



Southern Insight

Newsletter of Southern Insight Meditation, Christchurch, New Zealand

Newsletter 64

April 2019

UPCOMING EVENTS 2019

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 food and accommodation. Teachers receive donations.

Finding our True Refuge: A Day of Meditation with Sharda Rogell **Sunday 28th April (9.30-5pm)**

Cost \$35

Venue: Mary Potter Centre, Christchurch

The day will consist of sitting and walking meditations, as well as dharma talks and group discussions. Sharda enjoys engaging the wisdom of the group as a way of deepening our exploration together. This day is open to beginners and experienced practitioners. More information inside newsletter or on website www.Southern-insight.org.nz

Winter Treats! Half-day retreats with Di Robertson & Julie Downard **Sunday 30 June (12 – 4pm) & Sunday 11 August (12:30-4:30 pm)**

Cost TBA

Venue: Mary Potter Centre, Christchurch

Over the winter months Julie Downard and Di Robertson will run more of these popular half-day retreats: a chance to take a break in the midst of busy-ness and to connect with what the practice of meditation can really bring to our lives. Check our website or go on the mailing list for **local updates** (southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com).

Spring retreat: Spacious Mind, Fearless Heart **27 September - 4 October 2019. With Jeremy Logan and Di Robertson:**

Cost \$295 (150)* plus dana

Venue: Staveley Camp, Canterbury

The practices of Insight Meditation support our inherent capacity to awaken to wisdom and to the open-heartedness that is already here. In recognising our own suffering, we recognise our interconnectedness and see that our personal welfare and happiness are intimately interwoven with the wellbeing of all. In these challenging times, deep inner 'work' supports the capacity to engage in the transformation of our inner and outer worlds while remaining steady and balanced.

This retreat is suitable for both those new to meditation and those with experience. The programme will include sitting and walking meditation, evening talks, instruction, and time for discussion.

Registration for our retreats can be online or by e-mail or post. See the back of this newsletter for more information, or see our website: www.Southern-insight.org.nz

Costs: Retreats and courses are set to be as affordable as possible to cover the cost of the retreat itself. Teachers receive dana. *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*



“Hatred does not cease through hatred at any time. Hatred ceases through love. This is an unalterable law.”

Verse 5 Dhammapada

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

Kia ora koutou

Here is the Autumn newsletter – once again in time for Easter – but perhaps only because Easter is so very late this year! This newsletter has been a very special one to put together in the wake of the huge suffering felt by those who lost dear family and friends in the massacre here in Christchurch.

Over the following days and weeks, it has been clear, through the coming together of people from different Buddhist groups, different faiths, different communities, and from the messages and outpouring of support, that this difficult time here in Christchurch has been felt and shared around Aotearoa, and even far beyond. In this, it was good to see how possible and easy it was for notional ideas of difference and division to disappear.

What has also been moving is how many people have spoken of a recognition that the practice of mindfulness has helped them give language to this very human experience of sadness and strengthened their ability to respond with understanding and compassion.

In this newsletter there is a sample of some of the offerings we received – particularly an open letter to you all from Subhana Barzarghi, who many of you will know has been an inspiring teacher for Southern Insight for over 20 years.

Also, in this newsletter is some information about Sharda Rogell’s one-day retreat here in Christchurch. A regular and warmly welcome teacher, Sharda has shaped the theme of this day toward practices of equanimity and compassion to enable us to open to and respond kindly and wisely to suffering.

There are also reminders and information about other events and activities, and a note about some upcoming changes to our retreat registration process. Also a small piece about Auckland Insight Meditation’s recent retreat.

Enjoy

Meg 😊

Dear Dharma Friends,

The dark night sheds its skirt, a gentle dawn light streaks across the tops of the angophora gums in the gully below my house. It is the same enduring ancient light that touches you in Christchurch, caresses the globe and casts its immeasurable rays into the far reaches of the universe. This ancient light is somehow comforting to me in dark times. I light a candle on my altar for the friends and families who have suffered from the tragic events of the mass shootings at the Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch. My heart is heavy with grief.

On Monday night at the Sydney Zen Centre we dedicated our evening sutras to the people of Christchurch and especially the suffering in the Muslim community. We stand with you.

The news has shocked and deeply touched me and many of my Australian friends who live across the Tasman Sea, so I can barely imagine how much this trauma has impacted your community having had a terrorist attack in your own backyard. What has also been moving is to see the outpouring of compassion from the people of Christchurch embracing the Muslim community. Weeping with, offering a shoulder and leaning into one another, is a heart-felt response in their time of great need and sorrow.

