

# Dharma Stream

MOUNTAIN STREAM MEDITATION CENTER



September 2012 through March 2013

## Gratitude: It's Elemental

by Laura Holland Belk, Nevada City Sangha

As a self-proclaimed Buddhist-Pagan-Deadhead, I have ample and unique opportunities to cross-pollinate the practices of my paths. For mindful cultivation of gratitude, I enjoy a blended practice that combines the four stages of walking meditation with the five elements of magic.

### *Grateful to the bone*

Lifting. Moving forward. Putting down. Pressing the ground. You might recognize these as the four stages of walking meditation. According to the Venerable Sayadaw U Silananda<sup>1</sup>, each stage is imbued with one of the four essential elements (or *dhatu*) of Earth, Air, Fire, or Water. U Silananda assures us that when we are present in each stage of the process, we will be able to perceive the true essence of the corresponding element. In the Reclaiming tradition of witchcraft, we also work with the four essential elements, as well as the fifth element of Center. I like to think of these elements as the 'bones' on which I hang my gratitude practice. My favorite place to work with these bones is

in the woods behind my house where all the elements are so deeply present, so very available, gently calling me to remember and feel their support in my life.

### *Earth, my body*

In walking meditation, we typically begin with lifting – which is associated with Fire. And when we cast a sacred circle in Reclaiming, we typically start with Air. But I am such an Earth Dog that I like to start my personal practice with Earth. Walking on the dirt path through the forest, I begin by pressing my foot into the ground. I notice the Earth beneath my feet, the rotting stumps beside the trail, the cedars that connect Earth's core with the sky. And I am grateful. I am grateful that the Earth is my foundation, that it holds me up, that I can ground myself in the tangible solidity of its presence. I love green, growing things. So I like to notice the velvety moss, the flickering Dogwood leaves, the carpet of Bleeding Hearts. So many

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## In This Issue

This issue has a number of articles relating to our theme, Gratitude. Laura Holland Belk relates her walking meditation to the elements and her gratitude for each of them. Susan Solinsky expresses her gratitude for a sudden summer rain, and Steve Solinsky's poem about the creative process continues the expression of gratitude. John Travis's poem "Awareness Takes Care of Itself" comes to us from Bodhi Gaya and Nadine Kildare's heartfelt writing is about taking refuge since the recent, sudden death of her husband. Finally long-time Mountain Stream Sangha member, Maureen Nelly writes to us from her home in Asia about the effects of wearing her Buddhist Amulet, given to her by John Travis, as she travels in Bangkok. Enjoy!

Be sure to see our full-color complete newsletter online at [www.mtstream.org](http://www.mtstream.org), then click "E-Newsletter."



**DHARMA STREAM**

is the newsletter of  
Mountain Stream Meditation Center,  
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We invite you to send a \$10 or \$25 donation to help defer some of the costs of production and mailing. If you send us your email address we can email your newsletter instead of mailing it. Saving on the rising costs of printing and postage is gratefully appreciated.

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We appreciate and consider all contributions to the newsletter. Please send articles, commentaries, book reviews, photos, art and poetry to the above address or email [newsletter@mtstream.org](mailto:newsletter@mtstream.org). Submissions may be edited to fit the format of the newsletter.

Other contributions to Mountain Stream are gratefully appreciated. We can exist and continue to work on community due to your generosity. Our teachers and staff at retreats also are dependent on your dana as well.

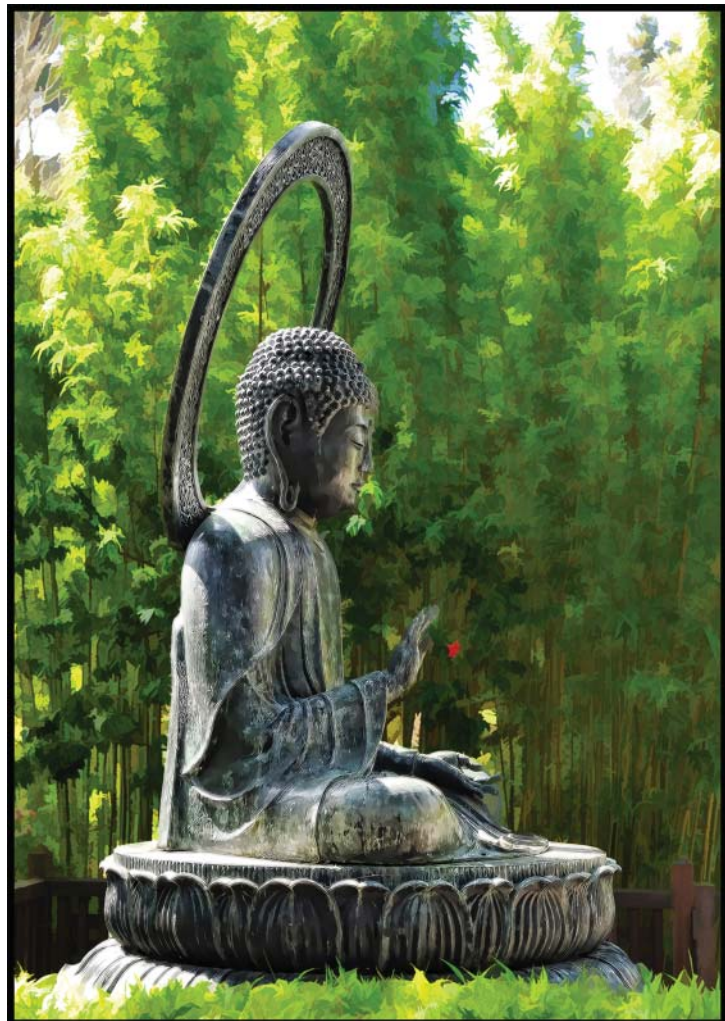
Dana is a Pali word meaning **GENEROSITY**. Dana is traditionally offered at sitting groups, classes, and retreats to support the teachers and retreat staff to continue their Dharma work. Registration charges do not cover the teachings which are freely given because they are considered priceless. Nor does registration cover the retreat cook or manager. Donations to Mountain Stream may be tax deductible in accordance with the law.



