in the now. When I speak, it is in the now. A step taken is in the now. This is such good practice for daily living, which has been the emphasis in my dharma



life in recent years anyway. I got the perfect retreat for what I need to learn, without consciously setting it up that way. Perhaps I'm also learning about trust and surrendering to what I'm experiencing in the "now."

I'm looking forward to sharing the dharma with you this fall. Our Tuesday evening sangha meditations and dharma discussions

have been well attended and it has been a joy to be a part of a spiritual community that is practicing together. I hope you will be able to join us for some of our upcoming meditation programs and that you will know peace during this political election season.

With love and blessings,

JOH4

**RESIDENTIAL AND  
NONRESIDENTIAL RETREATS**

**SEPTEMBER 10-11,  
FAYETTEVILLE, NC**

Dharma talk friday 7-9 pm (Dana), Sat. Day of Insight Meditation 9-4, Fee \$65. Led by John Orr. For information and registration contact Robin Greene at 5574 Whithorn Ct., Fayetteville, NC 28311, robingreene@att.net, (910) 630-7110

**SEPTEMBER 24-26 PITTSBORO, NC  
RESIDENTIAL/NON RESIDENTIAL  
RETREAT**

With Barbara Brodsky and John at Windsong Center . For information see page 5.

**OCTOBER 8-15, HOT SPRINGS, NC  
RESIDENTIAL RETREAT**

With Barbara and John at the Southern Dharma Retreat Center, 1661 West Rd., Hot Springs, NC 28743. Call: 828-622-7112 or www.main.nc.us/SDRC

**OCTOBER 29-31, ANN ARBOR,  
MI**

**RESIDENTIAL RETREAT**  
With Barbara, Aaron, and John. For information call Pat Shalis at 734-996-3743 or visit www.deep-spring.org

**WINTER-SPRING RETREATS**

**JANUARY 28-30, PHILADELPHIA,  
PA**

**RESIDENTIAL RETREAT**  
Led by John through the Philadelphia Meditation Center. For information call 610-853-8200 or see their web site at www.philadelphiameditation.org

**FEBRUARY 18-20, PITTSBORO, NC  
RETREAT COMBINING INSIGHT  
MEDITATION AND HOLOTROPIC  
BREATHWORK**

Instructors: Julie Lapham and John Orr at Windsong Center. For information call 919-286-4754 or office@newhopesangha.org

**FEBRUARY 26-27, ATHENS,  
GEORGIA**

**NON RESIDENTIAL WEEKEND OF  
MEDITATION**

Led by John. Contact David Kurtz 725 Kings Rd. Athens, GA 30606. 706-546-7238 or dkurtz41@yahoo.com

**APRIL 15-17, PITTSBORO, NC  
RESIDENTIAL/NON RESIDENTIAL  
MEDITATION RETREAT**

With Barbara and John at Windsong Center . For info. call 919-286-4754 or office@newhopesangha.org

**APRIL 23-30, EMERALD ISLE, NC  
RESIDENTIAL RETREAT**

With Barbara Brodsky, Aaron and John. Vipassana at the ocean. For information contact Linda Pendelton at 910-829-0079 until August 25, then call 910-822-6375 or mettagreetings@juno.com.

**WEEKLY CLASSES AND  
WORKSHOPS**

**SEPTEMBER 13- OCTOBER 4,  
RALEIGH, NC**

**LEARN HOW TO MEDITATE**  
Four Classes for beginners, Mondays, 7:15-8:45 pm. Fee \$75, Course ID Number (CE 1043), 0.6 CEU available. Instructor: John. Held at Meredith College. Register by requesting a Community Outreach Fall 2004 Catalog available at: Meredith College, Graduate and Professional Studies, c/o Anne Henderson, 3800 Hillsborough St., Raleigh, NC 27607-5298, or register online at www.meredith.edu/academics or call 919-760-8450

**OCTOBER 18-NOVEMBER 15,  
DURHAM, NC**

**MINDFUL COMMUNICATION**  
Four Classes, Mondays 7-9 pm. (No class on November 1) Offered by John at The Bishop's House Room 107 (East Campus) through Duke Continuing

Education. Fee \$125. Register online at www.learnmore.duke.edu/shortcourse or by phone 919-684-6000. Have the following information ready: Class ID# 8586 and MC/Visa information. To register by mail call 919-684-6259 during buisness hours and ask for a copy of the fall short course program which includes a registration form. Advance registration is recommended. Registration is possible at the class site, space permitting.

