

The Dharma Drum Beat

Newsletter of the Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association—Chicago Chapter



Upcoming Events in 2011

The year continues with more exciting and worthwhile happenings! Events are held at our 1234 N. River Road, Mount Prospect location, unless specified otherwise, and all are free unless noted. We are a bi-lingual organization, welcoming both English and Chinese speakers. Please check the Future Events page on our website for late-breaking news at: <http://www.ddmbachicago.org/futureevents>

Venerable Guo Ming Visits!

November, 4—7, 2011

Venerable Guo Ming will be joining us for an activity-filled weekend beginning Friday, Nov. 4, through Sunday, Nov. 7. Ven Guo Ming was Director and Abbot of the New York Chan Meditation Center (CMC) from 2004-2008, and has served as director of other DDM affiliates in Taiwan.

Friday, Nov. 4

7—9pm

The weekend will start with our Fall Fundraising Dinner, where Venerable will be our special guest as we enjoy each others company and many delicious vegetarian dishes to help support the many important activities and programs at DDMBA Chicago. Dinner is from 7:00—9:00pm at Szechwan Kingdom Restaurant in Northbrook.

Saturday, Nov. 5

10-12pm

Half-Day Chanting Ceremony: During this ceremony we will chant "Amitabha" or the Chinese "Amitofo". Amitabha is the Buddha of the Western Pure Land. The ceremony is appropriate for both English and Chinese speakers.

1-4pm

Mandarin Chinese lecture: The Platform Sutra. This sutra from the sixth Chan patriarch, Huineng, discusses sudden enlightenment and the direct perception of one's true nature.

Sunday, Nov. 6

1-4pm

English lecture: "Mastering Time-Keeping, including Chan Yoga". A Time-Keeper is an important role in a meditation retreat, since they maintain the schedule and assure the well-being of participants. If you are interested in gaining certification as a Time-Keeper, this class will train you for the position!

Holiday Party

Saturday, December 10, 2011

6:30pm

It's time for our annual Holiday Party! The evening will start with a delicious vegetarian potluck dinner, then we'll look forward to Santa stopping by to read stories to the children!

We will also be holding a gift exchange this year which always makes for holiday fun. Please bring one gift per person valued at \$10 or less. The gift can be labeled for a 'child under 10 years', 'woman', 'man', or the gift can be unlabeled if for a general adult. If you bring children, please bring a gift for each child to exchange too.

'Tis the Season for Giving! Our holiday charity will be Save-a-Pet. They need food and supplies for cats and dogs. Their food needs are specific: Science Diet dried or canned food, Pedigree dog food, Friskies cat food, and Tidy Cat or Pine kitty litter. More information is available at: <http://www.saveapetil.org/newPage>

Climate Project Presentation

Sunday, December 11

1:00pm

On this afternoon we will have a specially trained speaker from the Climate Project give us a presentation on current climate issues. This grassroots environmental organization is headed by former V.P. Al Gore and its continuing mission is to raise awareness of climate change issues.

Save the Date... Fall Fundraising Dinner!

On Friday, November 4th we will hold our ever-popular Fall Fundraising Dinner featuring countless tasty vegetarian dishes to delight your palate. Venerable Guo Ming will be our special guest for the evening.

Szechwan Kingdom Restaurant, 545 Waukegan Road, Northbrook, 7-9pm.

The Surangama Sutra Study

By Dan Baker

There are several things one notices when they bow and step into the large Chan Hall at Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Pine Bush NY. The amber glow of the wood interior blankets you with strength and reassurance that practice will be special here. The spaciousness of the hall and outer campus conjures awe and an unhurried state of being. I found myself here in August of this year to participate in a 7-day Surangama Sutra Study/Retreat with the added purpose of receiving Time-keeper certification.

