

Southern Insight

Newsletter of Southern Insight Meditation, Christchurch, New Zealand

Newsletter 68

December 2020

UPCOMING EVENTS 2021

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.

Summer Retreat 2021: 23 January – 30 January.

Jill Shepherd: Finding the Heart of Wisdom

Cost \$295 (150) * plus dana

Venue: Staveley Camp, Canterbury

This seven-day retreat will weave together a range of different insight meditation techniques to both strengthen the heart and open the mind. Building on a foundation of mindfulness and insight practice, we will cultivate the heart qualities of kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity, so that we can respond more wisely and compassionately to whatever life brings us. Each day, there will be sessions of guided and silent sitting meditation, walking meditation, optional relational practice, individual meetings with the teacher and a period of optional, gentle mindful movement. For larger retreat numbers Jill will be joined by co-teachers Di Robertson and/or Julie Downard.

Autumn/Winter events: varied one day and two day non-residential – details TBC – see website for updates. <http://southern-insight.org.nz/about/upcoming-events/>

Spring Retreat 2021: 1-Oct - 8 October. **Jeremy Logan and Di Robertson.**

Cost \$295 (150) * plus dana

Venue: Staveley Camp, Canterbury

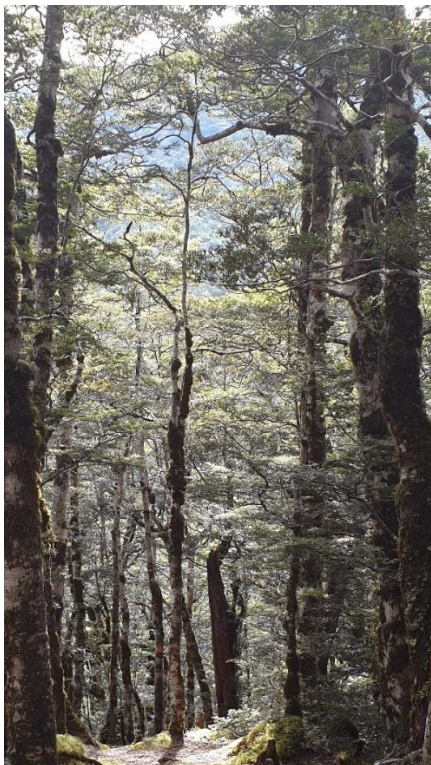
Registration for our retreats: please register [online](http://www.Southern-insight.org.nz) at www.Southern-insight.org.nz. Any problems registering, then please email us or phone (contacts below). **Retreat registration closes 9 January 2021** (note this retreat has no 'weekend option').

Enquiries: by e-mail to Southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com or phone Rachel 027 5030458, 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.

NOTE: We offset carbon emissions from teacher travel to our retreats through EKOS (ekos.org.nz)

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



The mind can go in a thousand directions.

But on this beautiful path, I walk in peace.

With each step, a gentle wind blows.

With each step, a flower blooms.

From "Walk like a Buddha" by Thich Nhat Hanh, Tricycle magazine - <https://tricycle.org/magazine/walk-buddha/>

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.

Kia ora koutou,

I am hearing from many people a sense of relief that the year 2020 is ending. I feel it myself and yet I wonder about it. The last date on the calendar will roll over and another day will begin. So perhaps what we are really feeling is a yearning to stop and stake stock, to re-set ourselves. Like the moment of pause before the next step or the next breath – a chance to say, "am I here?"

We could do this anytime of course but why not now? There is information in the newsletter about upcoming retreats – a wonderful way to stop and reconnect; tips on making walking meditation a meaningful practice in daily life, and an article from Buddhist psychologist Rick Hanson that gives us a three-step process for thinking about how we can nurture the basics of our lives.

Whatever way you practice this summer – we wish you well

Enjoy!

Meg 😊

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.

E-mail:

southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com

Post: 16 Ward Street, Christchurch

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

Future SIM events in 2021/22

What will we be doing in 2021 or 2022? Certainly, we will be doing something but it may have a different format to the past – we are adapting!

For instance – with our usual March non-residential retreat with Sharda Rogell on-hold we are exploring the potential for an Autumn two-day non-residential retreat which may be co-led by teachers Julie Downard and Di Robertson here in Christchurch with input from Sharda Rogell online.

Sign up for our newsletter and keep an eye on our website for further details.
www.Southern-insight.org.nz.

