



The Buddha's Poem of Peace Gil Fronsdal

Note from Gil: In the wake of war in the Middle East, Ukraine, Syria, Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and elsewhere, we publish a Buddhist verse which has been a catalyst for peace at least twice in history. May it serve for a third time. The article was originally published in the 2018 Winter Newsletter.

Hatred never ends by hatred
By love alone does it end
This is an ancient truth

— The Buddha; Dhammapada v.5

From the time of the Buddha to our modern times, the above Poem of Peace has been evoked in times of conflict and war. All too many conflicts arise out of hatred and then reinforce hatred. For conflicts to come to a true end, love and friendship are needed, otherwise the continued divisions fester.

With hatred, others are viewed as obstacles or foes, as wrong or evil. Those who hate are always blind in not seeing the full humanity of those who are hated. Hatred perpetuates itself. To end hatred, one must learn to love wisely and strongly.

Those who love wisely see clearly because they know the full humanity of others, including both the good and the bad. Love heals division as it views others as kin, as fellow companions on our human journey. Many conflicts dissolve in the presence of love; those that don't are transformed into problems to be resolved, not battles to be won.

It seems the Buddha first spoke the "Poem of Peace" at a time when his monastic disciples were split into hostile, opposing factions over a disagreement about a monk's supposed infraction of a minor monastic rule. Perhaps understanding that the perspective of our common mortality would convince the monks to put down their hostility, the Buddha added:

Many do not realize that
We here must die.
For those who realize this,
Quarrels end.

But in their blindness, even with the Buddha's personal intervention, his disciples didn't give up their conflict; in fact, they pushed the Buddha away. It was only when the laity stopped providing the monks with food that they repented and reconciled.

The "Poem of Peace" appears in a legend about how King Ashoka, one of the first emperors of India, renounced violence. After winning a battle in which tens of thousands of soldiers died, the king walked across the battlefield, viewing the carnage. When a monk walked calmly by, the contrast of death all around the peaceful monk captured the king's attention. When asked about his calm, the monk said,

Hatred never ends with hatred.
By love alone does it end.
This is an ancient truth.

The monk and this poem were the catalyst for the king to stop his battles. Jack Kornfield tells the story of witnessing the Cambodian monk Maha Ghosananda reciting the "Poem of Peace" in a refugee camp at the height of the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia. Under the threat of death from the Khmer Rouge, Maha Ghosananda built a large bamboo temple in the midst of the Cambodian refugee camp. When it was built, 20,000 refugees gathered to hear the peaceful and gentle monk. Over and over again, Maha Ghosananda recited in the original language of the Buddha and in Cambodian,

Hatred never ends by hatred
By love alone does it end
This is an ancient truth

As he did so, the refugees cried.

In our modern times, one of the most significant impacts of the Buddha's "Poem of Peace" is in the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in September, 1951. With the ending of World War II, Japan became a conquered and occupied country. The treaty was the product of a contentious conference where foreign ministers from 48 countries gathered in San Francisco to discuss the future of Japan, including terms of compensation for victims of Japanese war efforts. In discussing versions of a new treaty, many countries did not want Japan to become a sovereign nation. They were afraid the country would rebuild its military and once again go to war. Some of the foreign ministers wanted Japan to remain a subjugated nation in order to break the will of the Japanese to fight again.

As this was being debated, the foreign minister from Sri Lanka (then called Ceylon) gave a speech in which he said his country was entitled to compensation for damage inflicted by the Japanese. However, he then said, "We do not intend to do so for we believe in the words of the Great Teacher whose message has ennobled the lives of countless millions in Asia, that 'hatred never ends with hatred. By love alone does it end.'"

He ended his speech by stating, "We extend to Japan the hand of friendship and trust that...her people and ours may march together to enjoy the full dignity of human life in peace and prosperity." His words were received with great applause and the conference ratified the treaty that returned Japan to being a free and independent country.

In Tokyo there is a small monument commemorating the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the Sri Lankan foreign minister's speech. Written on the plaque are the words,



THE BUDDHA'S POEM OF PEACE (continued from front page)

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One of the remarkable transformations of the 20th century is how Japan went from a hostile nation to a peaceful nation existing in friendship with those who defeated it. While it would seem natural and justified for the victims of Japanese violence to hate Japan and in that hate punish the country, this would not have led to the amity that followed in the decades after the end of World War II.

In being an ancient truth, it is not surprising that others should speak the same wisdom as the Buddha did in his "Poem of Peace". One example is Martin Luther King Jr who said,

Hate cannot drive out hate;
only love can do that.
Hate multiplies hate,
violence multiplies violence,
and toughness multiplies toughness
in a descending spiral of destruction...

In addressing the civil rights and racist issues of his time, King also said,

We must meet the forces of hate
with the power of love...
Our aim must never be to defeat
or humiliate the white man,
but to win his friendship
and understanding.

No matter what side of a conflict one is on, without love, friendship, and understanding a division persists that is the seedbed for further conflict and hostility. But with love, not only can hate end, the seedbed for it to reappear disappears.

These three—love, friendship, and understanding—are not always easy to have. It requires intention, persistence, and effort. It also takes wisdom, discernment, and thoughtfulness. The greater the conflict, the greater the need for careful consideration of how to act or what to say. Perhaps the single most important thing we can do to cultivate greater love and friendship is to be mindful. Mindfulness allows us to see deeply into ourselves and into others. It is the vehicle in which greater understanding and empathy can show us clearly how much better off we are with love than with hatred.



SKILLFUL RESOLUTION

KIM ALLEN

Now is the time when we mark the turning of a new calendar year—arbitrary in some sense, and yet meaningful. It is natural at transition times to both reflect on the past and set sights toward the future. In our culture, this sometimes includes a New Year resolution, typically to let go of what we feel are unbeneficial actions or habits, or to cultivate those that would be more beneficial.

Resolutions—or any related term like aspiration or intention—can be made and acted on with varying degrees of skillfulness. In this essay, I offer some thoughts about bringing greater clarity, kindness, and indeed effectiveness to our New Year wishes.

A common pattern is to make a resolution with high hopes, then find that we cannot stick to it and subsequently feel bad about ourselves. If we look more carefully in such cases, we often find that the aspiration was created from an intellectual idea of how we should be. Or, that it was created out of an emotional reaction of aversion or desire regarding our life or our self.

The real problem is not our inability to stick with an intention. It is that this process of directing our resolutions from our thinking mind, or our desire or aversion, is not in harmony with how beneficial change actually unfolds. To use a simile from the suttas, it is like hoping to gain sesame oil by grinding gravel instead of sesame seeds.

What would be more realistic—that is, more in line with the Dharma, or how things actually work? There are ways to bring about beneficial effects in our behavior, mind, and life. They involve coming from a deeper place in our heart and bringing a dharmic perspective.

Let's consider two key ways to deepen our aspiration and clarify our perspective. Both involve recognizing a truth that we may not have fully recognized.

