



Southern Insight

Newsletter of Southern Insight Meditation, Christchurch, New Zealand

Newsletter 69

May 2021

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.

Winter half day: Sunday 15th August (12.45 – 5pm) – led by Julie Downward. – - Mary Potter Centre

A half day retreat – open to all. see website for updates. <http://southern-insight.org.nz/about/upcoming-events/>

Beginner course: -Di Robertson will offer a beginner course over winter, dates TBC. If you are interested in updates, please email us at Southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com with the words “beginner course” in the title.

Spring Retreat 2021: Friday (eve) 1-Oct - 8 October. A sanctuary in difficult times

Jeremy Logan and Di Robertson.

Cost \$320 (160) * plus dana

Venue: Staveley Camp, Canterbury

In these unprecedented times of radical change and uncertainty, a new world is being born. Courage and compassionate presence strengthen us to face into the chaos and not turn away. With wisdom and determination, we can move forward together to create a world based on justice, kindness and shared resources rather than on greed, hatred and delusion. The practices of Insight Meditation support our inherent capacity to awaken to wisdom and open heartedness. In attending to our own suffering, we realise that our personal welfare and happiness is intimately connected to the wellbeing of all life. This silent retreat is suitable for both those new to meditation and those with experience.

No Summer retreat in 2022 -in a departure from our norm we will not be running a Summer retreat in 2022. There is more about what we WILL be doing – later in the newsletter 😊

Small Cost increase: Occasionally we need to increase the cost of our retreats to respond to rise in prices and we have had to do so this year. We always do so thoughtfully because “access to all” is a core part of how SIM operates. Our retreats and courses are set to be as affordable as possible and just cover the cost of the retreat itself. Teachers receive dana. *A sliding scale or subsidised rates for those on a limited income is available. We also have a “top up” fund which is generously provided through donations from others who come on our retreats. There is information about this on the last page of the newsletter. Please enquire.

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 at Southern.insight.meditation@gmail.com.

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 journey of awakening—the classical journey of the mythical hero or heroine—is one of continually coming up against big challenges and then learning how to soften and open. In other words, the paralyzed quality seems to be hardening and refusing, and the letting go or the renunciation of that attitude is simply feeling the whole thing in your heart, letting it touch your heart. You soften and feel compassion for your predicament and for the whole human condition. You soften so that you can actually sit there with those troubling feelings and let them soften you more..

From “Renunciation – like a raven in the wind” by Pema Chodron, Tricycle magazine -

<https://tricycle.org/magazine/renunciation/>

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>

Kia ora koutou,

Welcome to 2021 and like the outside world, SIM is continuing to innovate. After 2020 “the year of Covid” (as I am sure it will be known), there are some new ways that we have taken to our heart and through this newsletter, you will see some of these arising. Notably, the Zoom sitting group, the “Virtual Sharda” retreat (see below), and some interesting ideas for future upcoming events.

On May 9th, we organised our first online and in-the-room half day retreat, where the teacher was Sharda Rogell located on the West Coast of the USA, using Zoom to connect to the collected yogis at the Mary Potter Community Centre. This went very well and many thanks to Lois for managing, Mike for organising the Technology and Di especially for holding space at the Centre.

Also, this newsletter is a first, as we have two editors (well one experienced editor and one newbie learning the ropes). Long-time editor Meg is being joined by John. Collaborating has been both practical and enjoyable. You will see more we’re sure.

Enjoy!

John & Meg 😊

Virtual Sharda...



This worked amazingly well. For me it was very close to having Sharda here with us. It makes me enthusiastic about doing more such events in future.

Mike

Future SIM events in 2022/23

We have to admit, it has been a challenge to organise a residential retreat in the first half of 2022 – with both teacher and venue availability proving problematic. So, we have put our thinking caps on and come up with some novel alternatives that we were keen to try anyway!

In **February/March 2022**– Julie Downard will be leading a “mini Dharma Yatra weekend” – a walking practice that will take us into Canterbury high country wilderness. Designed not to be too physically taxing we are looking forward to offering what to many people will be a fresh form of practice, though it has ancient and traditional roots.

In **June 2022** – we hope to again welcome Jill Shepherd who will offer a unique non-residential style retreat – with face-to-face guided practice over two weekends linked by a mid-week talk.

In **Spring 2022** – we will have our regular weeklong residential retreat.

In **Summer 2023** – we will hold a Dharma Gathering – Jan 20 – 27th with invited teachers from both the Insight and Zen traditions.

All are welcome to these events. Sign up for our newsletter and keep an eye on our website for further details. www.Southern-insight.org.nz.

Diamond Sangha: Golden Bay “Our deepest Ecology” Mini Sesshin: June 4–7



Southern Insight has warm relationships with dharma groups around the country – some of you may be interested in this event in June 2021.