**NOVEMBER 6, RALEIGH, NC  
MINDFULNESS MEDITATION: THE  
ART OF LIVING IN THE PRESENT  
MOMENT**

Saturday, 9 am-4 pm. Fee \$75, Course ID Number (CE 1044), 0.6 CEU available. Instructor: John. Held at Meredith College. Register by request-

ing a Community Outreach Fall 2004 Catalog available at: Meredith College, Graduate and Professional Studies, c/o Anne Henderson, 3800 Hillsborough St., Raleigh, NC 27607-5298, or register online at www.meredith.edu/academics or call 919-760-8450

**NOVEMBER 7, RALEIGH, NC  
YOGA, CHANTING AND  
MEDITATION WORKSHOP**

Sunday 10am-12:30. Led by Cyndi Bulka and John. Held at the Moving Mantra Yoga Studio in Raleigh. Fee is \$35. To register or for more information contact Cyndi Bulka at 919-449-0530 or movingmantrayoga@ncrr.com. Another way to reserve a space is the web site: movingmantrayoga.com.

N E W H O P E S A N G H A

*Fall Retreat, September 24-26, 2004*

REGISTRATION FORM

To register for the Weekend Retreat return this form to Durham Meditation Center, 1214 Broad Street #2, Durham, NC 27705.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

*If possible pay in full* . . . . . \$100 \_\_\_\_\_

*Or deposit* . . . . . \$60 \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate where you intent to stay during the retreat.**

I will be needing a bed in the center tenting commuting

**Payment Method** Check Visa MasterCard

Credit Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to Durham Meditation Center.

# Precept Practice

## *John's Dharma Talk, June 23, 2004, Enrich Retreat*

Good evening.

Welcome to Wednesday evening at the Monastery.

Sometimes I have absolutely no idea what the subject will be for the evening dharma talk. Other times I know a day or two in advance what I would like to share. A couple of days ago a neon light flashed in my mind, talk about the precepts. Immediately a feeling of fear and dread arose. People don't usually view the precepts as their most favorite aspect of practice. Many would rather hear about bliss, rapture, love and enlightenment. The other aspect of the fear I was experiencing was the realization that I might need to talk about myself in relationship to the precepts. Interestingly, when I feel this kind of fear and hesitancy, then I know it's the right topic to talk about.

We find precepts and guidelines for ethical living in every religion and many spiritual traditions. In the family I was raised in, my mother's side was Lutheran and my father's relatives went to the Catholic Church. Although we attended the Lutheran services, I felt both churches influenced me. Catholicism and the Lutheran Church place similar emphasis on a number of aspects of religious life including sin and its consequences. Honestly, no one had to remind me that I was a sinner. I was very aware of that fact. I also knew that I was probably destined to go to hell. But what I didn't understand was what does all this mean? I intellectually understood the Ten Commandments and tried to obey them as best I could. However, I often didn't succeed. Did this mean I was a sinful or bad person, or worse yet, that I deserved to go to hell? The concept of sin baffled me. I didn't understand exactly what it meant or what the consequences of being a sinner would be in a practical sense. Yes, I was flawed, that was obvious. I was probably born this way and seemed to be losing the game of life before I even had a chance to play it completely. But does this mean that I'm evil and am condemned to an after life of damnation unless I accept someone as my savior?

Like many people in our culture, I came into this lifetime with considerable unworthiness issues. I didn't feel I was good enough for myself or other people. Except for being a skilled athlete, I felt woefully inadequate in many regards. Like many teenagers, I would do something that was unskillful like drinking and unrestrained sexual expression and feel so bad about it that I would sit on the curb in front of our church on a Saturday night and cry. I would feel tremendous guilt, shame and pain about who I was and what I had done. Probably the most painful aspect of this was that I didn't have anybody to talk to about what I was feeling. I felt trapped in my loneliness and isolated with my dark secrets. If anyone knew who I was and what I was truly like than surely they wouldn't like me. Instead I kept the pain internalized, which further fed the deep habitual pattern of fear of unworthiness and not being loved. I saw

myself as a sinner whose life was over even though I was only in my teenage years. Not even God could love me.

