


Inside Dharma *A socially engaged Buddhist outreach organization applying Buddhist principles in prison & on the street*

The Buddhist Newsletter Serving the Inmate and Ex-Offender Sangha
"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is tied up with mine, then let us work together." - Lilla Watson, Aboriginal activist

VOLUME XIV * ISSUE III **July - September 2021**

"Be The Light In These Dark Times"
by Scott (Konchok Tingdzin Wangyal) Zirus –
Abilene TX

We live in dark times. We are experiencing a period of no lasting peace, insufferable warfare and famine; we suffer increasing danger from sickness, violence and civil unrest; our society is plagued by outrageous behavior that manifests itself through intolerance, hate, prejudice; people are unwittingly blind by distorted views and don't believe that their actions have any kind of ethical dimension.

We are not immune from these degenerations simply because we are behind these prison walls – we will continue to be obsessed with attachment, anger and the need for retaliation; we will experience anxiety, fear and loss through our ignorance; we will cannibalize ourselves in our never ending, self-righteous quest to find lasting happiness. We share all the degenerations of the free world.

But this degeneration of the human condition is not unique. It has ebbed with the tides of human history. What IS unique is the precious opportunity such times present. And as truth-seekers on the wise path through this life, we have the ability to seize that opportunity to bring light to these dark times. When the five Degenerations flourish, transform them into the path of awakening!

With his last breath, the Buddha taught, "Be a light unto yourself."

This is a very profound and relevant teaching for our time. It teaches that we have all the enlightenment that we need within ourselves. When we truly dedicate our lives to cultivating mindfulness and compassion, we develop a deep level of insight that allows us to intuitively know the path before us. We light our own way; we become a light unto

ourselves. By doing so, you naturally begin to "illuminate" and others, seeing this, are drawn from their shadows into your presence. They may not realize it, but they sense something special about this

presence. It is calm, honest, and radiates kindness and wisdom. This is how humanity has weathered the dangerous journey through these dark times...through the deliberate cultivation of enlightened hearts and minds by people like YOU.

When we become consumed by the material world, when we allow our practice to fall to the wayside, our inner light fades, our clarity becomes clouded, and we stray from our path and often lose our way. Fortunately, we can never lose our Buddha nature, so the light can never be fully



extinguished. All it takes to rekindle the light is a little nourishment, tenderness and patience.

It is not a mistake that you have stumbled upon this path. The real mistake is not following it. It has been some time since we have been able to meet as a Sangha, and we do not know when the conditions will allow for us to meet again. And, although the Sangha is an important part of the Three Jewels, not being able to meet is no excuse to neglect your practice and risk your inner light. Don't forget to be mindful. Don't forget to cultivate loving-kindness. The world needs it more than ever! And we are all in the right place to make a real difference.

Meditate, study, practice, share what you Know!
Be the LIGHT in these Dark Times.

“My Thoughts on Buddhism & Covid-19”
by Daryl Inge - Mineral Point MO

It took cycle ages for us to experience a pandemic such as now. More than ever, we must apply even Buddha's principles since the inception of his preaching at the age of 35, who held that suffering is unavoidable in life and the extinguishing one's worldly desires leads to a state of understanding and compassion called nirvana.

My thoughts on Buddhist reflections of handling the changes brought about by Covid-19: Every time we reflect on our memories, it vibrates to others. Through silent reflection or group reflection, the mind is healed.

Buddhahood is the province dedicated to Buddha. Buddha was a man that found enlightenment. The study of Buddhism is the study of ourselves. When we know ourselves, we are mindful of others. The voice of the Buddha has been

repeatedly reflected over the years. However, we must refrain from becoming affected by new mind-states or behaviors that are unskillful, leading to suffering and distress for ourselves and others.

It is so easy to get tired out, worn out and burnt out in a world that is struck by the corona virus pandemic during this past year. This is such a stressful time for family members and society as a whole.

How do we equate Covid-19 with the Buddhist perspective? First, look at the opposite of the 4 Holy Truths which are 4 false views: 1) Mistaking the impermanent for permanent, 2) mistaking suffering for pleasure, 3) mistaking what is not-self for self, and 4) mistaking what is impure for pure.

The 4 Holy Truths are: 1) All existence is suffering, 2) and this suffering has its origins in self-grasping, 3) and that origination of suffering can be stopped, 4) by means for the Eightfold Path. The 8 Fold Path is the Fourth of the 4 Noble Truths; the way to bring about the cessation of the origin of suffering: 1) Right view, 2) Right thought, 3) Right speech, 4) Right conduct, 5) Right livelihood, 6) Right effort, 7) Right mindfulness, and 8) Right concentration. This path is basically the foundation of Buddhism.



