

Insight Retreat Center

NEWSLETTER

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Donating to IRC

All IRC retreats are offered freely, following the 2600-year Buddhist tradition of dana (generosity). And your generosity is what allows us to continue this beautiful offering. The entire support for everything at the Center—all facility and retreat-related expenses, as well as teachers—comes from donations.

It's possible to make donations of any amount to IRC using PayPal or a credit or debit card—a secure method that is quick and easy. Just click on the Donate button on the IRC website. Setting up a recurring monthly donation can be done there too, using your PayPal account.

You can also write checks payable to Insight Retreat Center and mail them to Insight Meditation Center, 108 Birch Street, Redwood City, CA 94062.

Help IRC While Buying or Selling a Home

IMC sangha member Carol Collins is a retired longtime local real estate broker with Realtor connections throughout the state. If you are thinking of buying or selling a home she can refer you to a qualified Realtor. Carol will contribute her entire referral fee to our Retreat Center, and can serve as your consultant at no charge throughout the buying or selling process.

She has helped facilitate this for sangha members in San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz and other Bay Area counties. If you have real estate questions or are thinking of purchasing or selling a home, please contact Carol at carolcollins888@gmail.com or 408/348-1385.

IRC Email List

For future e-mail newsletters & updates, please subscribe to our email list at www.insightretreatcenter.org

Gil Fronsdal: Practicing in Online Retreats

An innovative opportunity in our modern technological world is the creation of online meditation retreats. Rather than traveling from our homes to attend a retreat at a retreat center, the retreat comes to our homes. While home retreats are not new, they have tended to be solitary with people practicing on their own. In contrast, online retreats provide a clear sense of practicing at home while also being with others who are similarly participating from their homes. A community of practitioners is formed sharing the same retreat schedule and teachings. Through web-based video conferencing platforms, meditators see each other meditating, listen to the same teachers, and hear the questions and concerns of other retreatants.

Doing a retreat at home places meditation practice in the location where we live our everyday life. We have the opportunity to bring our practice into the ordinary activities often seen as mundane or even distracting from our “practice”. Rather than pursuing special “spiritual experiences” apart from everyday life, washing dishes, folding laundry, and cooking become “spiritual,” i.e., in Buddhist terms, they become means to our liberation. An important part of home retreats is practicing in such a way that we are in harmony with any housemates, family or pets with whom we share our homes. Ideally, and more beneficially, this would mean learning how to be with others in a way that is in harmony with being on retreat. For example, if conversations are needed, we can discover how to speak in a relaxed, mindful way that neither disrupts the continuity of the retreat nor upsets our relationships. If caring for the welfare of others is necessary at home, this caring becomes as much a domain of mindfulness and concentration as sitting in meditation.

Of course, the context for online retreats is very different than practicing at a retreat center. At a center, many of our daily needs are cared for by others. Most of the shopping, cooking, and cleaning needed for a retreat is done by other retreatants or staff. Commonly, for a home retreat, practitioners need to provide all this self-care for themselves. This means that all necessary domestic tasks can become integrated into the retreat as “work-meditations.” These jobs can be done as consciously and mindfully as one would do on a retreat. Additionally, there is the opportunity to do them as an expression of generosity, care, and love for oneself. “Work-meditations” are equally “kind-regard meditations.” We can do these tasks as a clear and respectful way of supporting ourselves in retreat. In this way, when we sit down to meditate, we can recognize that we are supporting and caring for ourselves—that we are in a supportive community with ourselves.

Online retreats may require greater personal discipline than residential retreats, where it is easier to be carried along from one event to another by the group momentum provided by other retreatants. Practicing at home with no one watching us, we may not experience this shared momentum. We may then need to evoke greater dedication and self-discipline to meditate through the day. Developing strength and discipline is extremely useful; they are what will be needed to stay close to the heart's liberation once this is discovered. Online retreats at home certainly have their challenges, not least because some of our greatest attachments may be more manifest at home. Rather than going to a retreat center to get away from our everyday preoccupations and attachments, we have the chance to face them and find our freedom with them. For this reason, not a few people have been surprised at how valuable and transformative practicing at home can be. Rather than hav-

Practicing in Online Retreats, cont'd

ing the idea that mindfulness practice and retreat practice are separate from their daily challenges and joys, they discover how to practice amongst the challenges and joys.

