



## **IWM Sangha News - 5/25/23 - June Newsletter**

**Save the date! September 17, 2023**

**25th Anniversary Event:**

**Dharma with Joseph Goldstein & Celebration**

As previously announced, Joseph Goldstein is offering a benefit teaching event at IWM on September 17. Following that, we are planning a celebration of our 25th Anniversary.

We are excited to be celebrating 25 years as a sangha, sharing the Dharma and finding refuge together. It's a good time to reflect on where we have been and where we want to go next! In the coming months, we will be sharing our intentions and welcoming your input about our direction going forward.

And...we need your help. If you would like to support our 25th Anniversary offering by helping with the planning and logistics, please email [leadership@insightwma.org](mailto:leadership@insightwma.org).

### **This Month at IWM - COVID Update**

For IWM's June offerings that will be held as in-person/hybrids, we've checked in with the teachers/facilitators and are posting case-by-case plans as to whether or not masking is required or optional.

- In June, the following offerings will be in-person/hybrids: Michael Grady's retreat on 6/3; Monday evening practice on 6/12 and 6/26; 6/22 Queer/Trans/LGBTIA2S+ affinity group; Nick Boutros' 6/28 Dharma talk.

- In June, the following offerings will be Zoom only: 6/5 Blessing Circle; two Dharma talks (6/7 with Karen Waconda; 6/14 with Manny Mansbach); 6/19 Monday evening practice.

As we offer more in-person programs, 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 Format: Monday evening practice sessions**

As mentioned above, starting in June, we will hold some of our weekly Monday night open practice sessions in person and hopefully 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 the dharma topic of the night, and an opportunity for discussion. As we detailed last month, the month of June will be devoted to the Brahma-Viharas, the practice of the heart qualities of Lovingkindness (Metta), Compassion, Joy and Equanimity. June 5, the first Monday, will be a Blessing Circle on Zoom, as happens every month. The next three Mondays will each focus on one of the Brahma-Viharas. The second and fourth Mondays, June 12 and June 26 will be in-person and hybrid. The third, June 19, will be on Zoom.

Please consider joining us! If you are new to IWM, it is fine for you to attend any or all of these Monday night open community practice and discussion sessions: those of us leading the sessions will make a special effort to welcome you.

## **Supporting Affinity Groups**

Affinity groups, sometimes called caucuses or interest groups, are a group of individuals that share a common identity or interest. Before the pandemic, Insight Western Mass offered a variety of affinity groups for community members with specific concerns to get to know and support each other as Dharma Friends. These groups can help create a welcoming space for those who might not always feel welcome when entering a new community.

Before the pandemic, we offered the following groups, which happened in person at the center: Parents, Queer/Trans, Chronic illness/disability, BIPOC, and Young Adults.

In addition to the Queer/Trans/LGBTQIA2S+ group, which is already scheduled to start up again (see below), we would like to re-start as many of these as we can, and are reaching out to people who are still involved in the sangha who used to attend or host some of them. **If you would be interested in attending and/or holding space for one of these groups, please email us at [leadership@insightwma.org](mailto:leadership@insightwma.org).**

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

All of these identities 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).

### **White & Awakening in the Dhamma**

As we enhance our understanding of the harm arising from the system of white privilege, white supremacy culture, and racism, white practitioners can build skills to strengthen community

across differences in our sanghas. This fall, IWM would like to offer ***White and Awakening in the Dharma*** (WAD), a six-month, 12-session study and practice program for white-identified practitioners. WAD is 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 will provide a guided exploration of our racial conditioning as white people with the support of Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. We will draw on diverse academic and popular materials on the topics of racism and white supremacy culture. A strength of this program is the community that is co-created by group members learning, growing and taking risks together. In addition to group gatherings, weekly discussions with assigned Dhamma Buddies are encouraged.