In the first few days of the program I was carefully instructed on new standing and sitting yoga exercises, when and at what cadence to strike the large drum, how to use the clapper blocks and many other new things such as lighting and ventilation. Two other experienced time-keepers from other Chapters were also seeking certification. We were all of varied experience in this role and we learned a lot from our exchange of notes and ideas. Knowing that in a just a few days I would be leading the meditation and yoga for 70 retreatants, I came to appreciate just how much crafting goes into the orchestration by the resident monks. Having this purpose in caring for the quality of others practice did not give me pure escape from my own self-doubt of performing at a high standard. As I would quickly find, the anxiety of how well I would do was really a gift packaged in responsibility. It supplied me the chance to see the frequent arising of attachments in my mind. I observed the subtle anticipation of a good outcome and the aversion of uncertainty along the way. Remembering that the purpose of buddhadharma is to free one from vexation and that it's unnecessary to suffer from these vexations because they derive only from perception, I soon found calm and accepted whatever was next.

Each day began at 4:30AM with waking boards and consisted of three 2-hour lectures from Ven. Guo Xing interspersed with sitting practice. Copies of the Surangama were handed out during each talk and I found it very helpful to hold and see this material in support of his talks. The sequential translation was excellent throughout and gave me time to take many notes. In addition to the Sutra study, we chanted the Surangama Dharani each morning which was very auspicious in it's spirited pace and volume.

When my day to time-keep finally arrived I felt very lucid and positive. It seemed like the medicine of practice and dharma-study had taken effect as the fetters disappeared. The honor of leading the practice that day will be a highlight all my life and enriches me today.

Prior to this retreat I had some exposure to the Surangama from my friend Mike Harbut (who also attended). But counter to his constant urging I hadn't taken it too seriously nor understood how to approach the study of it as to benefit my practice. Upon returning from this retreat, a mere week of exposure, I was floored by how profound it was. To me it has become the keystone to the gate of Chan. You'll have to pardon me for not expounding on what is explained in this precious sutra. It's scope is just too great for this article. I'm hoping that your curiosity is peaking and you will investigate it yourself. I recommend getting a hardcover copy of Venerable Master Hsuan Hua's new translation from The City of 10000 Buddhas website: cttbusa.org

If this program is offered again at DDRC in 2012 you will see me there!



Inter-Faith Workshop: Rays of Hope—Remembrance of 9/11

On 9/11/2011, several hundred people gathered together in the mission of remembrance and hope for the tragedy that occurred 10 years ago this day. Even though an understanding of the events of that day still elude us, a message of tolerance, peace, and love of humanity guides our way. Members of many religious faiths came together to honor those who were killed and to offer insight in to their respective experiences. Representatives from the Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Native American, Baha'i, Sikh, and Buddhist communities shared words and music to offer their remembrances.

Reoccurring themes were that of inter-connectedness, warnings to not dwell in the past, and the importance of education. Both Muslims and Sikhs talked of the dangers of racial profiling and their daily struggle against being mistaken for terrorists. Other faiths offered prayers of peace and understanding and hopes for shaping a new future.

Representing Buddhism was Belinda Li, practitioner and past president of DDMBA Chicago. Belinda shared how the practice of metta meditation, or loving kindness meditation, is used to help liberate us from our focus on ourselves so that we may better contribute to the collective well-being. She also shared several verses from the Dhammapada which had special poignancy for the day's message. Among them:

Verses 5-6:

"In this world
Hate never yet dispelled hate.
Only love dispels hate.
This is the law,
Ancient and inexhaustible.
You too shall pass away.
Knowing this, how can you quarrel?"

Verses 129-131:

"All beings tremble before violence.
All fear death.
All love life.
See yourself in other.
Then whom can you hurt?
What harm can you do?
He who seeks happiness
By hurting those who seek happiness
Will never find happiness."



Belinda Li of DDMBA Chicago addresses workshop participants at the Performing Arts Center of Harper College in Palatine.

She then concluded with the with the transfer of merits.

Even though the reason for this gathering was never forgotten and the somber tone continued throughout, the promise of hope and understanding seemed to bring feelings of realization and anticipation of our individual responsibilities towards caring for one another to help ensure this tragedy does not happen again.