First, it is important to recognize the *dukkha* that is motivating our wish to make a New Year resolution. *Dukkha* is often translated as "suffering," but could also be the "struggle" we feel in some aspect of our life. We are struggling, and so we want to change. Here, to recognize the *dukkha* is to go deeper: To sit quietly, perhaps in meditation, and actually feel what is going on with this struggle. The language is important: We are feeling this *dukkha*, not thinking about it, trying to figure it out, or analyzing its origin. What is the felt sense of this *dukkha* in the moment?

If we want to become more patient, we sit quietly and feel the urgent energy of impatience and its effects on the body and mind. If we want to exercise more, we sit quietly and feel what is behind that—do we feel the sluggishness of being out of shape, the warm flush of wanting a more attractive body (and what is the *dukkha* of that?), or the slightly nauseating fear of a possible heart attack if we don't get in shape? When the struggle (or suffering) is felt directly—with Dharma-based (not intellectual) investigation—it hones the clarity of our resolve.

The second recognition is to realize that we do not have full control over how our intention will unfold in our life. This is vital to recognize! Although we can, through our will, take some near-term action toward our aims, the long-term process includes other factors besides our willpower. We cannot fully decide when and how we will become a better listener or even when we will manage to start sitting every day. Certainly, these things will not happen if we don't put any energy in, but it

is not only a matter of our directed action. So, there is a stance of humble determination—we do our part fully, and the rest is not up to us. We bring both sincerity and grace.

What is our part? I'll name a few helpful elements. One is to strengthen mindfulness around whatever pattern or behavior is involved. It is important that we can be fully aware of it. If we're working with anger, we need keen mindfulness of the arising of anger and how it feels when it is there – and also how it feels when it is not there. If we want to start meditating more often, learn to be mindful of the wish to meditate and also of the resistance to meditating. The more we can be with all of these different dimensions, the more likely some change can come about.

Another key element is to create supportive conditions. If we are aiming to let go of some behavior or pattern, it is fine to avoid situations where that is triggered, at least for a while, until our mindfulness gets stronger. If we are aiming to create or enhance something, we can go to places that support it. And throughout all of this, it is helpful to cultivate an attitude of *metta*—goodwill or benevolence—toward ourselves. Similar to training an animal, it is far more effective to treat it with kindness and care than with reprimands and harshness. It is the same for our body, mind, and heart.

And finally, when we have mustered all the clarity and supportive conditions we can, there is patience. Our behaviors and mental patterns may have been instilled over months, years, or decades. Deeply releasing them usually cannot be done by an act of will. If we are clear enough on what our *dukkha* feels like, the Dharma will help us find a way through it. And it may be surprising how that change comes about.

The real “resolution” is when the *dukkha* resolves. When the struggle ends. This is the fruit of Dharma practice, from the everyday level to the deepest forms of human suffering. May your Dharma process unfold beautifully in this new year.

Editor: This essay focused on the specific case of New Year aspirations, but the fine art of changing the heart by letting go of dukkha is much broader. The ideas here are unfolded in more detail and in a more systematic way in Kim Allen's recent book "Full Simplicity: The Art of Renunciation and Letting Go."

AROUND IMC: ASIAN DHARMA CIRCLE

YING CHEN AND LILU CHEN

On September 11, 2019, IMC hosted an Evening for People of Asian Background. The gathering was facilitated by Gil Fronsdal, Lilu Chen, and Ying Chen. It was born out of a desire to create a safe and welcoming environment at IMC for people of Asian backgrounds to share about their Dharma practice and to feel connected within the community.

The evening was filled with a spirit of celebration of the many diverse and unique Asian backgrounds present. We shared our personal stories and experiences. We talked about the gifts that each of us bring to the community from our culture. We discussed how we have navigated the Western dharma scene as people of Asian background. The room was filled with a deep sense of gratitude, authenticity, and tenderness.

This gathering highlighted the important role of sangha in our dharma lives. When we feel safe, at ease, welcome, and connected in a community of practitioners, our practice can unfold in ways that are nourishing, uplifting, and deepening. Moved and inspired by the first gathering, Lilu and Ying formed the IMC Asian Dharma Circle at the beginning of 2020,

for people of Asian background. The group began to meet regularly, twice a month. Initially the meetings were held at IMC in Redwood City, CA. Shortly after, we moved to Zoom, due to the pandemic. This opened the door to many people of Asian background from all over the world to participate. Since then, we have had people participating from different parts of the United States, UK, and Canada.

We continue to meet twice a month on Zoom. Meetings are posted on the IMC website calendar.

From the very beginning of this Sangha's formation, we were aware of the unique cultural characteristics and backgrounds of the people attending. The way we meet reflects and incorporates these cultural elements. Listed below are the different forms of meetings that we have adopted and reflections on them. These forms continue to evolve.

- **Dharma practice, reflection, and sharing:** Our primary form of gathering is centered on our common interest in learning, sharing, and practicing the Dharma. During the two Sunday afternoons each month when we meet, we meditate together for about 30 minutes. This is followed by a short Dharma reflection led by Lilu or Ying, and sometimes a guest teacher. One of the most important characteristics about the reflection is that it is interactive. Whoever leads the reflection often invites people to join in to share, discuss, and ask questions along the way. Sometimes in these conversations, various culturally relevant perspectives surface, such as our unique ways of relating to our parents, the sense of belonging, and the challenges we meet in a white-dominant society.
- **Community meetings:** A few times a year community members come together to share different aspects of themselves and provide feedback about the group. We get to know Sangha members in different ways. People bring poems, music, songs, chants, and stories from their lives. These meetings have been fun, lively, and engaging.
- **In-person celebrations:** We have started some in-person offerings at IMC around cultural and Buddhist holidays. Usually this is an abbreviated form of our usual Dharma practice, reflection, and sharing. We also may incorporate a ritual that feels appropriate. We have observed that ritual and chanting often enlivens practice for people of Asian background, who find this to be a meaningful way to engage. Our in-person celebrations also center around food, another important way that this community bonds.
- **Open house events:** We offer an open house yearly as a way to engage with the broader IMC Sangha. In the past, we have invited guest speakers to share aspects of the Dharma relevant to this community and enriching for the larger IMC Sangha. In 2020, we invited Chenxing Han to speak on her book *Be the Refuge: Raising the Voices of Asian American Buddhists*. Earlier this year, Trent Walker led an interactive session on Buddhist devotional chanting from his book *Until Nirvana's Time: Buddhist Songs from Cambodia*. People from the Asian community and greater IMC Sangha commented on how much they benefited from hearing and experiencing the chants.

It has been very heartening to be part of this community and witness the community expand, grow, and bond through our shared practice of the Dharma. If you are of Asian background, join us! We trust that the goodness that arises out of this community will benefit many people in this world. May all beings be well, happy, and peaceful!

FAREWELL TO THREE DEAR SANGHA FRIENDS

The people who practice and volunteer at IMC are treasures of our community. In 2023, three of our dear sangha members passed away, leaving us with memories, gratitude, and inspiration.

In February, Nancy Reed (b. 1964) passed away after a short illness. For over ten years she was the cook for many of the residential retreats that IMC offered before the birth of IRC. Her wisdom and love were so great she was viewed as a teacher for the retreat and would sit next to Gil in the meditation hall. Her attentiveness and loving care in cooking and supporting all the retreatants was a great inspiration for the community focus of our Insight Retreat Center, where she also cooked for many years. Nancy was often supported in the kitchen by her husband Greg and niece Amy, her meals often had the warmth and love of family cooking.

