



Tranquility. Wisdom. Compassion.

Sangha News ~ November 2012

The Four Noble Truths Point to Joy



From Bob Agolia, IMS Executive Director: Meditation teacher Spring Washam spoke with me recently about the impact of the Buddha's Four Noble Truths at different stages of her practice. These truths, foundational to Buddhist teachings, state that suffering exists, why it exists, that it can end, and the Eightfold Path to its cessation and our liberation.



Spring reminded me that while the First Noble Truth calls our attention to the suffering of greed, hatred and delusion, the Four Noble Truths as a whole point us toward lasting joy.

[Download](#) or [stream](#) Spring's description of how these essential truths can help us break patterns of thought that cause stress in our lives. Freeing ourselves from these painful habits of mind gives rise to greater insight, peace and compassion, both for ourselves and for others.

Spring will join Mark Coleman at IMS's Retreat Center to teach a Martin Luther King Weekend course, [Living a Mindful and Compassionate Life](#), January 18-21, 2013.



A More Diverse Refuge

Setting Goals

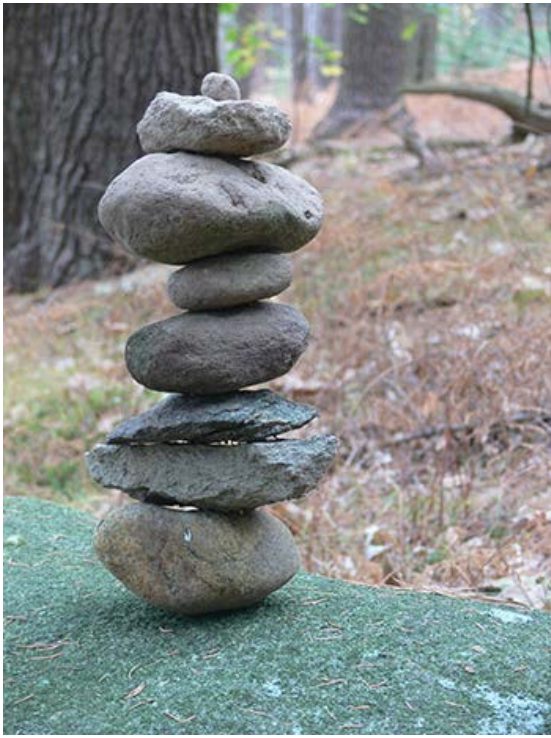
Also from Bob: In our previous issue of [Sangha News](#) last May, I mentioned that IMS was in the process of creating a Diversity Action Plan, so that the full range of voices present in our society is included in shaping IMS's culture and future. We believe this is essential for offering a vibrant refuge for generations to come in this increasingly diverse nation and world.

The plan is now in place and focuses initially on the suffering of racism that has impacted our community over the decades. Issues affecting other forms of oppression will, over time, be addressed as well.

We have set ourselves five goals for the next three years:

- To deepen the understanding and undoing of internalized and institutional racism in order that leaders and members throughout IMS's sangha can act with wisdom and compassion, informed by sensitivity to racial and cultural realities.
- To reduce identified barriers for people of color to sit retreats at IMS.
- To enhance the sense of welcoming, community and inspiration that people of color feel about sitting and serving at IMS.
- To offer the teachings in a way that resonates with a racially diverse sangha by enhancing cultural sensitivity on the part of existing teachers and by increasing the number of teachers of color.
- To define organizational strategies for sustaining focus on our Diversity Vision and carrying it forward.

We recognize that achieving these goals will require significant effort and time. We are committed to staying the course.



Longer-Term Practice for People of Color

A recent generous grant from the Frederick P. Lenz Foundation For American Buddhism is making it possible for IMS to provide substantially reduced rates for people of color to participate in half or all of next year's Three-Month Retreat. This is in addition to our usual financial assistance offerings for all.

A few months ago, we got the word out about this opportunity to various insight meditation groups across the country, and the response far exceeded our expectations - so much so that we now have a large wait list for this particular funding. There is a loud and clear message from our people of color community that longer-term practice is highly valued, and that financial support for it is much needed.



News Worth Noting

Groundbreaking Ceremony

Just after Labor Day, construction crews arrived at the Retreat Center to begin work on our major building project. First up is a new dormitory, a connector linking it to the Annex and Catskills, and a new external Catskills stair tower. When these are ready for occupancy early next summer, interior renovations will start in the Catskills wing.

