



# GAIA HOUSE

INSIGHT MEDITATION IN THE BUDDHIST TRADITION



ANNUAL REVIEW 2022  
& 2023 PROGRAMME



Gaia House is a silent meditation retreat centre, set amongst the peaceful South Devon countryside, offering meditation instruction and teachings drawn from a variety of Buddhist traditions.

Founded in 1983, we are a registered charity committed to preserving, protecting and enhancing emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual wellbeing through meditation.

We offer a year-round programme of silent retreats with meditation instruction and teachings, both in person and online.

Our meditation retreats offer a safe container built with sensitivity to the needs of others and a commitment to ethical behaviour rooted in non-harming, compassion, kindness, and generosity.

For those coming in person, Gaia House offers an environment of silence, rural tranquillity and simplicity of lifestyle; for those who cannot come to Gaia House, we offer a supportive online framework for contemplative practice.

We warmly welcome all people of every cultural and religious background, race, ethnicity, socio-economic class, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex, age, education, and physical ability, and we are actively working to investigate and remove barriers to inclusion.

*Gaia House exists to offer the Buddha's teachings of wisdom, compassion and meditation practice, for the wellbeing of all that lives.*

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### Credits

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We're pleased to share with you our 2023 retreat programme, and our story of the last couple of years via contributions from people across our sangha, in our first printed publication in over two years.

Your comments, feedback and ideas for next year's publication are always welcome at [comms@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:comms@gaiahouse.co.uk)

**From our Director, Devin Ashwood**

As we enter winter, the shorter, darker days of Devon's rainy season are lifted by the relief of returning to a more "regular" pattern of full retreats at Gaia House. The worldwide pandemic that threw us into a chain of closure, change and re-building feels like it is largely behind us as this more familiar and comfortable rhythm brings confidence to breathe into 2023, Gaia House's 40th year!

In 1983, with the support of a committed community, Christina Feldman, Christopher Titmuss and friends founded the original Gaia House in the old vicarage in our nearby village of Denbury. The tradition of our retreats being led by teachers who had returned from extensive monastic training has expanded to include teachers who have trained outside the monastery, living with families, and having careers while studying and practising Dharma in and from the same environment as those they teach. Gaia House's unique and inclusive approach

to the Buddha's teaching invites diverse teachers from a range of traditions, allowing people with greatly different temperaments and preferences to find a way into the path of freedom and peace that so many of us have found so valuable and enriching.

Making Dharma teachings and practice more accessible to more varied people and places has been greatly facilitated by our committed Community Dharma Leaders (CDL) who graduated from the first Gaia House training. These generous souls undertook a programme of study that began in 2015 to prepare them to share their love and knowledge of the Dharma in their communities. We are now planning a second CDL training and hope to begin inviting applications early in 2023. All are welcome to apply and we particularly encourage people from backgrounds underrepresented in Insight Meditation leadership in the UK & Europe.

Our work as a charity is to give everyone the opportunity to come on silent retreat, to experience the refuge of peace and insight that we offer. And this mission has been sustained with the kindness of a wide and generous community. This was never more clearly felt than during the pandemic, when without this community, we would likely have had to close for much longer, if not for good.

As the UK now faces a cost-of-living crisis, the depth of which has not been seen in our 40-year history, there's an opportunity for us to grow further together to ensure that we can continue giving this precious opportunity of refuge to all who need it in their lives. We'd love to offer our retreats without asking for a fee, but while we still need our current payment system to cover minimal costs, we rely on your generosity to keep our rates as low as possible, to subsidise and offer financial assistance to ensure all can come. The more your generosity grows, the wider we can open our doors.

You might notice that we no longer ask people to donate to the Financial Assistance and Bursaries Fund. This is because we don't want offering financial assistance to depend on how much is donated to a specific fund. It is central to Gaia House's mission to ensure that no-one is turned away because of an inability to pay; every penny we receive in fees, donations, legacies, or grants supports this mission: to make the jewel of Dharma practice universal and available to all who need it. Thank you for your ongoing support and generosity.







## TEACHER COUNCIL NEWS

**Jaya Rudgard**

Firstly, I'd like to express my gratitude and appreciation for the dedication of the many people who contribute in myriad ways to the running of Gaia House. I joined the Teacher Council at the beginning of the pandemic and so have been able to witness the enormous amount of care and hard work that went into seeing Gaia House through the challenges of the last two and a half years. Many thanks to those who helped through this time and have now moved on to other things, and to those who have joined the Gaia House community more recently.