In October, Meghan Radford (b. 1974) breathed her last breath in bed in the care of her mother. Until recently, Meghan was a resident volunteer at IRC where she was the kitchen manager and retreat cook. She was deeply dedicated to her practice and to her service to the community. She was invaluable in supporting IRC through the pandemic, including when she was the only resident watching over the property during the 2020 Santa Cruz fires. Her smile was contagious.

In November, Trudy Opitz (b. 1934) died peacefully in bed in the middle of the night. She was a longtime member and regular participant in our programs and events at IMC, including sitting many retreats at IRC, both residential and online. Her warmth and delight lit up many of our gatherings. Her sincere practice and reflections on the practice inspired many. She was known by most of the IMC teachers because of her wonderful inquiring mind.

These three wonderful people will be missed. They would be very happy if they could know how deeply they have touched our lives and inspired our practice.

With much gratitude!

GUIDE TO IMC PROGRAMS

IMC offers a set of recurring programs that can be linked together to form a progressive curriculum for beginner, intermediate, and experienced practitioners. Participating, over the years, in all these program offerings is one pathway for maturing in meditation, Buddhist practice, and IMC's community life. Many of these programs are offered both in-person and online.

Basic Programs (listed in the recommended sequence)

- Five-week Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation course, offered a number of times a year in English, and periodically in Spanish and Chinese
- Thursday Dharma Practice Evenings
- Wednesday evening series on different aspects of meditation to help one build and develop a meditation practice
- Half-day retreats on Wednesdays and some Saturday mornings
- Introduction to Loving Kindness course offered once a year
- 'Awareness and Wisdom' Saturday Daylong Retreats and weeklong non-residential Integrated Home Retreats offered by Andrea Fella (suitable for practitioners at all levels).

Intermediate

- Four- or five-week Intermediate Mindfulness Meditation courses
- Monthly Saturday daylong Mindfulness Meditation retreats
- Saturday daylong thematic meditation retreats
- Eightfold Path Program: monthly two-hour class and monthly individual meetings with a mentor; usually from October to June
- Multi-month series on important Buddhist practices, e.g., the Seven Factors of Awakening, the Ten Perfections (paramis), The Path of Fearlessness
- Three- or four-day residential retreats at our Insight Retreat Center (IRC) in Santa Cruz
- Refuge class and Refuge ceremony once every two or three years
- Sati Center programs on Buddhist practice and study (see Sati.org)

Experienced

- Daylong intensive retreats in June and September, most years; 6am to 9pm
- Week-long and longer retreats at our Insight Retreat Center in Santa Cruz
- Experienced Practitioners Programs: Ethics, Meditation, and Wisdom series. Three eight-month programs offered on a three-year cycle on three main areas of Buddhist Practice: The Equivalence of Ethics and Enlightenment, Deepening Meditation Program, and Entering the Stream
- Sati Center's online courses on the Teachings of the Buddha

Dharma Service Programs

- Volunteer as a Service Leader for IRC in-person or online retreats (suitable for people who have participated in a few of our retreats)
- Volunteer as technical support for IRC online retreats
- Sati Center's Buddhist Chaplaincy programs
- IMC/Sati Center's Dharma Mentoring Training Program

Please see the calendar on IMC's website for additional information, including online availability.



THE DOORWAY OF FEAR

DIANA CLARK, PHD

Mindfulness practice involves cultivating an awareness of our experiences, including the often unwelcome visitor: fear. The question arises: why should we welcome and embrace fear instead of evading or plowing through it, as many of us typically do? There are several compelling reasons for doing so.

To start, fear is a more pervasive presence in our lives than we usually realize. It frequently propels our actions, manifesting as procrastination, restlessness, or feeling stuck in various aspects of our existence. By learning to sit with fear, we unlock the door to greater freedom and ease in many facets of our lives.

Furthermore, fear, like all emotions, possesses both physical and mental dimensions. In mindfulness practice, we emphasize tuning into the bodily experience instead of trying to rationalize or think our way out of fear. Cultivating an awareness of physical sensations, even when they are uncomfortable, such as a lump in the throat or a knot in the stomach, fosters a habit of being attuned to our bodily experiences, especially in the face of adversity. This embodiment serves as a valuable anchor in the present somatic experience, which moves at a slower, more tangible pace than the frantic and narrative-driven mind during moments of fear. Embodiment decreases the likelihood of becoming overwhelmed and losing our mindfulness. While physical discomfort may persist, staying with these sensations and observing their natural abatement paves the way for greater wisdom and confidence, thereby enhancing our ability to confront life's challenges.

Resistance to feeling fear, along with other difficult emotions, is entirely natural. Recognizing and accepting this resistance is crucial for attaining greater freedom and ease in life. Often, we are oblivious to the subtle yet pervasive sentiment of wishing things were somehow better, which often accompanies our daily experiences. This resistance saps the joy from our lives. However, by becoming familiar with the diverse ways in which resistance manifests, we can weaken its power to diminish and disrupt our well-being. How do we typically experience resistance? Do we respond with anger, searching for someone or something to blame? Or do we instantly criticize ourselves, convinced we must have erred if fear rears its head? When faced with fear, do we feel motivated to initiate change, or do we relinquish any sense of agency we may possess? Given that humans commonly resist fear, recognizing and allowing the resistance to coexist with the fear enables us to gain insights into the multifaceted expressions of resistance in our lives. The path to ultimate freedom is unveiled when there is no resistance, not even resistance to resistance.

Additionally, when we permit fear to be present and experience it openly, it reveals many of our underlying beliefs. For instance, when we pinpoint the source of our fear, we may discover that it stems from beliefs about our identity, such as what it means to be a good person or a proficient practitioner, and fear surfaces when these expectations are unmet. Our convictions about the perpetual necessity of complete comfort or the efficacy of worry in averting mishaps may only become apparent in the presence of fear. By holding fear in awareness without resistance, we enable these underlying beliefs to surface, and we can then ask ourselves, "Is this belief true? Are we absolutely certain?" Investigating our core beliefs serves as a gateway to greater understanding and freedom.

Finally, becoming acquainted with fear and becoming more comfortable with it allows us to persevere when we encounter uncomfortable aspects of our meditation practice. Spiritual practice inherently leads to

expanded experiences and understandings. Along this journey, we may encounter fear of the unknown, fear of experiencing different emotions, or even fear of death. On the other side of these "fear barriers" lie greater freedom and ease, but we can only access these benefits if we learn to tolerate fear. Increasing our familiarity with fear provides a pathway to greater depth in our meditation practice.

In conclusion, while many of us might instinctively shy away from fear in our practice and daily lives, embracing fear can be a doorway to increased freedom and ease.

If you're interested in exploring fear further, Diana Clark and Tanya Wisner will be teaching an 8-month course on the Path of Fearlessness beginning in January 2024. You can apply on the IMC website.