On September 9, we held a groundbreaking ceremony to honor this important milestone and to send well wishes to the many beings associated with or affected by this endeavor.



The visual centerpiece of the ceremony was a beautiful dhamma cakka (wheel of dharma) mandala. This wheel of flower petals symbolizes the Buddha's teachings of awakening and liberation.

Over a hundred people, including IMS teachers, Three-Month Retreat participants, staff and friends gathered around the mandala. Words of gratitude were expressed for all who have committed to this project in various ways - those who envisioned and planned it, those who offered their resources and those now involved in the construction.

IMS co-founder Joseph Goldstein spoke about the support that a single room can provide for people on retreat and the importance of solitude for deepening practice. Teachers Carol Wilson, Greg Scharf and Susan O'Brien led chants and a guided metta meditation.



Joseph enjoys digging the ceremonial first scoop of earth.

Construction Progress

Over the last couple of months, foundations have been put in and insulated, utility lines installed, and framing and sheathing put up for the connector and Catskills stair tower.



Construction proceeds apace on the connector and stair tower.

Right now, the new dormitory itself is being framed and walls are going up. Indoor construction will start soon, as will more icy weather outdoors!



The framing for the first floor of the new dormitory.



This perspective shows how the new dormitory (L) and connector are situated in relation to existing Retreat Center accommodations.

In October, the ground level was raised at the back of the main building, in the

Annex-Catskills courtyard. This provides smooth external access to the Annex dormitory.



A new level sidewalk now leads to the Annex - gone are the old steps up to its door.

Once the entire project is completed by the fall of 2013, generations of retreatants will benefit from the peace and tranquility of greater accommodation privacy.

Check [here](#) for latest updates and photos.

Time-Lapse Video

We've installed a webcam to take photos of the construction every few minutes. When work is finished early next fall, we'll put together a time-lapse sequence of the project and post it online.

Retreat Center Front Entrance Improvements

Next spring, we'll start making the front entrance to the Retreat Center fully accessible. This work will involve several changes. The foyer area just inside the front door will be raised to the same level as the rest of the foyer, allowing smoother transitions to the meditation hall, the dining room and the dorms beyond.

We'll also be bringing the patio area immediately outside the front door up to this same level. This will involve shortening the portico columns and front door itself. In addition, a ramp will be constructed that matches the period architecture of the center.

We offer heartfelt thanks to all those who generously supported this endeavor. When the work is done, everyone will have direct, easy access to the entire facility.



This architectural drawing illustrates the planned accessibility changes.

Continuing a Tradition

To celebrate Halloween each year, staff members carve pumpkins and place them around the Retreat Center meditation hall. This year, a wide range of creative designs greeted the Three-Month Retreat yogis (participants) as they entered the candlelit hall.



New Forest Refuge Date Change Policy

As of January 1, 2013, new fees will apply for anyone shortening or moving the dates of a confirmed Forest Refuge stay. To find out more, see our policy [here](#).



Program Highlights

At the Retreat Center

Our annual Three-Month Retreat is in its final weeks. As the leaves fall and daylight shortens, the silence and tranquility of the retreatants seems to grow.



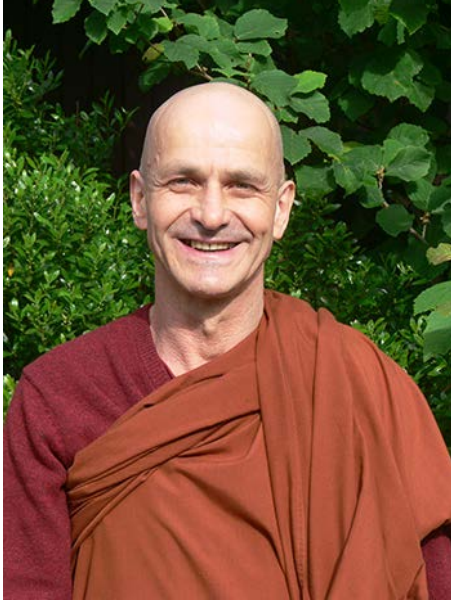
For the first half of the Three-Month Retreat, teachers were (L-R) Greg Scharf, Carol Wilson, Joseph Goldstein, Sally Armstrong and Guy Armstrong. Brian Lesage (far R) assisted for the first three weeks and was followed by Susie Harrington who assisted for the second three weeks.