Covid-19 has killed millions of U.S. citizens this year alone. Covid-19 cases and hospitalization continue to be at an all-time high when people go against or fail to adhere to social distancing and other suggested protocols. Millions of people have received the vaccines in order to help fight the spread of the virus, yet there are no known

deaths from the vaccines themselves. The developing of the vaccine actually began several years ago and has included much research, development, and testing. Despite this, people are afraid to get the vaccine due to their lack of knowledge about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines. Still, there are others who lack understanding about the corona virus itself and thus avoid taking precautionary or preventative measures when dealing with Covid-19. And as U.S. citizens continue to struggle with handling this epidemic, the virus continues to mutate creating various other strains including the more contagious and deadly delta variant.

That being said, it is up to each of us to handle the realities of a Covid-19 world in the best way we can. This would include developing our Buddhist practice by following not only the 8 Fold Path as previously mentioned, but also the 16 precepts. These precepts are divided into 3 groups: The 3 Jewels (The Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha); the 3 Pure Precepts (do no harm, do only what is good, and live to help others); and then there are 10 Virtuous Precepts (don't kill, don't steal, don't indulge in sexual misconduct, don't lie, don't indulge in idle talk, don't covet other peoples' wealth, don't display false views, don't harbor ill will, don't be selfish, and don't turn away those who want to hear the teachings).

Embracing these essential principles and practices comes to fruition when one is committed to the pursuit of Enlightenment.

"Covid-19 Changes"
by Norman Toler - Farmington, MO

Buddha taught the Four Immeasurable Minds (*metta, karuna, mudita, upekha*) as qualities of the mind to be cultivated. *Upekha* is consistently translated as 'equanimity.' It might be helpful to

think of equanimity as evenness of mind or stability of mind. Equanimity is 'the quality of being calm and even-tempered.'

Evenness of mind is aroused, developed, and sustained in *zazen*. Day in and day out the mind is steadied in the present moment in immobile sitting, in the bright awareness of *shikantaza*. The ability to stay with the present – attentional stability – is a powerful skill for developing evenness of mind. The skill of paying attention (ardent, alert, and heedful) to the present moment helps me weather change. I am connected to my thoughts and feelings. However, staying connected to the moment allows me to evaluate the situation for what it really is.

Institutional changes have been drastic as a result of Covid-19. The only way to respond is with a mind that is even, calm, and composed. I cannot change the changes.

"Buddhist Reflections of Handling Changes Brought About By Covid"
by Chris Bouquet – W. Concord MA

My reflections in sharing pertaining to this relevant issue at hand ultimately are based and grounded in getting to the point as I've always shared.

Life can be challenging, and thus, our practice enhances how we handle every life challenge. The result is the karma of how we are handling things and being. Our state is really a determining factor of how we handle all life's changes and challenges. When faced with challenges it's important that we continue to be in a focused and peaceful state.

When present we can face changes in a state of peace which is ultimately what we practitioners are all committed to.

Changes have not all been easy and responding in a state of stillness, which resulted from practice, has helped make things much more bearable.

**“Covid-19”
by Leonard Waechter – Lamesa TX**

Covid-19 and what it has caused is a little batty. Mom is 87 and she got it in December 2020. I also got it, and I’m 61. Her brain fog is clearing, mine’s been here since 1978 (due to other factors). Four siblings, 1 son, 2 nephews and 4 nieces are all still alive and haven’t contracted it, as far as I know.

My six year prison sentence is over in April 2022 and I hope I won’t be locked down in my freedom. If I am, I’ll still have more room to roam than I do in solitary confinement which is only 5,760 cubic feet.

I feel fortunate to be healthy as I was very ill as a child until I passed the age of 10. So, solitude is a strong memory of much time to think, meditate, as I have now. But now, I have little physical discomfort.

Between then and now, I’ve learned to understand much more than I did in the 1960’s. I’ve learned about most religions of the world, the eastern and indigenous being the oldest, and in my opinion, the closest to the true spirit of nature.

