# UU Sangha

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## Not Knowing Is Most Intimate: Bearing Witness with Zen Peacemakers Bernie Glassman & Eve Myonen Marko

**By Bob Ertman**

The main presentation at our 2007 Convocation was the session on engaged Buddhism led by Roshi Bernie Glassman and Sensei Eve Myonen Marko, founders of the Zen Peacemaker Order. The Zen Peacemakers are committed to Zen practice and social action around the world but are probably best known for their core practice of Street Retreats and their Auschwitz-Birkenau retreat.

The session was billed as an exploration of engaged Buddhism and so it was. After an introduction to the three tenets of the Zen Peacemaker Order– not-knowing, bearing witness, and loving action–Roshi Bernie gave us his understanding of the enlightenment experience: the realization of the oneness of life, the interconnectedness of life. The task of the Zen teacher is to help us stumble into this experience and the real key is to help us experience the state of not-knowing.

That phrase, of course, is used in many different ways. Because he didn't know us or where we were stumbling from, Roshi Bernie asked us what we thought the Zen Peacemakers meant by not-knowing. And so the day went, comments and responses followed by more comments and questions and stories in response; not a lecture but an exploration which defies summarization. I can offer here only the impressions of someone who sat and listened.

Not surprisingly, most of us thought that not-knowing was mostly about understanding that there is much that we don't know. But, the Zen Peacemakers told us, knowing that you don't know is knowing, not not-knowing.

A comment that intrigued Roshi Bernie was that persons in a loving relationship must accept that their partner has vast areas which they cannot know. He told us that there is a koan, "Not knowing is most intimate."

Alex Garr and Kay Jorgenson of the Faithful Fools with Bernie Glassman and Eve Marko of Zen Peacemakers Order

He told us a kind of story: A fish swimming in water is intimately with the water– the water is flowing through the fish and around the fish and the fish is mostly water, as we are mostly water. You have to step out of the box to say that a fish is swimming in water. Not-knowing is not stepping out of the box of oneness.

Sensei Eve told us about a late night radio broadcast she had heard many years ago in Yonkers, New York: A Catholic priest was being interviewed and what he had done was bring a trailer down to Times Square and he was giving hot coffee and donuts to the women working in Times Square. The woman interviewing him said, please

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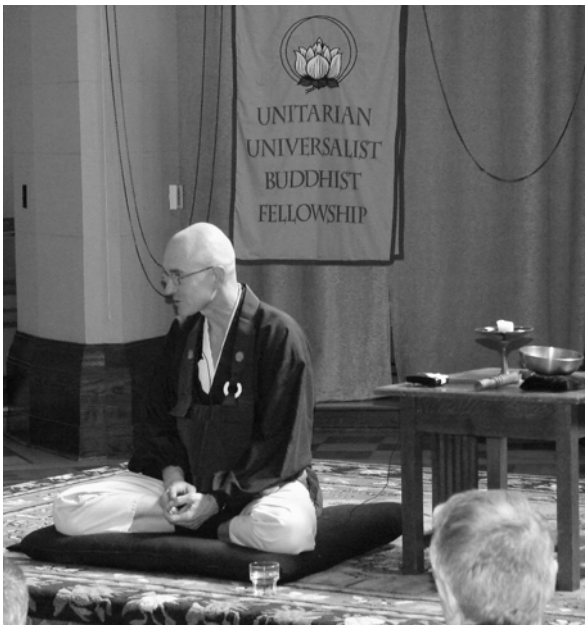
# Editorial Insights

This issue of *UU Sangha* highlights the program and experiences from the 2007 UUBF Convocation held last April in Garrison, New York. Bob Ertman gives us an inspiring account of the workshop on engaged Buddhism led by Roshi Bernie Glassman and Sensei Eve Myonen Marko. Also included in this issue are the Convocation opening message from Wayne Arnason and Marni Harmony's Convocation sermon. A more complete set of the 2007 UUBF Convocation sessions is available on audio CD/DVD. Order information is included on the UUBF Web page. More photographs from the 2007 Convocation may be viewed at: http://www25.uua.org/uubf/uubf-convo-2007-pictures.html.

