

St. Thomas Tidings

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Lozang Zopa shares his views on Buddhist meditation to members of St. Thomas Church in June.

Year 2008 Issue 5

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A Tibetan Monk Speaks Out On Buddhist Meditation

Developing a spiritual life is a responsibility, not a choice," explained Lozang Zopa, a young Tibetan monk who made that choice more than a decade ago.

Zopa, known to the St. Thomas congregation as Bobby Miller, 32, son of vestry member Karen and husband Bob Miller, spoke about Buddhism and meditation to a group of St. Thomas parishioners in June.

"The religion we practice is a personal choice. Whether you are religious or not is a personal choice. In Buddhism there is no discussion of a Creator God, but Buddhism contains devotional practices, so it has the characteristics of a religion.

"The spiritual urge is innate, no matter what culture or gender or religion you are. We all have spiritual longings but don't know how to hold the moment. The moments fade as we get caught up in our daily lives. Buddhist meditation can be used to enhance that spirituality, to bring it into our

daily lives."

Bobby, as we shall call him, began turning toward a more spiritual life while still in high school.

"I grew up feeling different," he said in an interview. "The books I liked to read, the conversations I liked to have, were different from that of most of my friends.

In a time of turmoil in his young life, as he watched a good friend suffer from Hodgkin's disease, his mom gave him the book *The Snow Leopard*, written by Peter Matthiessen. It is the story of the writer's 250-mile trek through Nepal on a spiritual journey, in search of the elusive snow leopard, but also for healing, following his wife's death.

That book inspired Bobby to read about Buddhism and influenced his decision to major in Asian History at the University of Illinois, where he eventually focused on Chinese, Tibetan and Indian histories.

As part of those studies, he spent

his junior year in Nepal, and had his first contact with Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

"When I came back to the US, I had a big decision to make. Friends and I had been saving money to travel after graduation. I had one year of study left: Should I go off with my friends as planned, or take the money I had saved and pursue my studies of Buddhism?"

Two weeks after graduation, Bobby was in Northern India in an exclusive, three-year Tibetan language program designed to train translators. He began to get the urge to become a monk.

"On my dad's advice, I got a Tibetan teacher, who said I should wait at least a year before making such a decision. I waited two years.

"I worked in Australia for a Tibetan teacher in residence. I translated his lectures. It was an excellent opportunity."

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Greetings from Vance ~

Peggy and I send greetings to our new parish family. The past few weeks have been busy ones, but they have been filled with joy as we anticipate a new chapter in our life with you at St Thomas Church, Burnsville.

Peggy and I will long remember your welcome Sunday, June 22. This first Sunday was a glorious celebration.

The reception following the 10:30 am service was filled with delicious food and joyous fellowship. It was a great way to begin a new ministry. Thank you for this day and for all the work that went into its preparation.

For the next few months, I will be listening to learn as much as possible about wor-

ship, mission, and ministry at St. Thomas. You have been able to accomplish much – a new building almost fully paid for, outreach that extends to our community and beyond, a rich worship life and a place where many find spiritual nourishment. As your priest, I have much to learn

-continued on pg. 2

A Tibetan Monk Speaks Out On Buddhist Meditation, continued from pg. 1

In the Buddhist tradition, Bobby explained, you do not go to the equivalent of a seminary, as would a preacher or priest in the Christian tradition. You study, then you find someone already "ordained" to give you your vows.

His teacher gave Bobby his vows. Bobby's Tibetan name, Lozang Zopa, means "intelligent patience." The first part of the name, Lozang, is taken from the name of the teacher who gave him his vows. It is a kind of family name. The second part of the name, Zopa (Patience) is a name selected for him by the teacher.

"In the Buddhist tradition, becoming a monk doesn't mean you are a teacher. You are expected only to live within the vows. You are not expected to pastor. Becoming a teacher is much more difficult. For that, you must study 10 to 15 years."

As Lozang Zopa, Bobby Miller now lives in the monastery Ching Gatsal Ling (The Garden of Immortality) in Dharamsala, India, near where the Dalai Lama lives in exile.

"We can see his garden from our monastery," he said.

Lozang rises between five and 5:30 in the morning, spends time meditating and reciting prayers, has breakfast, exercises, teaches English or translates documents, attends classes in Buddhism and then reads, or does private study.

