



# *Southern Insight*

Newsletter of Southern Insight Meditation, Christchurch, New Zealand

Newsletter 57

August 2017

## UPCOMING EVENTS 2017/2018

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.

**Spring Retreat *The Spacious Heart* Friday 6 (eve) - Friday 13(morn) October      Staveley Camp**  
**with Jeremy Logan & Di Robertson**      Cost \$295(150)\*  
weekend option (limited places) Cost \$130(65)\*

Through meditation our capacity to be compassionately present for our immediate experience grows. It enables us to be fully present for joyful moments, and to open to and tenderly hold the most difficult parts of ourselves. It deepens and enriches our experience of life, allowing us to move beyond conditioned patterns and to respond to life creatively.

We are very lucky to welcome back a much-appreciated teacher combination - Jeremy Logan and Di Robertson. They are both warm and grounded teachers with a great capacity to help us find the wisdom to work in daily life. This will be a great experience for beginners and experienced practitioners alike.

**Enquiries:**      **Email:** [Southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com](mailto:Southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com)      **Phone:** Sarah 027 669 3824

**Summer Retreat      Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> February – Sunday 11 February 2018      Staveley Camp**  
**With Yanai Postelnik – assisted by Julie Downard and Di Robertson**      Cost \$360(180)\*  
Four day option (limited places) Cost \$215(110)\*

As part of the “Season of practice” in February 2018 we offer a special nine-day retreat with home-grown and internationally renowned teacher – Yanai Postelnik, assisted by Julie Downard and Di Robertson.

**Registration for our retreats** can be by e-mail or post. See the back of this newsletter for more information, or download a registration form from our website: <http://southern-insight.org.nz>

**Costs:** Retreats and courses are set to be as affordable as possible. \*A sliding scale or subsidised rates for those on a limited income is available. See also “top up” fund information in this newsletter. Please enquire.

*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://southern-insight.org.nz>



## Future Retreat events

In 2018/19 we will be very lucky to welcome a wonderful mix of local and international teachers to run retreats with Southern Insight.

In **Spring 2018** we welcome back our much loved teacher Subhana Barzarghi who will be running a week long retreat in late September with Julie Downard (Sept 28<sup>th</sup> – October 5<sup>th</sup>)

In **January 2019** we will be holding a Dharma Gathering with its unique format of workshops and formal practice. Jeremy Logan, who has been a wonderful and wise guide to many Southern Insight folk over many years, and Subhana Barzarghi will be two of the leading teachers for this event. Look out on our website and in our newsletters for more information.

**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. We are also a charitable trust and donations are tax exempt. Our website is <http://southern-insight.org.nz>

### Enquiries:

[Southern.Insight.Meditation@gmail.com](mailto:Southern.Insight.Meditation@gmail.com)

### Greetings ...

This is traditionally the August newsletter but it may just scrape into your mailbox on the first day of spring this year – such has been the challenging nature of this winter!

That might well be perfect timing. Spring really is around the corner and while we have had some great sustaining experiences over the winter – with the very popular half-day winter retreats here in Christchurch it feels like it is time to throw open the doors and bring some energy into our practice and our lives.

The spring retreat is around the corner – yay! Come and join us! This year we have already had quite a few enthusiastic “pre- registrations” for this regular wonderful event. I am certainly looking forward it.

We are also doing something special this year and running what we are calling a “season of practice” with two retreats that return to the roots of the Insight practice. The Spring retreat with two day and seven day options with Jeremy Logan and Di Robertson and Summer Retreat that offers four days, and nine days and will be led by Yanai Postelnik with assistance from Julie Downard and Di Robertson. There is nothing like consecutive retreats. They bring greater familiarity to the open and clear states of mind that we can achieve on retreat and embeds these in our lives. It really is a rare opportunity. You can read more about this in the newsletter.

If you have received this newsletter by good old-fashioned post you will find a poster for the spring retreat inside (attached also to the E-mail). We would love it if you could post this somewhere people could see it – a café, library, school or work notice board etc. Many regular retreat folk first heard about our retreats this way so it is a great thing to share!

