

Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship Convocation 2005 Presentation Descriptions

The Chalice and the Wheel: the Meeting and Mutual Transformation of American Unitarianism and Japanese Buddhism

These days it is common to find Buddhist meditation groups in Unitarian-Universalist churches and hear sermons with Buddhist themes preached from the pulpit. But few UUs are aware of just how long the relationship between UUism and Buddhism has been developing. The first Japanese Buddhist to visit America became a Unitarian in 1843, a year before Unitarian Elizabeth Peabody published the first English translation of a Buddhist text. Unitarian missionaries first came to Japan in 1888, when a Buddhist reformer requested that they be sent to his country. In the 227 years since Unitarian writer Hannah Adams first struggled to make sense of the diverse forms of Asian religion, Unitarians and Buddhists have had a strong influence on one another, such that modern Zen and Pure Land Buddhism have been partially reshaped by the Unitarian encounter and American UUs include Buddhist materials in their hymnals and Sunday School programs. In this presentation we will learn about these and many more connections between American Unitarians and Japanese Buddhists, uncovering hidden moments in our shared traditions.

Jeff Wilson is a lifelong Unitarian-Universalist and certified Lay Teacher in the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist tradition. Editor of the UU Sangha and Contributing Editor of Tricycle: The Buddhist Review, Wilson is pursuing a Ph.D. in Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His research focuses on Buddhism in America.

Awakening the Wisdom that Has no Teacher: Mind to Mind Transmission in the Zen Tradition

John Daido Looi is one of the West's leading Zen masters, founder and spiritual leader of the Mountains and Rivers Order of Zen Buddhism and abbot of Zen Mountain Monastery, one of America's major Zen training monasteries. Several affiliated sitting groups of the Mountains and Rivers Order practice in Unitarian Universalist churches. Looi is a lineage holder in both the Rinzai and Soto Schools of Zen. He is known for his unique adaptation of traditional Buddhism into an American context, particularly with regard to the arts, the environment, social action, and the use of modern media as a vehicle of spiritual training and social change.

Looi is also an award-winning photographer and videographer, with a successful career in both commercial and art photography. He has had over one hundred one-person and group shows in the United States and abroad, and his photographs have been published in leading photography journals. Looi's most recent books are *The Zen of Creativity: Cultivating your Artistic Life* (Ballantine Books 2004) and *Hearing with the Eye* (Dharma Communications 2004). Shambala Press is publishing *Timeless Inquiry: Master Dogen's Three Hundred Koan Shobogenzo* in the year ahead.

Bringing Mindfulness Into the Mainstream

Beth's presentation will describe her work teaching mindfulness meditation to children and adults in health care and education settings throughout Connecticut, and the courses she offers at USNH on Buddhism and meditation practice. She will discuss the similarities and differences in bringing Buddhist meditation practices to diverse populations in two languages.

Beth Roth has been practicing Vipassana or Insight meditation since 1987. She is a Nurse Practitioner, with a Masters Degree in Nursing from Yale University. She has been teaching Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) since 1993. She trained with Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD, founder of the internationally acclaimed Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester. She teaches MBSR in Spanish and English to inner-city medical patients with chronic and life-threatening illnesses, and to graduate students at Yale University. She does consulting work with hospitals, health centers, elementary schools and universities in Connecticut, bringing mindfulness meditation to children, educators, and health care and social service professionals. She has published numerous descriptive and research articles about the effectiveness of MBSR as a therapeutic intervention in health care. Since 1999 Beth has been part of the Adult Religious Education Department at the Unitarian Universalist Society of New Haven (USNH) in Hamden, Connecticut, where she teaches courses on Buddhism and meditation practice. These programs focus on the application of Buddhist principles and practices for healing ourselves, our families, our communities and our world. Beth is married and is the mother of two young children, and has a special interest in the relevance of fundamental Buddhist teachings and mindfulness practices to parenting and family life. Together with her children she has offered meditation programs for children and families at USNH. She has published essays about parenting, adoption, and meditation with children in *Adoptive Families Magazine* and *The Inquiring Mind*.

Waking up to Our Deep Connections

According to Mahayana Buddhist traditions of Tibet and India, the path to Enlightenment is not a quest that issues in an isolated achievement, but a deep, intuitive awakening to ones deep connection to all others. This is expressed in the doctrine and art of Buddhahood as a luminous embodiment of liberating activity that spontaneously radiates out to many others. In our practice session, we will enter into meditations of wisdom and love designed to bring out the intuitive awareness and energy of that deep connectedness.

Lama John Makransky has studied and practiced Buddhism since 1978 under the guidance of Nyingma, Gelug and Kargyu teachers of Tibetan tradition. He is a lama in the lineage of Dzogchen Master Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche and his western dharma heir Lama Surya Das. He is also Associate Professor of Buddhism and Comparative Theology at Boston College and Senior Faculty Advisor for Chokyi Nyima Rinpoches Centre of Buddhist Studies in Kathmandu University, Nepal. He received his PhD in Buddhist Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison based on Fulbright research with Tibetan scholars in India and Nepal. His research focuses on ways that practices of Indian and Tibetan Buddhism have informed developing doctrines of Buddhahood. His books are *Buddhahood Embodied: Sources of Controversy in India and Tibet* (SUNY press, 1997) and *Buddhist Theology: Critical Reflections by Contemporary Buddhist Scholars* (Routledge-Curzon Press, 2000). Lama John teaches often at Dzogchen Center retreats throughout the United States where he has become renowned for his ability to help retreatants discover and express their innate compassion towards self and others.

Schedule Design

The presentations by our speakers will be preceded by meditation practice that incorporates the speaker's tradition. The talks will be followed by small group discussion time to integrate the learning and develop personal relationships between UUBF members. Early morning and late evening silent sitting will offer extra time for unstructured group practice. The opening and closing worship will integrate Buddhism with Unitarian Universalism.

Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship Convocation 2005 Schedule

Friday, April 29

3:00pm Registration
5:30pm Dinner
6:30pm Welcome and Orientation
7:00pm Opening Celebration
7:30pm Jeff Wilson's Presentation
8:30pm Break
8:45pm Small Group Meeting
9:30pm End of Program
10:00pm Silent Meditation (optional)
10:30pm Bedtime

Saturday, April 30

7:00am Silent Meditation (optional)
8:00am Breakfast
9:00am Zen Practice and John Daido Looi, Roshi Presentation
11:00am Break
11:15am Small Group Discussion
12:00pm Lunch
1:30pm Vipassana Practice and Beth Roth Presentation
3:30pm Break
3:45pm Small Group Discussion
4:30pm free time / social hour
5:30pm Dinner
6:30pm Tibetan Practice and John Makransky Presentation
8:30pm Break
8:45pm Large Group Discussion
9:30pm End of Program
10:00pm Silent Meditation (optional)
10:30pm Bed time

Sunday, May 1

7:00am Silent Meditation (optional)
8:00am Breakfast
9:00am UUBF Meeting
10:00am Break (finish packing/cleaning rooms)
10:30am Small Group Closing
11:00am Closing Worship led by Kim Crawford Harvie
12:00pm Lunch
1:00pm End of Convocation