My perception of sin is different now. Perhaps sin is an acknowledgement of my imperfections. After all, I am human and therefore imperfect. I experience fear, negativity, greed and delusion. I do things that are unskillful and cause pain to myself and other people. I now see that in awakening to Christ Consciousness, which is the same thing as my Buddha Nature and living as fully as possible from that awareness and love that I am saved or freed from my suffering.

But it has been a long journey to this realization. It was a path that took me to Asia, where I immersed myself in the Hindu and Buddhist spiritual traditions. Both of these religions emphasize moral awareness and the importance of ethical living. I ordained in the Theravada Buddhist tradition where the precepts play a prominent role for the lay and monastic communities. Whenever the lay people come to the temple for a service or a retreat they take refuge in the Triple Gem, which is the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and they take the five precepts, which we will be reviewing in this talk. The precepts and the practice of *dana* (pronounced DA-na), which means generosity are the foundations from which a layperson constructs their spiritual life. Even if a person has difficulty developing a meditation practice, they can still cultivate the innate qualities of generosity, loving kindness and non-harm.

The monastic community of monks observes ten basic vows and 227 rules of conduct. Ordained nuns have a similar discipline. That is a lot of rules to keep track of! It's necessary to become familiar with all of them because it is the vocation and responsibility for a monastic to do so, and because most of the lay people in these South east Asian countries who are Buddhist know the *vinaya* (vin-I-ya) or monastic discipline. For example, one of the rules of conduct is that a monastic must be barefooted while collecting alms food in the morning. There was a time when I was in Bangkok to have planters surgically removed from the bottom of my foot and needed to wear sandals while collecting alms. The streets of the city with all its motor traffic are particularly grimy. A woman not understanding my dilemma refused to give me food because I wasn't bare footed. When I explained my situation she then offered me some food. It is a tradition in Thailand that at least one male member of a family ordain as a monk for at least three months. Some men ordain for longer periods of time. It is therefore common that a Thai person would personally know someone who is or had been a monk or nun. It's easy to see how Buddhism is at the center of Thai culture and peoples familiarity with the monastic way of life.

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## PRECEPT PRACTICE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

The Buddhist eightfold path is composed of three aspects of practice, which leads us to freedom from suffering. *Sila* (SEE-la), means awareness of our speech, actions and livelihood. *Samadhi* (sa-MA-hi), is awareness and clarity which is meditation. It is cultivated by skillful effort, mindfulness and concentration. The wisdom factors of the path are right understanding and intention and are known as *panna* (PAN-ya). The Buddha spoke of these three, sila, samadhi and panna as being like three legs of a tripod. They work together and all must be there in order to support the dharma. Walking the eightfold path enables us to realize our true nature and find freedom from suffering. This is the goal of the spiritual life.

It's obvious that sila is an important piece in the Buddha's design for awakening. One teacher that I stayed with in Thailand, Ajahn Chaa, considered it as central to practice as formal meditation. There was a lot of emphasis on the precepts and how the monastic community conducted itself within and outside the walls of the monastery. Ajahn Chaa knew the importance of creating a harmonious environment where people could feel safe to practice and let go of their fear. Imagine what it would be like for us at this retreat if we were not observing the five precepts and someone who was cold and needed a long sleeve shirt simply went into our room and took one out of our luggage without asking first? How would we feel if we only brought one long sleeve shirt with us and when we went to put it on, it was missing? We might get a little upset or at least wonder what was happening? If at this retreat someone decided not to observe the silence and said something offensive to us out of their anger, how do you think that would affect our experience here? Would we feel safe or would it put us on guard for another possible attack? Observing the precepts is a way of preserving harmony within the family or community we live in. It engenders trust so we can relax and allow the natural unfolding of the dharma in our lives.

Another reason Ajahn Chaa may have placed so much emphasis on the precepts is that it takes mindfulness and concentration to be aware of thoughts and our intentions before we speak or act. This is the connection between the meditation, wisdom and ethical steps of the eightfold path. Mindfulness and a certain degree of focus of attention is necessary to be aware of what we are thinking and planning to say or do. We are aware of the intention behind our actions and the affect it will have on others as well as ourselves. This is right understanding and wisdom.