- Do you have some experience exploring and working with white privilege and want to increase your skills to support inclusive sangha building?
- Do you want to deepen your understanding of Buddhist teachings on suffering, oppression and liberation?
- Do you want to gain insight into the suffering and harm that arise from our racial conditioning as white people in this society?
- Would you like to become part of a supportive learning community of white practitioners exploring racism in the context of BuddhaDhamma and looking for ways to transform our white racial conditioning and white supremacist systems?

WAD is designed as a guided, collaborative exploration of our racial conditioning as white people. We will apply Dhamma practices to enhance our capacity to be in community with members of marginalized communities, and develop skills to

support the larger practice community. It is also our hope that, through this collaboration, we will expand our shared capacity to help each other learn and grow in ways that support liberation for us all.

If you are interested in learning more, and in perhaps participating in WAD or other programming on this topic, please fill out [this form](#). It will allow us to gauge interest and plan our programming.

### **Appreciation for IWM's [Teachers](#)**

We are grateful for our teachers, who ground us in the Dhamma and remind us of our deepest intentions. They connect us to our Theravada lineage, going all the way back to the time of the Buddha, offering their wisdom and experience in the spirit of *dana*, always in support of the awakening of all beings.

Thank you for your care and guidance and for connecting us to the Triple Jewel, each in your own distinct way: Adi, Candace, Devin, Jean, Manny, Michael, Peggy, Rebecca, and Tara.

### **Metta for Arinna**

Arinna Weisman, our founding Guiding Teacher, was diagnosed with anal cancer in early March of this year. She is now undergoing an intensive treatment protocol through mid-June. Metta prayers are welcome. Her address through June 30th is on her [CaringBridge](#) site which can be accessed under her name.

### **New Board Members**

The Board is pleased to announce that, after serving as a provisional member since February, [Suzanne Artemieff](#) has agreed to join the Board. Suzanne has been practicing Vipassana meditation for over 20 years, including numerous retreats at Insight Meditation Society and other centers. She was trained to

teach MBSR, which she incorporated into her clinical social work, specializing in mind/body and other trauma therapies. Suzanne is deeply grateful for the practice and has a strong desire to support IWM and the broader community.

The Board is also pleased to report that [Cathy Repetti](#), who has been serving as a provisional member of the Board since February, plans to continue on a provisional basis through the remainder of 2023. After years of dabbling, Cathy embarked on a more serious study of Buddhism and meditation 10 years ago while living in Vermont, through the Center for Mindful Learning, under the guidance of her teacher Soryu Forall. When she moved to Western MA 4 yrs. ago, she found IWM and has been engaged ever since. She quickly became involved as a volunteer, participated in the *White Awakening in the Dharma* program, attended various retreats, became the Volunteer Coordinator and feels the jewel of Sangha is extremely important on her journey. She joined the board because she saw a need to give a hand and help the Community transition out of the difficult past few years. She encourages others to become involved to help our Sangha grow and move into this next chapter .

## **The Programming Committee**

### **New Member**

We are happy to announce that Vaughn Flichtbeil has joined the Programming Committee! A few words about them:

Vaughn (they/them) is very excited to be serving on the Programming Committee here at IWM. They began their journey with meditation in graduate school with secular mindfulness and attended their first retreat in the Insight Tradition in 2016 at Spirit Rock. Vaughn began attending the offerings at IWM in 2019 after relocating from Salt Lake City to Worthington. They

currently work as a psychotherapist and a yoga instructor. They are under the mentorship of Devon Hase both individually and as part of a small dharma training cohort called Sukhanandi. Vaughn looks forward to supporting the programming needs of the sangha and becoming more involved with the community.

### **Volunteer Opportunity**

We can still use more new members on this Committee if you might be interested in this way of offering generosity to the sangha!

As a reminder, 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.

### **Stewarding Our Sangha - Volunteer to be a Hybrid Host**

We are seeking volunteers to learn how to run our tech equipment so we can continue to offer hybrid Dharma talks, courses, and retreats. In addition, the Community Dharma Stewards who lead Monday evening practice would like to offer twice a month in-person/hybrids and are seeking volunteers to help make that possible. Returning to in-person offerings in a way that allows for vulnerable sangha members to continue to attend on Zoom depends on this volunteer generosity!