Enjoy Meg ☺

## About the teachers



**Jeremy Logan** has studied and practiced insight meditation since the 1980s and has been teaching retreats throughout New Zealand since 1993. He lives in the Wairarapa and works as a counsellor, supervisor and facilitator of change programmes.



**Subhana Barzaghi** has been dedicated to a meditative and engaged spiritual life of inquiry since first encountering Buddhism in India in 1974.

Subhana was invited to teach in the Insight Tradition in early 1990's and is also a Zen Roshi. She has taught numerous silent retreats and Dharma gatherings. Subhana is a guiding teacher for the Insight meditation teachers' community in Australia and New Zealand, Kuan Yin Meditation Centre, Blue Gum Sangha, Southern Insight NZ, and Melbourne Insight Group.



**Yanai Postelnik** has been involved in spiritual practice and exploration for much of his adult life. Born in Switzerland, of mixed European and Asian parentage, he grew up in New

Zealand. Yanai encountered the teachings of the Buddha and the practice of Insight Meditation in Asia and began teaching at Gaia House, in the UK in 1992. He leads retreats in New Zealand, Sweden, Finland, Israel, the USA, and the UK. He draws upon wisdom from the breadth of the Buddha's teaching, loves to spend time in the wilderness when he can, and includes the transformative power of nature as one of his most important teachers, regularly leading retreats in the natural world. Yanai is a member of the Gaia House Teacher Council, and a Core Faculty member of Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts.



**Di Robertson** has over 20 years' experience in insight meditation, with intensive retreats and daily life practice in England and New Zealand. She has taught beginners' courses since 2000, has led a number of short retreats and co-taught longer retreats with senior teachers. She lives in Christchurch and is a co-founder and trustee of Southern Insight Meditation.

**Julie Downard** has been practising meditation since 1991 when she was living in England. Over the past twenty-three years she has done intensive practice with teachers in both the Insight and Zen traditions in India,



England and California. Julie has been teaching on retreats and Dharma Gatherings for the past seven years. She lives in Christchurch, and is a co-founder and trustee of Southern Insight Meditation.

**A note on Dana:** you may notice that most of our retreats mention the word "dana". The registration fees do not cover any payment to teachers for their teaching. They will receive only what you offer as dana. Dana is a gift by each person in the spirit of generosity to reciprocate the teachers' sharing of their depth of knowledge and expertise. The amount given is up to the giver. (Isn't that awesome?)

### Changes to retreat costs

You might notice a tiny change to our retreat costs. We at Southern Insight take great care to make sure our retreats are as accessible as possible but occasionally we do have to make changes to cover the increased cost of running a retreat.

We continue to offer a sliding scale and a "top up" fund (made up of donations by other yogis on retreats). All are welcome regardless of your financial situation. If in doubt talk to our registrar about the options.

## Spring Retreat *The Spacious Heart*



An Insight and Mindfulness Retreat  
with

**Jeremy Logan & Di Robertson**

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> (evening) – Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October  
(morning) 2017

Spring is coming – this is a chance to begin your  
'Summer of practice' with an open heart!

**Venue** Staveley Camp, Canterbury foothills

**Cost** \*\* \$295/\$150\* plus dana for teacher

**Weekend only** (limited places) \$130/\$65\* plus  
dana for teacher

**Enquiries:**

**Email:** [Southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com](mailto:Southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com)

**Phone:** Sarah 027 669 3824

**Registration forms and info on our website**

<http://Southern-insight.org.nz>

\* Sliding scale is available down to half the full  
cost of the retreat

\*\* Subsidised places are available through our  
"top up fund" – please ask

Registrations close Friday 29 September

## A Season of Practice: putting down deep roots

Over the years Southern Insight has offered many kinds of retreats. In addition to silent retreats of lengths from two to nine days we have offered those that build community ( Dharma Gatherings), work with the body (our combined Insight and Qi Gong retreats), or develop our capacity for heart-centred action in the world.

This year from Spring 2017 – through Summer 2018 we're returning to the root of dharma practice, the silent retreat, following the Buddha himself, who famously taught

*"There are trees and the roots of trees. Meditate now lest you regret it later."*

In case that's too obscure, the most common meditation hall for monks and nuns at the time was sitting in the open air under a tree. There is nothing like getting our rear on a cushion and not moving to really deepen our understanding.