At the end of a home retreat, one doesn't have to 'return' home. Rather, one now has developed new understandings, associations, and routines for how to continue practicing at home. For example, making our bed in the morning might be understood as an effective barometer of our inner state. Walking through one's home may be associated with walking meditation, so it can support greater mindfulness through the day. Inspired by the greater embodied mindfulness we evoked in the kitchen during the retreat, we may begin cooking with less distracting thoughts.

One dictionary definition for "retreat" is "a period of seclusion for the purposes of prayer and meditation." With this meaning, the word is closely related to the concept of sanctuary, a place where the sacred is found. Home retreats can teach us how to see our home as a sanctuary in ordinary life. Meditation retreats are not a withdrawal from the "real world," they are a withdrawal from the distractions, preoccupations, and fantasies that keep us from the "real world." Being on retreat is stepping back from distraction and delusion so we can be with what is most true, the world we experience when seen clearly, calmly, without the overlays of our mental projections. It is a time both to discover the sanctuary of a liberated heart and to carry this sanctuary into all areas of our life. In this sense, meditation retreats become an entry into the world, not a retreating from the world. Symbolically and actually, practicing retreats at home represents waking up to the "real world" more than does leaving home to do a retreat elsewhere.

Online retreats have opened many new opportunities. They have made it possible for more people to attend retreats and for more people to attend more often. They can include more people than a retreat center. Those who can't travel or who can't leave home can participate. People from all

over the world can participate and so create a global community of practitioners. These retreats have also made it possible to experiment with a variety of new ways to participate with a retreat. Some people seclude themselves at home to meditate much of the time. Others continue with their usual work while dipping into the retreat through the day, perhaps listening to the teachings as much as they meditate. The closing of retreat centers during the pandemic of 2020 has shown us the great benefit that online retreats allow. Online retreats are here to stay, expanding the variety of practice opportunities. Those participating in these retreats during the first year of our new online retreat era are the pioneers of an exciting expansion of the practice. We are laying down the foundation for people to benefit from online retreats for years to come.

IRC Update from Gil

Our experience offering retreats online since shelter-in-place began in March has been inspiring. Many retreatants have discovered the great value of bringing retreat practice into their own homes and discovering a whole new dimension to practicing in everyday life. People who normally would not be able to attend a residential retreat have valued the opportunity to do so online. We have discovered that, overall, online technology works amazingly well for teachings, instructions, Q and A, practice discussions, and the feeling of support from a community of practitioners.

Designing online retreats has provided great flexibility and creativity. We have experimented with a variety of retreat schedules, from days filled with periods of sitting and walking meditation to spacious schedules where meditation is interspersed with time to live daily life in a mindful and easeful manner. We have offered retreats for small groups and one retreat with 200 participants. This large retreat was surprisingly successful, enough so that we plan on doing another in August and more in 2021.

One huge benefit of offering large online retreats is that we have much shorter waitlists than our previous live retreats. People who have ended up on retreat waitlists for several years have been delighted to finally attend an IRC retreat.

Online retreats have been so successful and beneficial that we are actively putting in place the infrastructure that will allow us to continue to offer them after IRC re-opens for residential retreats. This includes training a new team of volunteers focused on online retreats.

IRC has been very fortunate to have many talented and dedicated volunteers who have provided much time and effort to make online retreats possible. Thank you all!

In addition to caring for our online retreats, the 7 volunteers in residence at IRC have worked hard on the ongoing care of the center.

Without outside volunteers to help with landscaping and facilities maintenance, caring for the property has been a huge job for the resident volunteers. With much dedication, they have used this time of being closed to improve trails and plantings, repaint the deck, and upgrade the electrical system in IRC's main building.

We continue plans to install solar electric panels on IRC's roof sometime in September or October. We have raised about half of the \$90,000 we need for this project. We anticipate the panels will save IRC about \$10,000/year in electrical bills. Information on donating to our "Powering IRC for the 21st Century" is on IRC's homepage.