10th ANNIVERSARY!

Dharma Stream is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Our first newsletter issue was published in the fall of 2002. Although our format has changed from paper to the new more sustainable e-newsletter, with only our front page and schedules being printed

and mailed, our goal of bringing Insight meditation to the Sierra foothills remains the same. Since 2002, we have printed articles, poetry, photography and artwork created by the Mountain Stream community. We are grateful to have so much talent among us.



“San Francisco Tea Garden”  
Photo © Steven Curnow



## Gratitude: It's Elemental

*continued from front page*

shades of green! So grateful for green! The rock people ground me in gratitude, too. So smooth, so ancient, I like to be still with the stones and listen to the heartbeat of the planet. Grounded, I am grateful to Earth and all things that come from it.

### *Water, my blood*

I am fortunate to be able to hike next to flowing Water. Consciously putting my foot down, I ponder the fluid quality of Water, how it never strives upward, but always flows down, no struggle, no attachment, meandering by choice, continually dropping in. But I don't have to hike by a stream to cultivate gratitude through Water. All I have to do is turn on the tap. I am so grateful for the simple, continuous access to clean water – for drinking, bathing, cooking, cleaning up. Thank you, Water, for flowing to me, through me, giving me never-ending opportunities to cultivate gratitude.

### *Air, my breath*

Walking through the forest, mindfully moving one foot forward, I breathe in the fresh Air and I am grateful. Sitting trailside on Banner Mountain, a cool breeze blows across my face and I am grateful. Safe inside my cozy home, a strong wind whips through the treetops, blowing down dead branches. And I am both awe-struck by the force of Air – and grateful to bear safe witness to this cleansing, elemental power. I'm grateful for nitrogen, for oxygen, for all the gaseous molecules that combine to make precious

Air. Thank you, Air, for supporting all living beings. Thank you for participating in the process of photosynthesis. Thank you for being part of the Ozone layer that protects us from the Sun's strongest rays. "All I need is the Air that I breathe. And to love you."<sup>2</sup>

### *Fire, my spirit*

Living in a place where wild fires are a serious concern, I exercise extreme caution – as well as deep gratitude – when working with the elemental bone of Fire. Aware of lifting my foot during summer hikes, I feel the sun's warmth on my back. And I'm reminded to thank the sun for helping plants grow, for powering photovoltaic cells, for creating the dappled light that spills through the forest's foliage onto the trail, for drying the laundry that hangs on my line. Coming in from cold, rainy winter walks, I give thanks for the



"Sky"

Photo by  
Jenna McAsey

warm shelter of my home, the heat from our blessed woodstove, the hot homemade soup cooked on the blue flame of the gas range. Always, through every season, my gratitude for transformational Fire burns bright. Thank you, dear Fire, for starlight, sunlight, moonlight, love light. Let it shine.

### *Center, all possibilities within our hearts*

In Reclaiming, Center is invoked as the fifth element. Center holds spirit. Center is the home of mystery. There is Center in everything. And, personally, I think the key to happiness lies in the Center. I associate Center with the Brahma Vihara of Sympathetic Joy – the possibility of feeling happy for others' happiness. Through elemental gratitude, Center reminds me to be grateful for every good thing that happens to any being – human or not – on this planet. On my forest walks, I see lots of really happy dogs. And I'm happy they're happy. I hear birds trilling songs of joy. And I'm happy they're happy. I see friends walking and talking together, and I'm happy they're happy. I walk in meditation through the elements that occupy the Gracie Ditch trail behind my home. And I'm happy I'm happy. Thank you, Center. Thank you, Spirit. Thank you, Mystery.