"My schedule is flexible," Bobby said. "And, I always have three or four weeks a year to come see my family (he is the second of four Miller children)."

It was on his visit to see his parents this year that Bobby spoke at St. Thomas.

"We need to address our inner life," he told the group. "In a sense, we are spiritual warriors; we need to don armor to protect ourselves – not to develop a hard heart, but to steel ourselves against trials – to have patience in the face of aggression."

Meditation is a key to achieving that kind of patience, he said. "The Tibetan word for meditation means to 'familiarize with,'" Bobby said.

Tibetan monks practice two kinds of meditation: "analytical" and "settling."

"The Mind includes emotions and all our conscious experience," he said. "It is like a muscle that needs to be exercised. We can train our minds to strengthen it toward a more positive state, to develop more compassion, to learn empathy. Without true empathy, we can have no ground for compassion."

One important aspect of developing that compassion and self-understanding, he said, is to "rid ourselves of attachment to those we love – to stop clinging to something because you overestimate its importance."

Losing attachment does not mean losing love, he said.

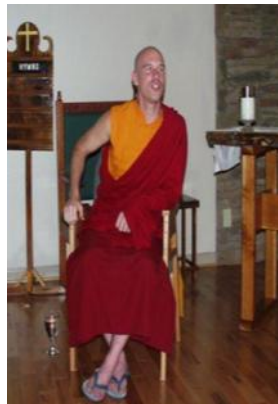
"Attachment as I speak of it is a matter of having unrealistic expectations about other people. That leads to conflict. You tend to blame the ones you love for their failing to meet your expectations."

Developing real empathy also helps us deal with people who are mean to us, Bobby said. "When we look at them with real empathy, we find they are afflicted

with all kinds of emotions – perhaps greed, hate -- and are affected by those emotions. We can learn to see a person as acting out of his or her own discomfort. You don't have to excuse their actions, but you can excuse the person."

The goal of Buddhist meditation, Bobby said, is to "realize our own potential so that we can better help others – to help them solve their problems."

-by Carol Thomas



"We need to address our inner life,"

Greetings from Vance ~ continued from pg. 1

About you and from you.

During most weeks, I will be at St. Thomas 2 ½ days a week: Sunday morning, all day Tuesday and two other mornings, afternoons or evenings. Whether I am in Burnsville or Weaverville, you may get in touch with me by calling my cell (828-273-7592) or by emailing me at vance@stthomasonline.org.

Thank you for inviting me to share in your community life at St. Thomas. This is something very special to me. I am excited as we listen together to where the Spirit is leading us and as God reveals greater and greater possibilities for us to serve in Christ's name.

Please continue to remember Peggy and me in your prayers.

Faithfully,

-Vance

“If you have done it unto the least of these....”

We, the people of St. Thomas, are inextricably bound to the ministry of Reconciliation House for its outreach is our outreach; its mission is our mission.

Reconciliation House was formed in the 1980's by the Rev. Gary West, then pastor at First Presbyterian here in Burnsville. With the support of Higgins Methodist and First Baptist Churches, the Rev. West established a centralized ministry to meet the needs

of the poor in Yancey County. Reconciliation House was then and remains today the singular arm of all Christian churches in the county seeking to meet the needs of the underprivileged.

Reconciliation House is located at 20 Academy Street in the “Old Methodist Parsonage” donated for its use by Higgins Methodist. At this location, two Client Services workers receive applications and assess the needs of those applying for assistance, offered in the form of food, clothing, and heating fuel and for financial subsidies for prescription drugs, water, electricity, rent, and other necessities. (Vouchers, not cash, are administered.) Detailed records are kept of assistance provided to families.

In addition to items given to qualified clients, a Thrift Sales Store is operated, providing clothing and household goods to low income families at reasonable prices. The shop generates \$45,000 annually to contribute to the operation of this ministry.

I spoke with Libby Miller, Director, whose chief concern is the rising cost of fuel and the ministry's inability to meet the needs of those who will suffer from inadequate heating this winter. She repeatedly expressed her appreciation for the contribution of St. Thomas, particularly through our Valentine Dinner-

Dance proceeds, to the fuel fund (\$2371. In 2008).