All of us are delighted that we are now up and running again with group retreats at full capacity, and once again able to welcome personal retreatants. It has been a real joy to be able to practise together with sangha in person again and also to welcome a growing number of people of all ages to Gaia House for the first time.

We are also enjoying settling into the new teacher space in the recently opened Dartmoor Wing, freeing up the former teacher wing for additional retreatant accommodation. We appreciate the generosity of all who have made this possible.

The last two years have seen some changes in the Teacher Council as well as in the wider Gaia House community. We were all deeply saddened by the

loss of our dear friend and colleague Rob Burbea. Gradually over this time, Jenny Wilks, Chris Cullen and Laura Bridgman also retired from the Teacher Council. We are very grateful to all of them for their service. We are currently in the process of welcoming on board Zohar Lavie and Nathan Glyde in their place. Zohar and Nathan are familiar and well-loved teachers at Gaia House and we are looking forward to working with them and to all they will contribute. I'd also like to express appreciation for the continuing Teacher Council members: Kirsten, Yanai and Catherine from close by Gaia House and Martine and Caroline who bring much wisdom and a sense of perspective from further afield.

2020 saw a shift in working patterns as everyone readjusted to sharing teaching

and practice (and holding our own meetings) online, with its challenges and blessings. The lockdowns forced creative thinking and opened up new teaching avenues, making Dharma more accessible to people who for all sorts of reasons are not easily able to attend in person retreats at Gaia House. These online offerings from Gaia House are here to stay and will continue to evolve as we move forward, alongside in-person retreats.

In 2020 Gaia House was also due its turn to host the triennial International Vipassana Teachers Conference, involving teachers from associated retreat centres Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts, Spirit Rock in California, and Beatenberg in Switzerland. Instead, the conference took place online, which meant that more people could attend and that its carbon footprint was radically reduced. This is likely to become the model for future gatherings. Nonetheless it remained a valuable opportunity for Gaia House teachers to connect with colleagues in the wider Insight Meditation community and exchange learning and ideas.





## AN UPDATE FROM THE TRUST

**Tim Blanch, Chair of Trustees**

As you would expect, the last couple of years have been an extraordinary time for Trustees, as well as for everyone else. This autumn we had our first in-person meeting at Gaia House for two years. Since 2020 we had been meeting on Zoom, sometimes several times a month, with staff, teachers and volunteers in order to be able to make quick decisions as circumstances changed. Communication has been generally very good, but we have really missed and not been able to replicate the informal connection with the working community that happens when we meet in person at Gaia house.

Despite all the challenges, the last two years have brought some benefits. Because the house has been shut, we have been able to complete the long-planned building work, opening the Dartmoor Wing and a new shower block (highly recommended) which hugely increases the number of showers, as well as reducing our carbon footprint by using the biomass boiler to heat the water.

The pandemic also gave impetus to the setting up of an impressive online presence. As well as being a lifesaver for many of us during lockdowns, it will now enable us to offer specialist retreats, make retreats accessible to people unable to come to Gaia house in person, and support people who have come on retreat

after they return home. Many thanks to the teachers and staff who managed to get it up and running so quickly and effectively.

When we go on retreat, we get the impression that everything runs incredibly smoothly, but like swans, there is a lot of unseen paddling underneath to keep Gaia House going. Life and work in the residential community or as member of staff can be stressful. We have spent a lot of time on an organisational health project, aimed at reducing work stress and improving communication between all the various contributors to Gaia House. Re-opening the house after lockdowns has been one of the most difficult challenges, because of staff shortages and constantly changing circumstances, but we hope that

as we get back on a more even keel, the changes we have made will make running the house more easeful for all.

The Trustees have been a small group during the last two years, which has made decision making easier, but we have now recruited more members to ensure succession as current members retire. We will be recruiting more over the next year. Our thanks go to Sue and Kate, our co-chairs. Kate retired as chair in the summer and Sue is retiring at the end of the year. They have skilfully and tirelessly navigated us through a challenging time.

We would like to thank the staff, coordinators, teachers and volunteers who have worked so hard and for so long, in very difficult and changing circumstances to enable Gaia House to continue to offer retreats, both in person and online.

Most heart-warming of all has been the tremendous support, both financial and emotional, from the sangha as a whole. Your financial support in the early days of the pandemic enabled the Trustees to make the decision to carry out the building work while Gaia House was shut during lockdown. It is wonderful to know that Gaia House means so much to us all, and that we all want it to survive and prosper.