1. "The Benefits of Walking Meditation", by Sayadaw U Silananda. Access to Insight, 7 June 2010, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/silananda/bl137.html>. Retrieved on 2 August 2012.

2. From the ballad by Albert Hammond and Mike Hazlewood



## Sitting in Bodh Gaya

by Cynthia Embree-Lavoie, Rocklin Sangha

*In 1999, I had the great fortune to be able to participate in a month-long pilgrimage to the places in India where the Buddha lived, practiced and taught. I was in the company of other practitioners and guided by an amazing man who was a native of Delhi and a student of Thich Nhat Hahn. It was a life-changing experience for me, partly because of what I experienced just being in such a different culture and partly because it created a sense of deep connection to our spiritual roots. I kept a daily journal during my journey, and the piece below is an excerpt about one of the most moving experiences I had there – sitting in Bodh Gaya near the bodhi tree, where the Buddha himself became enlightened.*

An incredible morning. I don't know if I will be able to re-capture it at all. After "bed tea" in our rooms, we met downstairs at 7:30 to go on the bus to the center of town where the main temple is, and the Bodhi tree, taking our cushions and mats so we could sit there, wherever was available.

Upon arrival, we just walked around a bit, looking at all the monks and lay people from different cultures, different traditions, hearing the chanting and other noise, looking up at the immense stupa. We walked around until we came to the back where "the" Bodhi Tree is surrounded by a small enclosure. A group of Tibetans or Cambodians was practicing there, so we continued on.

Our guide Shantum went back to the front and spoke for a little while with a monk. The monk unlocked a door for us and led us up to a second level, where there was a small meditation room as well as a room along the outside behind a wall which was about three-feet high. We decided to sit outside, facing out. What an incredible sitting, an incredible experience. On the way in feelings/ thoughts vacillated between the ordinary ("It's just a tree, just stone, just people...") and the awesome. I had the same kind of sense while sitting. Images kept arising. I was aware of sitting high up on this immense stupa, which rose up out of all the commotion and noise and busyness below, all the beggars and street vendors, the dogs and pigeons and trucks, like a huge lotus flower rising out of the muck. It was, in some ways, like sitting on Vulture Peak. I felt as if I were at the center of the universe, and all of it felt just right, just perfect. And the sounds, the noises, the truck horns and bells, people laughing and chanting, the variety of birds singing their mornings songs, an old dog howling in pain, the rhythmic "plonk, plonk" of the wooden gong being struck,



"Facets of Buddha"

Photo by  
Steve Solinsky

bells, chimes – it was all one river of sound that enfolded me. And it struck me that it was all one cry, in a sense, the cry of all those beings just wanting to be happy, asking for happiness and freedom from suffering, in whatever way they knew how.

I was reminded of the scene at the end of Herman Hesse's book *Siddhartha* when Siddhartha is an old man. He is on the river, looks

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## “Fire Monks” - A Book Review

by Pam Amato, Nevada City Sangha

Wildfire season in California often brings an uncertainty to those of us living here. I wonder if my husband and I cleared enough space to defend our property in the event the fire force comes our way. We have watched fires as close as one mile away, anxious and alert as our firefighters worked to protect us. Grateful when containment is announced. Relief when the fire is under control.

I just finished a book titled “*Fire Monks*” about the fire in Tassajara - Summer 2008. Zen Mind meets Wildfire at the Gates of Tassajara. A wonderful accounting.

Summer 2008 was a time when more than 2,000 fires burned throughout California, caused by lightning strikes and dry conditions. Monterey and Trinity Counties were under declared states of emergency.

The Basin Complex fire began June 21st in the Los Padres National Forest, and threatened the Ventura wilderness and nearby Tassajara Zen Center with its summer residents. When it was finally fully contained it had burned 162,818 acres. The Indians fire burned nearby, consuming more than 81,000 acres before it was put out.

This was the third time in history that the oldest Zen Buddhist monastery in the United States, tucked away at the end of a 14 mile unpaved road, would be threatened by fire. Reading back history as resident director David Zimmerman had done, we learn that in 1977 and 1999, fire personnel were available to provide support. This time, even though the precautions for defending this property had been made (including a fire sprinkler system on the roof structures nick named ‘dharma rain’ and pumped

from the creek) circumstances of changed fire policy and lack of resources called for evacuations at Tassajara.

When the final call came that no fire personnel would be dispatched to this mountain Zen, five dedicated and experienced Zen monks from the San Francisco Zen Center went back to meet and protect their beloved center. They worked together being ever alert to the smoke conditions, protecting their resources, keeping the water pumps going and the grounds moist. They wrapped the buildings with a fire resistant wrap and buried their Buddha. Their spiritual mindset was one of knowing “everything changes, everything is connected, pay attention.”