Interestingly, Ajahn Chaa had such reverence for the power of the monastic discipline that he would say that it was a good to get a little attached to the *vinaya* initially. We might think that that would be a strange thing for a Buddhist to say. What he was really encouraging was a full awareness of the precepts to the point where they were integrated into our being. After this process of awareness and integration we could let go and experience them more as guidelines for skillful living. While traveling through India in 1975 as a mendicant monk I tried my very best to observe the monks discipline. A monk can only eat food from sunrise to 12:00 noon. One of the rules prohibits holding food in a monk's possession overnight. This means from noon until the following sunrise you cannot have any food in your possession. If you have anything left over from your meal you have to give it away. I didn't have money to purchase food because Theravada monks don't handle money. I was dependent

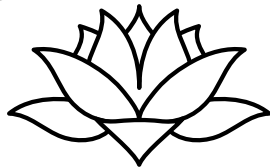
upon alms food for survival. At times I was well fed and there were other times when I had little to eat. There was a time when I was visiting a spiritual center and they saw that I was hungry and gaunt. The people there wanted me to take some surplus food with me when I left their center so I could feed myself. I told them that my discipline prohibited me from accepting their kind offer. As a result I went hungry and ultimately became quite sick and was hospitalized. I wouldn't recommend it, but if you want to lose weight and other diets aren't working, this is a way to become thinner. It soon became apparent that I was clinging to the rules and had become too attached to the discipline. I was not seeing the true spirit of the precepts, which is to be aware of what leads to unwholesome and wholesome states of body and mind. Which choices cause us suffering and which ones lead to well-being and peace. The precepts aren't moral commandments to be rigidly followed, but are guidelines for skillful living and a reflective tool which enables us to be aware of our intentions behind our speech and actions. This enables us to make choices that lead to less suffering and considerably more happiness and peace in our lives. This is the path of freedom.

During this talk I would like to have a closer look at the precepts and speak about them as practice. The first precept is: I undertake the precept to refrain from harming living creatures. In my mind, living creatures include people, animals, insect life, trees and plants. All of these are forms of life. Most people who come to these retreats don't intentionally kill creatures for pleasure or sport. If we kill an insect such as a mosquito it's because we are feeling annoyed by it and don't want to be attacked. I was living in a monastery in the North east of Thailand that had a huge mosquito population. Because there were no screens on the windows and repellent wasn't used, they had easy access to us. I was being bitten a lot and found myself swatting at and killing them. Remembering the precept not to harm, I felt a certain amount of shame and the guilt. I went to my teacher and described the situation. He said, "I understand that it's difficult, but every time you kill a mosquito, you have to come and tell me." I respected this teacher very much and didn't want to have to tell him each time I killed one. Which meant that I would have to pay close attention to the point where the mosquito was making contact with my skin, the unpleasant sensations and feelings that were a rising, and my intention to swat and possibly kill it. This was especially difficult while sitting in meditation in the meeting hall as I didn't want to brush them and have to move my body. It took a lot of restraint and awareness of intention, but I found that in not moving and letting them bite me, that I was much less caught in my fearful, agitated and reactive mind. Interestingly, I found that I received fewer bites, my mind was calmer and I was able to observe the precept. I bow to my teacher's wisdom as he used the precept as a teaching tool to help me look at my experience.

I usually recite the precepts each morning as part of my practice. The words I use for the first precept are: "I undertake the precept to refrain from aggression and the harboring of jealousy and ill will. This is an appropriate interpretation of the precept for me because jealousy, envy and aggression are mind states that are not

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# *Take Refuge in the Silence*



NEW HOPE SANGHA INSIGHT MEDITATION RETREAT

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*September 24–26, 2004*

**A** weekend retreat is an opportunity to develop calmness, wisdom, and compassion in a supportive environment. Emphasis is placed upon developing mindfulness in sitting, standing, and walking to help us access our innate understanding, joy, and peace. A weekend retreat such as this can be a wonderful way to learn meditation and to deepen one's practice. Beginners, as well as the more experienced, are welcome to attend. There will be instructions, practice, dharma talks, chanting from various spiritual traditions and silence.