## WHAT'S IN IT FOR MAJORITY WHITE SANGHAS TO EMBRACE ANTI-RACISM?

Anita Goraya

Since 2020, the Gaia House Trustees, staff, management team and teachers have started to shift the attention of our organisation from being non-racist, to becoming actively anti-racist.

If you look around at our residential retreats, you will likely see that the majority of our Sangha are white people, as indeed is most of rural Devon. However, many urban metropolitan Buddhist centres do reflect their significant multicultural communities by running affinity groups, typically led by people of colour, for people of colour, such as The London Buddhist Centre.

[www.londonbuddhistcentre.com/people-of-colour](http://www.londonbuddhistcentre.com/people-of-colour)

So if different ethnicities are having their spiritual needs met, albeit in different locations and separate Buddhist communities, is there any need for Gaia House to engage in matters of race? And is this engagement a political act when Gaia House's stated mission is essentially to offer teaching and silent space for individual meditators to practice? These are important questions that merit examination and here I offer some of my own tentative, early explorations.

Through the Four Noble Truths, I see racism as a form of suffering, of individual and

collective dukkha. The Second Noble Truth identifies the causes and conditions of racial suffering. At an internal (individual) level, racism is rooted in the conditioned and false sense of self, that separates 'us' from 'them', through the vehicles of ignorance and aversion. At an external (community) level, racism is manifested through structural practices and ethnocentrism that assume white culture as the norm and other cultures as invalid or abnormal.

The Third Noble Truth shows that freedom from the suffering of racism is possible by recognising this delusion of "us/them" separateness and the truth of interdependence. Combining racial awareness with mindfulness meditation is how we can pierce internal racial conditioning and also help develop the emotional resilience to tackle external structural racism.

Some academics and practitioners have argued that the Insight Vipassana community has historically focused almost



[image description: Buddha (detail). Central Thailand, first half of the 7th century. National Museum, Bangkok]

exclusively on mindfulness in the internal realm of the individual meditator, to the detriment of applying mindfulness to the external, collective realm. A more engaged form of Buddhism shifts the focus solely from individual suffering and individual liberation to look outward at structural forms of suffering and collective liberation. Personally, I see this inward/outward Dharma embodied in the statements that 'none of us are liberated until all of us are liberated' and 'a Dharma of justice, equity, inclusion and freedom'.

Of course, this tender work can lead us into areas that feel 'political'. Fear of this partisanship, and of making mistakes, can discourage the best intentioned from straying into this difficult territory of looking at race. But doing nothing about addressing racism that is, of course, a form of doing something i.e., perpetuating it. The work of anti-racism can only be undertaken through engagement and dialogue. That's why in 2020, a few

members of our staff, teacher and Trustee body participated in an international course 'Unpacking the Whiteness of Leadership'. This year, we commissioned training for all our service community, exploring their racial conditioning and enculturation in a safe and supported group. Toby Fairlove, a former residential volunteer, and I also made a brief film highlighting this work.

<https://youtu.be/ejOLm-s44To>

We have contributed to celebrating Black History Month 2022 by holding an online event, called Practicing the Inner Work of Racial Justice, with Rhonda Magee and Jake Dartington. The recording of this event is available on the website shortly, as well as a list of resources for those who are interested in reading further about Diversity and Inclusion and the Dharma. We are also designing our programme of events and inviting individual teachers with diversity and inclusion firmly in mind. This anti-racism work is an ongoing journey. We very much want our Sangha to help shape it, and welcome hearing from you how your own journey could be supported by Gaia House.

Following Black History Month in 2022 we added a new page to our website with some resources you may find useful when exploring how Insight meditation can interact with issues of racial justice and anti-racism. This includes links to a recording of a session with Rhonda V Magee and Jake Dartington exploring how mindfulness practices can help us to respond to racial injustice.

[www.gaiahouse.co.uk/about/inclusion-diversity/resources/](http://www.gaiahouse.co.uk/about/inclusion-diversity/resources/)



## INSIGHT MEDITATION PRACTICE

Practising with similes from the Buddha and elsewhere.

Caroline Jones

The Buddha used many similes in his teaching. What is a simile? One dictionary defines it as 'a figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another dissimilar thing'. For example, writing this article felt to me, at times, like pushing peas around a plate and, at other times, like wading through a swamp. Those images may evoke in you some sense of that felt experience. This form of expression has a rather different effect than if I just stated the bare fact that this process has, at times, been difficult. Similes, skillfully employed, describe human experience in ways that invite reflection and empathy.

