



# Insight Meditation Society

Sangha News - Spring 2009

## A Caring Heart

*From Bob Agoglia, Executive Director:* The theme of taking care - both of others and of ourselves - seems an apt one these days as we rise to meet current challenges.



I've observed that most of us find ourselves, at one time or another, in a caregiving role, whether we're looking after family members, attending someone sick or dying, or professionally engaged in service such as therapy or health care. While the intention to care can arise from a generous and selfless heart, the reality of our experience can be overwhelm and depletion.



How can meditation help us reconnect with our natural vitality and resilience? Recently, I asked IMS founding teacher Sharon Salzberg about this. Listen [here](#) to her perspective and to her practice suggestions.

## IMS and the Recession

*Also from Bob:* In this same spirit of care, I want to say a few words about the recession and its impact on IMS. Some of you know that we are very blessed to have an endowment, thanks to the generosity of our community. But like other organizations, our endowment portfolio has taken a sizeable hit from the economic downturn. This means that the income we receive from it has been significantly reduced.

So, to balance our budget, we are carefully monitoring our expenses and forming contingency plans in case further cost cutting is needed. Already, only essential maintenance work is being carried out and the usual annual pay increase that we offer our staff has been frozen for 2009.

The forecast, however, isn't all bleak! Registration for the Forest Refuge is greater than ever and many Retreat Center courses are at or nearing capacity. There is obviously interest at this time in deepening skills to help us live wise and compassionate lives.



**Extra Financial Assistance Efforts** - Typically, our annual **Spring Appeal** is focused on improving our facilities. But this year, to meet the increasing number of requests we are receiving for financial aid, we decided to dedicate funds raised from this appeal to providing more financial assistance. This is in addition to the one-third of all our retreatants who already receive some form of financial support each year. We hope that you will join us in making retreat time available to those who cannot otherwise afford the cost.

For several years now, we have offered a scholarship rate at the Retreat Center of \$30 a day. To stretch our various scholarship funds further, we have just introduced a **sliding scale scholarship fee structure**, with the \$30 daily rate as the base scholarship fee. For anyone wishing to apply for this form of assistance, you can now choose a rate that best suits your means. By paying at a higher level, you make more funds available for others. To find out more, visit [here](#).

And for those experiencing extreme economic hardship as a result of the recession, we will soon begin implementing a **limited number of 'You Choose' fee slots** for certain Retreat Center courses. If your situation meets these requirements, please check our [Retreat Center schedule](#) on a regular basis for updates.

I am confident that IMS will weather this economic storm. Despite the financial challenges we must deal with, I am inspired each time I greet yogis arriving to practice. My spirit is renewed each time I step into the oasis of tranquility that is IMS.



**News Worth Noting**

**Website Developments** - We are very excited to offer **podcasts, downloads and streaming of IMS teacher talks** at our website. By visiting our new [audio](#) page, you can now browse a list of the 15 most recent talks from both the Retreat Center and the Forest Refuge. You can also subscribe to an RSS feed (or 'podcast') to automatically receive new dharma talks as they are made publically available.

The IMS website also features a refreshed and clearer **homepage** - check it out at [www.dharma.org](http://www.dharma.org). If you're new to meditation, you can quickly find helpful information. If you're already registered for a retreat, you can more easily access relevant details. Viewers can go directly to audio material, sign up for our publications or connect with a host of meditation resources.

**New Staircase** - Many New England winters had left the concrete stairs leading up to

the back entrance of the Retreat Center meditation hall cracked and crumbling. Recently these old steps were removed and drainage added to prevent future damage. Then, new bluestone stairs were installed. The old hand-rails were sandblasted and painted before being reset, and the sloping, poured-concrete landing at the base of the stairs was leveled and patched. As you can see in the photo below, the handsome new stairway makes a more fitting entry to the meditation hall - and is designed to withstand many a winter to come!



**Sustaining the Sangha** - Since launching our *Sustaining the Sangha* monthly giving program a little over three years ago, the program has steadily grown. Now, more than 185 participants contribute almost \$60,000 annually, supporting our operations and helping us keep our fees affordable. If you are considering pledging a monthly gift, no matter its size, and would like more information, click [here](#).



### Springtime at IMS

After our icy winter, it has been a special joy to see spring unfolding around IMS and the environs. A walk around the grounds or through the surrounding woods reveals new plants in bloom - and new animal visitors!



*The painted trillium is a rare New England native. There are a number of these lovely plants in the woods around Gaston Pond.*



*This chubby porcupine has been a recent visitor.*



*Tulips lean out to greet meditators on the front lawn of the Retreat Center.*



*The crabapple trees are thick with blossoms.*

### Program Highlights

Sitting a retreat helps us to reconnect with our innately wise and loving heart. It is an opportunity to practice meditative skills that calm the mind and give rise to

transformative insights.

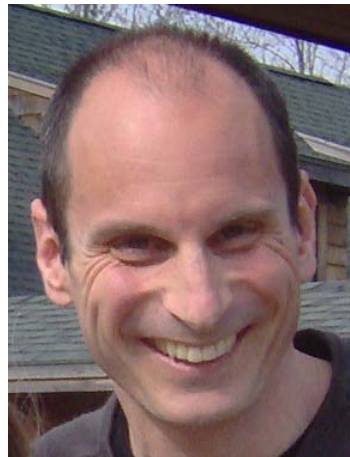
**Recent Retreats** - Late March saw the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of IMS's Women's Retreat - a milestone in establishing the lineage of women in Western Buddhist practice. The photo below shows this year's participants outside the Retreat Center, together with teachers Christina Feldman, Narayan Liebenson Grady and Maddy Klyne.



