

Grassroots Dhamma



Winter 2023

Winter Retreat, February 17-24, 2023

Spacious mind, tender heart: a winter Vipassana retreat

In this retreat, we will explore the two wings of Buddhism, emptiness and love. In our own practice, we will develop the spaciousness of the uncontracted mind infused with the warmth of the tender heart. We will examine both aspects of the absolute truth: impermanence which leads to non-clinging and interdependence which leads to a heart connection to the relative reality of our daily lives. Appropriate for both beginners and experienced students, this retreat will take place in the stillness of winter which will support deep inquiry into these liberating truths. It will include instructions in both Vipassana and Lovingkindness practice, daily teachings, and group and individual meetings with teachers.

To support the integrity of the retreat, participants will be expected to commit to the entire retreat.

**Teacher Biographies
and Online
Registration are
available at
WWW.TCVC.INFO**

Dear Friends,

After three years on Zoom, TCVC is planning to hold the winter retreat in person at the St. Anthony Spirituality Center in Marathon, Wisconsin. Some of us have attended other Vipassana retreats at this center, and we think you'll appreciate the old-world charm, spaciousness, and single rooms.

Following the safety protocols established by other major retreat centers, this retreat will be limited to 45 people to allow for social distancing in the meditation hall and other public areas. Read the details below. We're looking forward to seeing our teachers, Chas and Rebecca, and practicing together again.

After more than 30 years teaching the June retreat, Steve and Kamala won't be coming in 2023. Steve is limiting his travel, and Kamala will be on her own retreat. TCVC welcomes back Deborah Ratner Helzer and Vance Pryor who regularly teach with Steve and Kamala.

We appreciate the support of our teachers and the community. Wishing you well,
TCVC Board

COVID Safety Protocols for Retreat Participants:

- Everyone is required to be fully vaccinated and have received the latest approved COVID booster at least 14 days before the start of the retreat. **Bring proof of vaccination to the retreat or you won't be admitted.**
- Bring masks and plan to wear one in all public spaces. Only N-95, KN-95 or KF-94E masks are acceptable. Bring 2 FDA-approved rapid Covid Antigen Tests. If possible, bring additional tests in case further testing becomes necessary. Make sure the tests haven't expired.
- You will take a Rapid Test upon arrival at SASC. Your test must be negative in order to check in and enter the rest of the building. You will take a second Rapid Test about 72 hours into the retreat. Depending on conditions, participants may be able to remove their masks after the second round of testing. SASC staff will test with us and wear masks.

Emptiness and Love by Rebecca Bradshaw

On retreat, I walk at the seashore with the late afternoon sunset. The sound of the ocean waves is the sound of emptiness, including both the crash of the waves and the silence between them. The arising crescendo and the dissipation of the waves exists in vast silent stillness. While we hear the silence under it all, there's so much wild action! The infinite and the startling vibrant beauty. Each wave is unique and yet part of the whole. A common image used to describe emptiness is the ocean and waves. The waves can't manifest without the ocean; the ocean has the nature to manifest as waves.

Early Buddhism emphasizes *sunyata*, or emptiness, from an ascetic orientation towards the truth that nothing has independent existence. We understand emptiness as empty of an independent self. We subtract and subtract and subtract everything that we think is truly independent, including our very selves, and arrive at nothing. *Nada, nada, nada*. In this spaciousness we find the lack of solidity of anything that can be nailed down. What is there to hold on to?

Our understanding of emptiness comes from knowing the lack of intrinsic existence of anything in this world. Because of the all-pervasive truth of change and impermanence, everything is in flux. Not only that, everything is influencing everything else. Nothing arises independently and nothing exists independently. It's all an interconnected web. Because of this, everything is void of intrinsic existence. Because of the rapid and fluid nature of change, nothing in life is dense. Everything is made of parts which is made of parts which is made of parts until eventually we arrive at wide open space.

For some, however, the word emptiness can be problematic. It sounds like a void where nothing is happening, and this association can be frightening. Why would we want to go someplace that's so, well, empty? The word *sunyata* could just as well be translated as fullness or relationship. Everything is in relationship. Because nothing has an independent existence, everything is intimately connected to everything else. Everything is linked in a vast sparkling net of relationships. The movement of a butterfly's wings in China affects what is happening in your life. There's no time in which we are separate from the fabric of reality. This dynamic field of reality includes you and me and the sun and the earth and the flowers and the past and the future and every emotion and every cause and condition, and it's all shifting, vibrant and alive! From this perspective, the ground of being is seen as a great potentiality from which life springs forth and to which it returns. Always springing forth, a great fullness is continually manifesting.

We can consider these two paradigms of *sunyata* from the angle of wisdom and love. Seen from the angle of wisdom, we are nothing. Approached from the perspective of love, we are everything. "Wisdom tells me I am nothing, love tells me I am everything, and between these two my life flows," as summed up in the well-known words of Sri Nisargadatta. We embrace both aspects of existence because between them our life moves, flows, and carries on. The Buddha said that the practitioner who develops both heart and understanding succeeds in untangling the tangle.

Life has the nature not just of emptiness but also of love precisely because nothing is independent. When we drop awareness into the heart and experience emptiness from this space, it becomes obvious that emptiness is not separate from love. They co-arise. The heart not bound in the conceptual or energetic realm of separation is naturally touched by the world of form. The spontaneous response to unobstructed connection is love and compassion. To be touched is to love. We genuinely allow ourselves to be touched by the world, and the heart responds.

