



Insight Meditation Community of Western Massachusetts

(formerly known as Insight Pioneer Valley)

IWM Sangha News — 3/30/23 — April Newsletter

25th Anniversary

This year is IWM's 25th anniversary! The stability and continuity of our Center - in the midst of many transitions in recent years - is something to celebrate, and we are looking forward to honoring this important milestone for our sangha with you later this year. Please look for announcements about special anniversary events in the coming months including one with Joseph Goldstein.

Looking Back, Looking Ahead

It's been beautiful to see the sangha engage with our **Common Read**, *Radical Friendship: Seven Ways to Love Yourself and Find Your People in an Unjust World*, by Kate Johnson. The Common Read has brought us together with a sense of shared purpose, and has also been the occasion for fruitful conversation and connection at recent events facilitated by Jean Esther and Ruth Folchman. As many are aware, we had an event planned with [Kate Johnson](#) that had to be postponed. We are in the process of rescheduling with Kate for the fall and will let everyone know when we have a date.

In April, Jean Esther and Rebecca Bradshaw (hybrid at IWM) will be offering **Dharma talks** and we'll be welcoming back guest teachers Nico Hase and Jill Shepherd. On April 15, IMS's longtime resident teacher, Chas DiCapua, will offer a half-day hybrid retreat at IWM on [cultivating a suitable home for the heart](#).

Starting in June, we are hoping to hold some of our weekly **Monday night open practice sessions** as hybrid events at the center (IWM's Eastworks space). These sessions, from 5:30 to 6:45, are lightly led by a Community Dharma Steward and will include a silent meditation period, a brief talk on a dharma topic to be announced, and an opportunity for discussion.

Looking ahead, in addition to rescheduling Kate Johnson's retreat and Joseph Goldstein's offering, we are excited that Michael Grady (June), Lama Rod Owens (August), Lama John Makransky (October), and Jan Surrey and Florence Meleo-Meyer (December) will all be offering retreats at IWM.

New Welcome Statement

As you attend upcoming events at IWM, you will notice 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.

Programming Committee looking for several 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.

IWM White Leaders Caucus

White-identified members of the sangha who serve in leadership roles - as Teachers, Board members, staff, key volunteers, etc. - gather to look at the ways that white supremacy culture and racism undermine our commitment to inclusion and ethical practice. This year, the IWM White Leaders Caucus is exploring the Satipatthana Sutta through the lens of antiracist practice. The Satipatthana allows the group to look honestly at the devastating reality of racism experientially, through and with the support of our Dhamma practice.

White and Awakening in the Dharma: Creating Antiracist Sanghas (WAD)

As part of our ongoing commitment to lift up and support the cultivation of Beloved Community at IWM, in the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021, we offered WAD, a six-month, 12-session study and practice program for white-identified practitioners. WAD was designed to afford the opportunity to turn with mindfulness, wisdom, and compassion towards the manifestations of racism,

white supremacy culture, and privilege in our society and in ourselves. With the course, we provided a guided exploration of our racial conditioning as white people with the support of Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. We drew on diverse academic and popular materials on the topics of racism and white supremacy culture. JD Doyle mentored the facilitator group while also co-facilitating with Jennifer Cannon, Lore Detenber, Hal Fales, and Bernadine Mellis. JD Doyle and Jen Cannon adapted the curriculum from the “White Awareness Insight Curriculum for Uprooting Privilege (WAIC UP!): A Dharma and Racism Study Program,” which was created by members of the Spirit Rock Community Dharma Leaders Program (CDL 5) in 2015/2016.

When the program formally ended, the facilitators began offering bimonthly retreats for graduates of the program; those have now become seasonal half-day retreats for connecting and checking in about how our antiracism work and our Dharma practice are supporting and inflecting each other. Those who participate are very grateful to be a part of this mini-sangha.

The Board hopes the facilitators will again offer **White & Awakening in the Dharma**. We’re in discussion about how best to support continuing this offering. Many WAD participants 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.

Dharma Dialogue with Jennifer D.

Internal Conversation

“I should have. I could have. I would have.”

“Yes. I hear that often. And who is this that is speaking with me now?”

“Your mind. I have a lot to say to distract you from the present moment and from your practice.”

“OK, you can give it a try. However, I choose to have awareness of all that is, which allows you to be here without me believing a word you are saying. What do you have to offer me now?”

“Gratitude for your generous and open heart in including me in your everyday life.”

“Will you join me in a loving kindness meditation?”

“Thank you for inviting me.”

“You are welcome:

** May I be safe and free from harm.

**May you be safe and free from harm.

**May all beings everywhere be safe and free from harm.

**May I be free from suffering in mind, heart, and body.

**May you be free from suffering in mind, heart, and body.

**May all beings everywhere be free from suffering in mind, heart, and body.

**May I be peaceful.

**May you be peaceful.

**May all beings everywhere be peaceful.”

If you have an Internal Conversation you would like to share, or anything else about our practice, please send an email to leadership@insightwma.org. Thanks for considering joining me in this ongoing Dharma Dialogue. Anonymity is certainly welcome.

With Metta,

Jennifer D.

Community Dharma Steward

Downloadable Flyers

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

- April Offerings: [click here](#)
- Upcoming Courses & Retreats:
- [Cultivating a suitable home for the heart](#) with Chas DiCapua
- [Wise Attitude: Nurturing Ease While Facilitating This Path of Awakening](#) with Michael Grady

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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