

# SOUTHERN INSIGHT

Newsletter of Southern Insight Meditation,  
Christchurch, New Zealand

Newsletter 39

Autumn 2011

## UPCOMING MEDITATION RETREATS 2011 - 2012

All retreats are suitable for both new and experienced meditators and are accessible to people of any or no religious affiliation. The cost of each retreat covers all food and accommodation. Teachers receive donations.

**Queen's Birthday Retreat**      **Weds 1<sup>st</sup> (evening) – Mon 6th Jun 2011(midday)**      **... 200 (100)\***  
**with Jeremy Logan**      **.... ..Staveley Camp**

Through meditation our capacity to be compassionately present for our immediate experience grows. It enables us to be open to, and tenderly hold the most difficult parts of ourselves. It deepens and enriches our experience of life and also results in a spaciousness that enables us to respond creatively in situations we would otherwise react automatically from old conditioned patterns.

**September/October Retreat**      **TBA –**  
This retreat will possibly combine meditation with Qi gong. Check our website for updates

**Dharma Gathering**      **Sun Jan 22 – Sun Jan 29 2012**      **....\$280 (\*140)**  
**with Subhana Barzaghi, Jeremy Logan, and Arthur Wells**      **Staveley Camp**

A **seven day** Gathering offered by Southern Insight in conjunction with the Diamond Sangha Zen Tradition. Join us for a week of meditation, workshops, bodywork, poetry, group art projects, music, walks, and great vegetarian food. A celebration of the Buddha's teachings and an opportunity to discover how to stay in your heart as you interact with the world. Explore your relationship to everyday experience: social pressures; stress; interacting with others (parents, children, workmates, friends, partners); the desire for security (health, wealth, status); taking action for change; becoming who you really are.

**The Dharma Gathering is also available as a weekend only option, at a cost of \$125 (\*65).**

\*The actual cost of the retreat is the higher figure, however it is possible to pay a subsidised rate anywhere from the actual cost down to the bracketed figure.

**The Closing Date for registration is one week before the retreat starts.**

Information about registration and the teachers is inside the back cover of the newsletter.  
Addresses for the Christchurch retreat locations can be found there also



Greetings all,

This is a special newsletter. A little later than intended but we know from the tremendous support and assistance offered us by friends and sangha around the world that no one will be minding that too much!

What makes this newsletter special is that it is our opportunity to connect back with all our readers and well wishers . To say our heartfelt thanks and to let you all know that we are able to carry on offering retreats, sitting groups, meditation classes, and events to support your practice and link with the darma

As usual you will find a list of our upcoming retreats . There is also an article on what to expect in our June retreat – *Embracing the Quaking Heart* with Jeremy Logan at the Stavely centre. Over the years we have experienced many seasons at Stavely and this means we are well prepared to make sure that the centre is warm and cosy– and much cheaper than heating your own home! We hope many of you will be able to join us.

Enjoy!

*Buddhist teachings are not a religion, they are a science of mind.* - Dalai Lama

**Southern Insight Meditation** is a non-profit, non-sectarian group run by volunteers with the aim of making available the teachings and practice of Insight (Vipassana) Meditation through retreats, courses and talks.

<http://insight.orconhosting.net.nz/>



## Beginning with Gratitude

After the earthquake in February we found many people reached out to us. To offer us their compassion, their time, their homes, their energy, their thoughts. We realised in this that we were so very far from alone. People found many creative ways to give. This in itself was a most amazing thing.

At Southern Insight we would like to thank you for your true generosity. We particularly acknowledge Lindsay and Jackie who made such efforts to find everyone and keep us informed about how people were. Lindsay also set up the Southern Insight website bulletin board so that many others could have a place to make offers of support.

We are also grateful to Subhana Barzaghi, and Jeremy Logan who were at the end of the phone to many of us helping us make decisions about what to do and offering counselling.

The generosity of other groups around the country –the Hamilton sangha, the Aotearoa Buddhist Education Trust, and the Wellington Insight Meditation Community also made it possible for Southern Insight to run a free event for people in Christchurch and in particular for two people from Christchurch to travel to Wellington to take attend Eric Kolvig's retreat.