In another article, Wayne Arnason, reports and reflects on the UUA Board's decision last June to discontinue the affiliate status of a number of groups including the UU Christian Fellowship, UUBF, and a long list of others.

Finally, Ginger Williams, a 2007 Convocation participant, shares her Two Poems for the Buddha (© Ginger Williams, poems reprinted with permission from *Restringing the Beads*, Quaker Path Press, 2007).

**Gerald Bennett, Editor**




Konrad Ryushin Marchaj, Osho, from the Zen Mountain Monastery, Convocation 2007 Presenter

## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP

**President**
Wayne Arnason (Zen)
27100 Osborn Road
Bay Village, OH 44140
440-333-2255 x102 (w) 440-250-0300 (h)
Email: bergthor@aol.com

**Secretary**
Samuel A. Trumbore (Vipassana)
405 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12206
518-463-7135 (w) 518-456-7708 (h)
email: strumbore@uumin.org

**Treasurer/Publisher**
Richard Swanson (Zen)
PO Box 8434
Essex, VT 05451
802-878-5992
email: rsswansonvt@gmail.com

**Editor**
Gerald Bennett (Zen)
2126 Ansley Place West
Augusta, GA 30904
(706) 729-0105 (h) (706) 231-2759 (cell)
email: egsmb@yahoo.com

**Directors:**
Catherine Senghas (Zen)
Arvid Straube (Vipassna)
Judith Wright (Tibetan)

**Web page:** http://www.uua.org/uubf/

**List server**
UUBF-L@uua.org
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explain to me what you are doing. He said, I'm giving the women there hot coffee and donuts and a warm place they can go into between whatever it is they are doing. And she said, yeah but what are you really doing, and he said, I'm giving hot coffee and donuts to the women who are working .... She said but you're a Catholic priest, don't you tell them that they shouldn't do this? He said no. She said, don't you, I mean, don't you preach at them, don't you ...? He said no. She said, I still don't understand what you are doing. And he said, I'm giving hot coffee and donuts to the women working in Times Square.

Most of us laughed as the story unfolded, amused by the interviewer's attachment to her conception of what a Catholic priest should do. Sensei Eve went on to a fuller statement of the first tenet: "Not-knowing, thereby giving up fixed ideas about ourselves and the universe." Most of us, I think, understood this as a story about not-knowing, bearing witness, and loving action, all together.

The second tenet of the Zen Peacemakers is bearing witness–bearing witness to the joy and suffering of the world. And what do the Zen Peacemakers mean by this? The sense of bearing witness is becoming as close as possible to the situation, becoming the situation. Sensei Eve said that's where plunges come in, that's where they go out on the streets.

A Street Retreat is a plunge into the unknown. Participants give up the comfortable and familiar and go out with the clothes on their backs, no money, maybe a social security card, and meander slowly on the streets, aimlessly, hanging out with homeless people. They eat at soup kitchens and churches, they panhandle, they experience the generosity of the streets, the generosity of cardboard cartons which both cover them at night and protect them from the dampness of the ground. Begging is an important part of the spiritual practice–it teaches how to receive generosity.

Roshi Bernie told a story about an elderly woman who was panhandling on one of his retreats. She was happy when a woman gave her a dollar but when she was crossing the street she began crying. She realized that the woman had averted her eyes when she gave the dollar.

Roshi Bernie says that the Street Retreat is the most transforming Zen practice that he knows. No one who has gone onto the streets with him could encounter a homeless person on the street and look the other way.

Not-knowing, bearing witness, and loving action. I left the Convocation determined to bear witness to life on the streets of the capital of Maryland with the Mindfulness Practice Group of the UU Church of Annapolis. We did, and I will tell you that story in the next issue.