IRC's overall financial situation remains stable. While donations to IRC have decreased significantly with online retreats, we have taken many cost-saving measures and have managed to keep expenses close to our income. We are delighted that for the first half of 2020, our income exceeded expenses by \$6,000! We had anticipated we would be running a deficit during the pandemic.

We do look forward to the day we can again offer residential retreats. In preparation for this, we have started to focus on making a wide variety of improvements at IRC that will decrease the likelihood of any contagion for those in residence during a retreat.

We certainly miss welcoming retreatants to IRC. We have started to welcome people to weekly "online mini-retreats" at IRC. If you haven't yet done so, please join us for these two-hour YouTube offerings direct from IRC's meditation hall. Information is on IRC's homepage.

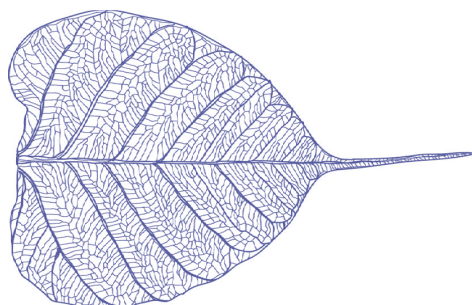
More Ways to Donate

Donate Your Car: Make a tax-deductible donation of a vehicle you no longer want, working or not. The Center for Car Donations will handle pick-up and all paperwork needed, and IRC will receive 75% of the sale price. Tell them you want to donate to Insight Retreat Center. Call (855) 500-RIDE and a representative will schedule your pick-up appointment and guide you through the process.

Amazon Smile: a simple and automatic way for you to support IRC every time you shop through Amazon, at no cost to you. You can find a sign-up link on this page of the IRC website, or use the Amazon Search link on our Donate and IMC's Recommended Books pages.

Stock Transfer Gift: Follow the instructions available on the website to initiate a stock gift for IRC.

Matching Gift from Employer: If your company has a matching gift program, ask them for its matching gift form. Our legal name is "Insight Meditation Center of the Mid-Peninsula." We are a 501(c)(3) organization and our tax ID number is 77-0450217. Please send your donation and the matching gift form to Insight Meditation Center, 108 Birch St, Redwood City, CA, 94062.



Schedule of Retreats

Due to COVID-19, IRC has transitioned to online retreats at least through the end of 2020. All IRC retreats are opportunities to engage in full-time mindfulness training. A daily schedule includes periods of sitting and walking meditation, instructions, dharma talks, and practice discussion groups with teachers. Usually silence is maintained throughout most of the retreat, except for discussions with the teachers and communication needed for household activities. Participants agree not to use electronic devices for any purpose other than accessing the retreat. If no registration date is shown for a particular retreat below, registration is open already.

2020

- **Aug 27–30** Insight Retreat with Gil Fronsdal assisted by Diana Clark, Ines Freedman, Shelley Gault and bruni dávila.
- **Sep 4–7** Insight Retreat with Max Erdstein and Diana Clark
- **Oct 1–4** Radical Presence: Courage, Connection, and Love for Personal and Collective Awakening with Max Erdstein and Joanna Hardy
- **Oct 13–18** Insight Retreat with Max Erdstein and Matthew Brensilver
- **Oct 25–Nov 1** Insight Retreat with Gil Fronsdal and Paul Haller
- **Nov 5–8** Metta Meditation Retreat with Diana Clark and Nikki Mirghafori
- **Nov 14–21** Insight Retreat for People in Their 20s and 30s with Gil Fronsdal and Max Erdstein
- **Dec 6–13** Insight Retreat with Gil Fronsdal and Matthew Brensilver (registration opens 9/6)
- **Dec 16–20** Insight Santa Cruz Retreat with Bob Stahl, Mary Grace Orr, and JD Doyle (registration opens 9/16)

2021

- **Jan 24–31** Insight Retreat with Gil Fronsdal, Nolitha Tsengiwe, and Devon Hase (registration opens 9/24)
- **Feb 14–21** Insight Retreat with Gil Fronsdal and Diana Clark (registration opens 10/14)
- **Feb 28–Mar 7** Insight Retreat with Gil Fronsdal and Ines Freedman (registration opens 10/28)
- **Mar 14–21** Insight Regreat with Nikki Mirghafori and Sayadaw U Jagara (registration opens 11/14)

