



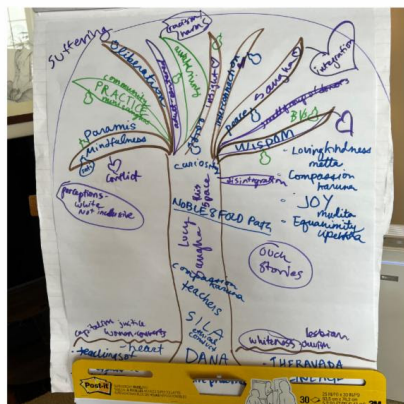
# Insight Meditation Community of Western Massachusetts

(formerly known as Insight Pioneer Valley)

## IWM Sangha News - 4/27/23 - May Newsletter

### Organizational Change & Development & Staffing

IWM's Board & staff met with Mieke Vandersall of the [Vandersall Collective](#) to take stock and assess where our sangha is now in terms of organizational structure and our financial picture, and to dream of possible visions of IWM's future. We are excited and grateful for Mieke's energy, expertise, and faith in our mission; and we look forward to sharing some of what we're learning from our process with her in the coming months. We are also pleased to share that Bernadine Mellis is now working at the center 10 hrs a week and will be working closely with Mieke, the Board and Casper throughout this process. If you don't already know Bernadine, you can [read more about her here](#).



**Spring is here!**

**This Month at IWM and Looking Ahead**

As we do each month, we'll begin May with a Blessing Circle (5/1). Two days later (5/3), we'll have an opportunity to honor the Buddha and our lineage as we celebrate Vesak with Bernadine Mellis and Lore Detenber; to close, all will be invited to stay for optional sharing of refreshments and social time. On May 10, we look forward to welcoming Maureen Shannon-Chapple; she is among the teachers who anchors InsightLA's monthly "Mindful of Whiteness" group. On May 17th, we'll be welcoming a new guest teacher to IWM, Dave Smith. We're delighted that Rebecca Bradshaw (5/24) and Jean Esther (5/31) are teaching this month and that early in June, Michael Grady is offering a Saturday morning retreat (6/3) on *Wise Attitude*.

**Changing COVID Protocols**

In April, at in-person offerings, IWM required vaccination and masking with teachers having the option to unmask if they tested negative. For our May programs, we're checking in with the teachers and will be posting case-by-case plans as to whether or not masking will be optional for all. As we offer more in-person programs (see description of new programming for Monday nights, below), you'll see that we're trying to maintain the Zoom option as well. While hybrids may not always be possible, we know there are sangha members who, for health reasons, can not take the risk of in-person attendance especially if masks become optional. We also know that those who attend from afar appreciate the Zoom option.

### **NEW: In Person Monday night open practice sessions!**

The Community Dharma Stewards, who open and hold the Open Community Practice Sessions on Monday nights from 5:30 to 7:00, have decided to offer two sessions per month in person at the IWM space at Eastworks. The second and fourth Mondays of the month will be in person (and hopefully hybrid - watch for updates). **We hope to welcome many sangha members who have been eager for more in-person sessions, even if you have not frequently attended Monday nights!**

These sessions will also be presenting new content: starting in June, we will be focusing on the **Brahma Viharas (Divine Abodes)**, the heart qualities of Lovingkindness (metta), Compassion (Karuna), Joy (Mudita) and Equanimity (Upekha). In June, the first Monday will still be devoted to the Blessing Circle as usual (on Zoom). The second Monday, June 12, will be in person at IWM, possibly hybrid, and focus on Lovingkindness or Metta; Monday June 19 will be on zoom only and focus on Compassion or Karuna; and Monday June 26 will be in person at IWM, possibly hybrid, and focus on Joy or Mudita.

These newly envisioned offerings will still include a 30-minute practice session and a chance for discussion or questions.

### **New: Queer & Trans (LGBTQIA2S+) Affinity Group**

All are welcome! We will practice together and have time for discussion and building community. First meeting: June 22, 2023; in person / hybrid. 4th Thursdays from 7:15-8:45. For more information write to: [bernadinem@insightwma.org](mailto:bernadinem@insightwma.org).

### **Update on Kate Johnson!**

Kate's coming to IWM on Saturday, November 11 from 2 to 4 PM to the Florence Civic Center (offering will also be hybrid on zoom). If you previously registered, you are all set; if you would

like a refund (from 2/25 postponement), look for an email soon about how to access that; if you did not register before but would like to attend in November, registration will open this summer.

Many of us are still very involved in gaining and discussing insights from *Radical Friendship*, as part of our sangha's continuing Common Read of the book. Kate describes the Buddha's teachings about spiritual friendship in the Mitta Sutta, as these ideas affect our relationships with ourselves, other people, groups and sanghas we care about, and the larger social environment. We're looking forward to hearing Kate herself talk about it and being able to ask her questions!