## Not Two: Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism

**by The Rev. Wayne B. Arnason**
**For the UU Buddhist Fellowship Convocation**
**April 12, 2007**

Two years ago when we gathered here at Garrison Institute for the first-ever Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Convocation, we had the feeling that the event was marking a turning point. For twenty years we have sustained a Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship as a way to raise the flag of this powerful spiritual practice and religious identity within Unitarian Universalism.

This blending of Buddhism and Unitarian Universalism has been especially dynamic for the last two decades, but its roots are deep in the nineteenth century, as the texts chosen for readings today testify. The first Buddhist text published in English was a translation by the Transcendentalist Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, published in an 1844 issue of the Dial. It is only right and true, however, to acknowledge that the two great 19th century poets of the spirit, Thoreau and Whitman, who we have read from tonight, and whose instincts testify to the realization of Buddha nature in the west, and whom we love to claim as poets of our faith, had little interest in the covenants and disciplines of the Unitarian church community that was available to them in their day. James Ford, Sensei, the first Buddhist teacher who is a fellowshipped UU minister, has written that in our time "Western Buddhists of many different schools who are seeking ways to integrate their experiences of East and West are

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discovering Unitarian Universalism as a true home" – and "that Buddhism is being integrated into this great Western tradition as a rich variation on our liberal religious theme". While Sensei Ford's observation is undoubtedly true, the question I want to address tonight is essentially: "So what?" How much difference does it make to have a Buddhist presence within Unitarian Universalism, and what difference does it make to have a relationship with a Unitarian Universalist church as part of a spiritual life that is also grounded in the Buddhist practice.

There have been two standard observations UU Buddhist leaders have made over the years about the mutual interpenetrating benefits that Western Buddhists who make their way into UU communities discover. 1st Buddhists find benefits in a structured and well-ordered curriculum of religious education for children when they want to raise their kids with a knowledge of our ancestral religions but also with a world religion perspective and, of course, with an openness to Buddhism. 2nd . Unitarian Universalism has long been committed to justice and social activism in ways that make sense to many Western Buddhists. These two possibilities for enriching our lives have been very attractive to Western Buddhists. Buddhists have also come with their gifts to Unitarian Universalism: primarily meditative practices and a refreshing commitment to spiritual practices and moral precepts that are non-theistic, and rooted in the plain and simple experience of attention.

But even in the last two years since we last gathered, I have noticed that there are more and more Buddhist sanghas who are integrating religious education and justice work into their everyday community life, learning from UU and other Western religious traditions how this can best be done, and resulting in less need among Western Buddhists for a UU community to fill in these gaps in their community practice. In my own Buddhist tradition, housed at Zen Mountain Monastery an hour or so north of here, the Sunday service now includes a full Zen Kids program with monastics leading a three hour program of religious education and activities for the children of younger sangha members who want to attend services. I am also aware of sophisticated and effective social and environmental justice initiatives coming from ZMM, some of which you will see reflected in the workshops this weekend. While not all Buddhist communities have taken these steps, Buddhist sanghas around the country are looking at what it means to offer more services and options to their students, following a pattern that we have seen in Buddhism for centuries, a pattern of learning a new culture and shaping the way that the dharma is taught to be able to transmit it most effectively in another part of the world.

So what does this mean for Unitarian Universalism and UU Buddhists? I think that it means we have to embody these two traditions within each of us, seeing them as one reality that we practice, and inviting others we meet who have Buddhist interests or practice but no sangha to consider the possibility that a Unitarian Universalist community could be that sangha. Unitarian Universalism needs to be embraced by people with Buddhist leanings not just as a convenience, or as an organization where a membership results in certain specific benefits, but as part of a way of life.

The involvement of lifetime or long time UU's with Buddhist practice is reaching a point where there is one symbolic gesture that I am hoping will be made during the process we are just beginning of reviewing the Unitarian Universalist Purposes, Principles and Sources. The gesture I am advocating is that a statement about Buddhist teaching being one of the sources that influences the Unitarian Universalist tradition be added to the list of sources that we affirm.