We have been very blessed. Thank you all

Southern Insight Meditation

*In April I was fortunate to attend a retreat led by Eric Kolvig in Otaki. The Aotearoa Buddhist Education Trust contributed substantially to my travel costs and I am very grateful for this contribution - it really made the difference between not going and going. For me, having this time with a wonderful, caring teacher and fellow yogis was very special. The Riverslea retreat centre and its surrounds are beautiful. It meant alot to me to have a break away from our beloved and shakey Christchurch and enjoy the beauty, stillness and silence of this retreat. A big thank you to the Trust!*

### Megan

*To all who made it possible for me to attend Eric Kolvig's retreat in Otaki.*

*I had been looking for some time out to connect in with myself to process and hear what was going on inside.*

*I was made very welcome, in such beautiful surroundings, amazing food, beautiful tuis, a hypnotic river, a playful dog, friendly people, a teacher who gave great counsel it was a perfect manifestation to meet my needs.*

*So once again many thanks for the opportunity, the financial assistance, the friendliness, a wonderful gift.*

*aroha,*

**rob.**

**Walk around feeling like a leaf. Know you could tumble any second. Then decide what to do with your time.**

-- From "The Art of Disappearing" by Naomi Shihab Nye

## Reflections on Eric Kolvig

On April 3<sup>rd</sup> Southern Insight hosted a free event for the sangha affected by the Christchurch earthquake. This involved a talk, a time for practice, and discussion lead by Eric Kolvig an Insight teacher with over 30 years experience who has specialised in bringing dharma to times of trauma in people's lives.

Southern Insight was deeply grateful that we could put on a post-quake sangha gathering with Eric Kolvig. Many of us have commented that while many difficult mind states and emotions have arisen during these quaky times, one of the heart warming qualities that has spontaneously arisen is gratitude, particularly in responses to compassionate actions or words from others.

This gathering was possible because, out of the blue (or the rubble!), Eric offered to come and run an event for us – he had planned to be travelling in the South Island (he's from New Mexico) before a Wellington and Otaki talk and retreat, but sent us a wonderful email offering his services in any way that would support us after the earthquakes.

On top of this the Waikato Insight Meditation group offered us their charitable donation for the year which we could use to fund the venue and hence be able to make the whole event free to everyone.

Eric's trip to New Zealand was funded by ABET the Aotearoa Buddhist Education Trust. This charitable trust has been set up to bring Buddhist meditation teachers to New Zealand, particularly from the insight tradition. While Southern Insight often brings international meditation teachers to New Zealand independently, we also work with other retreat organisers in Australia and with ABET to share travel costs. To find out more about ABET, and how you can support them see <http://www.abet.net.nz/>

*I was delighted when I heard of Eric's offer to come to Christchurch post earthquake and sit with our sangha. I had very little idea of what the day would offer I just knew I wanted to go.*

*It wasn't until afterwards that I noticed a lightness of being which I hadn't been feeling – somehow being able to talk into the group and listen closely to others settled me a little. It also reminded me of the importance of 'meaning making'. An opportunity to reflect on gratitude, impermanence, attachment, suffering, identity, trauma....*

*Eric provided a very sensitive and heart-full container. I can't really remember what he said, it was more his presence and attentiveness that linger in my memory. I hope he returns.*

Sarah

### A summary of Eric Kolvig's talk

The Sunday morning gathering was called "Mindfulness of the Mind and Mindfulness of the Body in Challenging Times - a post-quake sangha (community) gathering.

Unfortunately we struck a technical hitch with our taping of dharma talk so here's a brief summary. Eric started the morning with a loving kindness meditation. He explained it can be very hard to sit with the body and mind that is reacting to such traumatic events as the recent earthquake and aftershocks in ChCh. The metta or loving kindness meditation allows us to wish well for ourselves and others, wishing for our safety and happiness, our well being and ease. Metta allows us to open to the fear, vulnerability, judgement or whatever emotion is in the mind or body. It allows us to feel the impact and to bring loving kindness and compassion to our own, and others', suffering.

