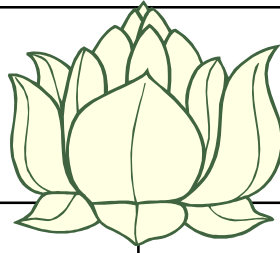


# Clear Mind



## Sally Clough Weekend Retreat, April 29-May 2, 2004

Madison Vipassana, Inc. is happy to welcome Sally Clough to Madison for the first time. Sally has been a leader at Spirit Rock Meditation Center where she has served in almost every role including executive director. After training with Jack Kornfield, she is now a member of the Teachers' Council and a leading teacher for the Dedicated Practitioners Program. We are honored to have Sally lead our next retreat and look forward to her clear teachings, which are firmly grounded in the Pali Canon. If you have questions regarding the retreat, contact Tony at 608-661-9959 or [tony.fernandez1@juno.com](mailto:tony.fernandez1@juno.com).

What follows is an article Sally sent us to describe the focus and content of the retreat.

### ***The Four Foundations of Mindfulness: Exploring the Buddha's Instructions for Meditation Practice***

by Sally Clough

The *Satipatthana Sutta* (usually translated as "The Four Foundations of Mindfulness") is the discourse in which the Buddha describes the path of mindfulness practice, beginning with simple awareness of the breath and the body, to very subtle understandings about how the mind works. In this retreat we will use this text as the basis for our meditation. The practices in this text cover all aspects of our experience, from awareness of the body in formal meditation and in going about our daily activities, to the highest teachings on liberation. I enjoy teaching from this text because it is so central to our practice of mindfulness meditation, and because of its connection to the origins of this practice. I have taught the Four Foundations in a number of different settings, including evening study classes, the Spirit Rock Dedicated Practitioners Program (where we did a seven-day retreat practicing, reflecting on and inquiring into the Four Foundations), to formal, silent retreats. Students usually appreciate learning that the way we practice now has a lineage stretching back all the way to

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## Sharon Salzberg to Speak in Madison

The First Unitarian Society Meeting House, Madison Vipassana, Inc., and Madison Insight Meditation Society are pleased to sponsor Sharon Salzberg for an evening lecture and book signing. Sharon Salzberg has been teaching meditation retreats worldwide for almost 30 years. She is a co-founder of the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies and the Forest Refuge, a new center for long-term meditation practice.



Sharon is the author of *Faith: Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience*, published by Riverhead Books; *Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness* and *A Heart as Wide as the World*, both published by Shambhala Publications.

On Tuesday, April 13, at 7 PM Sharon will give a public lecture in the auditorium at First Unitarian Society Meeting House, 900 University Bay Drive, on ***Transforming the World from the Inside Out: Meditation as a Tool for Developing Courage, Faith & Compassion***.

Sharon will also speak briefly and sign copies of her book, *Faith*, at Borders Books and Music, 3750 University Avenue, at 7 PM on Wednesday, April 14.

We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to hear from a founding member of the Insight Meditation Society and one of the people who have been instrumental in making meditation accessible to westerners. Inside this newsletter is a brief article by Sharon to give you a sense of the depth and insight of her teaching and writing.

*Continued from front page*

the Buddha, who came to awakening under the Bodhi tree 2,500 years ago. This text has amazing range and depth. It is a description of basic vipassana, or insight meditation, practice, but it also includes contemplations on death, a detailed investigation of the body, and practices where we take some central Buddhist teachings, such as the Four Noble Truths and the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, and actually apply them to our meditation practice.

The Buddha considered the practices he describes in this sutta to be all you need to know and practice to reach full enlightenment. The Four Foundations are Mindfulness of the Body, of Feeling Tone, of Mental States (including moods and emotions) and of Mind Objects. This last foundation is one that we often don't formally teach, as it is fairly complex, and includes being aware of the conditions that allow a certain mind state or experience to arise and then to cease. However, it is in learning how to practice this Fourth Foundation that our meditation can become very alive, as we actively engage in the process of cultivating wholesome states of mind, and of becoming more quickly aware of unwholesome states of mind when they are present, understanding the conditions that cause them to arise, and learning how we can more easily let them go. These are practices that are not just useful in formal meditation sessions, but can help us to increase our access to beautiful states of mind like joy or equanimity, and decrease difficult states like aversion or greed in our everyday lives. This practice of cultivation of the wholesome states, and reducing and then abandoning the difficult ones, is one of the central ways we bring more happiness and less suffering into our lives.