To register, for schedule changes, additions and more, visit:
insightretreatcenter.org/retreats/
or email info@insightretreatcenter.org



Volunteering ~ Helping to Care for IRC

IRC is run entirely by volunteers. The continuing support allows us to both take care of the Center and offer retreats. We aren't currently able to host a team for Work Days, but if you are interested in supporting the operation of the Center, please fill out a Volunteer Form at insightretreatcenter.org/volunteer or email volunteer@insightretreatcenter.org. Once we are able to open for residential retreats again, Work Days will resume.

Garden Days: At this time, we are able to welcome a few volunteers at a time to help with gardening and landscaping projects. Please email us at gardening@insightretreatcenter.org if you'd like to offer your time.

Service Leaders: As we offer more online retreats, we are hoping to be able to depend on Service Leaders, experienced retreat practitioners who both sit the retreat and serve the retreat in leadership positions as managers and technical assistants. Though they have more responsibility and devote more time they still spend much of the day in formal meditation.

People who qualify to be service leaders can sign up to serve as frequently as it works for them. If interested, please fill out a Volunteer Form at insightretreatcenter.org/volunteer or contact admin@insightretreatcenter.org

Resident Volunteers: Several practitioners live at IRC for extended periods assisting with the various tasks needed to support the Center. Through their service and in living in a dedicated spiritual community, they have an opportunity to immerse themselves in retreat practice and also broaden the integration of their practice in daily life. Contact newrvadmin@insightretreatcenter.org.

Resident Volunteer Life under Shelter-in-Place

Since the middle of March, the Resident Volunteers (RVs) at IRC have been sheltering in place along with most people in California. No longer welcoming a houseful of retreatants into their home several times a month, their daily lives and work responsibilities have changed in significant ways. They still care for the physical needs of the Center—working on the solar electric project, maintaining the garden and grounds, keeping the building systems running well. But the retreat support that was an ongoing part of their roles has been utterly transformed by the move to online-only retreat offerings, with the need to create and implement new administrative systems and to learn new technological skills. The community of other volunteers who ordinarily come for Work and Garden days, who come to take inventory, and to help with many other maintenance tasks on the property, are no longer able to visit, so RVs tasks in those areas have grown.

So that the greater IRC community can hear from the RVs how all this has been affecting them, we conducted some email “interviews” with several—Heather Gardner, Stas Fedechkin, willow mills, Doug Wiebe and Eileen Messina. Their edited responses are interspersed below.

Can you talk a little about changes to your daily activities and work duties in this period?

Heather Gardner: Whether sheltering in place or not, routine is tremendous support for me—particularly my morning routine. I commit to sitting meditation at 6:30am with other RVs, followed by Gil’s 7am online guided meditation and dharmette. Yoga practice and breakfast with RVs follows. This morning routine is the foundation to my day. My work role has shifted from landscape and housekeeping assistant to online retreat support and on-site housekeeping RV. Essential to this transition was coordinating with Lish Dorosin, the off-site housekeeping RV, in drafting a housekeeping care plan during COVID. With the support of the other RVs, we identified critical housekeeping priorities and came up with how each of our roles would support them.

Doug Wiebe: In many ways we RVs are lucky to have an isolated home in a low risk area to spend this time. And, of course, you almost couldn't ask for a better environment for personal meditation practice. The biggest challenge I have is with restlessness. Even in a retreat center, I can find ways to avoid facing my restlessness--things to do for the next retreat, things that need immediate attention. But avoiding it is much harder with shelter-in-place and no time-critical responsibilities. Time in general takes on a different quality--less minute-to-minute and more a flow of events. There is very little that feels like an immediate pull. Restlessness comes to the front and wants attention. It has been a great practice to be with it and not give in to the pull.

My day-to-day work life has changed a bit. When in-person retreats are happening there are a lot of small tasks—fixing appliances, unclogging drains, heating, fire alarms, etc. Instead of those, my focus now is more on long term issues--figuring out how to replace our back-up generator, how to upgrade our electrical system, and how to install solar panels. And there are the more general maintenance tasks--the RVs are keeping the center going while the larger sangha is away.