The teaching team for the second half of the course: (standing L-R) Chas DiCapua (assisting), Winnie Nazarko and Pascal Auclair; (seated L-R) Annie Nugent, Joseph Goldstein and Rebecca Bradshaw.

You can access [here](#) recent guided meditations and teacher talks from this retreat.

At the Forest Refuge



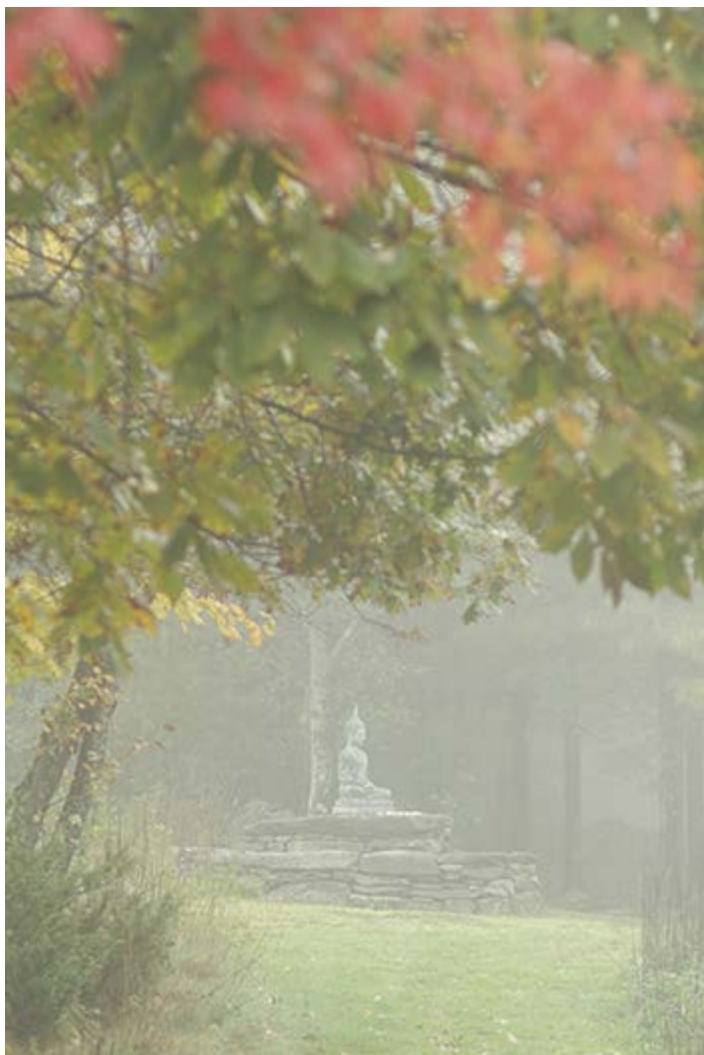
We were honored to host two senior monastic teachers last summer at the Forest Refuge. Sayadaw U Vivekananda (L) taught in June and Bhante Khippapanno (R) in July. Both offered the rich heritage of the ordained community to those on retreat.



Currently, Sky Dawson and Greg Scharf are teaching together throughout November.

Retreat Space Available

At the [Forest Refuge](#), there are openings for a personal retreat at various times from December 2012 through March 2013. Contact our office for more information: please [email](#) or call us at [978-355-2063](tel:978-355-2063).



At the [Retreat Center](#), space is available next year in [Steadying the Mind, Opening to Insight](#), taught by Richard Shankman and Bob Stahl, January 23-27.

Openings are also available in [The Buddha's Way to Happiness](#), led by Howard Cohn and Lila Kate Wheeler, January 30 - February 3, and in [An Integrated Awakening](#), offered by Thanissara and Kittisaro, February 16-24, 2013.



Serving on Staff

If you're interested in deepening your practice while working with others with similar values, please consider joining our staff. We currently have an opening for an experienced [cook](#) in our friendly Retreat Center Kitchen.



Wishing You Well

As the holiday season fast approaches, may you and your loved ones be safe and at peace. We wish you a joyous 2013.

May all beings everywhere be free from suffering.



You can find an archive of [Sangha News](#) and links to its audio interviews on our website.

IMS is a spiritual refuge for all who seek freedom of mind and heart. We offer meditation retreats rooted in the Theravada Buddhist teachings of ethics, concentration and wisdom. These practices help develop awareness and compassion in ourselves, giving rise to greater peace and happiness in the world.

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