AROUND IMC: EARTH CARE GROUP SPEAKER SERIES

The IMC Earth Care Group aims to share ideas about, engage in, and implement initiatives for meaningful actions to support the natural world. In 2023 the group started a monthly speaker series to provide new perspectives and insights on topics including science, sustainability, civic actions, and community responsibility, related to caring for our planet.

In 2023, the featured speakers addressed a wide range of climate change topics. Speakers included:

- Thanissara, leader of Sacred Mountain Sangha and author of "Time to Stand up".
- Ayya Santacitta, founder of the Aloka Earth Room.
- Kirsten Rudestam, a teacher in the Buddhist Eco-Chaplaincy Training Program.
- Elaine Salinger, a founder of the IMC Earth Care group and a leader in Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL).
- Kate Davies, of Whidbey Island Sangha and author of "Intrinsic Hope: Living Courageously in Troubled Times".
- Adam Borison, co-founder and partner of eMotion Autos.
- Phil Gregory, JD, of Our Children's Trust, an organization that provides legal representation to youth suing their governments for promoting the use of fossil fuels.

These meetings helped attendees gain a deeper understanding of earth care issues and sustainable choices, through the lens of the Eightfold Path. In 2024, the Earth Care group will introduce a new speaker series, building on established relationships by hosting returning speakers as well as introducing new notable speakers who are positively impacting our planet. Sunday, January 28, will be a special visiting guest teacher, Ayya Santacitta talking about "Inner Activism & Response-Ability", during the regular IMC event at 9:25am, in-person and on YouTube. Details are posted on the IMC Calendar. Additional speakers will include:

- Carla Brennan, an insight meditation teacher with Bloom of the Present Sangha in Santa Cruz who has been a pioneer in the study of the importance of guiding people to the direct experience of our indivisibility from the living world.
- David Loy, a Zen teacher, professor, and writer, speaking on connecting the ecological crisis with capitalism and plutocracy.

The speaker series events, along with the Zoom link, will be posted on the IMC Earth Care webpage, as well as on the IMC Events Calendar.

These events are held on the last Saturday of every month from 8:30am to 10am (Pacific Time) on Zoom. Audio recordings will be posted on Audio Dharma, and video recordings will be posted on IMC's YouTube channel.

CULTIVATING COMPASSION

GIL FRONSDAL

Note: This article was originally published in the 2012 Winter Newsletter.

Compassion is inextricably linked to the Buddhist practice of liberation. Compassion can be the motivation for this practice as well as a result. As one's inner freedom grows, one's capacity for compassion increases; as one's compassion increases, so does the importance of freedom from suffering. Liberation supports compassion, and compassion supports liberation—both benefit when they go hand in hand.

Compassion is a form of empathy and care that wishes to alleviate someone's suffering. Known as *karuna* in Buddhism, this compassion is sometimes referred to as the "jewel in the lotus." The lotus symbolizes the heart or mind that, with practice, blossoms into freedom, and the jewel represents the compassion appearing in the center of this blossom. The feeling of unfettered compassion is one of the most beautiful feelings a person can experience, providing valuable meaning and purpose to any human life. Buddhism celebrates its presence as an inner wealth and source of happiness.

Given its importance, Buddhism doesn't leave the manifestation of compassion to chance. We don't have to passively accept how often and how strongly we happen to experience it. Instead, we can develop our compassion and remove the obstacles to it.

Because people sometimes confuse compassion with feelings of distress, it is helpful to distinguish these two clearly. Compassion doesn't make us victims of suffering, whereas feeling distress does. Learning how to see the suffering in the world without taking it personally is very important; taking it personally is to become depressed or burdened by assuming inappropriate blame and responsibility for someone's suffering. We can avoid this if we learn to feel empathy without it mixing it with our fears, attachments, and perhaps unresolved grief.

We need to understand our suffering to feel greater compassion for others. Mindfulness practice is a great help in this. With mindfulness, we can better see our suffering, its roots within us, and the way to freedom from suffering; we can begin to cultivate both equanimity toward our suffering and release from its causes.

In this regard, it's helpful to appreciate the great value of staying present, open, and mindful of suffering, both our own and that of others. We often need time to process difficult events and experiences and let difficult emotions move through us. When immediate action is not required, staying mindful of suffering doesn't necessarily require a lot of wisdom or special techniques. It mostly takes patience and perseverance.

Relaxed mindfulness of our suffering increases our ability to feel empathy for others' difficulties and pain. It gives time for understanding and letting go to occur. By practicing mindfulness of habitual reactivity, we can take the time to see and feel more deeply what is happening. This allows empathy to grow and more profound responses to arise. In this way, compassion may be awakened rather than intentionally created.

Some people are reluctant to actively cultivate compassion because they worry it will be insincerely or artificially contrived. Others fear that it will make them sentimentally naive or prevent them from seeing others clearly or realistically—perhaps out of worry that they will be taken advantage of if they are compassionate to others. While there may be some wisdom in these concerns, only by taking some risks in having compassion can we learn wise compassion.

One effective way of developing compassion is creating conditions that

make it more likely to occur. Rather than directly making ourselves more compassionate, we can engage in activities that make it more likely to appear naturally.

A condition for compassion is a sense of safety. It is easier to feel compassionate if we feel safe, and difficult when we don't. Therefore, finding appropriate ways to feel safe can be helpful. Locking ourselves in our homes may feel secure, but it's not conducive to caring more about others. Learning how to be safe while in the world is more valuable. So is using mindfulness practice to address some of the anxieties and self-preoccupations that make us more likely to feel threatened.

It is important not to feel obligated to be compassionate as this often leads to self-criticism and stress that interferes with the arising of compassion. Buddhism doesn't require us to feel empathy and care for others. It does say, however, that we can be compassionate and that doing so is a wonderful asset to ourselves, others, and the practice of freedom. The focus can be on how compassion enriches us, not depletes us.

Some people hesitate to cultivate compassion because they worry they will have to give up too much of themselves as they help others. Or they fear they will have to spend time with uncomfortable people. By knowing we are not obligated to be compassionate, it may be easier to use our best wisdom and common sense to understand when acting on compassion is appropriate and when it is not.

Having confidence in our skill to respond to others' suffering can also make it easier to feel compassion. If we feel helpless, too uncomfortable, or even threatened by the troubles others are facing, awareness of their suffering may add to a sense of personal threat. Developing skill has a lot to do with slow and patient training in mindfulness, concentration, and letting go.

A way of strengthening compassion is to understand and then release what prevents it from arising. For example, tension and stress limit compassion. When stressed, we're usually too preoccupied for empathy to operate. However, when we're relaxed, our capacity for empathy increases. People who cultivate deep states of calm often find it naturally opens their hearts to great abilities of compassion and love.

Selfishness and self-preoccupation also obstruct compassion by blocking the attention and sensitivity that is needed for compassion to arise. One benefit of letting go of selfishness is that compassion arises more easily.

We can also increase the compassion we feel in our lives by setting the intention to do so. This intention can be specific, such as intending to be compassionate in a particular situation or toward a particular person—or it can be general, such as intending to practice compassion for a day or week. With such intentions, we're more likely to remember to focus on compassion and to recognize more compassionate thoughts and impulses as they occur.