Stas Fedechkin: I'm doing more practice in nature and throughout the day. I haven't participated in many sats or dharma talks online, mostly doing my own practice with a few teachers I work closely with. I enjoy having meals with other RVs and look forward to the times we share food and company in informal settings. I've gone on a few hikes with two RVs. I appreciate living in community and knowing everyone has a wholesome intention and practice.

I'm working more, as there haven't been volunteers coming for workdays or to help out on the grounds. I need to balance my energy and stay on task, doing one task at a time. I find keeping it simple and going at a steady pace to be helpful in preventing getting distracted or drained. I incorporate formal sats or other practice throughout the day as possible.

Eileen Messina: I've experienced more stillness, more solitude, as I'm not going out as much. My quieter side has been nourished during these months. The first part of the pandemic, I spent time with part of my family in Wyoming and away from IRC. I was able to spend a lot of intimate time in a very different community there. I feel I brought back to IRC a more easeful perspective to community life.

The online Work Day July 11 was fun, I really enjoyed it. I hadn't missed the contact with others outside of my RV and family connections, I was really content without connections with retreat yogis and IRC volunteers, but I like being back in contact now. I'm happy on my own, and also happy when people are present. And I'm totally content with online retreats.

Community living is always a journey, and that is still very present. I think I sat formally with a community more when there were in-person retreats going on, but the fact that residential retreats are not happening hasn't decreased my level of discipline in the practice.

My main work is different now than it was before, and I have enjoyed what's here—I'm doing gardening and helping support on-line retreats. When in-person retreats are happening my work is in the kitchen. The role of kitchen mentor is one of my favorite ways of being in service. It's nice being more solitary in the garden, just doing what's needed in the moment, not having to plan, seeing clearly what needs to be done right now. Working with the online retreats is not as clear—defining my role, delineating all the roles is still in process. It's important to be flexible, it's all new. It was fun being able to collaborate in the on-line retreat development process. Now a standard has been chosen and RV's are back to a script form of managing retreats.

willow mills: I only spent a few months at IRC before shelter in place started, and my day-to-day life hasn't changed all that much: I'm settling into and exploring Santa Cruz online rather than in person. But life was quite secluded before, and continues to be quite secluded. Living with the community of RVs has been really supportive during this time: I have the flexibility to spend time with people if I want, and have alone time if I want, as we have plenty of space. Some of us share many meals. We cook more, since we're not eating retreat meals and leftovers. One small thing I miss is meals during retreat with those not sitting retreat: sharing the retreat meals and usually eating down in the Council Room (the RVs' living room), retreats would be times when we'd eat together often.

We are navigating COVID as a community: each of us has our own lives, our own family, friends, and loved ones to see, and yet because we live together, we're responsible for caring for the other RVs and their loved ones as we make choices about precautions. Coming to shared understanding and agreements about how to care for each other in this way was particularly challenging at first, but we've managed to find harmony, through talking, listening, and being transparent about our choices.

Resident Volunteer Life, cont'd

What has been the effect on you of not having retreatants or community volunteers at IRC?

Doug: The biggest impact of shelter-in-place has been not having direct communication with the IRC sangha. For me, a big part of wanting to be an RV was to be able to support IRC residential retreats. I did that in the past in other ways—being a retreat registrar for example. I was looking forward to more in-person experience as an RV. So we will wait patiently until IRC can offer in-person retreats again.

willow: Not having in-person retreats is the biggest change for us. The retreats created the flow of RV life: alternating between ordinary daily life in community and being on retreat. The presence of the yogis really supported and carried our practice, so this has been a loss for me. Not being able to be physically present for opening and closing circle is also a loss, as those circles reminded me of the significance of the work I'm doing. During online retreats when there have been enough RVs sitting so that the retreat atmosphere descends on the center, it's great.

Stas: I enjoyed the structure and the flow of in-person retreats. I miss seeing everyone in person and catching up with retreatants and meeting new people. In some ways we are spending more time as a community and there is also less structure and support now than before. I miss the energy the retreatants brought in person, all the informal contact with teachers, and listening to in-person dharma talks and instructions.