So this is our focus for the summer of 2017/18 – a pair of silent retreats that will allow you to extend and expand beyond your usual comfort zone, to truly deepen into the spacious heart and the clear mind or wisdom.

We will start with a seven-day retreat in October this year, led by Jeremy Logan and Di Robertson. Seven days allows time for the mind to still and the heart to open, and for our practice to evolve through the various foundations of mindfulness until the mind can be present with each experience as it arises, without our practice being directed in any way. Our mind can just rest.

Then in February 2018 we offer a slightly longer nine-day retreat led by Yanai Postelnik and assisted by Julie Downard and Di Robertson. It's very exciting to be able to offer nine days – if you're familiar with weeklong retreats you may have noticed that there can be a significant deepening around day three as the habitual driven state of our busy lives ebbs away because we've ceased to feed it. In longer retreats something similar occurs around day seven. Having finally arrived at the practice of choiceless awareness, we are just sitting, bearing witness to our lives, with a steady clear mind. The sublime states of lovingkindness and compassion are opening our heart, and we have the precious opportunity on days eight and nine to see deeply into the true nature of life, to open to the deeper questions of *who we are?* and what all of *this* is

It's like we've spent all week perfecting the lamp of awareness, and now we get to shine it on our experience and really see it for the first time. So nine days of silence is a wonderful thing.

## Two and four-day options

If you are new to silent retreat and seven days feels a little daunting, or perhaps life is just too busy to get away for a full week, it is also possible to attend the October retreat for just the first two days; to dip your toe in the water and try it out. If this is what feels the right amount for you, then the February retreat offers a four-day option to extend your practice a little more. You get to see for yourself what happens when you put aside distractions and stimulus for a couple of days, the way the mind quiets down and steadies, and then on days three and four you can enjoy that peace and stillness. And of course, if the two days in October inspires you to want to dive heart-first into practice, it's wonderful to plunge straight from two days to nine!

In 2019 we'll be again offering the dharma gathering, which emphasises sangha and explores issues relating to daily life. So for deep personal practice, this year is the year!

## ...and why?

Doing multiple retreats in a year is an extraordinary gift to your life and to those around you. The clarity and compassion that is cultivated during retreats, and the increased familiarity of the open-hearted awareness, can permeate more deeply and become a more natural resting place in our daily lives. We at Southern Insight invite you to make the most of the opportunity and look forward to you joining us.

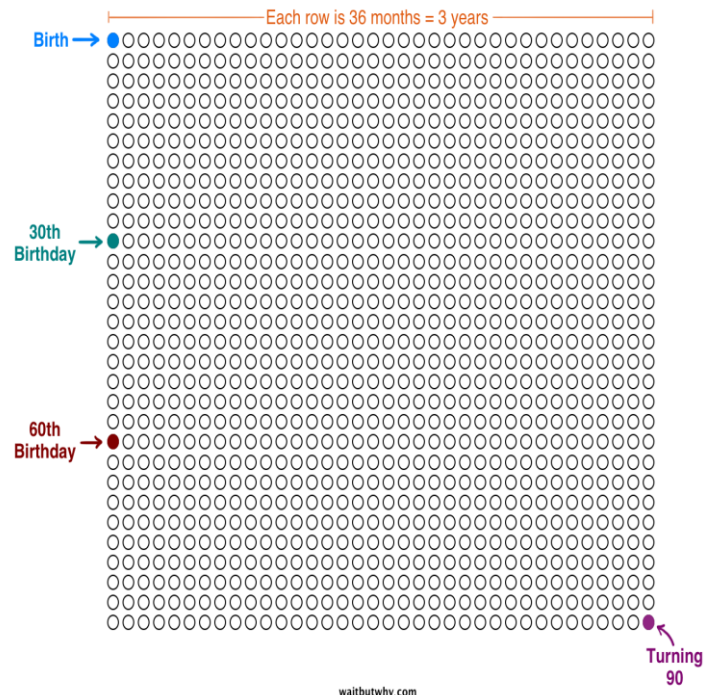
**Julie & Di**

## ...and why now?

here's a human life in months. Doesn't every one of them look precious?