I am working with ideas about what this statement might say and I would welcome your thoughts about the subject. Currently I am thinking we should advocate for a line in the sources that says: "Buddhist teachings which recognize the impermanence and the unity of all things and which invite us to realize ourselves through contemplative practice."

This is how I would summarize what Buddhist practice has brought to Unitarian Universalism, and how I hope we are changing our faith by the kinds of people we attract to be involved in Unitarian Universalism. Our great gift to our UU tradition is the gift of dedicated contemplative spiritual practice than engages our members with impermanence, with non-duality and with realization.

## BLOWING ON THE COALS

**By Rev. Dr. Marni Harmony**
**UUBF 2007 Convocation**

Archibald MacLeish's play J.B., a modern retelling of the Biblical story of Job, includes some now familiar words in the last scene. J.B.'s wife Sarah has returned to him; they are embracing; and J.B. cries that it is too dark to see. Sarah then says: "Then blow on the coal of the heart."

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"The candles in churches are out.
The lights have gone out in the sky.
Blow on the coal of the heart
And we'll see by and by….
We'll see where we are.
The wit won't burn and the
Wet soul smolders.
Blow on the coal of the heart
And we'll know…we'll know.."

"Blow on the coal of the heart."

What does it mean to blow on the coal of the heart?

Coal, of course, is a combustible rock. In its hardest form it is a metamorphic rock, having been exposed to elevated temperature and pressure. It's also the largest single source of fuel that produces electricity and heat.

Sarah was telling J.B. to breathe and fan the coal into light and warmth. And she was saying that one must trust in love to see, for love, she says a bit later, is "all the light now."

Do you know that coal in your heart? Have you taken the time to learn about that dark place, that hard place that needs more than anything our attention and kindness and willingness to find it and bring it into the light. Coals of course are dark, like the dark side of the moon. And we understand that we can't separate the dark side from the light side of the golden moon. It's all moon. Nevertheless, it is important to reach inside ourselves and discover if there are any smoldering coals—whether these are coals that may enchain us or energize us or enlighten us. For the coals are the meal of liberation.

Guishan Lingyou, living sometime in 8th century and dharma heir of Baizhang, became a monk at age 24. (Koan from Dogen's 300 Koan Shobogenzo, case 47)

Early in his training (that is to say, perhaps after 5-10 years) Guishan was sitting alone one night in the zendo. There he sat, completely alone in a dark, cold space. It was probably not much like zendos today, often with heating and cooling and beautiful polished floors and comfy cushions and mood lighting. Guishan, rather, sat in the cold, in the dark, not even burning any altar candles. At some point, his teacher, Baizhang, came in. Even in the dark, Baizhang sensed that someone was there and asked, "Who's sitting there in the dark?" Guishan said, 'It's me, Master…it's Guishan." "Ah," Baizhang says, "Please, stir up whatever coals may be in the fireplace. Rake through the coals and see if anything is still burning and get the hearth going." Guishan arose, stepped up to the hearth, and starting searching for live coals, but he couldn't find any. He told Baizhang that the fire had already gone out. Baizhang then picked up tongs, dug deep into the coals, and pulled out a single live ember and said, "What's this?"…
"What's this?

Ah, Guishan….he completely missed it. He missed the whole thing. And in that moment he was as dead as the ashes of the fire. He could not see the life that was right in front of him.

"The fire has gone out," says Guishan. It feels like a painfully familiar place to me. I know that place intimately. I'm assuming most of us do. If we're ministers and it's close to June and vacation time…it often feels like the fire has gone out. We started the church year in a whirlwind of energy and creativity and now…the fire has gone out. If we find ourselves in a relationship that just isn't working and we've raked the coals until our arms ache, at some point we may just conclude that the fire has gone out. Or we've exhausted ourselves working on behalf of one injustice or another and there seems to be no progress, at some point we're just too tired to keep alive that small, burning ember of hope. Or it's that bothersome, nagging doubt about practice itself; that the fire has somehow grown cold. Like Job, it feels like it is just too dark to see. If we're lucky, some Sarah—some friend, comes along and looks at us, pokes us, and says, "What's this?"