In this retreat, we will follow the usual format of silent sitting and walking practice, but the talks and instructions will be focused on the progression of teachings as outlined in this sutta. There will not be time to cover all of the practices outlined in the text, but I will try to give a flavor of them in the talks, and suggestions on how to include them in your practice after the retreat if you are interested. There will be group and individual interviews, guided meditations and time for questions and answers.

## Half-Day Meditation April 3

On Saturday, April 3, we continue our practice of offering half-day meditations (9 AM - Noon) every other month on the first Saturday of the month, in the lower meeting house of the First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive. The first sitting begins at 9 AM. If you aren't able to be there by 9 AM, you can also arrive on each hour. The last meditation will end at noon and will be followed by a potluck lunch. For more information or possible last minute changes, please call Dave Creswell at [274-8938](tel:274-8938).

## St. Benedicts Center No Longer a Retreat Facility

Madison Vipassana, Inc. recently learned that St. Benedict Center, where we have held our residential retreats since 1996, will no longer be available as a retreat facility. We offer our appreciation to the Sisters of St. Benedict for the immeasurable service the retreat center has provided to the Madison community for the last forty years.

The April 2004 retreat with Sally Clough will be our last retreat at the St. Benedict Center. The Board of Madison Vipassana, Inc. has been working hard to identify alternate retreat locations and we assure you that we will continue to offer residential meditation retreats. We have contracted with several retreat centers for our 2004-2005 retreats, and we will provide more details about them closer to time of the retreats.

Many of us are saddened by the loss of a retreat center as close, friendly, quiet, and beautiful as St. Benedict. Below is an email written by Cathy Loeb to the Director of St. Benedict upon learning that we would no longer be able to sponsor retreats there. We share Cathy's email because we feel it well expresses our gratitude to the Center and also our sorrow at losing it as a space for our own spiritual practice.

*"Greetings:*

*I've attended a number of retreats sponsored by the Madison Insight Meditation Group and held at the St. Benedict Center. I just heard last night that the center will no longer be available for retreats after June. I understand and respect your reasons, but I also want to let you know that this news deeply saddens me.*

*I've felt privileged to be able to attend retreats at the center. The facilities and the land are extraordinarily beautiful. Your staff is kind and sensitive to our group's desire to maintain silence during retreats. Your food is nutritious and tasty.*

*I've walked your land in every season, filled with joy. I've spent hours of walking meditation in the chapel, moved by its beauty and its sense of spirit. I've anticipated and savored the sounds of the Sunday morning service that form the backdrop to the final sitting of each retreat. I've been inspired by your commitment to restoring and safekeeping the land.*

*Buddhism teaches us that all things are impermanent and that wisdom and freedom lie in letting go. Letting go of my connection to St. Benedict Center will definitely be a challenging practice!*

*I hope to attend our group's final retreat at the center at the end of April. In the meantime, I offer deep thanks to you for sharing your warm and lovely home.*

*Cathy Loeb"*

## Practicing in the Thai Forest Tradition

*namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*

Have you been curious about chanting, taking the refuges and precepts, monastic tradition, or other aspects of Buddhism that you may have encountered on a retreat, when visiting a temple or in readings? Have the words of the chants or the tranquility of a Buddha image touched your heart? The meditation style practiced at our Sunday and Tuesday sitting groups and taught on our retreats is based upon a 2,500-year-old monastic tradition of Theravada Buddhism. Theravada Buddhism today is primarily practiced in Thailand, Sri Lanka and Burma and to a lesser degree in Laos and Cambodia. The Buddha's teachings emphasize the integral relationship between those who have gone forth to the holy life (monastics) and lay followers of the teachings; together they make up the fourfold assembly (*parisa* in Pali) of monks, nuns, male devotees and female devotees. All members of the *parisa* are essential to the sustenance and continuation of the teachings for future generations.

The monks and nuns, through their renunciation of worldly ways, offer the lay community a constant source of inspiration and knowledge of the path. In temples around the world, the *parisa* of monks, nuns, and lay people offers chants and traditional practices that are designed to recollect the Buddha's teachings through bowing, chanting, recitation and symbols. The traditions of Theravada Buddhism offer ways to realize the teachings experientially rather than through intellectual or rational thought.