The Buddha was a master craftsman of similes. Similes can give us a unified sense of a complex process. For example, in the simile of the raft, the Buddha describes practising the Dhamma as being like building a raft out of the materials at hand, then crossing a wide river using our hands and feet to propel us, and, finally, reaching the safety of the further shore, we lay the raft aside and continue on our way. (Sutta ref. MN 22:13)

He also crafted many similes that help in the discernment of wise action. A Dhamma practitioner once came to the Buddha for help with right effort. The practitioner had been doing so much walking meditation

that his feet were bleeding. The Buddha explained that right effort in practice could be compared to the correct tuning of a lute. If the strings of the lute are too tight, the strings would break. If the strings of the lute are too loose, no music can be made. (AN 6:55) We could usefully bring this simile to help us consider how we are relating to different areas of our life, for example, to meditation practice, to another person or to a job or task.

Similes, along with all the Buddha's teachings, are intended to serve the Buddha's central purpose of helping each of us to understand how suffering (dukkha) arises and how it ceases. The Buddha offered similes specifically designed to help us recognize and respond skillfully to afflictive states of mind. He singled out five kinds of mental disturbance that are very common for human beings called the five hindrances or obscurations. When there is no mindfulness and skill with these energies, we can't see clearly and suffering continues or increases. Aversion is likened to water that's boiling, sense desire to water filled with colored dye, sloth and torpor to water filled with algae, restlessness to the surface of water rippled by the wind, and doubt to a container of cloudy water that is in a place with no light. (sutta ref SN 46:55) We can also inquire, "Is the mind disturbed



or clouded right now? If so, what does it feel like? What does it need?

In meditation we can intentionally and carefully bring to mind an image which helps. For example, in the service of calm and clarity, I sometimes imagine the field of experience as being like a great ocean, with waves on the surface being like thoughts, and currents, creatures being like the movements of impulse and emotions, and also the depths below being like aspects of the mind not yet fully known.

Similes help us to cultivate helpful factors of mind by comparing an idea or word like 'mindfulness' which may be new to us, to what we have already encountered in our life on the material level. This creates a learning pathway, making a connection between what is not yet known and what is already known. The Buddha offers many similes for mindfulness: climbing a high

tower; the watchful presence of a cow herder; the diagnostic probe of a surgeon; the wise gatekeeper of a town. Each simile helps us to understand and recognize the variety of ways mindfulness can function and make it more possible for it to arise in a way appropriate to the situation we are encountering. Christina Feldman described mindfulness as being, "the space through which experience flows." How do you recognize the presence and activity of mindfulness in your direct experience? What does mindfulness feel like to you?

The Buddha offered his son, Rahula, a series of ways to cultivate the mind that draw on the elemental qualities of earth, air, fire, water and space. (MN 62:17) "Develop a mind vast like space through which experience, both pleasant and unpleasant, can appear and disappear without conflict, struggle or harm." To find an image that evokes a sense of space

for us, we can use our direct experience, for example the space of the room we are in. We could experiment by imagining our mind being like the sky. We could also draw on the memory of a place we have visited which, when we bring it to mind, gives rise to a sense of inner spaciousness. We can learn to find and then bring to mind a helpful image or simile, linger with it for a while, and then let it go when it has served its purpose.

Many of the Buddha's similes are designed to help us understand and come into harmony with the ephemeral and insubstantial nature of life. The similes for the five aggregates, five basic processes through which experience is formed, can help develop a calming and liberating way of seeing life. The first aggregate is the body, which is likened to a blob of foam floating down a river. (SN 22:95) This image really came home to me one day when I was on a walk and paused to notice blobs of foam on the surface of a stream, watching them form, float for a while and then dissolve back into the stream. Many different spiritual and religious traditions express this wisdom. I recently came across a passage from the book of James (4:13) in the Christian scriptures: "What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."



## Christine Bond: Appreciation for long- standing support

For those of you who have been coming to Gaia House for a while, Christine Bond may well have been a familiar face. She first came to Gaia House in 1986, and in 1996 took on a residential role for a year. Since then, she continued to offer support to Gaia House in many ways: she volunteered her time in the library, organising the collection of books; she helped many times on opening days; she also edited and proofread newsletters and programmes; and a very significant offering was her support role, which she started in 2001, offering one-to-one meetings with coordinators as they traversed life in a residential Dharma community, as well as meeting with other staff needing pastoral support.

As a trained psychotherapist, an ex-coordinator and a wise woman with experience of living in spiritual communities, Christine offered her skills and experience to support innumerable people for almost 20 years.