### Looking ahead, watch for updates

Lama Rod Owens (8/6); Joseph Goldstein (9/17); Lama John Makransky (10/15); Kate Johnson (11/11); Jan Surrey and Florence Meleo-Meyer (12/2)

## Financial Reporting

Insight Western Mass -- Asset Comparison 2022, 2021, 2015			
ALL ASSETS	Yr End 2022	Yr End 2021	Yr End 2015
FSB Checking	\$46,335	\$43,832	\$13,205
FSB CD (matured 3/2022)	\$0	\$18,589	\$17,185
FSB Savings	<u>\$18,653</u>		
<b>FSB SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$64,987</b>	<b>\$62,421</b>	<b>\$30,390</b>
Calvert Balanced Fund	\$61,915	\$68,739	\$40,451
Ishares S&P Small Cap	\$8,423	\$10,191	\$0
Money Mkt	<u>\$120</u>		
<b>INVEST ACCOUNT SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$70,458</b>	<b>\$78,930</b>	<b>\$40,451</b>
Eastworks Deposit	\$1,100	\$1,100	\$1,100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$136,545</b>	<b>\$142,451</b>	<b>\$71,941</b>

As the above table shows, IWM started 2022 with \$142,451 and ended the year with \$136,545. Because IWM has a conservative asset allocation, although our investments lost market value in 2022, we fared better than we otherwise might have.

In recent years, by the end of our fiscal year, IWM has successfully raised at least as much as we spent. In 2023, whether or not that turns out to be the case, the Board has decided to use some of our cash assets on-hand to hire additional staff as well as a fundraising/organizational development consultant.

Last year at this time IWM had spent about \$2,500 more than we had received in donations. So far this year, IWM has received \$16,800 in donations and has incurred \$26,400 expenses, leaving us with a year-to-date 2023 operating deficit of \$9,600.

We look forward to future sangha discussions about our finances and the work that's now underway with Mieke Vandersall.

### **Programming Committee - Deep Bow**

For the past two years, Candace Cassin and Manny Mansbach have served as representatives of the Teachers Council on the Programming Committee. Their presence and wisdom have grounded us, guiding us in always centering the Dhamma as we shape our offerings. Both Candace and Manny stepped down from the Committee after their two-year term in April. We are deeply grateful to them both for their effort and energy, their guidance and care, in this important role. Deep bow also to Anne Fine, a long-time practitioner who has also contributed enormously to the Programming Committee and stepped down recently after nearly two years. Anne continues to steward our

sangha as the Teacher Liaison for our Wednesday night Dharma Talks.

### **Programming Committee is looking for new members**

The role of the Programming Committee is to organize and schedule classes, half-day and day-long offerings, talks, series, affinity groups, and other programming that supports the mission of the Insight Meditation Community of Western Mass (IWM). The primary activity of Programming Committee members is to organize IWM's calendar of offerings and invite teachers to IWM. The committee collaborates with the Board and the Teachers' Council as appropriate. [Click here](#) to read more and apply to serve on the Programming Committee.

### **Justice & Belonging**

The Board of IWM is in discussion about how best to support continuing to offer *White and Awakening in the Dharma: Creating Antiracist Sanghas* (WAD). Many sangha members have also expressed interest in launching an IWM **Reparations as a Spiritual Practice Initiative**. Please feel free to let us know if you would be interested in a WAD course or in working on reparations in sangha by emailing [bernadinem@insightwma.org](mailto:bernadinem@insightwma.org).

### **Opportunities to Express Generosity**

#### **Center Dana**

We are grateful for all the ways that members of our sangha give of their time, talents, and financial resources. IWM operates entirely on the sangha's acts of generosity. We welcome any and all contributions. If you're inspired to give money to help support our staff and pay our rent and other monthly bills - we'd be delighted to grow our numbers of Friends of IWM (recurring contributors). We always welcome one-time donations anytime. [Please click here](#) to choose the



amount you'd like to contribute as well as the frequency. Thank you for practicing generosity in this way.

### **Hosts/Greeters**

IWM would benefit greatly from having a few more in-person greeters, Zoom hosts and hybrid hosts. Offering hybrids requires two volunteers (rather than just one if it's Zoom only or in-person only); our capacity for hybrid offerings will depend in part on how many volunteers we have. Please reach out if you'd like to learn more: [volunteer@insightwma.org](mailto:volunteer@insightwma.org).