At the Forest Refuge, Joseph Goldstein and Rob Burbea are currently offering the dharma. Later this month, and returning again in July, Bhante Khippapanno will be in residence, emphasizing *citta* (mind), the third of the Buddha's Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipatthāna* in Pali).



*Joseph Goldstein*



*Rob Burbea*

**Future Courses** - At the **Retreat Center**, space is still available in upcoming courses taught by Michele McDonald, Rebecca Bradshaw and others. They will lead a 7-day Metta Retreat, [Loving Friendliness](#), May 29-June 5. Immediately following this, they will teach a 9-day insight meditation course, [Liberation of Mind and Heart](#), June 5-14.

In September, two unique weekend courses will take place. [A Resilient Heart](#), September 10-13, is specifically for caregivers, therapists and health care workers. Teachers Sharon Salzberg and Susan O'Brien will help us deepen the power of equanimity - a key to sustaining ourselves in the face of daily suffering. Five nursing contact hours will be offered.

An [Insight Meditation Weekend for Scientists](#), September 17-20, is open to academics and professionals working in the broad area of the mind sciences. Taught by Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg & others, it will explore ways in which a rigorous and

systematic approach to introspection can inform research.

Single rooms will again be offered for all participants in this year's [Two-Month Retreat](#), September 26-November 21, and its two four-week partials, [September 26-October 24](#) and [October 24-November 21](#).

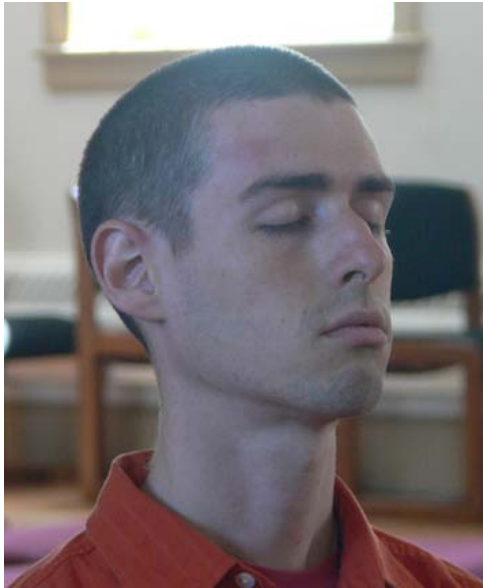
A new course has been added to our schedule. [Extending Wakefulness into Daily Life](#), December 4-6. It will be taught by Joseph Goldstein, Daniel Goleman and Tara Bennett-Goleman and is offered as a benefit to support IMS's mission.

At the **Forest Refuge**, there are still some spaces for a [personal retreat](#) from June onwards.



**Self Retreat** - If you have already participated in an IMS retreat and know the ropes, you might like to consider some [self-retreat](#) time before or after your next Retreat Center course. This is a wonderful way to build practice confidence.





## Sangha Stories

We value your stories highlighting your retreat experience and its positive impact on your life. Please email your contribution to [sanghastories@dharmia.org](mailto:sanghastories@dharmia.org).

*From yogi Gabriella M. in Georgia, who sat part of our 3-Month Retreat last year: **The Stove Cleaner** - When I arrive for my 6-week course, I find that my yogi job is cleaning the kitchen stove. It's an 18-burner with three ovens, and 45 minutes each evening doesn't sound like enough time to get the job done. But nevertheless, I'm going to be the best stove cleaner in IMS history!*

Over the next few days, I watch suffering build up: I spend an entire hour cleaning the stove. I miss the last sitting while doing it, and resent the 4 (*Four!*) veggie washers who finish their job so quickly. (*How can I get a veggie washer job instead?*) I am totally unsatisfied with the result of my labors. (*The more I clean the dirtier it looks!*)

Frustrated that I'm making such a big deal out of nothing, I ask one of my teachers why I can't let go. She suggests that I simply notice and be patient. Night after night, I enter the kitchen thinking, *I'm cool today, I'll just go there and do the job*. But I'm not cool - all I see is attachment to the result and self-criticism. I can feel that little shot of envy when the veggie washers bow to each other and leave the kitchen. *All right, keep noticing.*

Into the second week, I'm aware of the conditioning behind my wanting to be 'the perfect cleaner.' I recall when I was very young and my aunt would teach me how to clean, redoing the job herself if the result wasn't up to her standards.

Then one evening the thought occurs: *This heavy, resilient stove was at IMS well before me and will be here long after I'm gone. Can I take care of it with a bit of love? Maybe so.*

A few nights later I open the kitchen door and see my fellow yogis quietly doing their jobs - and I feel light, with no aversion in the mind. I go to the stove and for the first time I'm simply cleaning. When the veggie washers bow to each other, by chance I'm facing them: there is a smile on my face and I think, *That's so neat!* and in that very moment one of the veggie washers turns around and bows to me. Joy, freedom. *Just notice it.*

When mindfulness is present, it amazes me the way the dharma simply reveals itself.



## Staff Sangha

**Job Opening** - Please consider joining the IMS staff - we offer a warm and friendly community and a rich learning experience. We are currently seeking a [Maintenance Worker](#). If you have any questions, please contact Kelly Collett at [hr@dharma.org](mailto:hr@dharma.org).

Until our next issue, all of us at IMS wish you, your families and your communities deep joy and peace.

For an archive of *Sangha News* and links to its audio interviews, click [here](#).

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*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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