These two perspectives support each other. The paradigm of emptiness reminds us not to subscribe to independent existence anywhere in this fullness, to not own anything in this wild manifestation of life. The paradigm of fullness reminds us not to consider emptiness as a cold void where nothing is happening. The wisdom of fullness reminds us that we are not separate from any of this and invokes love and compassion. Life is met through the heart and continues as normal.

Emptiness without love and compassion is void. It's too cool, like outer space, and can result in detachment. Nothing really matters and the heart is whisked away from engagement and care. We want a juicy and alive emptiness, not a void and stark one! Embeddedness brings in love and tenderness that juices up emptiness into fullness. Unconditional love blooms from deep in the heart and shines upon everything equally, recognizing relationship everywhere it turns. It's juicy in making the ordinary world sacred. We don't need to get out of here in order to find sacredness, we're drowning in it.

Too much fullness without the perspective of emptiness and we drown in the suffering and drama of the world. The profound wisdom of emptiness reminds us that everything arises and passes away. When we understand deeply the lack of solidity and independence of things, the heart mind gains spaciousness and freedom. Less identified with passing phenomena, we don't get trapped in grief or aversion or craving. The heart mind can be flexible, wise, and loving in its responses, of true service in this world of full emptiness.

Registration for February 17-24, 2023 with Chas DiCapua & Rebecca Bradshaw

Register online at WWW.TCVC.INFO or mail your registration to Todd Stitt,
4532 46th Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55406

Name _____ Please identify your gender _____

Address _____ City _____ State: _____

Zip code _____ Phone _____ Email _____

This is my first retreat I can help set up or clean up I need a ride I can give a ride

I have special accessibility, dietary or other needs. (Please enclose a description or email the registrar.)

I need an assisted listening device.

I agree to follow all COVID Safety protocols including up-to-date COVID vaccination and latest booster, wearing a mask in public areas, and taking COVID Rapid Tests as directed. **(Required for all participants)**

Scholarship request (\$50 - \$500) \$ _____

\$ _____ Retreat Fee* \$750

\$ _____ Optional tax-deductible donation to TCVC Retreat Fund Scholarship Fund

\$ _____ Total Enclosed (Make check payable to TCVC)

*The teachers who we ask to lead our retreats do not request or receive any compensation from us for their teaching. At the end of the retreat, students are encouraged to practice *dana* (generosity) by offering a donation to the teachers.

Vipassana (insight) meditation is a simple and direct practice: the moment-to-moment investigation of the mind/body process through calm, open and precise awareness. Learning to observe experience from a place of spacious stillness enables one to relate to life with a balance of wisdom and compassion.

Held in noble silence, the retreat includes sitting and walking meditation, instructions, Dharma talks, and group and individual meetings with the teachers.

As the teachings of the Buddha are considered priceless, they have traditionally been offered freely. The teachers do not receive payment from TCVC for teaching. The registration fee covers room and board, travel expenses for the teachers and other expenses.

At the end of the retreat, students are encouraged to offer a donation to the teachers to support their living expenses so they may continue to practice and teach.

To receive a scholarship, enter the amount requested and subtract this amount from the registration fee.

Scholarships are limited to one retreat per person per calendar year. Those who wish to may help others by donating to the TCVC Scholarship Fund or Retreat Fund.

Accommodations at St. Anthony Spirituality Center are ADA-compliant, and everyone will have a single room. Pillows, sheets, a light bedspread, and towels are provided; **participants must bring their own blankets.** You may leave SASC's phone number (715-443-2236) with family for emergency contact only.

Retreat Schedule

| | | |
|-----------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Fri. 2/17 | Registration | 3:00–6:00 PM |
| | Evening meal | 6:00 PM |
| | Retreat opens | 7:30 PM |
| Fri. 2/24 | Retreat ends | After 10:30 AM brunch |

Attendance Yogis are expected to **arrive no later than 5:00 PM** on opening day and to stay for the duration. There are no exceptions.

Meals Vegetarian meals begin at 6:00 PM on opening night and end with brunch on the last day of the retreat.

Registration

Send a check for the full amount to secure your registration. You will receive an acknowledgement of registration by email. Shortly thereafter, you will receive a confirmation of your status for the retreat (registration or wait list). Approximately one month before the retreat, you will receive an email giving you more information about the retreat.

If you have questions or special needs, email the registrar, Todd Stitt, at retreats@tcvc.info or call 651-500-1469.

Cancellations

Notify the registrar if you need to cancel. Cancellation fees are as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Before February 9: | \$75 |
| On or After February 9: | \$250 |

**TWIN CITIES VIPASSANA COLLECTIVE
3518 E. 25TH ST.**

MINNEAPOLIS, MN. 55406

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***In person retreats will be held at St. Anthony
Spirituality Center in Marathon, Wi.***

<https://sarcenter.com>

Contact Us

retreats@tcvc.info

TCVC is a community of people interested in developing and deepening their meditation practice. We provide opportunities to hear and practice the teachings of Vipassana (insight) and metta (lovingkindness) meditation, with an emphasis on residential retreats led by senior teachers in the Theravada Buddhist tradition.

TCVC retreats are appropriate for both beginning and experienced meditators. We are committed to cultivating a retreat environment that is welcoming to people of diverse identities, including those of all races, ethnicities, cultures, sexual orientations, gender identities, religions, abilities and ages. It is our aim that all may feel safe and respected on their TCVC retreat.

TCVC CALENDAR

| Dates | Teachers |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| February 17-24, 2023 | Chas DiCapua & Rebecca Bradshaw |
| June 17-24, 2023 | Debra Ratner Helzer Vance Pryor |
| February 16-23, 2024 | Chas DiCapua & Rebecca Bradshaw |
| June 14-22, 2024 | Kamala Masters |