It seems the Texas prison system is letting Covid-19 run its course as they no longer separate those

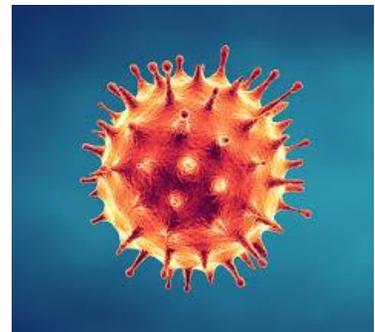
infected from others, and they still keep us locked up 24 hours a day for weeks at a time. I must remember that everything in this world is temporary (except consciousness and the spirit). That gets me through.

**“Corona Entity”
by Jeremy (Yoshi) Brown – Arcadia FL**

Change and fluctuations among all viruses and variants arises. Our humanoid bodies were created by master architect Buddhas to be in a sit-u-ation of perfected adaptation. E contemplators of this notion sit Zen like in created creation. Within the interbeing of self arises personal self-regeneration. Through neutral plasticity we can colonize our own brain with the scientia of simple meditation. Our negative perceptions of the coronavirus must ultimately change. Is not this virus a beautiful living being like ourselves? Why are we in fear? Why do we remain scared? How many animal, mineral and plant beings were scared of us humans after our annihilation of them?

We must open our mind’s perception of this viral being corona entity and become one with it. I send my love to it and ask it not to hurt too many

human beings. I ask this corona entity to not bond too harshly to my DNA. I listen to why it is killing us and ask it what does it truly hunger after? If it is food or blood, I will share and sacrifice part of my body for it. Corona entity wants to be seen, heard, and wants us to now be aware of its world of viral bodies...not to commit warfare.



We must send loving, peaceful, welcoming vibrations towards the corona entity. And only then, will we live in peace with one another and all others.

“The Covid-19 Experience”

by Jimmy Shelby – Bowling Green MO

In August, my cellie has been denying that he was sick for the last few weeks. I was asked about him, and I told them that he was in his bunk all day and night for the last week, under his coat and blanket saying that he was cold and not doing any of his artwork. They called the nurse, who came to examine him. It was then that I found out, as he told the nurse, that he hadn't eaten anything for over a week. The nurse left; they locked our door so that neither one of us could go into the wing. The nurse came back with an oxygen tank, hooked him up to it, took his blood, swabbed him, and took him to the transitional care unit. I was told to pack up all of my property because I was going to 10 house – the quarantine house. There I met with the other guys who has been taken there just a couple of days ago. (This was Tuesday night; 8 pm.) That Friday morning, all of us had to move to housing unit 1, which became the isolation and quarantine housing unit.

We made it to 1 house, and I was placed in a cell with someone who had already tested positive. We both tried to tell the staff this fact, but we were told that it was close contact and we had to be in the cell together. At this time there were plenty of open cells that each of us could have been alone. Little did we know that more people were coming. The next day the nurse came, and we told her this fact of my cellie testing positive and that I had not been tested at all. Of course, there was nothing that she could do, but she said

that she would check into it. That night guys started arriving from other housing units, including ad seg and the hole, and this lasted through the morning before everyone had made it there. That day the nurse came and she said that my cellie was positive for Covid-19 and she told custody, it was up to them to do something about it.

The third day, a CO came to the cell and said, “Shelby, you’ve been tested positive for the virus.” My cellie and I both told him that that he had the wrong person. I wanted to know how could I have tested positive when no one had taken a swab sample from me. The CO had no answer for that and said that he would go check on this. He came back later and said that we were right, and that Smith (my cellie) was positive and I was to move to another cell at the end of the walk. I moved to the new cell, alone for a day and a half until a guy moved in that night. This was Thursday. His cellie also went to TCU and he was moved like I was. But he says that he has the virus, didn't tell anyone and had made it through okay. He says that because of the fact that he and others around him had the virus that he could now smell it.



A few days later, on Monday, they take a swab from my nose but not from my cellie. A week and a couple of days go by, and when I see the nurse, I asked about the swab results. She said that I tested positive. I'm amazed as I've had none of the symptoms, nor did I go through any of the things that everyone else was experiencing. From what I was told by everyone who had the virus, it

was not nice and they all went through a number of unpleasant symptoms.

That Friday they moved me across the walk into another cell. The guy in there said that he has tested positive. So, now there's two of us in a cell who are positive. Monday a few guys go back to general population while a couple go back to the hole. My cellie is moved to the cell next door, and my previous cellie was moved into the cell with me; go figure! We're all at a loss. Another few days go by and the nurse swabbed me again...yet my cellie still has not been swabbed at all. About nine days pass, and when the nurse comes back, I ask about the results of my swab. She said I was negative and should have already been moved back to general population. On September 4th, I was finally moved to 6 house, not 3 house where the extended care unit wings are located. I requested not to go back and had to sign out of the ECU program.

