



Insight Meditation Community of Western Massachusetts

(formerly known as Insight Pioneer Valley)

IWM Sangha News - 11/25/22

Stewarding our Sangha - Hybrid Update - New Opportunities

We are grateful to Nick Boutros for encouraging IWM to take the leap to offer hybrid courses which are truly interactive and to everyone who made contributions to this effort (with money, equipment, and/or time). With the arrival of our new Meeting Owl, TV, and computer, we are able to offer programming and practice where those on Zoom can hear and see those who are in person at the center and vice-versa.

Because this new set up includes a 55" smart TV, if there's interest, sangha members could also gather at the center to watch/listen to offerings and films that are available on the web. Our new hybrid capacity might also encourage sangha members who have been involved in IWM's affinity groups - all of which have been on a COVID pause - to see if they might want to consider starting up meetings again.

As we begin to use the center more, we're seeking someone to steward our sangha as IWM's volunteer Facilities Coordinator. We also need folks who the Facilities Coordinator can turn to to help clean in advance of in-person offerings. If you have a couple of hours a month and might be willing to serve our sangha in this way, please email volunteer@insightwma.org to learn more.

Many of our offerings continue to be Zoom only. On January 1st we have an opening for a New Year's Day retreat Zoom host. If

you're willing and interested and aren't already trained as a host, we'll be happy to get you set up. Please email volunteer@insightwma.org.

Recent IWM Report and Looking Ahead

At trellis' recommendation, IWM received a \$3,000 general support grant from the Mertz Gilmore Foundation for which the Board recently submitted a final report. If you're interested, [click here](#) to read the one page overview.

The programming committee continues to do a wonderful job lining up members of our Teachers' Council as well as guest teachers to provide a rich schedule of Dharma talks, courses, and retreats. In the coming months there are offerings for both beginners and long-time practitioners. And, for the first time since the pandemic started, the non-residential weekend retreat will once again be held in-person (conditions permitting).

We are also grateful to IWM's Community Dharma Stewards and all who open the room for practice and/or discussion throughout the week. If you're new to meditation, orientations are offered the second Monday of the month. [Click here](#) to learn more about our weekday schedule.

Dharma Dialogue with Jennifer D.

Last month we explored what purpose Thinking Mind plays in our meditation practice and in our daily lives. I would like to take a look this month at how we can move attention down into Heart and Body for other experiences of being in the present moment. We could say that it takes effort, Compassionate Effort, to move attention around in our experiences while staying in the present moment. That process becomes an intention, not a goal, so there is no room for self - and other - judgement if we "fail" in this endeavor. This morning, while meditating, I watched the

zing/zang movement of attention go faster than the speed of light, with me hanging on to its coattails for dear life. I wanted to be still, especially in Thinking Mind. Being still in Heart and Body seemed out of the question... at least for a while. I am learning, repeatedly, that the same information that Thinking Mind provides us, seems different than what Heart and Body has to offer. For me, it is easier to access the information that Body has to offer if I am looking from the Heart. The words come to me, silently in practice or aloud in daily life as I practice one of the five precepts, "I will refrain from harsh and false speech, internally and externally." In the glimpses, between thoughts and feelings, I find the availability of the Heart to be there to fulfill that precept. For Body, in the last few years, my experience is most often one of pain and/or discomfort; not many pleasurable or even neutral sensations. And my attention to this wavers and flows, often without acceptance of the painful and uncomfortable sensations. For me, if acceptance is not present, (and I can use Thinking Mind and Heart to access that,) then the chances of Body sensations remaining seem greater. A hard and important lesson to have in my experience.

If you would like to add to this dialogue about Mind, Heart, and Body, please feel free to do so. Or it can be about anything else you would like to share with the Sangha. I would welcome the opportunity to explore aspects of our practice together. Anonymity is perfectly fine. Just email your writing to leadership@insightwma.org.

Together in this journey and on this path,

Jennifer D.
Community Dharma Steward

Sangha-Wide Common Read of *Radical Friendship* by Kate Johnson

The IWM Board and other leaders in our community are planning a “Common Read” to take place in the months of January and February, where everyone who would like to, will read this inspirational book, *Radical Friendship* by Kate Johnson, and come together in different formats to discuss it. We see this as a community building activity, hoping it will help to meet the need for sangha that so many of us are expressing at this time.

Two Kalyana Mitta groups are planned to start in January, which will focus on the book for their first few meetings; there are also two ongoing groups that are already reading and discussing it. In addition, there will be a few one-time meetings facilitated by various sangha members to reflect on the book and its messages. All these meetings will happen on Zoom or in some cases via hybrid.

We are very excited that Kate Johnson has accepted our offer to come herself to lead a final large group gathering focused on the book. This gathering will be offered on Saturday, February 25, mid-day, so save the date! (We hope this will be a hybrid offering.)

If you have not read the book, it presents a truly innovative and revelatory way to connect the Buddha's teachings about spiritual friendship to ways to deepen our connections with each other, with community and with work in the world. You can read comments about it from several senior Vipassana teachers here: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/624898/radical-friendship-by-kate-johnson/>

More details about how to sign up for the various groups in January and February will be coming soon, so please stay tuned!

Downloadable Flyers

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

- December Offerings: [click here](#)
- Upcoming Courses & Retreats:
- [Approaching the Winter Solstice: Beginning Again, Here and Now](#) with Devin Berry and Tara Mulay
- [New Year's Day Retreat](#) with Rebecca Bradshaw
- [Living Dharma: Working with Fear and Anxiety](#) with Michael Grady
- [Coming Home to the Refuge of the Dharma](#) with Rebecca Bradshaw and Jean Esther

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Feedback

If you have comments, questions, or ideas about the "Common Read" or anything else you'd like to share, please contact us: leadership@insightwma.org.

With much care and metta,
trellis, Lucy, Hal, Holly