As the fire arrived on three sides of Tassajara on July 9, 2008, these five courageous monks experienced the elements of earth, wind, water and fire. They observed that firewood can become ash, and ash will never again be firewood. Their minds, trained to stay in the moment, endured six hours of movement in meeting the fire, watching it die down and re-ignite until it died down leaving ash and passed through with just a few of their structures needing to be replaced or repaired. They were exhausted and grateful that Tassajara for the most part was saved. This is a wonderful read.



“Temple Offering”  
Cambodia  
Photo by Steve Solinsky



## Sitting in Bodh Gaya

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down in the water, and sees the reflection of all the beings he has known in his whole lifetime, flowing together. My sitting was like an auditory experience of that same flow and connectedness. And the sun shining on us, warming our faces. I could have sat there forever. Yet I knew that even if I did, the experience wouldn't last forever, but would change into something else.

After the sitting, Mary read the three refuges, and Roland read another short sutra, one unfamiliar to me, about Right View. As I was listening, looking out at the wall

in front of me, I saw some small Buddhas carved in the stone, and then looked more closely and saw hundreds of smaller Buddhas, everywhere, carved in the design. There are Buddha images everywhere here, and I reflected then that there are Buddhas everywhere. All of us, pilgrims, dogs, beggars, monks, all are Buddha, each and every one of us. We just walk, and sit, and hear, and cry out, all very ordinary.

What struck me was that part of the magnificence of the Buddha's teaching, the wisdom and compassion of it, is that he didn't

attempt to explain the origin of the universe. He didn't claim to know or say how the heavens were created. He only said, "I am a human being, like you, who has awakened, and I can teach you how to find happiness and freedom from suffering in this human realm, on this small earth, in this body that sickens and ages and dies."

So very ordinary and yet so awesome. Like the Bodhi tree.



## Zion Center Progress

Our Nevada City Dharma center is moving towards its late fall opening. Sheetrocking took place this week, with carpentry, wiring, plumbing and other areas falling

into place. There is a beautiful new bay window in the meditation hall and glass front door; a new driveway and a pedestrian walkway. Flowers keep blooming

on the recently transplanted roses and hydrangeas. Inside, the large metal Buddha and White Tara that John brought from Asia await their home in the niches in the meditation hall.



"Qwan Yin Garden"  
Photo by Steve Solinsky

Follow the blog on our website <http://streambuilding.wordpress.com> for more photos and regular updates on the construction and the crew. The Qwan Yin statue shown on this page graces a small space in the back area. She was generously donated by Linda Farley and photographed by Steve Solinsky.

Most recently, Ayya Santacitta, of Aloka Vihara in San Francisco, visited the center and performed a quiet blessing of our wonderful new space.



# Mountain Stream Meditation Center

## Retreats & Events

Sept 2012 through Mar 2013

### Sept 10 - 16, Mon - Sun

6-Night Residential Retreat  
John Travis, Dennis Warren  
Sacramento Insight Meditation  
Angela Center, Santa Rosa, CA  
[www.sactolinsight.org](http://www.sactolinsight.org)

### Sept 15, Sat - Daylong

*Two Truths: The Personal View & the  
Universal View*  
Heather Sundberg  
Nevada City, CA  
[mike@mtstream.org](mailto:mike@mtstream.org)

### Oct 5 - 14, Fri - Sun

9-Night Residential Retreat  
John Travis  
Jackson, WY  
[www.tetonSangha.com](http://www.tetonSangha.com)

### Oct 14, Sun - Daylong

Heather Sundberg  
Sky Creek Dharma Center  
Chico, CA  
530-228-6850  
[jswanson19@hotmail.com](mailto:jswanson19@hotmail.com)

### Oct 19 - 28, Fri - Sun

9-Night Residential Retreat  
John Travis  
Oakwood Retreat Ctr at Rainbow Farm  
Selma, IN  
Barb: 513-542-5258  
[sangha@triStateDharma.org](mailto:sangha@triStateDharma.org)  
[www.triStateDharma.org](http://www.triStateDharma.org)

### Oct 27, Sat - Daylong

Heather Sundberg  
Boeger Winery  
Placerville, CA  
530-626-1640  
[mike@mtstream.org](mailto:mike@mtstream.org)

### Oct 31 - Nov 4, Wed - Sun

4-Night Residential Retreat  
*Buddhism and The 12 Steps*  
Heather Sundberg & Kevin Griffin  
Vajrapani Institute  
Boulder Creek, CA  
[www.kevingriffin.net](http://www.kevingriffin.net)

### Nov 3, Sat - Daylong

John Travis  
Nevada City, CA  
[ann@mtstream.org](mailto:ann@mtstream.org)