Eric's dharma talk was largely based around our responses to traumatic events, what is helpful and what can be cultivated. He discussed the four noble truths and in particular the suffering that arises from our aversion to the unpleasant and the clinging to the pleasant. One of the

responses to the fear, and our desire to not feel the unpleasant, is to isolate ourselves through physical or emotional separation. Compassion, the quivering of the heart, allows us to stay open. "In separateness lies the world's great misery," the Buddha said. "In compassion lies the world's true strength."

Compassion requires us to be present and Eric reminded us of a useful process, referred to by the acronym RAIN, often taught by the insight teacher Tara Brach. This is also important at times when we have suppressed emotions.

"When we are caught up and suffering in the trance of fear and separation, RAIN can help bring us home to a full mindfulness by directing our attention in a clear, systematic way:

**R** *Recognize* what is happening

**A** *Allow* life to be just as it is

**I** *Investigate* inner experience with an *Intimate* attention

**N** *Non-Identification; rest in Natural awareness*"

For more on this see

<http://www.tarabrach.com/articles/RAIN-WorkingWithDifficulties.html>.

Eric talked about how important community is at times like this. Compassionate listening can also help others - how being present and caring, paying full attention and being willing to feel what someone else is feeling relieves the tension in others. In addition care is required that we don't become overwhelmed by the pain of others and equanimity provides an important balance to compassion. Equanimity is the knowing that things are as they are and that we can't save others from their pain; and releases us from attachment to results.

Another important aspect of mindfulness that Eric discussed was being aware of how much pain we can cope with. Right effort recognises that at times we need to investigate our inner

experience and other times we need to relax the mind. Eric's concept of "useless gazing" was popular - to make a cuppa, sit in a comfortable chair and gaze uselessly with no set agenda. This allows the mind to relax and can balance tension in efforts to concentrate and inquire.

Di

Life is an opportunity, benefit from it.

Life is beauty, admire it.

Life is bliss, taste it.

Life is a dream, realise it.

Life is a challenge, meet it.

Life is a duty, complete it.

Life is a game, play it.

Life is a promise, fulfil it.

Life is sorrow, overcome it.

Life is a song, sing it.

-Mother Teresa

## Finding Joy...reflections from Christchurch Yogis

*Loo musings from the eastside....*

*Starry winter nights are getting much appreciation from this side of town. The trip to the long-drop open-air option (spoilt for choice: chemical, long drop or port-a-loo) provides travel time to enjoy the sky, get up close with the dahlia bush (purple) and listen to the night sounds. The port-a-loo on the street gives time for neighbourhood contemplation, and the risk of being caught out in ones dressing gown and*

*gumboots adds a tingle of anxiety to the start of the day. The opportunity for friendly chats with strangers while collecting drinking water at the Opawa Rd 80 metre well has given me a sense of the community water well I have never had the chance to experience. I can't but wryly smile that we don't seem to linger the same way at the round green septic tank at the end of the street, but rather scurry with the wheel barrow home rather quickly, after furtively doing our business. Waking up, excited about a clever new thought about how to make a composting toilet, and then talking animatedly about it at length with a friend on the phone. These are curious days indeed. Needless to say, the lemon trees are doing very well.*

Rachel

.....

*People have been asking what they can do to help. For me one of the best ways you can help is to really appreciate and enjoy what you have - hot water, toilets, clean air and water, roads that work, no military or police issuing arbitrary and unreasonable orders (you will have seen on the news that Christchurch actually descended into civil disobedience). I mean REALLY enjoy what you have! Celebrate your dunny! Honour your electric stove! Give thanks for your structurally sound house. And say to yourselves every day "we are SO lucky!" Contribute to the pool of general happiness. Knowing that lots of other people are having happy lives does it for me (I'm not a jealous type!). This is not an easy task you've been set. It's much harder than sending money, and takes sustained effort and practice. I, meanwhile, will comfort myself with the fact that my loved ones are all well; that I have water at the turn of a tap; that the earthquake epicentre was on land and not in the sea; that my country doesn't generate nuclear power; that my food is still safe to eat, and that the faults in the vicinity of my city are not long enough to generate a magnitude 9.0 shake. And I remember those who have not even this.*

Julie

## EMBRACING THE QUAKING HEART

Upcoming retreat  
June 1<sup>st</sup> (evening) – June 6<sup>th</sup>  
Jeremy Logan



Jeremy Logan is kindly travelling south to be with us at Queen's Birthday weekend, and has offered to focus his five day retreat towards helping us to work with the aftermath of the Christchurch earthquake. Those of us living in Christchurch are dealing with a variety of emotions and physical experiences as we adjust to a new routine, a new way of living, and process the trauma of the whole event. Dear sangha members outside of Christchurch have expressed feelings of survivor guilt, of wanting to help but not being sure how, and it is clear that even for those who have not had their lives so disrupted, the emotional aftershocks have been powerful and raw.