Valuing compassion when it does appear can also strengthen it and make it more apt to arise in the future. We might consider and appreciate the benefits it can bring others and ourselves. Knowing the benefits can bring happiness that can make compassion more appealing. Compassion for others can be a relief when we have spent too long preoccupied with ourselves.

Another supportive condition is to reflect deliberately on compassion, perhaps stimulated by regularly reading and talking to others about it. Whatever we think about regularly can become our inclination. If we repeatedly think about love, kindness, and caring for others, compassion-related thoughts are likely to appear more often.

Spending time with compassionate people can also help us. The people

we frequently see often influence us. Seeing compassion in others can inspire it in us.

Finally, understanding how compassion is a form of love helps us recognize what a jewel it truly is. When it arises from inner freedom, it is then connected to other beautiful capacities of our hearts. It can appear together with well-being, calm, clarity, and peace.

There is, in fact, a great deal we can do to make compassion a more central part of our lives. As compassion grows, our self-centeredness and clinging decrease. As these decrease, compassion becomes more readily available. To let compassion and liberation support each other is one of the most beautiful ways of training in the Buddhist path. It can be our gift to the world.

NEW YEAR REFUGE AND PRECEPT CEREMONY

WITH GIL FRONSDAL

Sunday, January 14, 11:30am to 12:30pm at IMC

“Going for Refuge” and “Committing to the Precepts” are the two primary Buddhist rituals. These mark the start of residential insight retreats and they are used to initiate almost every other Buddhist ceremony.

Everyone is invited to come to the January 14 ceremony to begin the new year with a clear intention to have refuge and precepts be an integral part of one’s life for 2024. Gil will offer a short Dharma talk on refuge and precepts.

A red refuge cord will be distributed to everyone. We will then tie the cord around each other’s wrists as a symbol of taking refuge and committing to the precepts. Gil will lead the formal chanting of the refuges and precepts.

As part of the ceremony, please bring a single, long-stemmed flower to offer at the IMC altar.

People curious about the ceremony but not interested in participating are welcome to be present to watch. The 10am Dharma talk that day will also be on the theme of going for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

AROUND IMC: : SENIOR SANGHA GROUP – ENJOYING OUR AGING

Suzuki Roshi was once asked why he practiced, to which he responded with a laugh, “To enjoy my old age.” In the Senior Sangha online meetings we enjoy short guided meditations, dharma talks, and breakout-group discussions around previously-sent dharma reflections.

In addition to the large group gathering, we also organize small groups consisting of 6 to 10 members. These small group meetings occur online on weekdays every other week and last for 1-1/4 hours. Each session adds a chance for each participant to check in and share their experiences and practice.

These smaller groups have helped foster long-term dharmic connections and relationships with the same group of individuals, sometimes spanning years. This environment creates a sense of warmth and closeness, nurtured by the kindness of listening and being listened to by our peers — those who share our age and dedication to practice. Through this mutual kindness, wisdom and sharing, transformative experiences often occur.

We invite you to join our community of seniors, centered around dharma practice. Our meetings take place online on the third Thursday of every month, from 11am to 1pm (Pacific Time). To join please send an email requesting membership to imc.seniorsanghagroup@gmail.com.

‘INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS MEDITATION’ HISTORY

Gil Fronsdal

My journey into teaching mindfulness meditation began in Thailand in 1984. There, I received daily, personalized instructions from the monastery’s abbot. In Burma, in 1985, my initial guidance came from a 15-minute cassette tape, supplemented by discussions with the abbot.

In 1990, I started teaching Vipassana meditation when I was invited to lead a small Monday evening group in Palo Alto, which later grew into the Insight Meditation Center (IMC). After a couple of years, I recognized the need to provide introductory instruction in mindfulness meditation. However, the way I had learned it in Asia wasn’t suitable for an urban group in Palo Alto.

To address this, I designed a five-week course based on the sequence of instruction used in Insight meditation retreats in the West. This course covered the topics of mindfulness of breathing, the body, emotions, and thoughts. I also added a fifth week on integrating mindfulness into daily life.

The first introductory course in 1992 was offered 45 minutes before our Monday evening meditation session. In 1994, I extended the class to Thursday evenings, allowing 1.5 hours for each of the five topics to delve deeper into the practice.

Teaching this introductory class became a source of joy for me. It allowed me to explore different ways of making meditation accessible and kept me engaged with the practice in fresh ways. The course grew in popularity, and I taught it three times a year for around 25 years. Until 2002, I also offered a preliminary course on the five precepts before the five-week meditation course, aligning with the traditional Buddhist order of teaching ethics before meditation.

As I taught the meditation intro course, I began including practical tips for bringing mindfulness into daily life, along with short stories and wisdom that could be applied in everyday situations.

In 2010, other IMC teachers began teaching the introductory class, both in person and online. Until the pandemic, around 300 to 400 people participated in the courses offered each year. During the first spring of the pandemic, I offered an online version, which has since been viewed by thousands of people on YouTube.

I consider the introductory course one of IMC’s most valuable offerings. It has introduced many people to mindfulness and to IMC, fostering a sense of community. It also provides a shared foundation for insight meditation practice within our community and plays a crucial role in training our Insight Teacher Trainees.

Although it has been over three and a half years since I taught an introductory meditation class, I’m ready to renew our commitment to it. To kickstart this, I will teach the five-week course in person and on YouTube, beginning on January 31st from 7 to 8:30pm (Pacific Time). Please see the calendar on IMC’s website for additional information.





SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

January ~ March 2024

WEEKLY MEDITATION & TALKS

IN-PERSON AT IMC:

MONDAY EVENING SITTING AND TALK

With Diana Clark or guest teachers, 7:15 to 8:30pm (New time starting in January). A 30-min sitting, a 30-min Dharma talk, and 15 min Q&A.

WEDNESDAY MORNING HALF-DAY RETREAT

Sitting and walking meditation with Gil Fronsdal or guest teachers. You may attend any part of the morning.

- 9:30am – Sitting • 10:15am – Walking Meditation
- 11am – Sitting • 11:45am – Dharmette (brief talk)
- 12pm – Temple cleaning

At 12:15 we have an informal lunch and discussion outdoors in the parking lot. Everyone welcome (bring bag lunch).

DHARMA PRACTICE THURSDAYS: BRINGING THE DHARMA TO LIFE WITH TANYA WISER OR GUEST TEACHERS, 6:30 TO 8PM

Join us in exploring various Dharma topics. Includes sharing reflections on our practice; guided meditation, dharma talk, and group discussions. For beginners and experienced beginners.

SUNDAY MORNING SITTINGS AND TALK

With Gil Fronsdal or guest teachers, 8:30 to 10:45am.

- 8:30am – 1st Sitting • 9:10am – Walking Meditation
- 9:25am – 2nd Sitting • 10 to 10:45am – Talk

MEDITATION INSTRUCTION

IN-PERSON AT IMC:

INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

- 5 Wednesday Evenings, 7:30 to 9pm, Jan 31– Feb 28 with Gil Fronsdal

Basic instructions in mindfulness meditation taught sequentially, starting with mindfulness of breathing, followed by mindfulness of the body, emotions, thinking, and the application of mindfulness in daily life. No pre-registration is necessary.