### Nov 7 - 14 Wed - Wed

John Travis, Heather Sundberg  
Kailua Kona Big Island, Hawaii  
Catrinka: 808-885-3855  
[catrinka@mtstream.org](mailto:catrinka@mtstream.org)

### Dec 1-2, Sat - Sun, Two Daylongs

John Travis  
Reno/Carson City, NV  
[www.dharmaZephyr.org](http://www.dharmaZephyr.org)

### Dec 8, Sat - Daylong

John Travis  
Davis, CA  
530-867-5743  
[davisMeditation@gmail.com](mailto:davisMeditation@gmail.com)

### Dec 18 - 23, Tue - Sat

5-Night Residential Retreat  
*Insight Meditation at the Solstice:  
Embracing the Dark, Inviting the Light*  
John Travis, Donald Rothberg, Heather  
Sundberg  
Spirit Rock Meditation Center  
Woodacre, CA  
415-488-0164  
[www.spiritrock.org](http://www.spiritrock.org)

### Dec 26 - Jan, 5 Wed - Sun

10-Night Residential Retreat  
*New Year's Retreat*  
John Travis, Gil Fronsdal, Sharda  
Rogell, Adrienne Ross, Janice Clarfield  
Spirit Rock Meditation Center  
Woodacre, CA  
415-488-0164  
[www.spiritrock.org](http://www.spiritrock.org)

# 2013

### Jan 11 - 20, Fri - Sun

9-Night Residential Retreat  
John Travis  
Harmony Ridge  
Nevada City, CA  
Jenna: [jenna@mtstream.org](mailto:jenna@mtstream.org)

### Jan 25 - 27, Fri - Sun

Weekend Non-Residential Retreat  
*The Mystery and the workings of Karma-  
Exploring the Buddhist Approach & the  
Personal Journey*  
John Travis  
San Luis Obispo, CA  
Carole: [camaurer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:camaurer@sbcglobal.net)  
[www.whiteheronsangha.org](http://www.whiteheronsangha.org)

### Feb 27 - Mar 3, Wed - Sun

4-Night Residential Retreat  
John Travis, Gil Fronsdal  
Insight Retreat Center  
Scotts Valley, CA  
[www.insightretreatcenter.org](http://www.insightretreatcenter.org)

### Mar 4 - 30, Mon - Sat

Month-Long Residential Retreat  
Jack Kornfield, Trudy Goodman, John  
Travis, Lila Kate Wheeler, Pascal Auclair,  
Winifred Nazarko, Teja Bell (qigong)  
Spirit Rock Meditation Center  
Woodacre, CA  
415-488-0164  
[www.spiritrock.org](http://www.spiritrock.org)

### May 4 - 11, Sat - Sat

7-Night Residential Retreat  
Gil Fronsdal, Mary Orr  
Spirit Rock Meditation Center  
Woodacre, CA  
415-488-0164  
[www.spiritrock.org](http://www.spiritrock.org)

### May 16 - 19, Thur - Sun

3-Night Residential Retreat Our  
John Travis  
Bodega Bay, CA  
Amy: 530-795-2408  
[ajboyer@gmail.com](mailto:ajboyer@gmail.com)

### July 13 - 20, Sat - Sat

7-Night Residential Retreat  
Heather Sundberg  
Origin, CA  
Osha: [origin@highsierra.org](mailto:origin@highsierra.org)

### Aug 2 - 11, Fri - Sun

9-Night Residential Retreat  
John Travis  
Jamestown, CO (Near Boulder)  
Register: [www.sierraretreats.org](http://www.sierraretreats.org)  
Lois: [drLoisVk@gmail.com](mailto:drLoisVk@gmail.com)

For the most up to date  
retreat information, please  
visit our website at:  
[www.mtstream.org](http://www.mtstream.org)



*Contributions of any amount are  
always welcome. We especially  
appreciate dana earmarked for our  
new Nevada City Center.*

Nevada City Sitting Group Teacher Schedule

Wild Mountain Yoga Center - Monday 7:30 - 9:00 pm.  
Sept 3 John Travis  
Sept 10 Heather Sundberg  
Sept 17 Heather Sundberg  
Sept 24 John Travis  
Oct 1 John Travis  
Oct 8 John Travis  
Oct 15 Heather Sundberg  
Oct 22 Maeve Hassett  
Oct 29 John Travis  
Nov 5 Mary Helen Fein  
Nov 12 Maeve Hassett  
Nov 19 Mary Helen Fein  
Nov 26 TBA

Auburn Sitting Group Teacher Schedule

Canyon Spirit Yoga Center - Tuesday 7:30 - 9:00 pm.  
Sept 4 TBA  
Sept 11 Gale Hesselgesser  
Sept 18 Maeve Hassett  
Sept 25 Maeve Hassett : book night, new book:  
Phillip Moffitt's From Chaos to Clarity  
Oct 2 Heather Sundberg (Series of 4 talks)  
Oct 9 Heather Sundberg (Series of 4 talks)  
Oct 16 Heather Sundberg(Series of 4 talks)  
Oct 23 Book Night  
Oct 30 Heather Sundberg (Series of 4 talks)  
Nov 6 Mary Helen Fein  
Nov 13 TBA  
Nov 20 Tony Bernhard  
Nov 27 Book Night

Board Meetings

Board meetings are open to all. Please be sure to call as the locations listed are tentative. Potluck begins at 5:00 pm. Meeting at 6:00 pm.