You are deeply blessed to have Jacinda Ardern as your Prime Minister, who leads with clarity, strength and compassion. She is a shining role model that stands on the world stage, heads and shoulders above other Western national leaders and their responses to such terrorist attacks. Her words to the Muslim community in the aftermath, *'We stand with you, you are us, we are one'*, is a heart-felt insightful message of interconnectedness and good Kiwi values of inclusiveness. Wearing the hijab in embracing the Muslim community is a clear act of respect of joining with their community; this simple gesture speaks more than a thousand words. Inviting the Friday call to prayer to be broadcast across the nation brought me to tears. Sadly it is a far cry from our Australian socio-political discourse. I cannot imagine our political leaders offering such compassionate actions.

In challenging times we are called upon to bring as much love, mindfulness, wisdom, courage, and compassion as can into the world. I salute your New

Zealand values to honor diversity and inclusiveness your Kiwi spirit that you will not be defined by what happened on the 15th March, that violence and extremism in all its forms are not welcome in the Land of the Long White Cloud.

Suffering, tragedy, pain, sickness, old age, death, war, and violence have happened the world over from time immemorial. There were great wars that swept the Indus and Ganges valleys back in the Buddha's time too. As Zen student Ameli shared, "How awfully familiar the Christchurch tragedy is, and how it seems like one continuous tragedy spanning across aeons of ignorance. It's the same feeling of disbelief and grief only with new faces. Beautiful innocent faces".

The dharma teachings of the Four Noble Truths and the path to liberation emerged out of the Buddha's direct encounters with suffering. He gave the teachings of the two arrows: pain is inevitable, suffering is not. The second arrow that creates *dukkha* suffering is how we react to the pain of the initial event. Because our reactivity is created in our mind we do have control over. With mindfulness and compassion we can see and uproot fear, anger and delusion in our own minds. This is our inner work of healing and dismantling barriers so that we do not create further fear of 'other' as 'alien' just because they come from a different cultural background, faith, race, or ethnicity.

As Buddhist practitioners we cultivate the capacity to turn towards and 'bear witness' to the suffering in the world and respond with compassion. The Pali word for Compassion is *Karuna*, which can be translated as the quivering in the heart in response to another being's pain or our own pain. Compassion seeks to understand differences, to overcome prejudice, fear and resistance through dialogue, reconciliation, peace-making, and justice. When we lead with our wise and quivering heart there is a fearless presence, we muster courage to act wisely, to stand up and speak truth to power, even when we feel scared. Wise action does not mean you won't feel scared; it is the willingness to act with integrity despite how you feel.

It is a sad indictment that it was an Australian man who inflicted mass murder upon innocent people. This has at least widened the conversation here about redefining terrorism to include far-right, white supremacist and extremist views, Islamophobia and xenophobia. The perceived threat and focus to date

has been on radicalized Muslims and members of ISIS committing crimes against white Anglo-Saxons and western democracy. Waleed Aly, an academic, lawyer, Muslim, and media presenter who co-hosts a current affairs television program, The Project, said in his response to the terrorist act that he was not surprised. Right wing extremism has not just emerged out of a vacuum. Hate speech towards migrants, refugees, people of color, and Muslims has gone unaddressed and left to fester and breed in Parliament and the back pockets of our Australian communities. Hate speech is abhorrent, disrespectful and divisive. This must stop.

Tragedy brings out the worst and best in people. It is a time to come together, to hold each other and connect with one another. I notice when things are tough, I want to be with like-minded companions of the way. It's precious to have a Sangha, to have a safe space to share deeply, and process your feelings of grief, vulnerability, fear and anger, to listen to one another and be heard. When we have a safe harbor we find ways to nourish and soothe the heart.

Dear dharma friends I have witnessed you weather major earthquakes, rebuild your city, and overcome trauma with a resilient heart like the lotus that rises above the mire. For deep in the resilient heart is our essential nature that cannot be broken. It is the one light that endures. I have been touched by your compassion and steadiness of heart and mind. I bow at the waist to you and send you warm hugs across the waves.

With love
palm to palm

Subhana

**Zen Roshi Diamond Sangha
Insight Meditation teacher**

....