There is a generation of coordinators and staff who refer to Christine affectionately as Bondhi/Ma, a play on Bondy and Bodhi (meaning awakened), and Ma being an Indian way of honouring a female elder. This name really points to the qualities she brought to Gaia House.

In 2020 Christine 'retired' from Gaia House and we wish to express our great appreciation for the service she offered so consistently over these many years. Thank you, Christine, and a bow.



## VOLUNTEERING AT GAIA HOUSE

Claire Greenland

When I initially offered my services as a volunteer, I expressly asked not to be in the kitchen, and guess what, I ended up in the kitchen in the role of K2 (supporting the cook in the kitchen).

My fears were around the quantity of food I'd be making and the speed in which I would have to make it. What I had forgotten, was that the holding I always experience at Gaia House is not limited to the retreatants, but extends to all areas of the household including how it is run. I had two inductions, one of which was just going over the logistics and ethos of Gaia, the next shadowing another K2 in action. Even after that, I was told that help would be constant, and it was. I now love my role and could not imagine being without it.

In addition to K2, I have developed a monthly volunteer day that emerged from the needs of our community who are only available on an occasional basis but want to keep a connection with Gaia House. We have had two days so far and the combination of work and meditation has been extremely successful in providing the sense of teamwork and job satisfaction in the context of giving service in a silent setting. The long lunch hour also provides

an opportunity to enjoy the silence and the beautiful grounds.

If you are familiar with Gaia House and would like to get a sense of what it would be like to volunteer at Gaia House through joining us on a monthly basis, I'd really love to hear from you!

### VOLUNTEER DAYS AT GAIA HOUSE

Volunteer days happen monthly and are open to anyone who is familiar with Gaia House and would like to offer support. They normally run from 9:30am till 4pm with lunch provided.

Please contact Claire at  
[gaiahousevolunteers@yahoo.com](mailto:gaiahousevolunteers@yahoo.com)  
if you would like to come along.







## DARTMOOR WING

Devin Ashwood

It was, and still is, a great joy to have completed the work on our new Dartmoor Wing this summer. Thanks to the great generosity of our extended community, the crumbling stone garages opposite the Hermitage have been transformed into a beautiful two-storey, wood-clad building.

The new wing, named 'Dartmoor' because of the views across the moor from the top floor, was officially opened in July with a wonderful community day attended by friends from near and far.

This fabulous new space, which exists entirely thanks to the kind donations we received, means we can now offer:

- 10 additional single rooms for group retreats (we have 20 in total now!)
- 4 additional toilets and 2 additional showers in Denbury Wing (plus we have 7 further showers in the new shower block)
- Separate, quiet accommodation for group retreat teachers
- A new lounge and larger meditation room for our residential service community
- New meeting rooms for staff and teachers, which means the Library and Lounge are now more available for retreatants
- More spacious offices for our staff team, away from the main silent retreat space.

The enforced shutdown period of 2020/21 was the ideal time to get on with the noisy construction work without the concern of disrupting our exquisite silent retreat environment. We are pleased to report that we managed to complete the building project for less than we had budgeted, primarily by managing the build in-house and switching to an architect who was able to offer us friendly rates.



Celebration of "Breaking the rafters" in July 2019, blessing the start of the work of converting the old garages.



Opening the Dartmoor wing celebration in July 2022.

### Additional shower block

Again, seizing the opportunity of the pause in our usual operations, we made a determined effort to build a new shower block next to the Garden Wing. We now have seven new shower cubicles that are heated in an ecologically sustainable way via a heat exchanger that uses our existing biomass boiler, which means near to zero carbon output in heating the showers.

The block was completed in 10 months and was ready for when we were able to welcome back our first retreatants in summer 2021. As we were still very much restricted to social distancing conditions at this time, the seven additional showers allowed us to offer more retreatant places than we would otherwise have been able to, which both increased access to our retreats and helped Gaia House regain some financial security.

The Dartmoor Wing and shower block are by far the biggest developments to our site since the Chapel, Hermitage and Garden Wing were built in the 1950s and 60s by the sisters of the Convent who resided at 'Ogwell House' before it was taken over by Gaia House Trust in 1996. We are so thankful to our Building and Grounds team, especially Richard Rendle who managed the project to the highest standards and lowest costs possible over the course of a challenging couple of years - the results are fantastic.

We would once again like to express our heartfelt gratitude for the generous support of our sangha to enable these long-planned and much-needed developments to happen. The new buildings have significantly improved Gaia House's offering for all retreatants now and into the future, and we couldn't have done it without you.