The money we gave served 7 families. (There is now a \$300. per family delivery minimum.)

The work of Reconciliation House far exceeds the dollar amounts extended to needy families.

As their mission statement affirms: Reconciliation House is truly a “haven of refuge” to those suffering from hunger and deprivation. “We offer a helping hand any way we can in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ – regardless of the recipients’ race, religion, citizenship, age or gender.”

Only three churches in the area: Higgins (\$1500/month), First Presbyterian (\$600/month), and First Baptist, (a tithe of their annual budget), pledge an amount substantial enough to actually ensure this ministry's survival. Could we, the family of St. Thomas, become a similar, significant supporter in this compassionate effort to alleviate poverty in our own backyard?

-by Joann Collins

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Adult Education Class-Environmental Stewardship

The Adult Education group, which meets 9:15 AM to 10 AM or so Sunday mornings, is reading and discussing Matthew Sleeth's *Serve God and Save the Planet*. Sleeth is a physician who at one time was chief of staff and director of the emergency room of a New England hospital.

creation and as such belongs to God. We are sojourners on the Water Planet: it does not belong to us. For none of us is Earth a permanent address. As guests we are obliged not to collectively wreck Earth. And we ought to share its resources that are safe to exploit equitably as required by the Golden

rule. Some of the talk is preaching to the converted, but the participants seem to enjoy and benefit by learning new things due to the diversity of our backgrounds and the provocative themes in the book.

-Jack Kaeck

Sleeth had an income and lifestyle consistent with his leadership responsibilities at the hospital. As an evangelical Christian, Sleeth fell into thinking about the impact that supercharged consumerism, a major driving force of our economy, and makes on planet Earth. He began to question the burden his family was placing on Earth's resources by the way they were living. The family arrived at a consensus to change and began to systematically adopt a significantly simpler lifestyle which included a much smaller house, a move from SUVs to small, fuel efficient cars and the continual struggle to reduce and manage possessions in general. The book is a case for Creation Care.

An important issue is a call for Christians to separate wants from needs. Sleeth challenges Christians to take the creation stories seriously in the sense that Earth is a part of God's

Rule and by the first commandment to love God first and foremost. This is tough medicine for many to swallow.

The Adult Education participants are proceeding at a measured pace through the book; it is not too late to join us. During each meeting we are thoroughly dis-





Prayer Corner

Matthew 6:27-29 AMP

“And who of you by worrying and being anxious can add one unit of measure to his stature or to the span of his life?

And why should you be anxious about clothes? Consider the lilies of the field and learn thoroughly how they grow; they neither toil nor spin.

Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his magnificence was not arrayed like one of these.”

Our Current Prayer List:

Alice Poltrock

Helen Marsh

George Emerson

Jim Peek

Billy Donovan

Jack Wilson

David Hazlett

Shirley Coppock

Bernie Sampson

Jim Rush

Mark

Allyson

Doug Hawkins

Frances

Bob McMillan

Father Marco & Dolly

Bishop Ramos

“Confess your faults to one another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” -James 5:16

Let us continue to pray for the victims of violence of all kinds, whether at the hands of beings or of the environment. As we do so, let us particularly keep in mind the world situations of need and war. Let us pray that soldiers, peacekeepers, activists, and leaders be inspired to listen with love, act with love and justice, and be given charisma to lead us all through

these dark times. A good way to pray for this cause is through Counting Prayer (see April 2008 newsletter).

Photo taken June 8th 2004 as Venus passed between the Sun & The Earth-Vilano Beach, FL



Psalm 111

1 Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

2 Great are the deeds of the LORD! they are studied by all who delight in them.

3 His work is full of majesty and splendor, and his righteousness endures for ever.

4 He makes his marvelous works to be remembered; the

LORD is gracious and full of compassion.

5 He gives food to those who fear him; he is ever mindful of his covenant.

6 He has shown his people the power of his works in giving them the lands of the nations.

7 The works of his hands are faithfulness and justice; all his commandments are sure.

8 They stand fast for ever and ever, because they are done in truth and equity.

9 He sent redemption to his people; he commanded his covenant for ever; holy and awesome is his Name

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; those who act accordingly have a good understanding; his praise endures for ever.