For people interested in these tradition and practices, Madison Insight Meditation Group is starting a once a month gathering called "Practicing in the Thai Forest Tradition." On the first Monday of each month, from 7 to 8:30 PM, you are invited to join Jan Sheppard, who is about to complete her training as a lay minister in the Thai Forest Tradition in the lineage of Ajahn Chah and Ajahn Sumedho, to learn the chants and practices that can open our hearts and help us maintain clarity and mindfulness. We will meet at 5717 Cedar Place, in Madison. For directions or more information, please call Jan at 233-3844. The first gathering will be on Monday, April 5.

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*The gift of Dhamma triumphs over all other gifts;  
The taste of Dhamma triumphs over all other tastes;  
The happiness of Dhamma triumphs over all other pleasures;  
The eradication of craving triumphs over all suffering.*

Dhammapada 354

## A Conversation with Sharon Salzberg

*Question:* What does the word faith mean to you?

*Answer:* To me, faith is having the courage to step forward into the unknown. It encourages engaged and openhearted participation in life. Faith is reaching out to others for connection instead of remaining isolated. Faith is always having a sense of possibility, moment by moment.

*Question:* What inspired you to write a book on faith?

*Answer:* After writing *Lovingkindness*, a book devoted to universal love and compassion, I was wondering about my next project. I began to examine what keeps me afloat when life's challenges present themselves, and what ensures that I remain open to life's joys and celebrations. The common thread was faith. So I wrote this book to help people develop a meaningful, intelligent sense of faith. The faith I'm talking about doesn't require them to abandon their religious convictions.

*Question:* Many people, especially those with roots in an organized religion, think of faith solely in terms of belief and trust in God. How is your approach to faith different?

*Answer:* Whether faith is connected to a deity or not, its essence lies in trusting ourselves to discover the deepest truths on which we can rely.

*Question:* Throughout *Faith*, you stress the importance of having faith in oneself. How can faith serve as a catalyst for positive change and ongoing personal development?

*Answer:* Faith is the essence of personal change. Without a sense of aspiration, without creative courage, without faith, we would all feel like victims of circumstance and prisoners of our past. Faith empowers us to step directly forward into the center of possibility that life can be different and we can be better.

*Question:* How do you think faith throughout America has changed in the aftermath of September 11, 2001?

*Answer:* I've heard many people talk about finding something inside them that they didn't know they had. I think that people all over — survivors, families who lost loved ones, those who bore witness to the pain and suffering and tragedy of that experience — had to draw on their inner experience to be at all able to move forward. Those people are in fact relying on the very faith I talk about. Now perhaps we are remembering to stay more connected to our deepest values, to the immediacy of love, and to the need to live a meaningful life.

*Question:* What is an example of a way that faith can be put into action?

*Answer:* We can begin to look at our own experiences in terms of successes instead of failures. For example, you may be a teacher and feel that you are a failure because you are

*Continued on back page*

not a principal, which your family always defined as far more worthy. One day you stop berating yourself and really notice the students whose lives you are helping to shape and mold. You see your job with a whole different perspective. When we learn to look for a deeper experience of who we are, we find our lives are far bigger, far more filled with potential than we usually imagine.

*Question:* How can the practice of meditation strengthen faith?

*Answer:* Both meditation and prayer help us to quiet the mind, to be able to focus more clearly on things we care about, and to uncover our own greatest capacities. Faith is developed and sustained by doing this, and opens us to a sense of the boundless, to the laws of nature, and to the truth of something bigger than ourselves.

*Question:* What is the main message of this book?

*Answer:* With faith, we can all look forward to a more fulfilling life, and we can start now.

*Question:* What do you want people to take away from your story?

*Answer:* That life is workable—that there's a tremendous amount we can do with our own minds and own hearts. Also, no matter how alone we might feel at times, we're never really alone. Every life is connected to other lives and to truths much bigger than ourselves.

*Question:* Are you still on the journey of faith?

*Answer:* I hope so. Writing this book certainly tested my faith. I came through the process with a much stronger appreciation of faith in what's possible for me and for other people. Faith is a never-ending journey.

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## Upcoming Retreats

Wes Niskar, October 14-17, 2004

Myoshin Kelly, April 5-10, 2005

Howie Cohn, July 21-24, 2005

Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia, October 2005

Watch our website at [www.vipassana.net](http://www.vipassana.net) for details!

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This newsletter is published periodically throughout the year to inform our members of our activities and of events. Much of this information is also published on our website at <http://www.vipassana.net>

Jan Sheppard: Editing, Layout & Design

Cathy Loeb, Duplicating & Distribution

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