:

## A 90-Year Human Life in Months



waitbutwhy.com

(from the witty, and profound little website "Wait but why" <https://waitbutwhy.com>)

## The Great Where are We

*When gods were young*

*This wind was old*

Edward Thomas

Find a hollow like a flue  
on the hillside  
and sprawl and watch  
the dramas unfold  
in the great where are we,  
the sky

Then listen to the wind that's older than  
Methuselah,  
Singing the songs  
Earth intuits in us

*From 'The Great Where Are We' by Brian Turner*



## The Mysticism of Wide Open Eyes

Three months before his death from pancreatic cancer in 1994, the British playwright Dennis Potter was interviewed for the BBC by broadcaster Melvyn Bragg. In obvious pain and taking regular swigs from a bottle of liquid morphine, Potter explored a wide range of questions about his work, politics, family and feelings—given that he was already in the terminal stage of his illness.

I was spellbound by the raw honesty and energy of his answers, but there was one section that catapulted me into a different state entirely. It came when Potter described the plum tree blossom outside his study window: Looking at it, instead of saying ‘*Oh that’s nice blossom*’

*“...I see it is the whitest, frothiest, blossomest blossom that there ever could be, and I can see it.*

*Things are both more trivial than they ever were, and more important than they ever were, and the difference between the trivial and the important doesn’t seem to matter. But the nowness of everything is absolutely wondrous, and if people could see that, you know, there’s no way of telling you; you have to experience it, but the glory of it, if you like, the comfort of it, the reassurance...the fact is, if you see the present tense, boy do you see it! And boy can you celebrate it.”*

I knew immediately what he meant. Potter had a complicated relationship to religion, and he didn’t use overtly spiritual language to describe his experience that day, but that’s how I felt it. He went on to say that this new state of consciousness had given him more clarity and serenity, along with the ability to stay fully focused in every moment. “*Almost in a perverse sort of way*”, he told Bragg, “*I can celebrate life*” so close to death.

These feelings of joy, compassion, clarity and connection are characteristic of mystical experience, but Potter’s story raises an intriguing question: why wait so long to enjoy the fruits of a fully awakened life? Shouldn’t we be living this way for as long as is possible, despite the

constraints imposed by mortgages and college fees and all the drudgery of convention that surrounds us?

Adapted from Michael Edwards article on Open Democracy 30 May 2017, and discussed by Dermot at recent Sitting Group

For full article:

[www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/michael-edwards/mysticism-of-wide-open-eyes](http://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/michael-edwards/mysticism-of-wide-open-eyes)

## The best of being surprised

Life is a surprise. It surprises me, anyway, whenever I let the whole mystery pour over me, whenever I find I have the courage to open to the whole uncertainty and impermanence of it.

It surprises me that I have a name and a body and an abode that I live in and people I love and who care about me.

It surprises me that I have a creative and not wholly knowable mind, a mind that might stray anywhere at any moment, or might just drift with the arising and passing sensations of being alive.

It surprises me that I have a heart that is beating blood all through my body, and that it has been doing so the whole time I have been alive, without fail, and it surprises me even more that it can feel such love, because love is a surprise, even more so than anything else that surprises me, and it surprises me how love just makes me want the best for everybody, and it surprises me that I don’t know what “the best” is, because sometimes some of the worst things that have happened to me have turned out to be the best thing that could have happened to me, and sometimes the best things that have happened to me have also turned out to be the best thing that could have happened to me.

It surprises me how many tears I still have left in me even though I have cried and cried and cried and cried and cried.

The thing that surprises me the second most, after love, is that there are teachings that make it possible to come alive to this whole mystery, so knowable and unknowable. And when I come alive it surprises me how scared I am of opening to the unknown, and it surprises me how comforting it is to open to what can be known here in this continuing present which may never have an end or a reason but just is here anyway.

Life is a surprise, and sometimes it is too surprising and too scary, but the thing I find the third most surprising is how stepping right into the centre of the fireball of fear is a beautiful, enchanting, loving, and wholesome experience when I have enough energy.