The beginning of March in 2021, I took my first vaccine shot of Moderna, and the second shot at the end of the month. I was finally fully vaccinated and this was good because anyone who wanted to have visits had to be fully vaccinated. Then on April 22nd I was moved to 11 house, and open bay housing unit for those who were level 1s and 2s. This housing unit was supposedly for people who could work outside the camp. But because they had to get all the levels 2s off of the general population side and out of the camp, we were placed here. On May 25th, I was transferred to Bowling Green MO, Northeast Correctional Center, a level 2 facility.

Throughout all of this time, I studied and meditated every day, considering that there was plenty of time and none of us were leaving until we had a negative test result. In the beginning you had to have 2 negative results, whereas by

the time I was released, we only needed one negative result. I am still studying and meditating and will continue to do so.

RESOURCE DIRECTORY –
To request copies of the resource directory for St. Louis, please write to:

Heartland Zen
9648 Olive #364
St. Louis, MO 63132

Note: There is only ONE directory and it is only for St. Louis.



“The Brain That Cried Wolf”
By Reverend “Shindo”
Tom Bradshaw
Shinzo Zen Meditation Center
St. Louis, MO

The other day an old Aesop fable came to mind with a Zen twist to it. Imagine you are a shepherd & work with a guy named Brian. Brian is new to the job & wants to do his best.

The first day is going great. Suddenly Brian runs over shouting, “Wolf! Wolf! There’s a wolf near the sheep!” So, you go running after him to see what needs to be done. When you get there, you realize there is no wolf. Brian had mistaken a gray boulder for a sitting wolf.

The next day after lunch Brian runs over yelling, “There’s a wolf just over the hill! I saw it creeping in the field. You follow him & see

that the “wolf” was just a grey tarp slowly blowing across the field.

The third day Brian comes running as fast as he can & yells, “I saw a wolf running along the trees!” You both rush to the sheep & see there is no wolf – just a baby deer.

At this point you’d probably sit Brian down & be like, “Hey, Brian. You’re doing a good job overall, but you have to stop freaking out over everything that you believe is a problem. You *really* have to take a closer look before you sound the alarm. Got it?”

What is interesting is that this is how we treat **Brian** but not our **brain**.

The brain’s job is to keep an eye out for us – which is a lot like Brian keeping an eye on the sheep.

Our brain cries wolf when it thinks something is a *real* problem when it’s not. Here are some examples: Maybe the brain thinks someone was being mean when they said something. Maybe the brain thinks we won’t get a job because we don’t have nice clothes for the interview.

Just like Brian was doing his job looking out for the sheep, our brain is doing its job looking out for our well being. Both Brian & the brain are doing their best; Brian looking out for wolves & our brain thinking about someone being mean or a failed interview. In this way the brain (like Brian) is just fine. Problems arise when the shepherd always mistakes Brian’s shouts for a real wolf or when we mistake our brain’s thoughts for truth.

When we sit zazen we start to become aware how many times the brain cries wolf. (It even

cries wolf during zazen too – “My zazen is no good today!”) As Zen practice continues there is a change in the understanding of the brain. This means we don’t believe everything it says like we used to. When the shepherd stops believing Brian & stays calm, Brian calms down because he begins to realize that wolf problems are not that common.

But since we still have a brain (just like the shepherd needs Brian’s help) we need to listen to what the brain says. Zen practice allows us to listen to what the brain has to say without immediately believing it. We need to listen to the brain because there will come a day when there is a wolf. Maybe we find a lump in our arm & our brain says, “Could this be cancer?” The answer could be yes.

Zen practice has two sides to it then. First, it is noticing when the brain comes crying wolf & like the shepherd, just listening before we believe it. Second, it is trusting the brain is doing its job & cutting it some slack when it overreacts.

EDITOR’S CORNER:

Dear Readers,

Laughing Bear Bakery has purchased a new building and Shinzo Sangha & Inside Dharma will be allowed a small space within this building. Thus, please know that at the end of this month of September we will have a NEW ADDRESS:



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Reminder: **Our next issue deadline is Nov. 30th.**

In gassho, Kris (Kyuryo), Editor

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***For our 2021 Oct. – Dec. Issue
We will publish your thoughts on....***

***The greatest gift which you
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has given to humankind.***

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