BASIC MEDITATION INSTRUCTION

- 2nd Monday evening each month 6:15 to 7pm
- 2nd Wednesday morning each month 8:30 to 9:15am

ON YOUTUBE:

For the 7am weekday YouTube teachings in early 2024, Gil Fronsdal will spend five weeks providing the basic mindfulness practice taught at IMC. See IMC's Calendar on our website.

ONE DAY RETREATS

ON SATURDAYS, IN-PERSON AT IMC:

- Jan 20, 9:30am to 4:30pm, **Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation** with Kodo Conlin
- Jan 27, 9:30am to 3pm, **Mindfulness of Self, and Going Beyond the Self** with Nikki Mirghafori
- Feb 10, 9:30am to 4pm, **Lovingkindness Meditation** with Kodo Conlin

- Feb 24, 9am to 4pm, **Introduction to Insight Meditation** with Matthew Brensilver
- Mar 2, 9:30am to 4:30pm, **Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation** with Bruni Dávila
- Mar 9, 9:30am to 4:30pm, **Día de Retiro** con Andrea Castillo en Español
- Mar 30, 8:30am to 5pm, **Daylong** with Gil Fronsdal

ON SATURDAYS, ONLINE THRU IRC:

For information go to insightretreatcenter.org.

- Jan 6, 9am to 4:30pm, **Online Retreat** with Ines Freedman
- Feb 3, 9am to 4:30pm, **Online Retreat** with Bruni Dávila
- Mar 2, 9am to 4:30pm, **Awakening Through the Body** with Gil Fronsdal

SATURDAY HALF-DAY RETREATS

IN-PERSON AT IMC:

- Feb 3, 9:30am to 12:15pm, **Mindfulness Meditation and Practice** with Tanya Wisser

WEEKLY ONLINE PROGRAMS

SEE WEBSITE CALENDAR FOR LINKS FOR THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS:

- **MONDAY THRU FRIDAY MORNING SITTING AND TALK** with Gil Fronsdal or guest teachers, 7 to 7:45am. On YouTube.
- **MONDAY THRU FRIDAY EVENING HAPPY HOUR: LOVING KINDNESS PRACTICE** with Nikki Mirghafori, Liz Powell and others, 6 to 7pm. Guided Meditation teaching, and discussion on loving-kindness. On YouTube and/or Zoom.
- **TUESDAY MORNING SITTING, REFLECTION, & DISCUSSION** with Dawn Neal and others, 9:30 to 10:45am. 30-minute sitting, followed by a reflection and discussion. On Zoom
- **MARTES DHARMA EN ESPAÑOL** con Andrea Castillo o Sandra Sanabria, 6 a 7:30pm. Meditación y pláticas de Dharma en Español. On Zoom.
- **THURSDAY EVENING SITTING AND Q&A**, with Ari Crellin-Quick, Liz Powell, and others, 7:30 to 8:30pm. A sitting followed by a short reflection and discussion. On Zoom.

RESIDENTIAL RETREATS

AT THE INSIGHT RETREAT CENTER (NEAR SANTA CRUZ)

For information go to insightretreatcenter.org.

- Jan 21 – 28, **1-Week Insight Retreat for People in their 20s & 30s** with Max Erdstein and Matthew Brensilver
- Feb 11 – 18, **1-Week Insight Retreat** with Gil Fronsdal, Marjolein Janssen, and Tanya Wisser (Also available as Online/Hybrid)
- Feb 25 – March 1, **6-Day Insight Retreat** with Bruni Dávila and Tuere Sala
- Mar 10 – 17, **1-Week Insight Retreat** with Gil Fronsdal, Dawn Neal, and Johnathan Woodside (Also available as Online/Hybrid)
- Mar 21 – 24, **4-Day Insight Retreat** with Ines Freedman and Max Erdstein
- Apr 19 – 28 **Awareness and Wisdom Retreat** with Andrea Fella and Alexis Santos

SERIES PROGRAMS

PATH OF FEARLESSNESS WITH DIANA CLARK AND TANYA

WISER Six Saturdays 12:30pm to 3:30pm: Jan 27, Feb 24, Apr 13, May 25, Jun 29 and Aug 10. On Zoom

Studying the Dharma through studying ourselves, this program's aim is to support us in having greater self-understanding and greater fearlessness in all aspects of our lives.

The program includes monthly meetings that will include dharmettes, guided meditations, group discussions. Course participants are expected to be familiar with the foundational teachings and practices of Theravada Buddhism and not complete beginners. More information and application on IMC's website. Apply by Jan 18.

SPECIAL EVENTS (In Person at IMC)

NEW YEAR REFUGE AND PRECEPT CEREMONY WITH GIL

FRONSDAL Sunday, January 14, 11:30am to 12:30pm

See *Sangha Programs & News* for a full description.

INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

DAYLONG RETREAT WITH KODO CONLIN Saturday, January 20, 9:30am to 4:30pm. Includes guided meditations, dharma talks, and alternating periods of sitting and walking. Instructions and guidance on mindfulness of breathing, body, emotions, thoughts, and open attention will be provided. Appropriate for beginners and those with more experience. Bring lunch.

MINDFULNESS OF SELF, AND GOING BEYOND THE SELF

WITH NIKKI MIRGHAFORI Saturday, January 27, 9:30am to 3pm.

What is the nature of your self-dialogue on the spectrum from criticism-to-kindness and greed-to-generosity? We will first gently shed light on how we relate to our self, and then turn to releasing unhelpful self-preoccupation in service of cultivating caring wisdom for self and others. The day includes guided and silent meditations, alternating periods of sitting and walking, and short Dharma talks. Recommended for people who have some meditation experience and have attended an introductory mindfulness meditation course (or similar), as well as for experienced practitioners. Bring lunch.

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION AND PRACTICE HALF-DAY

WITH TANYA WISER Saturday February 3, 9:30am to 12:15pm. This half-day of mindfulness practice will include guided or lightly guided meditations, a brief dharma talk, group discussion, and mindful activity. This is an opportunity to deepen your meditation and daily life practice, ask a teacher questions and practice with other sangha members. Appropriate for beginners and those with more experience. Bring lunch.

LOVINGKINDNESS MEDITATION DAYLONG WITH KODO

CONLIN Saturday, February 10, 9:30am to 4pm. "A mind well cultivated in *metta* is supreme in beauty." Join us for a day of *metta* (lovingkindness) practice as we nourish the roots of kindness,

compassion, and mental beauty. Includes guided and silent meditations, alternating periods of sitting and walking, and short Dharma talks. Recommended for people who have some meditation experience and have attended an introductory mindfulness meditation course (or similar), as well as for experienced practitioners. Bring lunch.

INTRODUCTION TO INSIGHT MEDITATION DAYLONG RETREAT WITH MATTHEW BRENSILVER

Saturday February 24, 9am to 4pm. There are so many doorways into the dharma because the dharma is so many things. We will explore the foundational teachings of insight meditation and learn several approaches to meditation practice. Includes dharma talks, guided and silent meditation, and time for questions and dialogue. All are welcome. Bring lunch.

INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

DAYLONG RETREAT WITH BRUNI DÁVILA

Saturday March 2, 9:30am to 4:30pm. Includes guided meditations, dharma talks, and alternating periods of sitting and walking. Instructions and guidance on mindfulness of breathing, body, emotions, thoughts, and open attention will be provided. Appropriate for beginners and those with more experience. Bring lunch.

DÍA DE RETIRO PRESENCIAL EN EL IMC CON ANDREA

CASTILLO Saturday March 9, 9:30am to 4:30pm en Español

DAYLONG RETREAT WITH GIL FRONSDAL

Saturday March 30, 8:30am to 5pm. This retreat is meant for people who already understand the basic practice of mindfulness; no instruction will be given. Includes alternating periods of silent sitting and walking meditation with a Dharma talk at the end of the day. Brief interviews to talk about the practice will be available with Gil. Bring lunch.

20's AND 30's PROGRAM

AT HOME IN THE WORLD: DHARMA EVENINGS FOR PEOPLE IN THEIR 20'S AND 30'S WITH MAX ERDSTEIN AND

GUEST TEACHERS. Sundays, 7:30 to 9pm (except the 2nd Sunday of the month). Our meetings alternate between Zoom and in-person at IMC; please check IMC's website Calendar for details. Our group addresses themes relevant to people in their 20's and 30's and includes guided meditations, short dharma talks, and group discussions. We have a friendly and vibrant ongoing community, and all are welcome to drop in at any time.

THE HEART OF BURMESE BUDDHISM UNDER THREAT

Sunday, January 21, 12pm (PT) on Zoom

A conversation with Carol Wilson, Greg Scharf, and Billy Ford about the state of the conflict in Burma (Myanmar) and its implications for the ordained Buddhist Sangha and lay community, and the tradition & culture of Dana. More info on IMC calendar.

YOUTH & FAMILY PROGRAMS

IMC has a variety of programs for youths and family from preschool through high school. For more information contact Hilary at IMC.familyprogram@gmail.com. In-person at IMC.

MINDFUL PARENTS Led by Lauren Silver and Melody Baumgartner. **THIRD SUNDAY OF THE MONTH, 11:15AM TO 12:45PM.** This year's theme is Mindful Parenting in the context of the Eightfold Path. Each month we will explore a different path factor. Parents are invited to practice together in a warm and caring community, supporting each other as we raise thriving children of all ages—infancy through adulthood. Includes meditation, mindful speech and listening, with time for sharing. No registration necessary. Contact Melody Baumgartner at melodybaumgartner@gmail.com.

DHARMA SPROUTS (K-2ND GRADERS & THEIR PARENTS) Led by Hilary Borison and Carla Rayacich. **First Sunday of each month, 11:15am to 12:15pm.** Meditation and mindfulness practice through stories, songs, art, movement, and games. Parents/caregivers participate with their children. Contact Hilary Borison at IMC.familyprogram@gmail.com or 650-575-2052 for more information or to RSVP. Please provide first names of each adult and child who will attend.

DHARMA ROCKS (3RD-5TH GRADERS) Led by Camille Whitney and Tim Sandoe. **Third Sunday of each month, 5 to 6:15pm.** Meditation and mindfulness practice through games, stories, and art. Vegetarian pizza will be provided. Parents/guardians can either drop off and pick up their kids or wait at IMC. We ask participants to sign up at least two days before the event. For more information, please email CRWmindfulness@gmail.com.

DHARMA BODHIS (6TH-8TH GRADERS) Led by Hilary Borison. **SECOND SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH, 5:15 TO 6:45PM.** A time to explore how the dharma can support challenges and opportunities pertinent to middle schoolers through group discussions, mindfulness practice, creative activities, and interactive games. Vegetarian pizza will be provided. RSVP if you plan to attend. For info or to RSVP, contact Hilary Borison: 650-575-2052 or IMC.familyprogram@gmail.com.

MINDFUL TEENS (HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS) Led by Laura Hansen and others. **Monthly on Sunday.** Check the Youth and Family Program page on the website for updates. Open to all teens interested in mindfulness and discussions of applying mindfulness to all aspects of our lives. For info, or to be added to our email list: imcmindfulteens@gmail.com.



SUPPORT GROUPS

SUPPORT GROUP FOR PEOPLE WITH HEALTH CHALLENGES

ON ZOOM: 1ST & 3RD THURSDAYS OF THE MONTH, 12:30 TO 2PM. The primary purpose of this group is to provide each participant an opportunity to share personal challenges, triumphs, hopes, and fears with individuals facing a similar situation. Meetings include brief sittings and consideration of pertinent Dharma topics. At least four days before attending the group for the first time, please contact Ying Chen at imcsg22@gmail.com.

BUDDHISM AND 12-STEP SUPPORT GROUP

ON ZOOM, 2ND SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH 7 TO 8:15PM. Group discussion and study exploring Recovery principles and the teachings of the Buddha. Includes a 15-minute period of sitting meditation, a reading on Dharma and Recovery and open discussion. Everyone is welcome. Facilitated by Jennifer Lemas. For more information contact: jennlemas@comcast.net. See IMC website calendar for Zoom link.



OTHER GROUPS

DHARMA CIRCLE FOR PEOPLE OF ASIAN BACKGROUND WITH LILU CHEN AND YING CHEN. ON ZOOM: 2ND AND 4TH SUNDAYS OF EACH MONTH, 1 TO 2:30PM. Includes sitting meditation, a short dharma talk, discussion and community activities. We intend to provide a safe, friendly, and nourishing environment. Open to all self-identified people of Asian or South Asian, Southeast Asian, East Asian and Pacific Islander background. No registration required. For info contact asianimc2020@gmail.com.

WOMEN'S CIRCLE OF MINDFULNESS WITH HILARY BORISON. THURSDAYS, 11AM TO 12PM. In-person on 2nd Thursdays of the month; on Zoom other weeks.

A gathering for self-identified women who wish to deepen practice in a loving community, as we learn to weave mindfulness throughout our daily lives. For info and to receive the Zoom link, contact Hilary at hborison@sbcglobal.net.

DHARMA-INSPIRED BOOK GROUP

ON ZOOM: FRIDAYS, 5 TO 6:30PM. We stroll through books on Buddhism and meditation at a pace that allows lots of discussion. You are free to drop in even if you don't have the book. The Dharma-Inspired book group is self-led. For our current book, Anne Foster is acting as facilitator, contact: afoster@rawbw.com. For info, Zoom link, and to sign up to receive email updates: insightmeditationcenter.org/dharma-friends/

SCHEDULE PG. 4

EARTH CARE GROUP

ON ZOOM: LAST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH, 8:30 TO 10AM. We focus on a set of diverse topics relating to the right actions we can take to mitigate climate change. Meetings will usually have an invited speaker and include a brief meditation, presentation, and group discussion. See IMC website calendar for Zoom link. For info, contact the Earth Care group at EarthCare.Dharma@gmail.com.