Guy

Accommodation at Staveley..can you help us with this?



We need to provide some alternative sleeping accommodation for yogis with specific needs that can't be easily met in the bunkrooms or tenting options at Staveley Camp.

A loan (or hire for a reasonable amount) of a campervan would be great. A caravan could be good too if you could also help with locating it to Staveley for the week of the retreat. Anyone who thinks they could help with this please contact Sarah (retreat registrar) 027 669 3824 or Lois (retreat coordinator) 03 332 6106. Or Email [Southern.Insight.Meditation@gmail.com](mailto:Southern.Insight.Meditation@gmail.com) – with the words “accommodation help” in title.

The spring retreat this year is Friday 6 (eve) - Friday 13(morn) October. We might also have similar needs for other retreats (e.g. Summer retreat Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> – Sunday 11 February 2018)

Ideas and offers much appreciated!

## The practice that comes out of our mouths

One of the growing aspects of Southern Insight has been mindfulness in action – and no action is more fundamental to our everyday lives than speaking. As elections approach and we experience anxiety about what might happen and some division between ourselves and others, we can find ourselves in some difficult conversations.

The Buddhist practice of “Right Speech” (one of the components of the eight-fold path) has some helpful ideas to offer us. The Pali Canon, describes Right Speech as having four parts:

- Do not slander others or speak in a way that causes disharmony or enmity.
- Abstain from rude, impolite, or abusive language.
- Do not indulge in idle talk or gossip.

But Barbara Brian, in her online article points out:

*Practice of these four aspects of Right Speech goes beyond simple "thou shalt nots." It means speaking truthfully and honestly; speaking in a way to promote harmony and good will; using language to reduce anger and ease tensions; using language in a way that is useful.*

Barbara also points out that while the practice of Right Speech has never been easy,

*...thanks to 21st-century technology speech takes forms unimaginable in the Buddha's time. Through the internet and mass media, the speech of one person can be flung around the world.*

*As we look at this global net of communication, there are plenty of examples of speech used to inflame passion and violence and to separate people into sectarian and ideological tribes. It's not so easy to find speech that leads to peace and group harmony. Sometimes people justify harsh speech because they are speaking on behalf of a worthy cause. Ultimately, stirring up acrimony is planting seeds that will hurt the cause we think we're fighting for.*

“Non-Violent Communication” or “Compassionate Communication” is a communication process developed by Marshal Rosenberg, that is growing in influence; and the ideas behind this have a lot in common with “Right Speech”. It focuses on three aspects of communication:

- *self-empathy* (defined as a deep and compassionate awareness of one's own inner experience)
- *empathy* (defined as an understanding of the heart in which we see the beauty in the other person), and
- *honest self-expression* (defined as expressing oneself authentically in a way that is likely to inspire compassion in others).

I asked Chrys Horn who has done some compassionate communication training about putting some of these concepts into practice. As someone who has been involved in community development work, and stood for local and now

national elections she says *"I have had people come up to me and say things you really wish they wouldn't."*

*What I start with is to try to see what is really going on. The first conversation I tried this with was quite daunting. I asked a very aggressive man "so you are feeling angry?" We ended up having quite a long conversation – it really changed the trajectory of the conversation. I ended up actually liking the person, even though we didn't quite get to agreeing with each other.*

*It is all about connecting with people and their emotions and needs. Instead of getting angry or trying to score points, try to see the unmet need driving their behaviour.*

*You also need to know where you are at –what is your reaction to this? I remember being in a workshop and feeling very angry. I realised that my whole upper body was tense. So then I wondered 'how can I work with this?' and realised that softening that tension was the way to start. It led me to thinking about how the other person felt, and to my great surprise, I found I could interact more compassionately.*

*Overall, I think compassionate communication helps you stay engaged rather than withdrawing. It gives you a path for building a connection with people. It helps you see the person's need – possibly even more than they are seeing it themselves. That then enables other solutions to the conflict because both of you can work together to generate a way forward.*

*It also helps you see how powerful things can be when you really speak your own truth.*

As Barbara Brian notes, words can be nourishment or poison and speech can be thought of as a gift we give to others.