To sign up for our newsletter or local events mailing list:

We run two mailing lists – the *SIM newsletter mailing* list goes out 3-4 times a year to nearly 500 people around Aotearoa and beyond. We also use this list to remind people about upcoming retreats

The second list is a *local events* list – which has more activity. It updates people about local Christchurch based, half day and one day retreats or courses.

To sign up for these simply email us at Southern.Insight.Meditation@gmail.com with the words “subscribe newsletter and/or local events” in the title. To unsubscribe – simply do the same with the word “unsubscribe” in the title.

While most people get this newsletter online – if you would like a **hard copy** that is still possible. Email us and let us know your postal address.

Awakening Joy programme 2021

“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.

James has taught the Awakening Joy course to over 24,000 people from 30 countries since 2003. Since 2014 Julie Downard and others have been offering a supported group programme here in Christchurch, where participants explore the themes and teachings together. Julie will offer this course again in 2021, commencing in early February.

If you would like to go on a mailing list for updates about **Awakening Joy** please email Julie directly at angulijulie@gmail.com

Feedback from Christchurch participants:

“I feel more peaceful and accepting and am learning to be kind to myself and better understand my intentions, the way I want to live my life.”

“The practices and understandings are so deeply helpful in these troubled and confusing times, as a resource to empower us, to give us confidence and strength and to build connection with each other.”

“Working skilfully to change those old unhelpful pathways, the strategies were very grounded and possible.”

About the teachers



Jill Shepherd began practicing insight meditation in 1999 and has lived and worked at several meditation centres and

monasteries in the US, Australia, England, and Thailand. She is a graduate of the IMS /Spirit Rock teacher training program in the US, under the guidance of Joseph Goldstein and Gil Fronsdal. She recently spent seven years on staff at the Insight Meditation Society (IMS) participating in retreats study programmes, as well as offering weekly meditation classes at a nearby men's prison.

Jill currently divides her time between the USA, Australia, and New Zealand, teaching vipassana and brahmavihara retreats and offering ongoing study and practice groups focused on bringing the dharma into daily life. She also leads courses and non-residential workshops exploring the relational practice of [Insight Dialogue](#). Jill is an independent meditation teacher and is not financially supported by any meditation centre or Buddhist organisation. She relies entirely on dana for her livelihood.



Di Robertson has over 25 years' experience in insight meditation. 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. Di also works as an ecologist and is a stepparent 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 practicing 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.



Sharda Rogell has been practicing meditation since 1976 and teaching worldwide since 1987. She is a member of the Teacher's Council at

Spirit Rock Meditation Center 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.

Summer Retreat Finding the heart of wisdom with Jill shepherd



This summer Southern Insight are delighted to welcome Jill Shepherd to teach her first retreat with us. Covid 19 has thrown up many challenges but also brought about new experiences. One of these is that Jill's teaching regularly takes her overseas but not so this year! Some of you may have previously sat with Jill and many of you may know her talks and guided meditations offered through dharma seed (dharmaseed.org).

For larger retreat numbers Jill will be joined by co-teachers Di Robertson and/or Julie Downard. Julie recently taught with Jill at Te Moata and here is what she has to say:

Jill brings a wealth of practice and study to her teaching, and her knowledge of the Buddha's teachings is extensive. I enjoyed her refined instructions, which have an almost zen-like simplicity, where nothing is surplus to requirements but at the same time nothing is missing. I particularly like the way she has reframed the Brahmaviharas (lovingkindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity) in a way that is more accessible in modern times and I'm looking forward to this opportunity to practice them with her again.

If you are planning on coming to the summer retreat Jill has provided the following links – particularly useful for those new to practice and those who wish to familiarise themselves with Jill's teaching before the retreat.