Heather: Co-creating an onsite “retreat container” with yogis, teachers, fellow RVs and service leaders was compelling. Our practice is a shared and embodied one that deeply inspires me. On in-person retreats, we quietly accompany each other through sitting and walking meditation, meals, work tasks, and opening/closing circles. I miss “ordinary” interactions with yogis during retreat—sitting in opening circle, crossing paths at the coffee/tea area, listening to a talk together in the meditation hall or sharing a conversation at the post-retreat lunch. I also miss this larger “retreat body” that practices together—it is very inspiring to me.

How has the shift to online retreats affected you, in your work and in your practice?

Doug: Getting started offering online retreats has been exciting. It is a whole new world and I feel like IRC is on the forefront. In particular, it is exciting to offer retreats to people who normally might not be able to attend in-person retreats—either because of where they live or because of personal circumstances. But I still miss the in-person interactions with our sangha.

willow: Most of my role as administrative manager revolves around retreat. Shifting to online retreats, we've needed to develop a new way of being on retreat and develop new systems, starting on the fly and learning as we go. I've been heavily involved in this process of development. This has shifted my work from pretty well-defined, simple, and straightforward, to more complex, collaborative, and with room for creativity. In dharma terms, this has gone with a shift from more focus on samadhi and tranquility to equanimity and wise speech. Wise speech is particularly highlighted for me, as this shift in work isn't just individual: it's been a shift in work of our RV community and extended IRC volunteer community, and that comes with collectively being with uncertainty and developing new patterns of working together. I think for most of us, the amount of work we've been doing has increased as well. I've definitely had times of frustration and stress with this transition.

For the most part, I've been in the background of online retreats: setting up the technical systems and documents needed for the retreat. One thing that's become clearer to me is how much of retreat is about community,

and consequently, how much of our role as RVs is about welcoming people and supporting them to feel included as part of a retreat community. We could just have a schedule and dharma talks for people to download, and even though that's kind of the skeleton of a retreat, it would not come close to a typical retreat: we receive so much support from being with others, and in a way, being carried by the community. What we've been doing to foster this has brought a lot of joy: for example, welcoming people during the online registration process, giving people virtual tours of parts of IRC, even supporting people with technical issues.

Stas: I've recently managed an online retreat and was reminded of how sweet it is to help retreatants feel welcome. It is sweet to see the range of experience the participants have and the general sense of gratitude and appreciation to be able to come together and practice together. I felt joy and sadness both seeing how many people wanted to keep connecting as the retreat ended.

The documentation and structure of online retreats is quite different. My main role as a manager is to help people feel welcome and support them. Online, this looks a little different—answering emails, troubleshooting zoom, email, google permissions and other tech aspects. Spending time on the computer and monitoring the tech aspects of the retreat has been more tiring. But I feel like we are all trying to adapt to the changes and making it up as we go, and it's working out well.

Heather: My experience with online retreats has been with co-managing. In addition to a learning curve with technological logistics and format changes, I have enjoyed partnering with fellow RVs and Managing Director Liz Powell in new ways—preparing technologically for the retreat ahead of time and supporting retreatants' ability to connect in the various Zoom meetings.

Final words...

Heather: I love the way retreat practice can be adapted and potentially become more integrated into the “true retreat center” which is not specific to any one place but instead is wherever one practices. We take refuge or shelter in practice, wherever we are. The true retreat center is precisely where each of us practices. This is a deeply affirming invitation and this is a gift of sorts from this time.

It has been a period of transition, change and learning for all of us. Interpersonally, it feels like a more concentrated RV practice as our home does not include the physical ebb and flow of retreatants. COVID introduced some challenges and important questions about how we live together, in community. It arrived as a humbling reminder of interdependence and change.

willow: Hopefully I haven't made it sound too rosy: I'm very grateful to be here during this time, and there's also a significant sense of loss without the in-person retreats, both for my own practice, and for the joy of service and community that they brought.