Dr. Jimmy Yu's Visit to DDMBA Chicago

On Saturday, October 15th Dr. Jimmy Yu (Guo Gu) presented a lecture in Chinese on "The Gem of Chinese Buddhism: The Significance of the Dharma Drum Chan Lineage". Later in the day, he gave a short talk on the basics of chanting and some of the key points to remember. He then led a chant in both English and Chinese of the Chan Liturgy. Both of the days talks were very well attended.

Sunday's activity was a day-long meditation retreat introducing the Huatou method of practice to a group of 30 novice and experienced meditators. For the benefit of beginners, he provided an introduction to the specificities of the Chan school before explaining differences between the methods of Huatou and Mozhao (Silent Illumination). The rest of the day was devoted to sitting, walking, eating, and mindful work with the Huatou, concluding with a Dharma talk and discussion of Huatou in daily life.



A Message from Guo Gu: Pure Land on Earth Pilgrimage 2012

Dear Dharma brothers and sisters,

Shifu established the Dharma Drum Mountain (DDM) as a sanctuary for the world. It is an embodiment of his vision of a Pure Land on Earth. We have all put our hearts and efforts into making this vision into a reality. It is our home away from home. In 2007 I brought a group of 17 of Shifu's long-time students from the US and Europe (with the help of Zarko Andricevic) to go back to Taiwan to see him. Shifu passed away in 2009 and this was the last time we all saw him. Our visit continues to be extremely meaningful in many ways. For example, he encouraged all of us to transmit Chan on his behalf and serve as a bridge to bring the teachings to new places. I write to you about an opportunity to make an 11-day pilgrimage to DDM at the end of May 2012. Shifu's corporeal form is no longer here, but his life's work and teaching is. To understand his teaching is to understand ourselves and the deeper significance of the Dharma. This pilgrimage to DDM will recharge us spiritually and enable us to bring back what we learn to the rest of the world. We will be the "drummers" who continue Shifu's legacy and extend DDM's contribution to the benefit of all humankind, and, no matter where we come from, we help build the bridge that brings Chan to the rest of the world.

I will be leading this "Pure Land on Earth Pilgrimage" in May, 2012. Enrollment will be limited to 80 DDM supporters/practitioners abroad. I am writing to all chapters, branches and offices to invite all who wish to join this pilgrimage.

Our pilgrimage is both a unique practice opportunity and a vacation. It is a practice opportunity because we are in good company with other bodhisattvas from the US and Europe and together we will participate in a 5-day intensive Chan retreat (in English) under the guidance of Ven. Guo Yuan at the Chan Hall of DDM. It is a vacation because we temporarily remove ourselves from our daily concerns, worries, and entanglements. We remove ourselves from what we normally think of as samsara to return to the DDM Pure Land, our home. We will visit some of the local DDM monasteries in the Taipei area. We will also visit Taipei's important cultural and scenic sites so that we can experience the beauty of Taiwan and its people.

In the Dharma,

Guo Gu

***If you would like more information about this pilgrimage**

please email us at DDMBACHicago@gmail.com

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Visit us on the web:

<http://www.ddmbachicago.org/>

The DDMBA Chicago is part of the International Cultural and Educational Foundation of Dharma Drum Mountain, DDM, founded in Taiwan by Venerable Sheng Yen. DDM is dedicated to the spiritual and educational needs of people at all stages of their lives.

The regular activities that take place at our Center comprise of two main groups: practice activities and social/caring activities .

Practice activities include Chinese Dharma Study Group, English Dharma Study Group, Meditation, Chanting, Sutra Prostration, and Monthly Gatherings. In addition, the meditation hall is open to the public for self meditation every Sunday morning. Currently our English programs include monthly book discussion, weekly meditation, and other special events. New programs are added often.

In addition to our English newsletter, the Chicago Chapter publishes a monthly newsletter in Chinese. Both the English and Chinese newsletters are archived in the newsletters section of the DDMBA Chicago website.



Inter-Faith Workshop: Rays of Hope held at Harper College September 11, 2011.