**THE RETREAT LEADERS** **Barbara Brodsky** is a Quaker and trained "dharma teacher" in the Buddhist tradition. She is the guiding teacher of Deep Spring Center in Ann Arbor Michigan. Barbara has been deaf for 27 years; living with silence has greatly influenced her life and teaching, as have years of active involvement with nonviolent action for social change. **John Orr** received Theravada Buddhist ordination and training for a period of eight years while living in Thailand and India. He has been teaching meditation and leading retreats around the country since 1980. John is an Interfaith minister and teaches at Duke University.

**THE LOCATION** The retreat will be held at the Windsong Retreat Center, 2540 Seaforth Rd., Pittsboro, NC. This is a lovely Center located on 16 beautiful acres east of Pittsboro, near Jordan Lake in Chatham County. Windsong is within easy driving distance from anywhere in the Triangle and commutable. There is lodging available on a first register first serve basis. There are no private rooms. Tent sites are available. Check in will begin at 5:00 pm on Friday and supper will be served from 6:00-7:00 pm. Course opening is at 7:30 pm. We will end by 9:30 each evening to allow time for commuters to return home. The retreat will end at 4:00 pm on Sunday. Upon registration you will receive directions to Windsong Center and other information.

**REGISTRATION** The fee for the weekend is \$100 whether participants choose to sleep at Windsong or not. This fee covers the cost of putting on the retreat which includes teacher transportation, 6 vegetarian meals, and advertising. Barbara and John will offer the retreat on a "dana" generosity basis as will the Windsong Center. Participants will have the opportunity to offer generosity to the teachers and Windsong Center at the end of the retreat. As part of our gift to Windsong Center there will be a hour long work period on Saturday and Sunday morning. Appropriate jobs are assigned and none of the work is too strenuous. A deposit of \$60 will hold a place in the retreat. All but \$10 of your retreat fee is refundable if you cancel before September 10th. Use the registration form on page 2. For information call the Durham Meditation Center (919) 286-4754 or [office@newhopesangha.org](mailto:office@newhopesangha.org).

## PRECEPT PRACTICE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

uncommon in my experience. For example, this afternoon at our group discussion someone asked my teaching colleague, Barbara, what she has been experiencing at the retreat? Barbara described how she was feeling healthier and was experiencing a lot of joy. Then a member of the group said "You are sparkling and you look innocent and joyful like a child." Immediately I started to feel jealousy. Then it was my turn (laughter) to describe how the retreat has been for me. I said, "Well, I was really looking forward to coming, but then I came down with a bad cold right before I was to travel. It's hard to be around so many people and teach when I'm feeling sick. However, being here has gotten easier and I've enjoyed the retreat more as I have felt better and had more energy." I was being honest. But no one said that I was sparkling and I certainly didn't feel that way (laughter). There were moments of joy, but I wasn't feeling exceedingly joyful. As I started to compare myself to Barbara who is sparkling and obviously experiencing a lot of joy, the habitual pattern of unworthiness started to arise.

I have done a lot of work with unworthiness this lifetime and there have been times when it's been extremely painful. Thankfully it's no longer a major issue for me. There is not longer a belief or fear that I'm unworthy to a degree that I become self identified as being an unworthy person. This is a great relief and has been a fruit of my practice. But, given the right conditions it comes up again as it did this afternoon. The important point is that there was awareness of the mind state and the ability not to get lost in stories about being unworthy or less than my friend Barbara. The precept to refrain from aggression and the harboring of jealousy and ill will, reminds me of my intention, which is to not cling to and harbor fear, jealousy and envy. When I allow space for these old mind patterns to be present without reacting to them, then I'm much less likely to move into aggression as a means to protect myself from what seems threatening. Love dissolves much of our fear and clinging. The love that Barbara and I share with each other and the love we have for the dharma is the greatest medicine. Through awareness and love we begin to have a different relationship with the habitual patterns of mind that have caused us suffering for so long. There is freedom from suffering and a peaceful heart.

The second precept is to refrain from taking that which is not given or doesn't belong to us. While living in a monastery if you need a new robe or alms bowl, you can request the item from the abbot of the temple or who ever is in charge of such supplies. But, you can't ask a layperson for anything unless they first ask you if you need something. This is a wonderful opportunity to look at desire and the grasping mind. If a monk runs out of toothpaste and there isn't any available in the monastery, then he may need to brush with salt until some becomes available. It's an interesting experience to want something and not be able to go to the store and buy it. It encourages us to look at our desires and live simply. In fact, the way I recite this precept is, "I undertake the precept to live simply and take only that which I need."

