



Insight Meditation Community

OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

IWM November Sangha News 10/27/23

September 17 Benefit with Joseph Goldstein

As you may have heard, we more than met our fundraising goal at this wonderful event, raising nearly \$35,000 to support our teacher resources and expand the diversity of our teaching pool. We are currently engaged in thinking together with our teachers about possible new structures for teacher participation in the sangha and how best to leverage the funds raised for those purposes. We will keep you informed as these plans move forward. Thank you so much for making it possible! If you missed the benefit, you can still register to receive an online recording by [clicking here](#).

Report on Community Town Hall 10/18

This event, with 18 people on Zoom and 8 in person at IWM, was full of warmth, connection and great ideas. Many expressed a desire for more social gatherings of the sangha, potlucks or hikes or other ways to get together. If you are interested in this and/or could help organize an event, please email us at leadership@insightwma.org. Other ideas included regular chanting in connection with the lunar calendar, getting together with others who volunteer in the same way you do, and courses for more advanced practitioners. As sangha members initiate and coordinate these offerings, we will share updates.

If you were inspired by the discussion of volunteer opportunities to get involved in that way, or if you would be willing to be on a notification list to hear about volunteer opportunities when they arise, please contact Cathy Repetti, our volunteer coordinator, at volunteer@insightwma.org.

This Month at IWM

Monday night open practice

In November the Monday evening sessions led by Community Dharma Stewards will consider the Eightfold Path, the way to liberation as the Buddha described it in the fourth Noble Truth. This month both the second and fourth Mondays, 11/13 and 11/27, will be in person at IWM; 11/27 will also be hybrid. See below for specific topics.

Two retreats and one course starting 10/31

There's still time to register for Nick Boutros's upcoming course, "The Path of Mindfulness of Body," which begins on 10/31 and continues for four Tuesdays via Zoom. On November 4, Gina Siepel and Bernadine Mellis are again sharing their outdoor offering, "How to Breathe with a Tree," which includes a walking meditation and contemplation of our relationship with the forest. Kate Johnson is joining us on November 11 for her offering, "The Dharma of War and Peace," which will take place in-person/hybrid. Kate is the author of [*Radical Friendship*](#), which the sangha engaged with earlier this year during our Common Read. After Kate's offering, there will be light refreshments and time for informal conversation (one of the things people expressed an interest in at the October Town Hall). BIPOC registrants are also invited to a potluck affinity gathering with Kate the night before (11/10). If you're interested in learning more, please email leadership@insightwma.org.

Wednesday Evening Open Community Practice and Dharma Talks

Finally, we are happy to welcome guest teachers Vance Pryor and Tuere Sala, as well as IWM teachers Devin Berry and Manny Mansbach, to give Dharma Talks in our Wednesday night open community practice sessions.

See below for more information about all these offerings.

From the Board: A Financial & Organizational Update

We write today as the IWM Board to share with you some of what we are doing. Our main focus this year has been to work towards the creation of a more equitable, sustainable organizational structure for IWM. Concretely, we hired new part-time staff, and engaged with an outside consultant.

As we look back on the year, we are heartened by the ways our sangha has responded with enthusiasm to both our traditional and new offerings. We sought to prioritize **inclusivity** by creating spaces for diverse groups; experience **sangha** in smaller groups like Kalyana Mitta groups as well as larger sangha-wide gatherings; find **coordinated learning** about the Buddha's teachings; and **access these offerings** for those eager to gather in person and also those who need to attend events on Zoom.

People who make things happen

All of this - everything IWM does - is supported in one way or another by staff, volunteers, and infrastructure (our physical space as well as our communication and financial systems).

Early in 2023, our 25th year as a sangha, the Board welcomed and oriented two new highly engaged board members, hired Bernadine Mellis, a part-time senior staff member who is also a teacher-in-training, and engaged with Mieke Vandersall, a consultant focused on fundraising, organizational planning, and

development. We did so with funds raised in previous years as an investment in our growth as an organization.

IWM also employs two longtime consultants who manage our books and payroll services, and one staff member, Casper Lucia, who has served since 2022 as our programming, outreach and administrative coordinator. Casper works 25 hours a week. Working closely with our volunteers, our paid staff make our offerings possible. To read more about important financial information and our gratitude, [click here](#).

Justice and Belonging

Affinity Sanghas

We're happy to share that our Affinity Sanghas continue to grow. Our **Queer & Trans** Sangha meets on the fourth Thursday of each month. Check our offerings page to see whether in-person/hybrid or Zoom only, as it varies by month. The next meeting for our **BIPOC** Sangha is November 17 - time TBD - and the format of this group will be split between meditation practice, discussion of materials group members bring to share, and socializing. We are in the process of relaunching our **Disability/Chronic Illness** Sangha and are looking for folks who'd like to be involved. Please contact leadership@insightwma.org with questions or comments about our affinity offerings.

White & Awakening in the Dhamma

We are happy to share that we will be offering the 6-month *White & Awakening in the Dhamma* (WAD) curriculum again this year, starting in December. WAD is designed to afford people who identify as white the opportunity to turn with mindfulness, wisdom, and compassion towards racism, white supremacy culture, and privilege, as they manifest externally and internally. With the course, we will provide a guided exploration of the racial conditioning of white-identified people with the support of Buddha,

Dhamma, and Sangha. Registration is already open and the full description is included below.

Dharma Dialogue with Jennifer D.

Sangha

In Buddhism, Sangha is the community of people who follow the teachings of the Buddha. The term, which in Pali and Sanskrit means “collection,” is one of the three basic creeds of Buddhism. The other two are Dharma (the Buddhist teachings,) and the Buddha. These are sometimes called the Three Refuges. In our Center, a non-residential practitioners’ community, we often gather on retreats, classes, in formal meditation practice and discussions, and to listen to Dharma talks by a variety of Buddhist teachers. For me, being part of a Sangha benefits my individual practice in ways that are sometimes difficult to describe. Collective spiritual practice strengthens my essence as a Buddhist practitioner, heightens the commitment I have to following the Dharma, provides safety and companionship, and supports my efforts when I realize that I am not always going to be able to be with others to meditate. It makes those “solo ventures” easier to choose on a daily basis when I can.

To read more of Jennifer’s sharing and also a response from Rachel, please [click here](#).

Downloadable Flyers

Below are downloadable flyers in case you want to share them with a friend or post them on a public bulletin board:

- November Offerings: [click here](#)
- Upcoming Courses & Retreats:
- [The Path of Mindfulness of Body](#) with Nick Boutros
- [How to Breathe with a Tree](#) with Gina Siepel & Bernadine Mellis
- [The Dharma of War and Peace](#) with Kate Johnson

- [White and Awakening in the Dhamma \(WAD\)](#)

Feedback

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

With much care and metta,
IWM Board