Sept 23 MH Fein/Stu Clancy  
Oct 14 Barbara Tandy  
Nov 4 Zion Street Center  
Dec 9 Kathleen Hare

Dharma Talks by John Travis

John Travis's Dharma talks are available on our website. Please visit [www.mtstream.org](http://www.mtstream.org) for more information. You can download and listen to over 80 talks. Enjoy!

Area Sitting Groups

**Auburn**  
Canyon Spirit Yoga Ctr  
538 Auburn Ravine  
Tues—7:30–9:00 PM  
Mary Helen 530-887-9400  
maryhelen@mtstream.org

**Carson City, NV**  
Dharma Zephyr Sangha  
Methodist Church  
213 N. Minnesota  
Mon—7:00–8:30 PM  
Kathy 775-882-4980  
info@dharmazephyr.org  
www.dharmazephyr.org

Dharma Zephyr Beginner's  
Mon—5:30–6:30 PM  
Jeff 775-884-3676  
www.dharmazephyr.org

West Wind Sangha  
Methodist Church  
213 N. Minnesota  
Wed—6:30–8:30 PM  
Terrah 775-841-3921  
www.dharmazephyr.org

**Chico**  
Thurs—7:00–8:30 PM  
Dharma Study Group  
Nancie 530-898-9139

Heart of the Lotus Sangha  
Tues—6:30–8:15 PM  
Joanne 530-895-1579  
juanarojas@aol.com

**Davis**  
Thurs—7:00–8:30 PM  
Jenna 530-756-4494  
jenna@mtstream.org  
www.davisinsightgroup.org

Mon—7:00–9:00 PM  
and 2nd Saturdays  
9:00 am–12:30 PM  
Tony & Toni 530-758-2904

**Minden/Gardnerville, NV**  
O2 Yoga and Wellness  
1557 Zerolene Place, Minden  
Thurs—6:00-7:00 pm  
Karen 775 267-2424

**Nevada City/Grass Valley**  
Wild Mountain Yoga Ctr  
574 Searls Avenue  
Mon—7:30–9:00 PM  
530-265-6111

**North San Juan, CA**  
Tues—7:30-9:00 pm  
(Opportunity for Tea After)  
Your Place, Too  
Near Oak Tree  
(Call for Directions)  
Bruce 530 277-3470  
bruce\_pardoe@yahoo.com

**Placerville**  
Sierra Insight Sangha  
Wed—6:30-8:00 PM  
Gale 530-621-3089  
galerespect@gmail.com  
sue@boegerwinery.com

Thur—7:00-8:30 PM  
Will 530-626-6579 or  
530-306-7264  
mettaphoto@mac.com

**Reno, NV**  
St. John's Church  
1070 West Plumb Lane  
Mon—6:30–8:15 PM  
Dionne 775-771-3435  
www.dharmazephyr.org

One River Sangha  
Reno Buddhist Center  
Tues—6:30-8:15 PM  
820 Plumas Street  
Frank 775-813-7159  
oneriversangha@gmail.com  
www.oneriversangha.org

**Rocklin/Roseville**  
Rocklin Montessori School  
5250 Fifth Street  
Mon—6:30–8:00 pm  
Donna 916-532-6955  
Elke 916-632-8766  
donna@mtstream.org  
elke@mtstream.org

**Sacramento**  
Sun—7:00–8:45 PM  
Sacramento Buddhist  
Meditation Group  
www.smbg.org  
info@smbg.org

2nd & 4th Thurs  
7:00–9:15 PM  
Sacramento Insight Meditation  
www.sactoinsight.org  
info@sactoinsight.org

**South Lake Tahoe**  
Penny 530 541-1610  
pennyfairfield@bmwmotorcy-  
cletech.info

**Truckee**  
Thurs—6:45–9:00 PM  
cathynason@sbcglobal.net







## Blessing

by Susan Solinsky, Nevada City Sangha

I woke suddenly hearing low thunder on a July morning. Then came some fluttering, like leaves on the roof. Rain. At first there were light drops, soft and uneven, then full pounding splats that lasted only long enough for us to run around in sleepwear closing our skylights, to bring in sandals and shovels, garden gloves and rugs. We were showered in thick coolness, and welcomed the joyful noise before it all stopped. Sunlight burst through as the air lifted a perfume of wet earth and washed leaves to fill our senses

with a humid sweetness. It was just enough rain to moisturize the dull heat and offer a respite that doesn't come often to the foothills. July is usually ochre dust and brittle grasses in the Sierras.