During this retreat I've had a severe head cold and I've been using a lot of toilet paper to blow my nose. Since I was running out of paper I went to the supply room to get some more. I looked into the box and saw only five or six rolls left. Realizing that this precious

commodity was dwindling fast and we still had some days left in the retreat, I felt the urge to grab at least a couple of rolls. Fear said, one won't be enough and you'll be uncomfortable. Fortunately I saw my mind grasping for my rolls out of fear. I then reflected on the precept and the questions, am I taking more than my share? Can I become more mindful of when, why, and how this? So, I took one roll and decided to trust in the universe if I need another (laughter).

The third precept: I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct. Sexual energy can be a powerful force in our lives. A couple of questions to consider are: What is the difference between lust and healthy sexuality? What's the relationship between sexuality and love? Like many teenagers I experienced some difficulty around sexual issues while growing up. I do believe this was one of the reasons I became a monk. I needed to experience a period of celibacy in my life at that point in time. I ordained on my 24th birthday and was in the prime of my sexual life. It was apparent that I needed to understand more fully this powerful energy in my life. Being celibate helped me to see more clearly the thoughts and sensations associated with sexual feelings. I also became much more aware of impulses and my intentions related to sexual expression. Some of us may experience considerable fear, shame and guilt related to our sexuality. It's important to make this whole area of our life part of our spiritual practice. Being aware of these mind states and other aspects of habitual sexual energy, such as lust, will help us discover a wholesome sexuality. Healing our relationship with our sexuality may be an issue that some of us have chosen to work on in this lifetime. It can be difficult and painful work, but the fruits of this awareness can lead us to a healthy sexuality that is truly connected with the love in our hearts.

The fourth precept: to refrain from incorrect speech. In what ways do we use our speech to harm others or hide the truth? If we're feeling jealous and envious of someone else, how might we in subtle ways put another person down in an attempt to feel better about our selves. In what ways do we use our anger as a way of pushing others away so we can feel safe? Expression of anger in a hurtful manner towards someone else can be an unskillful way of sharing our pain. The staff of the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts were asked the question, which of the precepts was most difficult to observe? Many replied that observing right speech was the most challenging. Whether it is in a family situation, the work place or living in community, many different dynamics arise related to our speech. Both listening and speaking are important areas of observation.

Last but not least is the precept addressing the use of intoxicants. I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating drink and drugs, which lead to carelessness. Interestingly, the Buddha did not include this as one of the precepts originally. It was added sometime later on. When I mention this fact, some folks feel relieved. One less precept to keep (laughter)! Within the monastic community and at retreats there is total abstaining of intoxicants. This fosters clarity of mind and harmony in the community. Some teachers recommend their students never use intoxicants. My feeling is that there is a difference between the use of alcohol and drugs and the abuse of them. What's important is looking at the relationship with the substance.

Whether it be drugs, food, nicotine or any substance we are ingesting into our bodies. It's imperative to be aware of how it is affecting both our bodies and minds. What is our relationship with these various substances? Is there craving and clinging to them? Does the use of them cause us suffering? These are vital questions to consider if we are to be free. At one time I had an addiction to marijuana. There was habitual energy tied to this substance. It was an old friend that helped to ease pain. However my attachment to it would ultimately cause suffering. I wanted to be free so I stopped using it. It's a relief not to be dependant on a substance. Letting go of my attachment to marijuana has contributed to a deepening of meditation practice. Drug experiences pale in comparison to what is possible in meditation. Addiction of various kinds is rampant in our society. It can cause massive suffering for individuals and their families. This precept invites us to take an honest look at our relationship with substances and encourages us to be responsible in our actions.

In the Hindu tradition there is one primary precept, which is to do no harm. The essence of all the precepts described in this talk is simply to do no harm to all living creatures and us. When we live with kindness and compassion then we will be fulfilling the spirit of these precepts. This is a path that ends suffering and blesses the earth with peace.

We will end with words of wisdom spoken by the Buddha, "The thought manifests as the word. The word manifests as the deed. The deed develops into habit. The habit hardens into character. So watch the thought and its ways with care. And let it spring from love, born out of respect for all beings."

Thank you.