*Thank you!*



## COOKING

**Frank Taylor**

There are many words frequently used here at Gaia, linguistic staples which carry the unique spirit of Gaia and convey, through the sense in which they are spoken, the essence of Gaia's missions and aims. One of the words that is central to Gaia's lexicon is "container", however I personally like the variation of "vessel". With this word comes an array of interpretations and meanings; there's the connotation of something that holds and supports, such as a vase, which also is a platform, display and invitation for beauty; there's the image of a ship, a wayfarer and home of journeys, carrying across infinite waters those whose taste for adventure, foreign lands and inestimable riches impels them to seek the unknown, cast toward novel beings in new worlds, toward definite strangers, possible friends and certainly a new self; and there's the image of the cauldron or cooking pot which, as a member of the kitchen team, sits most closely to my heart, in all its cliché glory.

In the cauldron we put that which has already in some sense been prepared, our "mise en place", intended to be transformed in one way or another, through care and attention, skill and experience, into something nourishing for our community or family. Sometimes we

follow a recipe, and sometimes we let our intuition guide us, giving faith to the process, trusting that things will come together if they are cherished and fostered in the right way, supported by prior experience and a diligent, discerning sense of taste. And then there's the fire, the element of wonder that in one sense signifies the evolution of humanity through the light of wisdom. The fire sits beneath our vessel, gently warming or ferociously blazing, tempered and wielded to perfection to render our transformations optimal and methods dynamic.

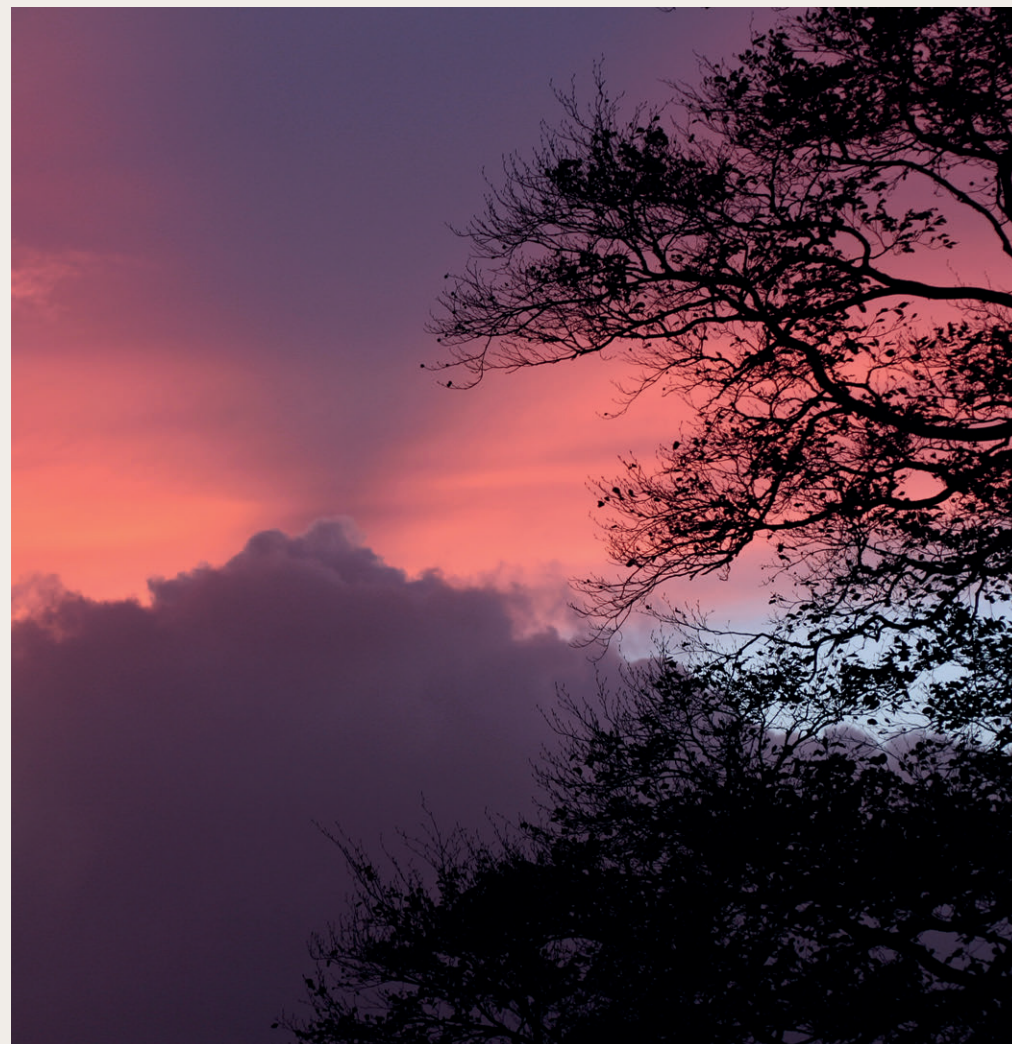
I love this image so much because it captures so totally my experience thus far at Gaia House; I'm here cooking, in more sense than one, and with an eye to the love and joy that a beautifully prepared meal can give to others I share the heat with all those who come to Gaia. Together we make a wonderful dish, a flavour and bouquet I've never come across before in my life, changing everyday, that I will no doubt savour for years to come.