*Responding to the present situation with compassion;
recognising the danger of anger in our own heart;
understanding the causes that lead to violence;
and taking action from that place of wisdom and understanding;
this is what we can do to increase peace in the world.*

**Excerpt from posting by venerable Ajahn Chandako
Abbot of Vimutti Monastery, March 16 2019**



<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0710/S00099/christchurch-peace-bell-pavilion-wins-awards.htm?from-mobile=bottom-link-01>

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said *“if only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being.”*

It is what we cultivate that determines where that line is. May we recognise that lovingkindness and compassion are the way out of fear, divisiveness and hatred, and let us guard our own hearts against hatred, and cultivate love for all. Let us not exclude those whose hearts are not yet open, who are not yet able to understand, and who perpetuate harm against others. And let us include in our kindness that part of ourselves which is also capable of harm.

May all beings live peacefully and harmoniously together, respectful of each other and the great interconnected web of life which supports us. Aroha to all of you in your suffering.

Speech by Julie Downard, Interfaith gathering for healing and for the Muslim Community at the Christchurch Peace Bell (March 24 2019)

There are many aspects to the experience of trauma – sometimes we imagine these only belong to those who have been directly affected or think they are only short-lived and do not always recognise them in ourselves. Here are some useful online resources for recognising and dealing with trauma, Shared by Jeremy Logan,

<https://thiswayup.org.au/how-do-you-feel/traumatised/>

Day-long retreat
Sunday 28 April December
9.30am – 5pm
“True Refuge”
with Sharda Rogell

In this daylong, we will have an opportunity to enter the silence together for a time of quiet reflection. With the support of our meditative practice, drawing on the power of our mindful awareness and heart practices, we will explore different aspects of the Buddha's teaching on transforming the way we are with suffering (dukkha). With equanimity and compassion as our primary ground of support, we can access a response of the heart that can embrace the present moment, as it is, with kind awareness. In order to open our heart in a caring and balanced way, we practice emptying our minds of fixed views, ideas and beliefs that interfere with clear-seeing. This is what frees the heart and allows us to engage more fully in the world.

The day will consist of sitting and walking meditations, as well as dharma talks and group discussions. Sharda enjoys engaging the wisdom of the group as a way of deepening our exploration together.

This day is open to beginners and experienced practitioners alike

Venue: Mary Potter Centre, 442 Durham St. North, St Albans, Christchurch (arrive by 9.15am for 9.30 start).

Cost: \$35 plus dana

Lunch: Please bring your own. Morning and afternoon tea provided.

To bring: cushion or stool (some provided – chairs also available); cash for dana (online payment of dana is not recommended).

Registration:

Please register by online form by April 25 to let us know you are coming and if you have paid online or will pay on the day.*

Enquiries: email/phone Chrys on 0272 86 86 53 (southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com)

*see back page for online payment instructions

About the teachers



Sharda Rogell has been practising meditation since 1976 and teaching worldwide since 1987. She is a member of the Teacher's Council at Spirit Rock Meditation Centre in California. Along with her

training in the Theravada tradition, she has been influenced by the non-dual teachings of Advaita and Dzogchen. She has been a student of A. H. Almaas in the Diamond Approach for nearly 20 years and her primary interest is awakening the heart/mind with embodied presence.



Di Robertson has been practising insight meditation since 1994 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 or assisted alongside Jeremy Logan, Yanai Postelnik, Subhana Bazaghi and Sharda Rogell. Di lives in Christchurch and is a co-founder and trustee of Southern Insight Meditation. Di also works as an ecologist and is a step parent and grandparent.



Julie Downard has been practising meditation since 1991 when living in England. She has practised intensively with teachers in both Insight and Zen traditions in India,

England, California, Australia, France, and New Zealand. Julie has been teaching on retreats and Dharma Gatherings since 2007. She lives in Christchurch and is a co-founder and trustee of Southern Insight Meditation.



Jeremy Logan Jeremy has been involved in Insight Meditation since 1984 spending several years in the east and in Europe learning and practising meditation. He has been teaching retreats throughout NZ since 1992. Jeremy currently lives in the Wairarapa working as manager of a community counselling and family violence prevention centre, and has a small private counselling practice.

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.

How do you hear about Southern Insight stuff?

If you got this newsletter by email, it is likely you are on the **Southern Insight Newsletter mailing list**. This list notifies people around Aotearoa and even overseas about our upcoming retreats and major events.

We also have a “**local events mailing list**” that sees a bit more action – and tells people about short one-day or half -day events in and around Christchurch, and local programmes like Awakening Joy or the weekly sitting group.