August 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1Men's Breakfast kick off meeting	2
3	4	5 Centering Prayer 9:00am	6	7	8	9
10	11	12 Centering Prayer 9:00am	13	14	15	16Men's Breakfast 9:00 am
17	18	19 Centering Prayer 9:00am	20	21Order of St. Luke 5:30pm-9:30pm	22	23
24	25	26 Centering Prayer 9:00am	27Vestry Meeting 6:30pm	28Memorial Garden Committee 6pm	29	30
31						

Birthdays & Anniversaries August/September

- > 8/3/08-Reid Peterson
- > 8/3/08-Tom Niehaus
- > 8/6/08-Julia Storrs
- > 8/07/8-Peg Emerson
- > 8/7/08-Diane & Robbie Clark
- > 8/15/08-Dee & Peter Bobbe
- > 8/18/08-Chuck & Alice Poltrock
- > 8/21/08-Ann Rush
- > 8/24/08-Neal Culver
- > 8/25/08-Jean Hanes
- > 8/31/08-Paul Collins
- > 9/8/08-Robbie Clark
- > 9/8/08-Diantha Stevenson
- > 9/12/08-Merribeth Stevenson
- > 9/27/08-Jack Kaeck
- > 9/27/08-Ann & Jim Rush
- > 9/28/08-Jackie Murray
- > 9/28/08-Joseph Murray

Treasurer's Snapshot of July 2008

July 27, 2008

The following compares St. Thomas General Fund Year-to-date Actual Income and Spending vs. Year-to-date Operating Budget, as of July 18, 2008. The Year-to-date Budget assumes the money is spent evenly through the year.

	Actual	Budget	Difference
Income	\$58,772	\$52,371	\$ 6,401 Favorable
Expenses	\$44,629	\$51,329	\$ 6,700 Favorable

We are about 12% Favorable on income, largely due to several parishioners paying the full balance of their annual pledges.

On the spending side, we are about 13% Favorable. About \$5,000 of this is due to spending not incurred for Rector Search, hiring and relocation of our new Rector. With our new Rector on board, we should be close to budget spending at year-end.

A copy of the General Fund Budget Report for July as presented to the Vestry is posted on the bulletin board at the entrance to the church. Questions from parishioners about this report, or about finances are encouraged.

The Building Fund balance at July 18th remained at \$7,609 with no expenditures nor receipts during the last month. Memorial Garden planning will hopefully begin in the near future.

-Charlie Stover



News from the Episcopal Diocese of Western North

Reflections from Porter...

As you know, I have just returned from the Lambeth Conference, and, yes, I am weary and a little uncertain of the future. There were some amazing moments of grace. Our retreat with the Archbishop of Canterbury was a time of transfiguration. However, we have come down from the mountain and now have to make our way to Jerusalem, which is always a hard road. I would rather build three booths on the mountain than make this journey, but we do not get to choose. I honestly do not know how our differences will be worked out. The way is not clear at the moment. I am not certain how we can find the unity in the Anglican Communion that we seek and God wills.

However, I do know we are called to discipleship; we are called to make our way to the place where God transfigures and transforms us. That is a journey we will make together in faith.

In one of his addresses at the retreat, the Archbishop quoted Hebrews 10 in reminding us that Christ has opened "a new and living way" for those who love him. We place our hope and faith in that assertion. We do not have to open the new and living way; Christ already has. Our task is to discover it and then walk in it.

May we be about that in the days and weeks and years to come. I thank you for your prayers during the Lambeth Conference and for your prayers always. I am glad to be home.

+Porter

Have you seen a Deacon?

The Deacon's Council will be hosting the Annual Deacon's Day at Trinity Episcopal Church on Oct. 11th from 9:30 -2:00. Bishop Taylor will be our guest and Celebrant at the closing Eucharist. We are inviting all Rectors and those people in their congregation who may be interested in becoming a Deacon to come for this informational meeting. The program will include an overview of the Diaconate in the Diocese and information on the process and the training program. Current ministries will be spotlighted to show the variety and the commitment of Deacon's within the diocese.

For more information or to make reservations; please contact The Rev. Deacon Peggy Buchanan at 669-6191 or peggy@trinityasheville.org.