But this wetness slipped in as a gift, a reminder, a blessing really after a wildfire 30 miles away still smoked and sputtered. The rain seemed to come when we needed to be grateful, struggling vainly in our everyday discomfort. Maybe it was summoned the day before, in the white Dakini-shaped

clouds that appeared after a day of meditation and Dharma with a visiting nun. Maybe it came because the day was spent inward, quiet, our metta secretly calling the clouds. And they came, as an offering to the parched foothills before thunder woke me early the next morning, reminding me of gratefulness.



Dana Retreat  
From Left to Right -  
Candace Cable,  
Jenna McAsey and  
Lauren Simpson

Photo by  
Jenna McAsey



## Gratitude for this Gift of Perception

by Steve Solinsky, Nevada City Sangha

On the Groundcrew of Wooo,  
as human being, fine-art  
photographer, and explorer  
through the psychedelic 60's, I trip  
with beauty I find in light.

Curious of the power of substance  
to move the heart,  
I am struck by the etymology of  
the word "esthetic."  
Its root comes from Greek "esthes"

which describes the sudden Ahhh  
of breath one takes when captured  
by stunning beauty.

My curiosity takes me deep into  
this sublime experience centered  
in the heart.

It is here I come to know  
Emptiness, and how stillness  
bonds me with all I experience.  
Within the sweet caress of Beauty,

there is recognition of genius and  
perfection in what arises.  
Intuitively, like the potter at his  
wheel, I sense myself integral  
in this process as perceiver, *and*  
creator.

I feel the "ahh" (awe) arising, the  
still wet clay on my hands,  
Gratitude in my heart  
for this gift of perception.



"Harmony Retreat"  
Photo by Jenna McAsey



Awareness Takes Care of Itself

by John Travis

The mind like a great tiger  
Waits for a thought to pounce on.  
Once identified it makes its move  
Making it more real than the world around it,  
Creating worlds of succulent identification.

Today from one thought  
I created Buddha realms.  
Layer upon layer,  
Like a blister  
It popped.

At first stranded in the present;  
Only to awaken to peace  
And contentment of the simple  
Ordinary awareness that holds  
The Buddha feels of right here.

Leaning back not disturbed by anything  
All experience empty  
Need for or against  
Nowhere to be found.  
Thoughts float by like clouds  
Letting everything pass by,  
No place to stand, awareness takes care of itself...



A Poem

by Lao Tzu

Always we hope  
Someone else has the answer  
Some other place will be better  
Some other time it will all turn out

This is it  
No one else has the answer  
No other place will be better  
And it has already turned out

At the center of your being  
You have the answer  
You know who you are  
And you know what you want

There is no need  
To run outside  
For better seeing  
Nor to peer from a window

Rather abide at the center of your being  
For the more you leave it, the less you learn.  
Search your heart and see  
The way to do is to be.



“Temple Entry Terrace”  
Cambodia  
Photo by Steve Solinsky



## My Refuge

by Nadine Kildare, Rocklin Sangha

For years of my practice, I've known and taken in: "I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha." This I cherish, reflect on, and hold dear to my heart, mind, and soul. The last four months since my husband died suddenly of a brain aneurysm, in my arms, in our home, at age 49 – my refuge has taken many forms.

Any form I could grasp after this trauma. Refuge in just a moment without sobbing. Refuge in the time between doctors, family, and friends who came to visit Krish before his body was taken to the hospital where his organs were harvested. Refuge in the task of remembering to breathe. What came through very simply, without me even asking, were not just the words I knew of the Buddha and hundreds of Dharma teachings. The most impressive, beautiful

refuge there for me that week and to this very day is my Sangha.

From the moment calls went out of Krish's brain death, my sangha was there. Sitting with me in the hospital for days. Standing at Krish's body, sending metta to him and me during this traumatic time. Bringing nutrition to me for my body that I had forgotten to take in. Calling me at times when only my Sangha family knew I just may need that call.

The day of Krish's life celebrations service, I was taken aback when I saw a large group of our small Rocklin Sangha there. I asked my dear friend Donna to speak for me, as well as to share who this group of people are to me in my life. Holding hands, all of them, Donna asked all there to note the words of Metta. For me, Donna shared her

most sacred, beautiful version of Metta.

It was a beautiful moment for me.

Their love, kindness, care, compassion and respect was not just shown for Krish and me, our families and friends, but was surely felt like a full force gale of peace, as I was told by many afterwards. I'll never forget that vision of those moments of my Sangha being there.