If you would like to subscribe to the newsletter and/or local events mailing list – just email us with the words: “Subscribe to Newsletter (and/or Local Events”) list in the title.

We try not to overfill your email boxes, but if at any time you would like to unsubscribe just email us with the words “UNSUBSCRIBE” in the title and you will be removed from all lists.

Note –all this is done manually (no robot involved) by our very busy volunteers -so please have some patience if we are a bit slow at times. 😊

CHANGES TO RETREAT REGISTRATION PROCESS - GET IN EARLY!

We have been running our retreats now for 20 years - can you believe that? Over this time we have seen many changes to the way people expect to book and pay for an event like a retreat. Today most people inquire about retreats via email and book using this, or our online system. People also seem to like to make their full payment online before coming out to the retreat.

Because of the number of inquiries and the organisation this involves, we have found we need to make sure that people get their registrations in earlier than in the past. There is lots to do – such as organising food, and transport to the retreat for people coming from lots of different places, and this takes quite a lot of preparation time. So if you are familiar with our old retreat registration system, please look out for “**new registration closing dates**” which will ask you to complete your registration and payment earlier than in the past.

As always, all are welcome to join us on retreat. Feel free to inquire about the sliding scale for payment or the assistance fund for those on a limited income. Postal registration and payment by cheque is also still possible.

5 ways to practice mindfulness when you feel like you are overloaded

- ❖ Start your day with a pause
- ❖ Savour your morning coffee
- ❖ Take a mindful walk
- ❖ Practice eating with gratitude
- ❖ Slow down before you sleep

https://www.mindful.org/five-ways-to-practice-mindfulness-when-youre-busy/?mc_cid=7a48577b9f&mc_eid=846829e03a



1

The heart has four faces. Each sees the world in a different way and speaks with a different purpose. Yet, as each aspect belongs to the same heart, they are inseparable, like the four directions of a compass.

Gil Fonsdale

Compassion practice – retreat by Jill Shepherd – Auckland Insight Meditation

Early in April I was very fortunate to sit the “Befriending the Mind” retreat run by the [Auckland Insight Meditation Sangha](#) and taught by their guiding teacher, [Jill Shepherd](#)

There were many wonderful experiences on this retreat, not least the chance to sit with another group of people who have made the practice of Insight meditation a core part of their lives. I was made very welcome and am so delighted at this flourishing of community, I can’t recommend this experience highly enough and look forward to a growing number of people from around the country “cross pollinating” between different groups.

At this retreat Jill’s reminded us that the Insight tradition of Buddhism recognises the equal need for both compassion and wisdom, and yet much of the teaching has preferenced wisdom (6000 talks on Dharma seed and only a handful on compassion). On this retreat we were offered a very timely invitation to explore how we might equally strengthen this other quality: the ability to hold our

hearts in times of difficulty facing others and ourselves.

Compassion practice is part of the Buddhist teachings referred to as the four Brahmavihara, sometimes known as the ‘divine abodes’, or as the art work above demonstrates and Gil Fonsdale mentions, ‘four qualities of the heart’. For myself I think of them as “spaces to rest in and draw strength from”. In the Pali language of traditional Buddhist teaching, these four are referred to as metta, karuna, mudita, and upekkha. In English they are commonly known as loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity. While they are all related to each other, it is possible to encourage and strengthen them collectively or separately. Just as regular mindfulness practice (no matter how small it is in our busy lives) builds the capacity to call on steadiness of mind when needed, these qualities too can be built to become a regular tool for ourselves in our lives.

The focus of this short retreat was particularly on the cultivation of compassion. This can be included in a meditation practice by bringing to mind a person or situation of some difficulty and suffering (including yourself) and holding them in contemplation while reflecting on the following phrases

I am aware of this pain
I care about this pain
May you/they/I know release
May you/they/I know peace

Easing into this seems to be the key, so it is often recommended to begin with finding a place that is not too difficult for us to go to— the moderate difficulty of a friend or colleague for instance. From there we can gain strength to feel into more challenging areas. Practising compassion is a way to build resilience in our hearts before we leap to the rescue, so that when action calls us we have a core of strength to draw upon.

Thank you, Jill and all the Auckland Insight Meditation team, for your wonderful retreat

Meg
<https://www.insightmeditationcenter.org/books-articles/articles/the-four-faces-of-love-the-brahma-viharas/>

¹ This ‘four faces of the heart’ is a lovely piece of artwork by Julie Downard. She “borrowed” the idea from an artist in the UK at Gaia House. She can tell you more!