So this retreat will offer all of us the opportunity to connect deeply with both the painful and the joyful, to embrace our experience and to allow ourselves to move on. We are going to use the lovely Staveley Campsite for this retreat, and I'm thinking that it is just possible that some of you have an association in your mind of Staveley with some kind of austere 'Concentration Camp'! For those of us who live in Christchurch, however, our standards have now shifted. Staveley has hot showers! Flushing toilets and sewage and wastewater systems that work. It is single story and there are no bricks, so it's actually safe! The air is clean and pure, no sewage-laden dust. There is the bliss of clean, untreated Canterbury water, It's a positive palace.

For those of you from out of Christchurch (with more normal standards of living) this retreat still

welcomes you to a chance for grounded reflective practice in a retreat centre that will be warmer than your own home!

This poem by Vietnamese Buddhist Monk Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us what the practice of meditation and its cultivation on retreat can offer

### ***Our True Heritage***

*The cosmos is filled with precious gems.  
I want to offer a handful of them to you this morning.  
Each moment you are alive is a gem,  
shining through and containing earth and sky,  
water and clouds.*

*It needs you to breathe gently  
for the miracles to be displayed.  
Suddenly you hear the birds singing,  
the pines chanting,  
see the flowers blooming,  
the blue sky,  
the white clouds,  
the smile and the marvelous look  
of your beloved.*

*You, the richest person on Earth,  
who have been going around begging for a living,  
stop being the destitute child.  
Come back and claim your heritage.  
We should enjoy our happiness  
and offer it to everyone.  
Cherish this very moment.  
Let go of the stream of distress  
and embrace life fully in your arms.*

This poem is from "Call Me By My True Names" The Collected Poems of Thich Nhat Hanh.

### **Get it by e-mail!**

In addition to the regular mail-out of the newsletter we send out the newsletter as a PDF attached to E-mail. If you think you would like to be on our e-mail newsletter circulation list all you need to do is send an e-mail to [Southern.Insight.Meditation@gmail.com](mailto:Southern.Insight.Meditation@gmail.com) with the words "**subscriber**" in the title.

If you would like to replace your hard copy with this E-version – include your name and address in the body of the e-mail and state "**remove from hard copy list**".

If you would also like to go on [the local sangha contact list](#) to receive updates of local events in the Christchurch area – also state "**add to local list**" in the e-mail.

If at any time you want to be removed from our e-mail contact list – just send us an e-mail with the words "unsubscribe" in the title.

### **CUSHIONS!**

To purchase a newly made meditation cushion please contact Julie Downard [angulijulie@gmail.com](mailto:angulijulie@gmail.com)

\$60.00 each, available in a wonderful range of colours (red, purple, pink) and patterns (orange and pink with white daisies)



## SITTING GROUP NEWS...CHANGES TO VENUE!

We have a new format for meeting together at our Wednesday night sitting group. We will alternate between meeting at Ferndale School and the Opawa Zendo. The evening starts at 7.30pm and runs through to 9.15pm.

**First Wed:** Normal sitting group - Ferndale School

**Second Wed:** Normal sitting group – Opawa Zendo

**Third Wed:** Talk/Facilitated Discussion - Ferndale School

**Fourth Wed:** Normal sitting group – Opawa Zendo

If there are five Wednesday's in a month – the default for the 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday will be Ferndale School.

**Confused?** Call Di or Dermot to find out where we meet this week (see ph numbers in this newsletter)...or send us your E-mail address to go on the local sangha mailing list.

Our new schedule starts in June...but there will be no sitting group on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June as this coincides with the retreat.