Diocese of WNC invited to Pilgrimage to Durgapur, India

Our Companions in Christ from the Diocese of Durgapur, West Bengal, India have invited members of the Diocese of WNC to visit.

There are two trips planned: January 12th - February 2nd; and January 28th - February 10th.

The trips are limited in size and the travel dates are flexible; however the Diocese of Durgapur's Annual Thanksgiving Service and Santali Tribal Celebrations will be held January 31st and February 1st and will be the highlights of our trip.

Please contact The Rev. Deacon Ann Fritschner at annieme@bellsouth.net for more information about tickets, visas and prices.

Estes Book benefits new Senior Center

Maryallen Estes' recently published book, "Their Lives Made a Difference", is available at the Senior center or from Maryallen. The cost is \$25, of which \$18 goes to the Senior Center Building Fund.

A second printing of the book arrived recently.

"Their Lives Made a Difference" is an oral history of 30 seniors from Yancey County who were interviewed about their life stories and their contributions to society.

The book can also be purchased online at lulu.com. Click on But; then click on biographies and Memoirs; then the title, "Their Lives Made a Difference" The cost is \$28 online. The Senior Center will still get a substantial portion of the cost.

Anyone interested in buying the book can contact Maryallen Estes at:

828-581-4310.



Many Thanks.....

Many thanks go out to all who attended the Garden Day that was held at St. Thomas on Monday August the fourth. Much was accomplished in a few short hours by many hands.

A big heartfelt thank you goes out to Peg and George Emerson for all their labors in keeping the landscape here at St. Thomas flourishing.

Help is still needed with the watering of the landscape. Please contact Kristi the church secretary at 682-0037 or email her at secretary@stthomasonline.org

St. Thomas' First Men's Breakfast Meeting

Nine men gathered for breakfast at the first meeting of the Men's Group on August the first. All men are welcome to attend. It is not too late to join in the fun and discussion. There was a lot of interest in planning for prayer, study, action and service projects. The group will meet again on Saturday August the sixteenth at 9 am.

Call Mike Foster at 675-5642 for details.

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

372 Reservoir Road "on the hill
above Food\$mart"
P.O. Box 591/ Burnsville, NC
28714

St. Thomas Parrish Family is a joyful, warm and ever-widening circle of God's people prayerfully committed to serving Jesus in our community and our world. Through prayer, study and intellectual discourse on God's Word we seek Truth. Through Eucharistic fellowship we celebrate the gift of abundant new life. Through mutual care of one another and vigorous service to all of God's people and creation, we proclaim God's love and hope in Jesus.

Don't forget.....

- ♦ Send your articles and announcements to the church secretary, Kristi McGrath, at :

secretary@stthomasonline.org

- ♦ Not receiving the *Highland Episcopalian*?
Email your name & address to:
thewillardgroup@earthlink.net or leave a note for our secretary to submit your request.

Contacts

Rector: Vance Mann, 658-4280 (h); 273-7592 (c); vance@stthomasonline.org
 Senior Warden: John Davis, 682-6043; email: johnnd@data-tech.com
 Junior Warden: Joann Collins, 675-5645 (h); email: mjclns@juno.com
 Other Vestry members: Neal Culver, Charlie Stover, Stacey Lane, Karen Miller
 Treasurer: Charlie Stover, 675-9595 (h); email: cfsquartz@gmail.com
 Building Fund Treasurer: Charlie Stover
 Buildings and Grounds: John Davis and John Sterr
 Stewardship: Joann Collins, 675-5645 (h); email: mjclns@juno.com
 Adult Formation: Jane Stover; Simple Suppers: Joann Collins
 Pastoral Care: Alice Johnson, 682-3957 (h); email: alicewjohnson@gmail.com
 Healing Ministry: Maryallen Estes, Margie Haaga, Jim Haaga, Alice Hawkins
 Prayer Chain: Diantha Stevenson, 682-3188 (h); dwestevenson@trconline.net
 Ministry & Mission: Diana Donovan, 675-5918 (h); email: diatoday@msn.com
 Visitation of the Homebound: Maryallen Estes, 581-4310
 Secretary (on-site Tues. & Thurs. 9am-1pm): Kristi McGrath, 682-0037
 Send requests for announcements to her by Thursday mornings at: secretary@stthomasonline.org.