This silent retreat will encompass a light version of sesshin format with slightly later starts and a programme that is optional, so that if you need to take time to simply rest then you can do so whilst being fully immersed in the retreat. The retreat format includes zazen, silent meals, Dharma talks, outside walking meditation along a lovely private beach, Teisho, and morning sutra service.

The theme acknowledges our deep interconnectedness with the rest of nature and our care for the Earth and each other. It will be located at the wonderful Shambhala retreat centre at Onekaka – 20 minutes’ drive west of Takaka township with a spectacular outlook across Golden Bay.

For further information and registration, please click the link below.

<https://diamondsangha.weebly.com/>

Sean Weaver Sensei

¹Image from article “The fourteen precepts of engaged Buddhism” by Thich Nhat Hanh– Lions

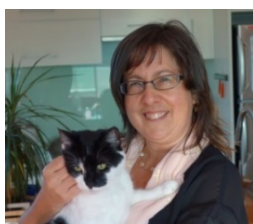
Roar <https://www.lionsroar.com/the-fourteen-precepts-of-engaged-buddhism/>

About the teachers



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.



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.

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](#).

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.*

Notice yourself wanting to feel good?

Perversely (perhaps) this rocky nugget of wanting is often all that is preventing us from entering the soft heart of connection.

Guy

I was once on a nine-day self-guided retreat. Nine days of listening to what Maria Popova calls the “Stockholm syndrome of the superego.” On this retreat, I observed (once again) just how mean my inner critics can be and how much they limit me. There’s one critic that goes on and on about what a bad meditator I am, how I have terrible concentration, and how all my insights are shallow. This script inevitably leads me to greater striving. The striving leads to frustration (because, go figure, ease and freedom don’t come from grasping desperately at a goal). In my frustration, the critic starts all over again about me being a failed meditator. That voice is such a jerk. But I’m the one who keeps listening to it.

From “You Belong” by Sebene Selassie

Zoom sitting group.

Fortnightly Wednesdays

As many of you are aware during restrictions under Covid the Christchurch sitting group met on Zoom and invited others to join from around the country. We were surprised how much connection we felt through the shared sitting time, dharma reflections and discussions in small breakout groups. While we are back at our weekly face to face sitting group at the Zendo, we are continuing to hold the Zoom sitting group, currently fortnightly on Wednesdays from 7:30-8:30.

Both sitting group formats are open to all and encourage us to keep the practice alive and integrated in our daily lives

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

Di. R. 😊

Going solo



Meg on retreat

This summer I did my first solo retreat. If you search online for “solo retreat” – there is an abundance of packages for people to relax and unwind in beautiful locations at catered resorts. Mine wasn’t like that. I found a small farm cottage in South Canterbury where my luxury welcome pack was a small tin of home-made short bread and a note reminding me to shut the gate when the sheep were in the next paddock. Other than that, it was just me for 6 days. It was confronting. It was liberating. It was fantastic.

As many of you know who regularly attend organised meditation retreats the rhythm and simplicity of the retreat form supports and holds you in your practice. Bells wake you, guide you to sit, walk, eat, and rest. These are seemingly small actions and yet the day is so full. You listen to instructions and allow the wisdom of the dharma talks to help you steadily re-awaken to your experience. There is nothing very different in a solo

retreat except that you create this form for yourself. Accepting the responsibility for self-guided practice caused me to recognise more fully the choices I make in every moment. There is no one to provide a good example to you, no one's rules to cheat on but your own and at first, I found that confronting. Discovering my limitations, barriers and resistance and solving these for myself; knowing for the future that I can bring this new awareness into play wherever I am, at any time - that was liberating. Experiencing a depth of practice in aloneness that profoundly connected me to my under-seen inner self and brought me to a joyful, open-hearted connection with the world – that was fantastic!

If the time is right for you to try a solo retreat (and it is good to check in with a teacher, you have worked with to decide this)– here are some tips. I got these from the example and shared stories of other experienced solo retreaters and Kalyāṇa-mittatā - particularly Lindsay, Di and of course Dermot (I didn't think he would be right about some of these, but he was!)

- Location, location, location – it isn't all that easy to find a place that is simple and affordable, but they are out there. A degree of distance from your home is good, as is being near good places for walking, and feeling secluded yet safe. Some people manage to do solo retreats at home. You will know for yourself if it would be possible to do that. The place I chose had no internet or even cell coverage.
- Form an intention – that was a useful tip from Di – to ask “what is my intention for this time?”. It gives you a place to start – from there new understanding and new questions evolve.
- Take some talks and guided meditations. I chose a lot that I thought would be “good for me” and then a bunch that I felt drawn to – the latter were the ones I listened to! I took some dharma books but did not read them.
- Check in with a teacher. As on a formal retreat, the guidance of a teacher is very useful. I was lucky and grateful that Di offered to connect with me on the phone over the days (I had to drive to a hilltop to do this and once got a fantastic but rather disturbing view of an electrical storm). There are teachers like Di and Julie who would be happy to help with this.
- Aim to do formal practice around three times a day . “*What? Really?*” – I said to Dermot “*What else will I do?*”. Well, he was right – three times a day is a good anchor practice. Walking and looking after your body takes a lot of time if you are being fully present and gives you a fresh appreciation for the care that is offered to you on an organised retreat.
- Take something that is nice – a treat. It is a practice in kindness and self-care.
- Open to it all – the struggle, the delight, the tiny moments of life that are so often unseen – and enjoy.