### **Sangha Stewards - Deep Bow**

In addition to expressing gratitude to IWM teachers, we are grateful to the sangha members who served from January through March in the following ways:

- Zoom Hosts/In-Person Greeters/Hybrid Hosts: Catalina A, Suzanne A, Nancy B, Lucy B, Holly B, Adam C, Alison C, Cheryl K, Lesley M, Cathy R, JM S, and Susan S.
- Day-to-Day Operations (Admin/Teacher Liaison/Technology/Volunteers): Lucy B, Adam C, Anne F, Cathy R.
- Finance Committee: Lucy B, Jen G, (staffed by Fariba G)
- Green Metta: Betsy H, Rick H, Diana R, Andrea Z.
- Programming Committee: Candace C, Hal F, Anne F, Manny M (staffed by Casper L and Bernadine M)
- Community Dharma Stewards: Suzanne A, Holly B, Jennifer D, Hal F, Ruth F, and Jaya K
- Peer-led Tuesday morning open practice and discussion and Friday evening open practice: thanks to all who hold the space on Tuesdays and Fridays.
- Facilitators (Common Read, KM, White Caucus, White & Awakening in the Dharma): Suzanne A, Holly B, Jen C, Candace C, Jennifer D, Lore D, Jean E, Hal F, Ruth F, Jaya K, Bernadine M, Cathy R, Melissa T.

## Dharma Dialogue with Jennifer D.

### Topic: Self-Compassion

#### From Rachel R:

After many years of Buddhist practice, I still had a really fierce Inner Critic that caused a lot of suffering and interfered with my capacity to be present for any length of time. Fortunately, when I was introduced to Self-Compassion (through the book *The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion* by Chris Germer, PhD.), everything changed. This truly was the missing link to greater ease and wellbeing in the context of relationship especially. Sure, I still get triggered, but the difference is the intensity of the Inner Critic has dialed down quite a bit, and I have this practice to relate to my Inner Critic with acceptance and love instead of hatred and wanting it to go away.

One of my favorites goes like this: (with hand on heart, or holding my face so I can feel the warmth of my hand on my jawbone and cheeks):

*May I be safe*

*May I be peaceful*

*May I be kind to myself*

*May I accept myself, just as I am*

*May I forgive myself.*

During especially challenging times, I will call on this and other Self-Compassion practices several times throughout the day, repeating the phrases, sometimes stating them out loud. It never fails to bring me back to center and to the *Truth* of who I am - a perfectly imperfect being on the path of healing, doing the best she can.

#### From Jennifer D.

A question for myself (and all who are reading this offering!) What comes first - self-compassion or compassion for others? Or can/do they appear and arise simultaneously? I have heard the question answered in many ways from teachers and students on



our Path. For me, self-compassion has to precede compassion for others, because if I do not recognize that I have that capacity to begin with, and Practice it with my life, then I don't have the experience to offer it to someone else. Some say it is easier to have compassion for others than for ourselves, and through offering it to others, we learn how to Practice it for ourselves.

What do you think?

Sometimes I forget that the Buddha offered us the following in his teachings: remembering that we all have the capacity all of the time to hold ourselves and others in compassion. We just lose sight of that. And then rediscover it over and over again. When I forget that, it is as if the possibility doesn't even exist. However, just like anything that we aspire to (without clinging) it's all about our Practice.

For me, it is a lifeline to have the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha in my everyday life. For most of my childhood, I had a different Path/Practice, imposed on me by well-meaning adults. As I reached young adulthood, it lost its meaning for me, and I wandered for years searching for an alternative. And then I found Buddhism; first, Zen, and now, Vipassana, (Insight). I feel at home opening to the Practice within myself and others.

If you would like to participate in our ongoing Dharma Dialogue, please send an email to [leadership@insightwma.org](mailto:leadership@insightwma.org). Anonymity is welcomed. It just occurred to me that a Dialogue can have more than 2 people at any given time. We might have to change the name, but we could easily do that!

With loving kindness,  
Jennifer D.  
Community Dharma Steward

**New Welcome Statement**

As you attend upcoming offerings at IWM, you may have noticed a new Welcome Statement being read along with other opening remarks. We see this new practice as a way to reflect our commitment to making IWM a place of belonging for all.

*IWM is committed to creating a space of belonging for all. We honor the differences among us, including those of race, class, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, cultural and religious background, and ability. It is our intention that all feel included and comfortable in practicing here.*

*IWM community agreements for all our events include the practice of what the Buddha called Wise Speech. We take this to mean each of us speaking for ourselves, from our own experience, rather than making assumptions about others; observing confidentiality around anything shared; and being mindful to avoid speech that might express bias, microaggressions, or harm toward other persons or groups.*

*In this way, we can all work together to make our sangha reflect the fundamental Buddhist principle of non-harming.*

### **Feedback**

If you have comments, questions, or ideas you'd like to share, please contact us: [leadership@insightwma.org](mailto:leadership@insightwma.org).

With much care and metta,  
IWM Board