My gratitude for having the opportunity to live in and serve this community is hard to express because it's not derived from any particular "who" or "what" that comes in or out of this magical vessel; rather, it springs from Gaia's centrality in relation to

everything it holds, both functionally as the hub of a world of Dhamma and teaching that sends people home transformed and nourished in ways that will unfold and ripple beyond her walls, but also symbolically as a true support, a dear old friend, a home away from home.

It's in these timeless human qualities that my heart rejoices, emboldened and

revivified by the simple act of sharing in deep, resounding preciousness, not only in spite of but because of the difficulties wrought and surmounted here. As a coordinator I share in cooking the future of Gaia's memory in the hearts of all those blessed to know her, and rest in the history of her grace, which returns with all those retreatants enchanted by her – what an absolute honour!





# GAIA HOUSE IN 2021

In **2021** we had:

- **20** residential retreats from 2 to 28 nights attended by **431** people for a total of **2725** nights
- **1** in-house day retreat attended by **22** people
- **46** online retreats attended by **2744** people



The Financial Assistance and Bursaries Fund (FAB) supported **123** people, including:

- **40** FAB grants
- **23** Young Person places
- **60** Supported places



Your donations contributed **£22,814** in **Gift Aid**



Our website had an average of **1,450** visits per day

# GAIA HOUSE IN 2021

INCOME	2020	2021
Residential retreats	£97,386	£152,151
Online offerings	£68,646	£141,171
Donations	£375,207	£244,028
Government grants and other	£112,295	£68,863
<b>Total operating income</b>	<b>£653,534</b>	<b>£606,213</b>

EXPENDITURE		
Programme delivery	£546,433	£571,310
Governance	£5,831	£10,718
<b>Total operating expenditure</b>	<b>£552,264</b>	<b>£582,028</b>

**What we spent on building projects**  
(2020-2022)

Shower block: £94,945  
Dartmoor Wing: £476,106

**Total= £571,051**



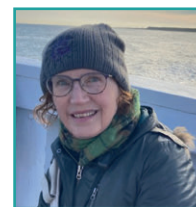
# WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXPERIENCE PRACTICE, WORK AND SERVICE WITHIN A DHARMA COMMUNITY SETTING?

**If the answer is 'yes', we invite you to consider joining our residential staff community.**

This is a special opportunity to live in community in a dedicated part of Gaia House, whilst working together with our teachers and wider staff team to offer a safe, nurturing retreat environment, and developing your meditation practice and understanding of the Buddha's teachings.

The role comes with regular interview opportunities with teachers, Dharma discussion sessions, free participation in our groups retreats during time off, board, lodging, a monthly stipend and a share of any donations given for the residential community. At the end of your stay you will also be offered free retreat time proportional to the length of your stay.

We offer positions in a variety of departments. If you would like to know more about living and working at Gaia House, please have a look at our website or contact our Retreat Manager: [retreatmanager@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:retreatmanager@gaiahouse.co.uk) / telephone 01626 333613.



## ACCESS TO GAIA HOUSE

**Eileen Palmer, October 2022**

When I first came to Gaia House in 2008, I had no idea that six years later I would be arriving at a seven day silent retreat as a wheelchair user. A medical doctor, in 2008 I was part way through my Masters in Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy at Oxford. By 2013, I was researching for a DPhil on mindfulness and compassion in end of life care, when I unexpectedly developed a rare life changing illness that left me needing a wheelchair.

As I slowly began to rebuild my radically changed life, coming to Gaia House was higher than ever on my list of priorities. Uncertain how, or even if it would work, I began planning the practical logistics of coming to Devon with this different body. The physical world changes dramatically with a wheelchair. Slopes, edges, distances and even ramps can become seemingly insurmountable barriers. The width of passageways, turning circles and the distance to the nearest accessible bathroom suddenly become the enablers or the insurmountable barriers to participation.