SENIOR SANGHA GROUP: ENJOYING OUR AGING WITH DAVID COHN, FIONA BARNER & ROBERT CUSICK

ON ZOOM: USUALLY ON THE THIRD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH, CHECK THE IMC CALENDAR TO CONFIRM, 11AM TO 1 PM. (See the calendar entry and fill out the short form to be added to the email list for class materials, announcements and Zoom link). Suzuki Roshi was asked, "Why do you practice?" He laughed and said, "To enjoy my old age." Join our dharma-based community of IMC seniors of all ages. We will cultivate enjoying our journey through the vicissitudes and blessings of aging with kindness and wisdom practices. Includes guided meditations, talks, and discussions on topics that support aging with ease and contentment.

SONA'S DHARMA STRUMMERS

Join us as we make music for the elderly. No prior musical experience is necessary. Once a month, we visit an elderly residential care facility in Redwood City and sing old favorites accompanied by our ukulele playing. If you don't play the ukulele, you can come and sing along. We practice once a month in a nearby home. Basic ukulele instruction provided. Masks required indoors. For info contact Martha at marthachickerting@gmail.com.

IMC LGBTQIA+ SANGHA

ON ZOOM: 1ST AND 3RD SUNDAY OF THE MONTH, 5 TO 6PM
Suitable for both beginners and experienced practitioners within our LGBTQIA+ community. Open to people who self-identify as trans, nonbinary, queer, genderqueer, questioning, bisexual, asexual, intersex or two-spirit, gay, lesbian.
Please contact imcqueersangha@gmail.com to join us online and be added to our e-mail list. The Zoom link will be sent separately. We are peer facilitated with guiding teacher Bruni Dávila.



YOGA

THURSDAY MORNING YOGA AND SITTING MEDITATION WITH TERRY LESSER 9 TO 10:45AM IN-PERSON AT IMC

Each session uses a variety of asanas (poses) to focus and calm the mind, enhance breath and overall awareness, and develop flexibility, balance, and strength. Beginners are always welcome. The class is a mixed level, and everyone is encouraged to work in accordance with their own needs and abilities. Bring a large towel and sticky mat if you have one.

SATI CENTER

Register for these events at Sati.org for more info and Zoom links.

ON ZOOM:

ALL THE UNPOPULAR BUDDHIST TOPICS WITH AJAHN

NISABH, Saturday, Jan 6, 9am to 12pm. In Buddhism's coming to the West, several key teachings have been dismissed as incongruous with modern understandings, however many of these represent meaningful parts of the Buddhist path.

STORIES OF INSPIRING BUDDHIST WOMEN WITH DIANA

CLARK Tuesdays Jan 9, 16, 23; 5:30pm to 6:30pm We will explore lesser known stories of inspiring women from the time of the Buddha as well as those who helped bring insight meditation to the West.

ENGAGING THE ABHIDHAMMA WITH TONY BERNHARD

Saturday, Jan 13, 9am to 12pm The *Abhidhamma* texts are an enigma to many Buddhist practitioners, but with familiarity they can become a potent tool for liberation.

AGING AND AWAKENING WITH DAVID CHERNIKOFF

Saturday, Jan 20, 9am to 12pm. While the aging process involves losses and challenges, these can become a pathway to profound spiritual realization.

CHAPLAINCY SPEAKER SERIES:

- **Listening to Nuance in Bereavement: Loss, Emotion, and Awareness with Tom Harshman, Saturday, Jan 27, 9am to 10am**
- **Accompanying Living, Accompanying Dying with Kirsten DeLeo, Saturday, Feb 17, 9am to 10am**
- **Healthy Compassion in Crises and Disasters with Nathan Jishin Michon, Saturday, Mar 16, 9am to 10am**

CRAFT-ING OUR PATH WITH YING CHEN, DAVID LOREY,

DIANA CLARK, KIM ALLEN

Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday Jan 30, Feb 1 & 3, 8:30am to 10am.

We will explore the multi-dimensional qualities of mind and heart that are captured by words like Confidence, Refuge, Aspiration, Faith, and Trust.

THE WAY TO THE FAR SHORE PARAYANAVAGGA: SUTTA

NIPTTA BOOK FIVE WITH LEIGH BRASINGTON

Saturdays: Feb 24 & March 2; 9am to 12pm We will take an in-depth look at the 16 suttas found in *Sutta Nipata* Book V, presented as conversations in which the Buddha addresses questions posed by learned brahmins.

THE SPECTRUM OF COMPASSION WITH KIM ALLEN

Tuesdays, Mar 5, 12 & 19; 7 to 8:30pm. Explores a selection of compassionate mindstates and actions found in the Pali Canon with occasional connections to later Buddhist literature.

JOY AS PATH: PAMOJJA AND TRANSCENDENT DEPENDENT ORIGINATION WITH AJAHN KOVILLO

Saturday, Mar 23, 9am to 11:30am By exploring different routes to well-being (paths to *pamojja*), the retreat aims to help participants rediscover happiness in their practice.

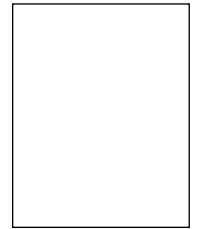
Insight Meditation Center

108 Birch Street

Redwood City, CA 94062

www.insightmeditationcenter.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



DANA SUPPORTS IMC

IMC continues a 2,600-year-old Buddhist tradition of providing the teachings freely to all who are interested. IMC has no paid staff and is run entirely by volunteers. All financial support comes from the generosity of people who value what we do. Tax-deductible donations support all expenses, including programs, publications, website, the Insight Retreat Center, and AudioDharma. Teachers receive no salary and are supported by teacher dana, which isn't tax-deductible.

We at IMC are very grateful for all the support we receive, and are inspired by how beautifully Dharma practice develops when it does so in a field of generosity and gratitude!

To donate, please go to www.insightmeditationcenter.org/donate/. If you have any questions, please email fundraising@insightmeditationcenter.org, or call (650) 260-8674.

PARKING AT IMC

To be good neighbors, we ask that those attending IMC events do not park on the 100 block of Birch Street where IMC is located, unless you are not able to walk more than a short distance. Also, please do not park in The Abigail parking lot across the street from IMC; your car may be towed.

Abundant street parking is found close to IMC: on El Camino, Brewster, Broadway, and Hopkins & Fulton. Parking further from IMC will not only help our neighbors, it will provide more parking for people for whom walking is a challenge. Thank you!

ABOUT IMC: NEWSLETTER

For this Winter issue, you will see a new layout with an expanded Sangha Programs & News section. The IMC newsletter team includes Gus Pinto and Caylin Howard (Sangha Programs & News), Maureen O'Brien (Schedule), and Elena Silverman (layout and production) — plus all of the wonderful people who contribute content to the newsletter! If you have any comments, or suggestions for articles that would help develop and strengthen community at IMC, please email your thoughts to: newsletter@insightmeditationcenter.org.



Please refrain from wearing scented products to our center, as there are those who have allergies, asthma, or chemical sensitivities. Thank you

GENERAL INFORMATION:

contact@insightmeditationcenter.org or 650/599-3456.

ON THE IMC WEBSITE:

- To sign up to receive emails: click on the **EMAIL SIGN-UP** button (upper right).
- To receive this newsletter by postal mail: Resources>Newsletter, click on "PAPER newsletter: [sign up for our postal mail list](#)"