## Presence, Kindness, and Freedom

*Aaron's Teachings on Living from an Open Heart.*



*As I go through the Aaron material, I am struck by its sophistication and its lightness, its clarity and its beauty.*

—Ram Dass, spiritual teacher, author of *Still Here* and other titles.

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## SPIRITUAL COUNSELING & MEDITATION INTERVIEWS

Spiritual Counseling addresses both psychological and spiritual issues, honoring the wisdom of many paths. It is helpful for people who are just beginning to explore their psychological and emotional experience. This counseling can also be relevant for those who have been in psychotherapy and now wish a more transpersonal counseling perspective that helps them know more fully their divinity. Sessions may also include instruction in mindfulness meditation. Rates for counseling meetings are on a sliding scale.

Meditation interviews are also offered and are similar to interviews given at retreats. The content of the session is about your meditation and what you are experiencing in your practice. Meditation interviews are available on a dana (generosity) basis. John is welcoming new clients at his Durham office and also does telephone consultations. He can be reached for more information or to make an appointment at 919-286-4754 and at [john@newhopesangha.org](mailto:john@newhopesangha.org).

# NEW HOPE SANGHA

## *Bimonthly Meditations and Dharma Discussion*

**O**ur community, the New Hope Sangha, will be holding meditations and dharma discussion the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month, at the Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship on Garrett Rd. in Durham. We will meet from 7:00–9:15pm in the Chapel, which adjoins the main Sanctuary. This is an ideal location and accessible from anywhere in the Triangle. The format will be alternating sitting and walking meditation, which will be followed by a dharma talk and/or discussion.

The 1st Tuesday of the month there will be a dharma talk on a relevant subject and on the 3rd Tuesday we will discuss our experience of it in relation to our practice. Any questions about your meditation practice or spiritual life are welcomed.

Please plan on arriving by 6:50 so we can be in our seats by 7:00.

This is an open group and all are welcome to attend. If you are new to meditation and need meditation instructions please come to the Chapel by 6:50pm and one of the group leaders will meet with you separately to give you instructions and guidance in the practice. If you have any other questions concerning the group please call Jim Jarvis at his office 309-2922 or e-mail him at [jjjarvis@mindspring.com](mailto:jjjarvis@mindspring.com).

There is no fee charged. There will be a dana (generosity) basket available to help pay the cost of the room rental. During the first Tuesday of the month, when there is a dharma talk given, there will also be a dana basket for the teacher offering the talk.

The New Hope Sangha is a resource for anyone who wishes to learn and practice the dharma. This is a nondenomi-

national community that respects the wisdom of various spiritual traditions. Our meditation practices are grounded in three Buddhist practices: Vipassana (Mindfulness) Meditation, Metta (Lovingkindness) Meditation and Dzogchen (Non Dual Awareness) Meditation. To facilitate this process we have set up a web site (see: [www.newhopesangha.org](http://www.newhopesangha.org)) that will give up to date information about the meditation programs we are offering, as well as, dharma talks by various teachers and other useful information. Our newsletter, "Leap Of Faith" is available online and in hard copy for those who request it. Send requests to [office@newhopesangha.org](mailto:office@newhopesangha.org).

May All Beings Be Happy!!

DIRECTIONS TO ERUUF AT 4907 GARRETT ROAD:

**Raleigh/Cary (east), Charlotte/Greensboro(west) via I-40:**

Exit 270 (15/501). Go north toward Durham. At Garrett Road, turn right continuing 7/10 mile. Turn left into the entrance.

**Raleigh/Wake Forest via I-85/70**

After Rt.70 merges with I-85, Exit from the left lane onto 15/501 toward Chapel Hill. At Garrett Road (BP Station), turn left and go 7/10 mile to entrance on the left.

**Greensboro/Hillsborough via I-85/70**

Exit Rt. 147 and Exit onto 15/501 toward Chapel Hill. At Garrett Road (BP Station), turn left and go 7/10 mile to entrance on the left.

*As you enter the church grounds, bear to the right, and park in the lot next to the sanctuary. The chapel adjoins the sanctuary. For detailed maps visit [www.eruuf.org](http://www.eruuf.org).*

FALL 2004  
*leap of faith*

Meditation Retreat  
September 24-26  
See page 5.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

1214 Broad Street, #2  
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(919) 286-4754

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