## Dharma Dialogue with Jennifer D.

From Rachel R.

Hi all,

Further reflection on the benefits of Self-Compassion practice from last month's Dharma Dialogue inspired me to add another piece that I learned and thought to share given its relevance and resonance. *May it be of benefit to you, too.*

How Self Compassion can be an antidote to the stress response of *fight, flight, freeze*

Stress response turned inward:

Self-criticism = Fight

Isolation = Flight

Rumination = Freeze

Self-Compassion as an *antidote*:

Self-kindness for Self-criticism (Fight) EX: "May I be kind to myself in this moment."

Common Humanity for Isolation (Flight) EX: "I'm not alone; many people are struggling right now with something."

Mindfulness for Rumination (Freeze) Ex: "This is anxiety (or some negative emotion or thought); its nature is to arise and pass."

*Deep Bow*, Rachel R.

From Jennifer D.

"Pleasant" and "Clinging"

I had originally titled this offering "Wanting" as that concept seems to include a lot of my life experiences. Then I realized that back in the March 2023 newsletter, I wrote about Unpleasant/Aversive internal and external experiences, and never got back to the Pleasant Ones. I would like in this piece to convey my understanding of the relationship between "pleasant" and "clinging." One way I would describe it is that if



I am in the company of those I like or love, and want that situation not to change, it is both “pleasant” and “clinging.” If I like my job, my living situation, my neighbors, my hair style, my diet, my body, and am generally satisfied with life as it is, and don’t want anything to change, the inherent context is “pleasant.” The suffering comes into play as soon as it becomes a preference to have everything stay the same. That is the “clinging.” But life is not like that. The Buddha taught that things arise and pass away, and to struggle against that Truth causes suffering. To be in the present moment with compassion and acceptance with whatever arises brings us out of the suffering. That is our practice. And it is a constant and continuous practice. On many levels, we know that as human beings, we are imperfect. And that encourages, and yes, I would add, demands that we practice constantly and continuously, or at least, as often as we can. The Eightfold Path that is at the core of the Buddha’s teaching is the Path and provides the Way to end suffering. Perhaps in future Dharma Dialogues, we can explore each aspect of the Eightfold Path.

If you would like to participate in the monthly Dharma Dialogue, please send an email to [leadership@insightwma.org](mailto:leadership@insightwma.org). Anonymity is welcome. Not only this topic, but any part of our practice is open for discussion and sharing. I would value others’ perspectives and experiences as we travel this spiritual path together.

With Metta,  
Jennifer D.  
Community Dharma Steward

## **A Note from Jean Esther**

Dear Sangha,

Greetings and Happy Spring! Over the last number of months I've heard from a number of folks saying that they miss in person dharma gatherings. Me too! It was a joy to be able to offer the non-residential retreat in person this past January after 2 years of offering it online. There is something profound about being in person after all these years of not.

How fortunate that IWM has continued to maintain the center in Eastworks throughout the pandemic even though the space remained empty. Slowly but surely that has been changing over the past 7 months.

I am personally excited to be offering an in person Wednesday evening talk and discussion on 5/31, my first time physically back at the center in Easthampton in almost 3 1/2 years. I welcome you to join me either in person or on Zoom. Please check the website for specific in person protocols which vary by teacher. You can also check the website for other in person events that are being offered at IWM this spring.

All Good Wishes your way,  
Jean Esther

### **Looking ahead - watch for updates**

We are excited that Michael Grady (6/3), Lama Rod Owens (8/6), Lama John Makransky (10/15), Kate Johnson (11/11) and Jan Surrey and Florence Meleo-Meyer (12/2) will all be offering retreats at IWM.

## Downloadable Flyers

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

- June Offerings: [click here](#)
- Upcoming Courses & Retreats:
- [Wise Attitude: Nurturing Ease While Facilitating This Path of Awakening](#) with Michael Grady

## 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