I don't know how many of you have seen the marvelous Miyazaki movie "Howl's Moving Castle." But there's wonderful imagery in the story. The wizard Howl, cursed by the Witch of the Waste, lives in an enchanted moving castle and is said to eat the souls of young girls. Inside the castle is Calcifer, a talking fire-demon who provides the power for the castle's movement. A magic contract binds Calcifer and Howl together and so Calcifer must work as a servant to Howl. We learn that Howl's heart lies in the ashes of Calcifer's fire. Suffice it to say there's a war and sorceresses and an array of characters that include our heroine Sophie, but in the course of events a bucket of water is thrown on Calcifer, extinguishing his fire and possibly killing Howl. But Sophie, happily, is not Guishan. Though Miyazaki doesn't mention it, I'll bet Sophie's been sitting for a few decades; probably lifetimes. She puts her poker into the ashes and keeps searching. She doesn't give up. And finally she finds in the rubble a small spark that she retrieves. And that little spark turns into the portal to and from the magical castle. Stepping through the portal, Sophie finds herself in the land of Howl's childhood. There she learns that as a

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young boy, Howl had caught a falling (dying) star—Calcifer—and saved its life by giving it his own heart—the gift that bound Calcifer to Howl. But, metaphorically, the result of that gift is that Howl remains in a childlike state incapable of mature love. Sophie eventually convinces the Witch of Waste to give Howl's heart back to him. As Sophie pushes it into Howl's chest, Calcifer then emerges in his true form as a shooting star. How's that for blowing on the coal of the heart!

So as I was thinking about our focus for this convocation, I kept thinking about the image of blowing on the coal of the heart or, in the case of Howl, his heart literally lying in the coals.

I find this such a difficult, troubling time in the world. Maybe it's my age…but I feel it more. There is so much suffering and brokenness and lack of balance and harmony…so many hearts lost in the coals. A deep part of our practice is to not separate ourselves from suffering; to be present to it. To extend the image, we have to walk on the coals of suffering and find a way to stay whole. And we have to find the bit of light left in the burning coals. And we have to figure out what ignites our spirit… most especially with regard to how we will bear witness in the world.

We need to find ways to engage in mindful acts that address suffering. It's part of our practice, but a part that's played out as much off the cushion as on the cushion. To be an engaged Buddhist, our practice must include this element of service. We need to be responsible not just on personal level but as well on global level. HH the Dalai Lama has been a profound spokesperson for engaged Buddhism, using the term "spiritual democracy" to suggest that every living being has an equal right and desire to happiness. In engaged Buddhism, our actions are based on our best understanding of the common good; what will really serve all beings.

A monk asked Basho: What is the essence of your practice? Basho's simple answer: Whatever is needed. Whatever will serve the common need….What is needed, right here, right now…in this moment. Part of raking through the coals, it seems to me, challenges our capacity to look into our hearts and minds and see what is needed…and to look deeply into the phenomenal reality of the world and do what is needed. And, needless to say, to develop and employ skillful means to do that.

Skillfully witnessing to suffering can take many forms. We've heard about the Street Fools ministry and the Zen Peacemaker Order's bearing witness retreats at the Nazi concentration camps. I'd like to share one that is dear to me and is now part of an eternal living coal in my heart...or perhaps a shooting star in my heart. And that is participation in the Jizos for Peace Project.

If you travel in Japan, you will find statues and shrines to Jizo almost everywhere. Jizo is widely known as the guardian of women, infants and children, travelers, and those at life's crossings. Stories and legends abound about Jizo—there's the Jizo who "pulled out the nails of pain", the Jizo who prolongs life, the Jizo who protects houses and harvests from fire, the Jizo who burned his cheeks rescuing someone from Hell, the Jizo who helps in childbirth, the Jizo who watches over children and prolongs life. Jizo also became the protector of those most helpless—the oppressed, aged, the poor, and the children. Children, especially, may seek refuge under Jizo's robe when they are afraid.