Meg 😊

Dermot – such thanks! 😊

As many of you know, successfully running events like those SIM has managed for over 20 years, takes a lot of dedication and commitment by a group of volunteers. In SIM's case, there were a group of early pioneers who mostly are still "at it" and continue to work for us all. However, there comes a time, when those volunteers may wish to be involved less directly and quite reasonably leave the hard work to others for a change. Therefore it is no surprise perhaps, that our long term hard worker and dharma-friend, Dermot Sallis, has stepped down as a Trustee and member of the SIM steering group, to focus on other things. He isn't going anywhere though and will still be a stalwart of the Sitting Group. He just feels "it is time". Given the huge amount that Dermot has given SIM over the years, we all gratefully thank Dermot and wish him well for whatever he continues with. The following is a collection of reminiscences, poetry and a down-right celebration of all that is Dermot.

John

*Dermot! I always think of you asking questions, wishing to get the depths of practice, and understanding of the Dharma.
And of course, the early bell ringing and the silent breakfast layout so many times.
And your technological command of changing recording techniques.
And, above all, these and many other things done quietly, lovingly, for the good of all beings!
May you be happy, healthy and busy in other pastures*

Ali P.

*Dear Dermot thank you for all your service and I appreciate your steady presence.
Much love*

Kate (Rob and Sam)

I love Dermot's sense of humour as shown in his talk on dana at the end of a retreat when he said something like: "We don't want you to get halfway across the plains on your way home and think "I wish I'd given more dana". I enjoyed quoting our 'local sage' when I got to give that talk
Ali B.

Turtles on Land

he so casually has us all twirling our feet
the soft warmth of his voice mixes well
with soft silence
after some wriggling and a few more twirls
we are then belly to the floor.
turtles on land
a leg then an arm
pre crawling toddlers
primal and earthbound
but after some gurgling
a settling into
reorientation of body mind

next flipped on our backs
arms and legs turtling
Feldenkrais Dermot sits up
lures us back on our feet
happy grown babies walking!

Heidi Ombler

In the swirling friendly heart of S.I.M.'s structure, Dermot Sallis has been marvellous. What often seems seamless from the outside, has people like Dermot doing the unseen, keeping the wheels turning, the fires burning, the porridge cooking. (Actually literally, in Dermot's case, the porridge cooking). Dermot has also studied various disciplines of movement, and has led gloriously uplifting movement sessions, almost always involving self-foot massage, as well as very subtle movements, which nevertheless bring great relaxation. Movements that have a way, I have found,

of moving my mood into a greater aliveness. Thank you, Dermot, for your energy, enthusiasm, and efforts. May your practices continue to flourish.

Guy

Dermott and I went to a harp-building course in Christchurch some time ago. It was over several weekends and expensive and it was quite difficult. Dermott breezed through it, of course, but I ran into trouble with a band saw and I came very close to ruining everything before I quit for the day. I was worried and didn't sleep very well that night. When I went back to class the next day I told Dermott all about it and he said (his exact words) 'It's a bugger when that happens, isn't it?' I immediately felt better. He then fixed up the tricky bit and gave me back my confidence to carry on the project successfully. I'll always be grateful to him for that.

At breakfast one morning on retreat, Dermott was making himself toast and it jammed in the toaster. He poked a knife in to unjam it without turning off the toaster. I was horrified. He said "It's all right. I'm an electrical engineer"!

A Great guy!

Lindsay

I really appreciate Dermot in so many ways. He has shown a real commitment to SIM and amazing generosity of time and his knowledge. His ability to get up early on retreat, without question and brew up a good pot of porridge for us all. Always open to collect and deliver cushions and matts where needed. Open to filling his bus with required STUFF for retreat. Consciously being available at sitting group and providing lovely grounding movement work. Thanks, Dermot, for all you have given to SIM so generously.

Lois

A Poem called Always

i enter into retreat
nothing is sure
no expectations
snow, hail or sun
may or may not come
surrender to the bell
the one thing that rocks
this security in uncertainty:
the porridge.
Dermot
pervades
the borderless realms
his porridge
as always
sublime!

Heidi Ombler

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.

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