[Intro to Insight Meditation](#)

A series of talks given to the Mahurangi West community
October-November 2020
Mahurangi West, Auckland, New Zealand

[Practising in Challenging Times](#)

A series of talks given for Auckland Insight
March-April 2020
Auckland, New Zealand
Jill also has a website and a regular newsletter: <https://jill0shepherd-insightmeditation.com/teaching-new-zealand/>



Looking for a cook on the Summer retreat

We are looking for two cooks for the summer retreat. We have a very organised system – recipes, cook's instructions all pre-prepared, and a group of retreatants to chop and blend and stir during the work period. The cooks attend the retreat for free. If you are interested, please email the retreat coordinators

Mike and Lois at

Southern.Insight.Meditation@gmail.com

Standing, sitting, walking, lying ...all buddha

At a recent sitting group we explored mindfulness practice in different postures. It is a good idea to cultivate a familiar place and way of practice that helps us ready the mind for steadiness and clarity – and for most of this will be a sitting practice – whether on the cushion or the chair. However, in our busy lives it can also be good to become familiar with how we might practice wherever we find ourselves. This can be standing waiting in a queue at the supermarket, walking to catch a bus, or even lying in bed on the edge of waking or sleep. In any given moment there is the chance to connect with our body that brings us into experience of the here and the now.

Walking, in particular has the potential to be a wonderful opportunity to connect with the sensations of sun, and air on our skin and the feel of feet on the earth, but it can also pull us away into more busyness.

Thich Nhat Hanh has written some beautiful instructions on walking meditation.

We walk all the time, but usually it is more like running....Our mind darts from one thing to another, like a monkey swinging from branch to branch without stopping to rest. Thoughts have millions of pathways, and we are forever pulled along by them into the world of forgetfulness. If we can transform our walking path into a field for meditation our feet will take every step in full awareness, our breathing will be in harmony with our steps, and our mind will naturally be at ease.

When you practice slow walking meditation alone, try this: Breathe in and take one step, and focus all your attention on the sole of your foot. If you have not arrived fully, one hundred percent in the here and the now, don't make the next step. You have the luxury of doing this. Then when you're sure that you've arrived one hundred percent in the here and the now, touching reality deeply, then you smile and you make the next step. When you walk like this, you print your stability, your solidity, your freedom, your joy on the ground. Your foot is like a seal. When you put the seal on a piece of paper, the seal makes an impression. Looking in your footstep, you see the mark of freedom, the mark of solidity, the mark of happiness, the mark of life. You can make a step like that because there is a buddha in you— Buddha nature, the capacity of being aware of what is going on. There is a buddha in every one of us, and we should allow the buddha to walk.

You can also practice walking meditation using the lines of a poem. In Zen Buddhism, poetry and practice always go together.

I have arrived.
I am home
in the here,
in the now.
I am solid.
I am free.
In the ultimate
I dwell.

From "Walk like a Buddha" by Thich Nhat Hanh, Tricycle magazine - <https://tricycle.org/magazine/walk-buddha/>

There is hope

To Papatūānuku and all her children
Dismissed, avoided, neglected, abused
and abandoned

Hear my call:

There is hope

With every seed of mindfulness I plant

I plant a seed of hope

As I learn to attend to the seed

To look after it like a mother to her child

With warmth and deep caring

This seed of mindfulness will germinate

With joy will I experience it bringing forth
its first leaves

While its roots growing deeper into the
earth every day

When I feel fearful and I want to run

I will remind myself not to do

What I have done so many times before

I will not abandon my little plant of
mindfulness

I will not abandon my only hope

And day by day

Moment to moment

Breath by breath

My little plant of mindfulness

Will have grown into a big, beautiful tree

With roots deep into Papatūānuku

And branches reaching high to Ranginui

Under its massive canopy

Many creatures will find shelter

And protection from the elements

Some might be starving

Some might be frightened

And others sad or angry

Here they can all come together

To be heard in their sorrow

Here they are being held in Love's
embrace

There is hope

Yet

Insa Y.

Taking Care of the basics

Extracts from Rick Hanson (American Buddhist psychologist) on a reflective practice that can ground us in turbulent times – offered by Lindsay L..

When we don't take care of the fundamentals, the foundation is shaky for whatever we've built: a relationship, a career, personal well-being, or spiritual practice. Perhaps we can get away with this for a while, but there is usually a background cost in uneasiness, waiting for a day of reckoning.... On the other hand when you handle the basics... you feel like you're on solid ground. Even if things don't turn out perfectly, in your heart you know you had the humility and conscientiousness to honor the prerequisites, ...the bedrock of the matter.

First, know what is basic for you. Since this will differ from person to person – here are some potential "basics" for you to consider; they are just a start, and please add your own!