Jizo is benevolent, seeking to do good, largely because he sees all beings as innocent and pure and vulnerable. One of the practices recommended to cultivate the benevolence of Jizo is to envision each person's heart as holding a baby Buddha. Our response to that baby is to have patience and to love and guide them as they grow. What's this? asked Baizhang. Maybe the answer is, "A baby Buddha." Blowing on the coal of the heart.

In his left hand, Jizo carries the Jewel of Truth that radiates light and hope in places of darkness and despair. In her right hand, Jizo carries a pilgrim staff—a staff of non-harming. Jizo's true name could be compassion, bringing aid to those who suffer, celebrating whenever we take steps that lead us closer to liberation. And Jizo does not judge when we fall back into old ways and bad habits that cause us difficulty. Jizo is unfailingly there to cheer us on whenever we take even the smallest positive steps. She is unfailingly optimistic and has become a sort of patron saint of lost causes. Jizo, of course, represents that part of each of us that is moved by others' suffering and wants to do something to help or relieve it. And when we call upon the power of Jizo we are calling up the power that is within each of us that supports us in fulfilling our life purpose.

One of the stories told about Jizo is called "Angry Jizo." (The story is from Jizo Bodhisattva by Jan Chozen Bays.)

"A brilliant flash painted the town white. It was as if the sun had fallen before his very eyes. People wearing scorched and tattered shirts fled past the fallen Jizo, dragging their feet on the ground. When the fires finally died down, the city of Hiroshima had become a vast field of burnt-out ruins, without houses or schools or office buildings or trees or flowers. A badly burned little girl collapsed face down in front of the stone Jizo. Her entire

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back was bright red, as if draped with a blanket of peonies. "Mo-m-my, water. I want some water," the girl said, looking at the stone Jizo. "Some water, please, water."

Before this the stone Jizo had been known as "Smiling Jizo," but at this point, tears (reportedly) fell from Jizo's eyes, a salty water offering.

In memory of the thousands who died during and after the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima on August 6 and 9, 1945, more than 400,000 hand drawn images of Jizo were taken to these cities two years ago on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the bombings. When I heard about the project, I invited the church I serve to participate. So throughout the fall of 2004, all ages gathered at different times and places to learn about Jizo and draw the images along with messages of peace. We then took the varied and beautiful panels and used them to decorate our holiday tree. After that, the panels were sent to Great Vow monastery where they were sewn into banners and prayer flags and offered to survivors, temples and children's groups.

For me and for many members of the congregation, this experience offered a deep teaching about bearing witness to a time when "the lights had gone out in the sky." I like to think that each week when we light our chalice in our congregations, we are truly reviving that ember of light in the burning coals of a suffering world. "What's this?" we're saying to a broken world and to each other. "What's this?"

So blow on the coals of the heart. Keep practicing. The best light we have is that which resides in the ordinary human heart, just as it is.

## A UU "MU" – REFLECTIONS ON UUA AFFILIATE STATUS

**By UUBF President Rev. Wayne Arnason**

On June 26, the UUA Board voted not to renew the UU Buddhist Fellowship's application for Independent Affiliate status. The vote came not because we have changed but because UUA policy has changed. Along with virtually all other former affiliates encouraging theological identities and practices (such as the UU Christian Fellowship, the Humanists, CUUPS, etc) we were denied renewal because we supposedly do not meet new criteria related to supporting congregational life and cooperating with each other in attempting to do so. Almost all former affiliates were denied renewal on similar grounds, so we are assured it's "nothing personal".