Heather: I want to acknowledge the privilege I feel to be living, working and practicing at IRC as an RV, especially now. I would feel remiss not to acknowledge the fuller context of these times—real suffering and illness invoked both by COVID and systemic racism. The fact that I have the opportunity to live in a beautiful location, practice, work and have the company of fellow practitioners feels like a tremendous opportunity. As a result, I do not want to take this unique and precious opportunity for granted. As a Buddhist chaplaincy student and practitioner of Zen and Vipassana, my vow is to keep practicing and learning, with this body and mind.

Wednesday Mini-Retreats

Since IRC is not able to offer residential retreats during this time, we have been looking for creative ways to serve our community in other ways. In addition to the online retreats that Gil wrote about in this issue of the newsletter, we are also offering online Mini-Retreats each Wednesday morning. These offer an opportunity to get to know the Insight Retreat Center and have a two-hour taste of retreat practice. Each retreat begins with a tour of part of the retreat center, hosted by one of IRC's Resident Volunteers. Recent tours have featured the garden, the walking deck and trails, facilities improvements, the check-in process, the community room, and the meditation hall, as well as Resident Volunteers sharing a little about their work at IRC.

The tour is followed by a welcome from one of IRC's teachers, who then leads a period of meditation followed by walking practice. After a second period of meditation, a dharma talk is offered. Recent guided meditations and dharma talks have supported retreatants with a variety of inspirations for practice: receptive awareness of moment-to-moment experience, protecting the mind and offering protection to others in our complex world, ethical maturity, caring for oneself and for others, inner sanctuary, and welcoming oneself into meditation with loving awareness.

For participants who wish, there is a final treat available: a switch to a Zoom meeting for some informal conversation after the teachings. It's a great way to build community and enjoy the company of fellow practitioners! Join us for a Wednesday mini-retreat soon. If it's not possible for you to join one live, all the retreats are recorded and available for viewing. Do a search on YouTube.com for Insight Retreat Center, and on the resulting page, scroll down to find a photo of a statue of the Buddha in a circle with a red "subscribe" button next to it.

Yes

*It could happen any time, tornado,
earthquake, Armageddon. It could happen.*

Or sunshine, love, salvation.

*It could you know. That's why we wake
and look out—no guarantees
in this life.*

*But some bonuses, like morning,
like right now, like noon,
like evening.*

*~William Stafford, from *The Way It Is**

A Home Retreat Recipe: Coconut Red Dal Soup

With people participating in online retreats from their homes, there's been a demand for simple to prepare meals that can serve for several meals. Here is a hearty Indian-inspired soup that can be made ahead and varied day to day with the addition of greens, tofu, or other additions. It always gets rave reviews.

Makes about 4 quarts, 16 servings

Time: 30 minutes to prep, 30 minutes to cook

Ingredients:

- 6 Tbsp coconut or olive oil
- 3 medium onions, coarsely chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, chopped
- 8-inch piece of ginger, grated or finely chopped
- ½ cup flaked coconut
- 1 Tbsp turmeric
- 1-½ tsp ground cumin (or 2T whole cumin seed)
- 3 Tbsp medium curry powder
- ¾ tsp red pepper flakes
- 3 cups red lentils (masoor dal)
- 3 cups water
- 3-14.5 oz cans chopped tomatoes
- 1-½ cups chopped cilantro, if desired
- 3-13.5 oz cans coconut milk
- Salt to taste
- Yogurt and lime or lemon wedges to serve

Preparation:

- Sauté onions in coconut or olive oil over low-medium heat until soft; add garlic for 1 to 2 minutes
- Stir in ginger, flaked coconut, spices and dal, stir to coat.
- Add water and canned tomatoes.
- Bring to a boil, lower heat to simmer, and cook until lentils are soft but not mushy.
- Add coconut milk and 1/2 cup chopped cilantro, and salt to taste. Cook five minutes.
- Serve with dollops of yogurt and lime or lemon wedges.

This recipe can be varied endlessly by the addition of whatever you think is compatible: diced potatoes added during the final ten minutes before adding the coconut milk, finely chopped greens such as spinach, chard or kale added partway through the cooking of the dal, protein heavy foods such as tofu or paneer added along with the coconut milk, fresh chilis for more spice. Served with a green salad and some naan bread or a crusty sourdough loaf, it makes a simple, tasty, nutritious meal.