- *Relationships – No actual or threatened violence; respect for personal autonomy; no crazy behavior; no meanness*
- *Childrearing – Lots of love; real time for family; aspirational values (e.g., help out, be honest, do your job in school); reasonable parental authority*
- *Job – Getting to work on time; feeling alright with the people around you; having the resources to fulfill responsibilities*
- *Physical health – Good sleep; good food; exercise; minimal intoxicants; take care of issues as early as you can*
- *Mental health – On your own side; stepping back to observe your mind; calming down stress and upsets; take*

*in the good of positive experiences;
self-compassion; exercising restraint*

Take a moment to consider one or more specific situations –an ongoing issue in your life. Open to listening to the "still small voice inside" that may tell you about a basic thing you could care for better; it may well be something you've known all along.

Second step. *Perhaps one or more things have come to mind. Pick one this week and act upon it.*

In your mind, getting back to something basic means: giving it your attention; acknowledging in your heart, your emotions, that it's important; committing honestly to it; and making a plan about it. Out in the world, taking care of something basic mean doing something differently. It could be as down-to-earth and modest as not watching TV past 10 pm, or not interrupting your partner, or getting home from work by 6:00 for dinner with the kids.

Third step: *Open to appreciating the benefits to you and others of honoring and handling this fundamental thing, whatever it is. Let the felt sense of its rewards, its goodness, keep drawing you toward continuing to take good care of it.*

*When we take care of the basics,
everything else usually takes care of itself.*

More from Rick Hanson :

<https://www.rickhanson.net/multimedia/audio/talks/buddhist-wisdom/>



The last sitting group for the year will be December 23rd and we will reconvene on February 3rd 2021, after our summer retreat

Connected practice - online and in person

Otautahi / Christchurch Sitting Groups

The SIM sitting group has met on Wednesday nights since 1998. We managed to continue this year amongst necessary Covid restrictions through Zoom. This allowed surprisingly warm connections and of course had the bonus of including people regardless of location.

The one-hour format of the Zoom sitting groups focuses strongly on connection, inquiry and sharing, as well as sitting together. For many people the online option meant they were able to join from parts of the country where there are few options for linking with fellow sitters or to take part when energy and circumstance meant travel to a group was difficult. As a result, we have continued hosting the Zoom session even after Covid restrictions eased – alongside our weekly local sitting group at the Zendo in Opawa – which is also thriving.

In 2021 we plan to offer this virtual sitting group twice a month. We will share the online hosting more in 2021 so we can sustain both groups.

Both sitting group formats encourage us to keep the practice alive and integrated in our daily lives; to connect with others exploring this path; and to deepen our understandings of mindfulness, compassion and the teachings of the dharma. You are all most welcome to join in – online or in person.

To join the sitting group mailing list email southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com with the words "sitting group updates" in the title.

Di. R. ☺

Registration for retreats

For Online registration for all our retreats

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. Payment of \$50 is required to confirm registration and many people choose to pay the full amount for the retreat when you register. **Please note on your form whether you are paying online and how much you have paid.**

Online payment instructions

Account for payment:

Southern Insight Meditation

Account Number:

Kiwi bank 38-9017-0230890-04

Please note the following:

- *Particulars* box: put the initials of the teacher followed by "rt" and the year (e.g. JSrt 2020 for Jill Shepherd Summer retreat).
- *Code* box: put how many people you are paying for (e.g. 1 person).
- *Reference* box: put your name e.g. J Smith

Having trouble registering online?

If you have any difficulties registering online or would like to post a cheque rather than pay by direct debit then please feel free to call the retreat contact person (see website for specific contact for the retreat you are registering for) or email us at

southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com

Sliding scale of payment:

Retreat costs are set to be as affordable as possible and longer retreats including a sliding scale. The actual cost of the retreat is the higher amount, however it is possible to pay a subsidized rate, for those on a limited income, anywhere from the actual cost down to the bracketed figure.

Top-Up Fund

The top-up fund is for those who find even the sliding scale rate is a barrier to coming on 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, please talk with us before coming on retreat.

Refunds of Deposits

The deposit (or full payment if already received) for retreats is refundable up to the closing date of retreat registration.

Retreat payment can be refunded (less deposit or \$25 admin fee if position can be replaced from wait-list) if cancellation occurs after the final registration date but prior to the day before the retreat start date.

We cannot refund payment if cancellation occurs later than this. Exceptions for compassionate grounds can be made at the discretion of the steering committee.

If undelivered, please return to:
13 Dacre Street
Christchurch