Addresses:

**Ferndale School** , 104 Merivale Lane in the staffroom

**The Opawa Zendo** is located at 4 Kennedy Place, Opawa on the corner of Opawa Rd opposite the Hillsborough Domain. Parking is limited on Kennedy Place, so please park in the Bremca Ltd carpark at 10 Kennedy Place.

*I mourn the loss of thousands of precious lives but I will not rejoice in the death of one, not even an enemy"*  
Martin Luther King Jr

### Southern Insight Meditation – Annual General Meeting for Charitable Trust

Somewhere in the midst of the crazy last months SIM's Annual General Meeting came around. We managed to hold this finally on Sunday May 1<sup>st</sup> at the Buddhist Water Drop Cafe in Riccarton. At this meeting we approved the year's finances (with many thanks to Guy Wilson our treasurer), and took steps to get our schedule of retreats back on track.

If anyone is interested in contributing to the running of SIM we are always grateful for help. Feel free to contact any of the steering group members whose numbers appear in this newsletter and on our website.

### Booking Procedures

Please phone **Paul** on **381 0444** for a retreat registration form. **The completed form and a deposit of \$50.00 should** be sent to **6 Trent St, Christchurch**. Please make cheques payable to **Southern Insight Meditation**. Stamped addressed envelopes are appreciated when booking. Further information will be sent to you on receipt of your deposit. Please note that retreats will only run if there are sufficient registrations.

### Refunds of Deposits

The deposit for retreats is refundable up to the closing date of the retreat booked, less a \$5.00 charge for administration costs. Deposits cannot be refunded after the retreat closing date, and the money will be put into the Top-Up Fund.

### Top Up Fund

The top-up fund is for those who are unable to afford the cost of a retreat. Southern Insight aims to make retreats as accessible as possible to all, and it is possible to pay less than the lower amount in the sliding scale for a retreat. We encourage people to make use of this fund, which, thanks to the generosity of others who attend our retreats, is currently in a healthy state.

### Receiving our newsletter

If you did not receive this newsletter by mail and would like to be on our mailing list, please phone Dermot on 381 4617. Any donation towards the cost would be appreciated.

### Contact Details for Southern Insight

**E-mail:** [southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com](mailto:southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com)

**Post:** 16 Ward Street, Christchurch

**Web:** <http://insight.orconhosting.net.nz/>

If you'd like information about retreats or about the group and insight meditation (including lots of opportunities to help with our work) here are the contact details of the Steering group, all of whom would be happy to talk with you:

*Di* 338 7070

*Meg* 328 8052

*Julie* [angulijulie@gmail.com](mailto:angulijulie@gmail.com)

*Dermot* 381 4617

*Rachel* 379 2548

*Sarah* 027 669 3824

*Russell:* [southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com](mailto:southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com)

### TEACHERS

**Subhana Barzagli** has practised meditation for over 20 years, is an acknowledged teacher in both the Insight meditation and Zen Buddhist traditions. She teaches 7 day intensive retreats in India, Australia and New Zealand. In 1996 Subhana became the first Australian Zen Roshi and is the spiritual director of the Sydney and Melbourne Zen Centres. She is also the founder of the Kwan Yin Zen Centre in Lismore. Subhana is the mother of two children and works as a counsellor and psychotherapist in Sydney.

**Jeremy Logan** has been involved in Insight Meditation for the last nineteen years, spending several years in the east and in Europe learning and practicing meditation. He has been teaching retreats since 1991 in New Zealand and he has taught in India. He currently lives in the Wairarapa working as a Counsellor and facilitating Stopping Violence programmes for men.

### INSIGHT AOTEAROA

Insight Aotearoa is an e-newsletter for New Zealand's insight meditation practitioners and communities. Posted monthly, it includes articles by and interviews with dharma teachers from around the world as well as a comprehensive listing of events in the insight meditation network across New Zealand. To subscribe (free) visit: [newsletter@insightaotearoa.org](mailto:newsletter@insightaotearoa.org) or write to PO Box 6626, Wellington 6041, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Not to be able to stop thinking is a dreadful affliction, but we don't realize this because almost everyone is suffering from it, so it is considered normal. This incessant mental noise prevents you from finding that realm of inner stillness that is inseparable from Being.

*-Eckhart Tolle*

If undelivered, please return to:  
13 Dacre Street  
Christchurch