Awakening Joy –programme in Christchurch offered through Southern Insight.

Today there are plenty of messages to heighten our fear and sadness about the world, and so more than ever it is vital to understand the importance of joy as a central aspect of life / spiritual practice. We need to remember how to stay connected to that place inside that makes life worth living. True happiness is not about acquiring anything, but rather opening to the natural joy and aliveness right inside you. Your own cultivation of well-being, resilience and joy can become our gift to a troubled world.

As some of you will know, "[Awakening Joy](#)" is a transformative and internationally recognized course created by leading Insight meditation teacher James Baraz. It is designed to awaken joy through engaging themes and practices that incline the mind toward well-being and deeper insight.

For the past six years Southern Insight has been offering a supported group programme led by Julie Downard, where those undertaking the course can explore the themes and teachings together. This is a closed group format that meets twice a month in Christchurch and is in mid-cycle (from February to July 2019). A second course may begin in May and run through to October if there is enough interest. For more information e-mail Julie Downard at Southern.Insight.Meditation@gmail.com with the words "*Awakening Joy Inquiry*" in the title.

Climate Change Group

Climate change is a widely encompassing and profoundly challenging phenomenon that touches across all aspects of global human society and non-human life. Over the last few years SIM has offered courses (Mindfulness and Climate Change, Ecosattva training, Deepening the Well of Resilience), and material on retreats and dharma gatherings to help support an engaged practice that is awake to this issue.

In Christchurch, a group also meets regularly to support each other in their practice of climate conversations and actions in their homes, communities and work places. Much has changed in the last few years with respect to public awareness, the understanding of the severity of the current rate of change, and in the advocacy for appropriate

action. We look forward to responding to what's most useful to our community now.

Through our practices of mindfulness and compassion, we increasingly wake up to our fundamental interconnections with each other and nature, and to what threatens and what increases the wellbeing of us all. While turning towards the difficulties of our times is painful, there is a depth of joy, belonging and authenticity that flourishes as we act and support each other in this way.

If you are interested in participating in the Climate Change group or in receiving their emails and updates – email Chrys or Di at southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com with the words "Climate Change Group Inquiry" in the title

Christchurch Wednesday Sitting Group

7.30 – 9.15pm
Opawa Zen Do

All Welcome!

Our Wednesday night sitting group is currently in good heart. It is held each week from 7.30 – 9.15pm at the Opawa Zen Do (4 Kennedy Place,).

All Wednesday evenings are open to all who want to practice meditation / mindfulness in the insight tradition. The evenings include meditation, guidance and facilitated discussions (and the second Wednesday also includes guided mindful movement).

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

Struggling to fit meditation and the dharma into your life? Put it in the centre where it can feed and flow through all of what you do.

(paraphrased from Jill Shepherd)

Registration for retreats

Online registration: this is a new option available on our website Visit www.southern-insight.org.nz

Online registration:

1. Visit <http://southern-insight.org.nz/about/how-to-register-and-pay-for-our-retreats/> to find the online registration form.
2. Complete this form and pay your deposit.
3. **Please note on your form whether you are paying online or by cheque, and how much you have paid.**
Your deposit can be paid online (see instructions below) or by cheque posted to the address provided in the retreat information.
4. Any issues, please ring us or email southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com
5. A PDF form is also available from the link above, if you would prefer to download it and send it in to us either by email or by post.

Postal registration (still possible)

If you would like to register by mail, please call the contact person for the retreat or one of our steering group who should be able to help you. Note: because of delays in our postal system you will need to contact us at least two weeks before the close of registrations.

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.

NB: *To pay less than the sliding scale, you must talk with a committee member before coming on retreat.*

Online payment instructions for Sharda Rogell one-day retreat 28 April 2019

Please register [online](#) by April 25 to let us know you are coming, and if you have paid online or will pay cash on the day.

Online form is available at our website
www.southern-insight.org.nz

Online payment:

Southern Insight Meditation
Account Number: Kiwi bank 38-9017-0230890-04
In the Particulars box - put *SR 2019* (Sharda Rogell 2019).
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

If you have difficulties with this you can email Chrys at Southern.Insight.Meditation@gmail.com
Or phone her on 0272 86 86 53

If undelivered, please return to:
13 Dacre Street
Christchurch

