



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2017

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<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/toowoomba>

Dear Friends,

As we approach the season of festivity, the season of coming together, exchanging gifts and of joyfulness, it can be helpful to stop for a while for reflection. We can ponder upon our own experience of joy and what it means to us, not only at this time of year but every day of the year. What is our experience of joy and does it have any connection with giving and receiving? Is happiness the same as joy?

Joy is spoken of in many faiths and may mean a special kind of happiness related to blessings, profound peace or the service of God. In Buddhism, one of the *Brahma Viharas* or Pure Abodes is *mudita*, which can be translated as sympathetic joy or gladness. *Mudita* is a pure joy unadulterated by self-interest. It is being happy in the joy others feel, happy in their good fortune, however that may manifest. We can cultivate such joy through the meditation practice of *mudita bhavana* but we can also cultivate it through practising gratitude. Each day we receive so much for which we can be grateful – food and water, a home, communication with others, the environment, freedom to practise our faith, this precious human birth and so on. When we give to others in any way, we share our abundance and delight in the happiness that others feel. When we gratefully receive, we are enabling others to experience the joy of giving. May all blessings be yours. [Viriyaja]

DECEMBER 2017 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

- Thu 7th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; conclusion of Ch. 5 - Ethics of Views [V]
- Thu 14th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **Sevenfold Puja** [R]

JANUARY 2018 CALENDAR

- Tue 16th **Women's Dharma Study [8.30am], and Women's Meditation [10 am] recommences**
- Thu 18th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation celebrating:
20 years of the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre [V]
- Thu 25th **FRIENDS NIGHT:** Meditation; **Sevenfold Puja** [K]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*:

This year the study program has included stories from the Pali Canon, teachings from the *Udāna*, 'suffering in the context of everyday life', and the *Heart Sutra*. We began an in-depth look at how we might live more ethically, using Sangharakshita's book '*Living Ethically*' and other writings. In December we complete *Ethics of Views*. In 2018 we shall finish the book by looking at *Mental States* and *The Results of Actions*.

****FRIENDS NIGHTs, on Thursdays, 7-9pm, are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor. There is no charge for these events, but a donation is very much appreciated, since we rely heavily on people's generosity to keep the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre operating.***

Friends Nights are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices, learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, but most importantly to engage in these activities in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect; each month one or two devotional practices take place and other evenings have a Dharma study/activity component.

MISSING LIBRARY BOOKS – do you have one of these?

Many thanks to Jan Rutherford, for her work in completing a stocktake of the Centre's library books recently. There are a number of **books missing**, which may have been missing for quite some time. Here they are:

'*The Dhammapada – Pali Text and Translation with stories and brief notes*' by Narada Thera

'*Everyday Enlightenment – How to be a Spiritual Warrior at the Kitchen Sink*' by Pema Chodron

'*Buddha's Brain*' by Rick Hanson

'*Make Your Mind an Ocean*' by Lama Yeshe

'*Nothing Special Living Zen*' by Charlotte Joko Beck

'*Empty Cloud: the Teachings of Xu Yun*' by Katsuki Sekida

'*An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*' by Kazuaki Tanahashi & Tensho D. Schneider

'*Essential Zen*' by Alan W. Watts

'*Who is the Buddha?*' by Sangharakshita

'*A Guide to the Buddhist Path*' by Sangharakshita

Please look on your bookshelves [or even in unusual places!] to see if any of them are hiding there.

SANGHA DAY and MITRA CEREMONY – Saturday 4th November:

Congratulations to Peter Barden, who became a Mitra within the Triratna Buddhist Community in the good company of family and friends. Around two dozen people joined in the celebration with meditation, a puja incorporating the Mitra ceremony, rejoicing in merits and having lunch together. The children heartily joined in the proceedings too, enjoying colouring in and stories from the Buddha's life. Sadhu to all!



'ENCOUNTERING THE BUDDHA' - a retreat report from Jan Hew:

I recently attended the "Encountering the Buddha" weekend retreat led by Siladasa a visiting Triratna Buddhist Order member from Melbourne. It has become an annual tradition to the delight of many Sangha members at the TBC and wider Triratna community. As I live in Brisbane the opportunity to attend a weekend retreat in Toowoomba and reconnect with the three jewels, is a highlight on my annual retreat calendar.

'When meeting the Buddha, the heart opens.' This is the first line I have written in my notebook. I certainly found this to be true over the weekend. After much illness in 2016 I was feeling disconnected in many ways, so this was very timely for me personally. So much can be said about encountering the Buddha and Siladasa, in his usual wise whimsical style, led us through our own bit of awakening. We considered many qualities of the Buddha - his compassion, kindness, patience and skills in meeting others where they are. We considered his connection to nature; how he led by example, and how he went out of his comfort zone to seek the truth.

Do I wish this for myself? If so, how can I become more receptive to Buddha's influence? How do I find inspiration for my own practice in everyday life? Perhaps I can meet the Buddha through symbols and ritual: bowing to the shrine, my meditation posture, the simple act of lighting a candle.... "to him who is the light, we offer light". Perhaps through the chanting of mantras, a walk in nature, creating a shrine in my garden or home; by reading out loud poetry or the precepts. Some of us connected with the earth touching *mudra* of Shakyamuni and Akshobya, others the fearless *mudra* of Amoghasiddhi. There were many inspiring pithy phrases such as: 'Whatever helps arouse our faith and trust in the Dharma - USE IT!' or 'Never underestimate the power of your kindness', to take with me in my practice.

As the weekend progressed and my heart opened ever more widely, the faith in my practice deepened along with an increasing confidence and clarity. I am wholeheartedly grateful for the Three Jewels, who continue to inspire and guide me in my life. Many Thanks to Siladasa and to all who participated in our "Encountering the Buddha" retreat. I felt totally safe and held within the Sangha jewel. Much love and metta [Jan Hew]

COMING UP IN 2018:

20 years of the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre: In January 1998, Roger initiated a first gathering of like-minded people in (then) Janet's house, which quickly became a sangha, meeting regularly in various people's houses and other venues. While nothing is yet planned to formally celebrate our 20th birthday, there will be a small celebration through meditation and reflection on our first Friends Night for 2018 – January 18th. May many of us gather then!

Retreats: The Toowoomba Buddhist Centre normally holds 3 weekend retreats a year. No dates or topics are confirmed yet for 2018 but we are planning to hold them in March, July and November.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

**Truly auspicious and a festive time,
A happy morning and a joyful rising,
A precious moment and a blissful hour
Will come for those who offer alms
To the ones who lead the holy life.**

**On such a day, right acts in words and deeds,
Right thoughts and noble aspirations,
Bring gain to those who practise them;
Happy are those who reap such gain,
For they have grown in the Buddha's Teaching.
May you and all your relatives
Be happy and enjoy good health.**

Anguttara Nikaya (III, 150)



On 'Encountering the Buddha' retreat, November 25th 2017