There has been much furor on the chat groups and blogs associated with some of the former affiliates, especially those representing theological identities, declaring that this is at best an insult, and at worst an ominous sign of creedalism and conformity. I don't believe it's any of the above. In fact, in a previous life as a UUA Board member, I was in on the beginnings of discussion about this policy and understand quite well why it was formulated. Two years later, and now off the Board, I have trouble recognizing the original intent in the ways that the desire to tighten up affiliate status is now being interpreted and applied. It feels like a "fundamentalism" has emerged here, i.e. One Powerful Revelation , namely, that the UUA's mission should be focused on its owners, the congregations, is being applied like a razor shaving away all other concerns, viewpoints, and gray areas.

Having said, that, what difference does this new policy, whether it proves to be for good or ill, really make to UUBF? Should we be concerned about whether we are a formal UUA affiliate? My answer is "Mu".

When we are given the koan known as "Mu" we learn that the word in Chinese means "no" but in certain circumstances it can have the opposite nuance and imply "yes".

Affiliate status with the UUA used to entitle us to certain privileges. Those privileges included access to program slots(s) at General Assembly, web site and chat line hosting by the UUA's server, and discounts on some advertising in the World and the GA Program. We are told that none of these privileges are unavailable to us any more. However, the decisions about how these privileges are granted have been "outsourced" to the committees or staff responsible for managing them.

So the new policy creates more work for the GA Planning Committee, the UUA staff who manage their web site and server, and the staff who manage advertising policy. UUBF leaders will do our utmost to communicate and cooperate with them, (they didn't make the policy, after all!) and we expect that we will be able to use UUA resources in the future at a fair cost to us that recognizes the value that organizations and networks devoted to exploring the UU sources have to both congregations and individual UU's. We will also cooperate with other theological identity groups insofar as such cooperation proves useful for us and helpful to the staff and committees who manage resources we need.

On the positive side, if we don't bother to seek independent affiliate status any more, we are saved the hassle of annual paperwork, a UUA donation, and proba-

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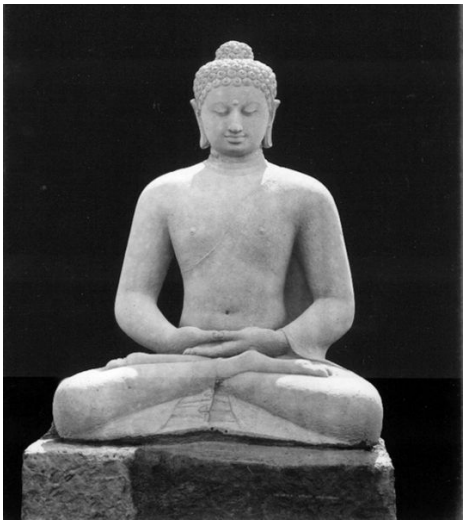
bly the laborious process of seeking 501 c 3. status. For UUBF, the incentive to be a 501 c 3 was less around the value of tax exempt dues or donations for a small organization like ours, and more around meeting UUA requirements. Our Board will be discussing whether 501 c 3 is worth having in this brave new UUA world.

So does the UU Buddhist Fellowship have UU nature? Despite not being an independent affiliate of the UUA any more, the answer is still and always has been "Mu." Sit with that this year and we'll see how things turn out.



## Two Poems for the Buddha

~1~

I find you where the grass grows thick, sweet.

Where water runs free.

Inside the peach, the almond.

At the core of every core.

Gleam. Shine.

You move in shadows.

Blaze in human hearts

~2~

When Buddha comes
swinging his lamp across the path
casting light for those on their islands
and for those needy of rest or shelter

when Buddha comes
as horse or sick dog, as bridge or jewel
as lotus or the rising moon
of the mind, or wish-fulfilling tree

then, so will I too
take up the lantern, let it glow
on the bridge, the tree, so will I too
begin to shine like my own sun

sweet as the core of every fruit
the nectar of all honey
so will I too become radiant
with light, turn the wheel away

from black smoke, turn the wheel
toward the six realms, where
something has begun to live
beyond the tree, the bridge, the lamp

even beyond the blazing
of the ten thousand suns.

**Ginger Williams**

## UUBF Convocation 2007—Garrison Institute, Garrison, New York

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