Here it is, months later and I strive for a day without tears. I go to Sangha on Monday nights, yet cannot sit for meditation for my mind is not yet at ease to do so. What I still know is: "I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma...and most of all, I respect, care and love - MY dear Sangha."



"Krish's Memorial"  
Rocklin Sangha



## The Sacred Amulet

by Maureen Nelly, Mountain Stream International Sangha

The sacred amulet of openings, inclusions, small families, and brief lively encounters. A place to begin. Interactions with an open heart.

It began upon arriving at Tavee Guest House in Bangkok. I had stayed there before and felt like I was visiting old friends. Mr. Tavee pointed at my Buddha amulet with a big grin and said, "Bou-dha!" with a thumbs up.

I did a lot of walking this time, in Bangkok markets, to temples, and throughout northern Samui. The amulet I wear on my heart was one that John Travis gave to all the 2012 Pilgrims at the beginning of our Indian adventures. A giant Kora...

So, the lost key. I met so many people I would never had met...

except for the amulet. Old mamas at chicken stands would grab it from my neck, and scrutinize it and discuss it with their husbands. The feedback I got over and over again was "yes, a good one!" (Men always asked if they could see the amulet without grabbing).

This Buddha was blessed by John in Thailand, it was recognized and blessed in India. And now, traveling in Thailand again, it has been blessed by many others. Sometimes with a smile, a thumbs up, a gesture, and even sometimes with a story. In abbreviated English, some Thai folks would endeavor to tell me about its history, its lineage, where it came from. I was told by a guard at Wat Arun that this Buddha amulet is from the north-east, in the Cambodian style.

I am filled with gratitude. Having encounters of the heart with so many beautiful people...that I may not have had except for the amulet. Common ground.

Upon leaving the Bangkok guest house, Mr. Tavee showed me the amulet he wears to protect the heart. Stunningly beautiful that has a front Buddha part and three small glass orbs in the back with some sacred parts of local saints. You can wear it either way. Mrs. Tavee gave me a present of yellow rose oil, for protection for all travelers. And again, the heart was touched in such a simple and deep way. Cap poon Caa. Bou-dha!



## Beginning Meditation



### Auburn

#### **Oct 2nd through Oct 30th**

5 consecutive Tuesdays  
6:00 to 7:30 PM  
Maeve/Mary Helen  
Unity Church  
1212 High Street  
Contact 530-887-1573  
or 530-887-9400  
maeve@mtstream.org  
maryhelen@mtstream.org

### Nevada City/Grass Valley

#### **Sept 26th through Oct 24th**

5 consecutive Wednesdays  
7:30 to 9:00 PM  
Heather Sundberg  
assisted by Paul Steege  
Core Movement Center  
578 Searles Ave  
Nevada City  
Contact 530-205-8564  
naima@mtstream.org



Mountain Stream  
Meditation Center

P.O. Box 1644  
Grass Valley, CA 95945-1644

[www.mtstream.org](http://www.mtstream.org)  
email: [info@mtstream.org](mailto:info@mtstream.org)

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### **Mountain Stream Meditation Center**

is a nonprofit organization, a vipassana community of Buddhist meditation groups dedicated to open heart, open mind. Retreats are held in various locations from the Sacramento Valley to the Eastern Sierras. Local meditation retreats are small and intimate. They feature vipassana instruction, sitting/walking meditation, group or individual meetings with the teacher, opening and closing circles, vegetarian fare, and dharma talks.

### **John M. Travis**

has been teaching meditation since 1986. He studied in Asia with senior teachers of both Theravada and Tibetan traditions and completed a four-year teacher training with Jack Kornfield. He is the founding teacher of Mountain Stream Meditation Center in Nevada City, California, and a teacher for Spirit Rock Center, a Buddhist retreat and training center in Marin County. John has a private practice as a meditation counselor and has trained in Hakomi body-centered therapy. For appointments call (530) 263-4096.

### **Insight Meditation**

is a simple and accessible vehicle for opening the heart, clearing the mind, and living in a peaceful and free way. It is based on a 2,500 year-old Buddhist practice which trains a clear awareness of breath and body, heart and mind, and the universal laws which govern our lives.

### **Donation and Fees**

are given freely, because the Buddhist teachings are priceless. There is never any charge for teachings. Registration fees for Mountain Stream events cover space rentals, transportation, food and other Mountain Stream expenses. None of this money goes directly to the teachers or staff. Classes and daylongs are also held on a donation basis. To allow teachers and staff to continue their Dharma work, support from the students is needed. There will be an opportunity to contribute at the end of each retreat, class, daylong and event. Mountain Stream requests your generous donation to support our endeavors. We wish to make clear that no one is ever turned away for inability to pay our fees. Please speak to the contact person if you cannot pay for all or part of an event and arrangements will be made.