Barbara Brian's article can be found here [www.thoughtco.com](http://www.thoughtco.com) and more about compassionate communication can be found here [www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org). There are courses available throughout Aotearoa see information here: [www.nvc.org.nz](http://www.nvc.org.nz)

**Meg & Chrys**

## Wednesday Evening Sitting Group Monthly programme:

Week of Month	Programme	Facilitator	Venue	Time
1 <sup>st</sup>	Awakening Joy	Julie	Ferndale	7:30-9:15
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Mindfulness and movement	Dermot	Zendo	7:30-9:15
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Topic announced monthly	Rotates – monthly	Ferndale	7:30-9:15
4 <sup>th</sup>	Teachings for daily life	Di	Zendo	7:30-9:15
5 <sup>th</sup> (if there is one)	No topic – community practice night and discussion	Dermot / Di	Zendo	7:30-9:15

We continue to make Wednesday nights available freely. We do ask for a donation / koha to contribute to room hire (suggested \$3) and any dana (koha) for the facilitator. Any questions about the Wednesday night topics or schedule, please contact

[Southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com](mailto:Southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com)

Ferndale School 104 Merivale Lane, staffroom  
Opawa Zendo 4 Kennedy Place, (off Opawa Rd)

## Timaru

Do you live in or near Timaru? If you are interested in Insight Meditation and would like to connect with a local yogi to share in practice, rides to events etc Silke would love to hear from you

Email: [silkeway1@yahoo.co.nz](mailto:silkeway1@yahoo.co.nz)

## Southern Insight Meditation Steering Group

If you have any questions about retreats or other events, or would like to get more involved, here are the contact details of the steering group, all of whom would be happy to talk with you:

Di	338 7070
Dermot	381 4617
Sarah	027 669 3824
Chrys	338 0313
Lois	3326106
Meg	328 8052
Rachel	382 2019

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

**Post:** 16 Ward Street, Christchurch

**Website:** <http://southern-insight.org.nz>

E-mail is generally checked weekly. For a more immediate response, call one of the steering group members listed above.

### Registration for retreats –

We offer two options for registering for our multiday retreats: e-mail and post. Instructions are below:

#### Email registration:

1. Visit [www.southern-insight.org.nz/](http://www.southern-insight.org.nz/) and download a pdf or Word file of the registration form.
2. Complete this form by hand or on your computer.
3. Send a scanned version or Word file via e-mail to: [Southern.Insight.Meditation@gmail.com](mailto:Southern.Insight.Meditation@gmail.com) with the words “*Registration for XXX retreat*” in the title.
4. **Please note on your form whether you are paying online or by cheque and how much you have paid.**  
Your \$50 deposit can be paid online (see instructions below) or by cheque posted to the address provided in the retreat information.
5. You will receive a response acknowledging receipt of your registration, along with more information about the retreat.

*To pay less than the full retreat cost, you must talk with a committee member before coming on retreat.*

#### Postal registration

1. Go to our website (<http://www.southern-insight.org.nz/>) and download a pdf of the Registration form. Alternatively, email Southern Insight and request a form by post.
2. Complete the registration form and post to the address shown for that retreat
3. **Note on your form whether you are paying online or by cheque and how much you have paid.**

Your \$50 deposit can be paid online (see instructions below) or by cheque posted with the registration form.

Please include your return address for correspondence (a stamp addressed envelope is appreciated).

#### Online payment instructions

Account for payment: Southern Insight Meditation...

Account Number: Kiwi bank 38-9017-0230890-04

Please note the following in your payment:

In the *Particulars* box, put the initials of the teacher followed by “rt” and the year (e.g. JLDR2017 for Jeremy Logan & Di Robertson retreat).

In the *Code* box, put how many people you are paying for (e.g. 1 person).

In the *Reference* box, put your name  
e.g. J Smith

**Please note on your registration form that you have paid your deposit online and say how much you have paid.**

#### Refunds of Deposits

The deposit for retreats is refundable up to the closing date of retreat registration, less a \$25.00 charge for administration costs. Deposits cannot be refunded after the retreat registration closing date except for compassionate reasons. That 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.

If undelivered, please return to:  
13 Dacre Street  
Christchurch