After many long telephone calls and complex queries with Gaia House staff, I nervously arrived for the retreat with wheelchair, rolling walker and the various other medical bits and pieces I now needed to care for this body. I had no idea at all whether it would work or be a mistake. I think it is fair to say it was a steep learning curve, for myself and for the outstanding team at Gaia House. Despite the challenges, somehow, we found a way through together, that worked for me and the

particularities of my medical needs. I came back on retreat regularly, only pausing with the pandemic. I have no words for how much this meant for me, how deeply being at Gaia House again touched me, how healing this part of my journey has felt.

I have shared a little of my story, but every retreatant who has access needs is unique. The particularities for each person differ. I believe the person who best knows what they can and cannot manage is the person living day in, day out with their physical limitation. An Access Information statement can be a powerful tool for that person, empowering them to make better and wiser choices for themselves because they have the information they need at hand.

Recently, Iain Fraser, the Building and Grounds Manager, and Team Support Officer Suzanne Ruffles, have put together an "Access Information Pack" for Gaia House. You can find it here:

<https://gaiahouse.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/GH-Access-statement-2022.pdf>

What a difference easy access to this sort of information can make. Sadly, it does not mean the house is accessible to all, but this information would have made such a big difference to us all when I look back to that retreat in 2014 and the trepidation we felt.

Please let us know if you think anything important needs changing or adding.



# THE FIRST IN-PERSON RAINBOW DHARMA LGBTQI+ RETREAT AT GAIA HOUSE.

## Reflections from teachers and participants

### Bernat Font Clos (Teacher)

To some it will feel as if a retreat based on an “identity” runs counter to the Buddhist aim of letting go. But the words of appreciation by those who attended did not transpire clinging or reification; quite the opposite. The Rainbow Dharma retreat isn’t about the abstract concept of identity, it’s about non-harming. To feel as confident and welcome as any other group becomes the basis from which letting go can happen. We know that learning requires safety, and sadly not everyone experiences that on retreats. So making steps in that direction is in perfect harmony with the values of the Dharma - well aware that we have much to learn along the way.

Many remarked settling into a collective calm not often experienced, and quite soon into the retreat. They showed up for each other, practised diligently through joys and challenges, and in the evening discussions, they expressed their interests and concerns. There was honesty. There was courage. Teaching it was as rewarding as it was challenging. And, luckily, in the teaching team we leaned on each other, remembering that we must do this together. There is no other way. The great lesson of the retreat was the third refuge: spiritual friendship.

### Katrin Auf der Heyde (Teacher)

Of the many things I could say about the LGBTQIA+ retreat these are the ones that continue to linger:

I had underestimated the impact that being part of an exclusive LGBTQIA+ group would have on my own retreat experience. This added a palpable dimension that is difficult to put into words but that was not present in any other retreat I’ve ever been on and one that I was not aware had been missing until this retreat.

As the retreat unfolded, it was shaped and informed by the many questions, reflections and comments from within the group from one day to the next and this made for an unusually dynamic interplay between silence and “no silence”. This lent a very “rich” dimension to the retreat.

A further source of inspiration for me was the way movement was integrated into the daily schedule: not relegated as is so often the case on other retreats, to the lower rung of mere “exercise” or “stretching”, but rather as a meditative practice in its own right. Right from the outset it became an integral part of the continuity of practice throughout each of the

days and it was beautiful to observe how and where it took hold.

And finally, I was deeply moved by the way in which retreatants appreciated both each other and the group at the end of the retreat - in the fullest, most heart-felt way I have ever experienced.

*“The container of the retreat environment enabled me to deepen my practice in a way that I wouldn’t have been able to do outside. The scheduled meditation and having incredibly tasty meals cooked for me helped so much with this. Being around other queer people helped me to feel at ease and welcome. Having the teachers be queer and to discuss these issues was indescribably amazing. I would just like to reiterate my deep gratitude not only to have participated in the retreat, but have been welcomed unconditionally by everyone at Gaia House and importantly to be here and be queer in its fullness.”*

**Florence Gillard**

*“There is so much I could say. I’ve been coming to Gaia House for many years and it has always been an enriching experience, but this retreat has been special in so many ways. It has been a privilege to be present at a ground breaking event, the teaching has been brilliant. I was surprised how quickly the retreatants (myself included) settled and the feeling of being deep was palpable, especially as quite a number were new to Gaia House and some had never been on a retreat this long before.”*

**Phil**

*“I feel Gaia House restores my soul every time I come. Food, support, soothing; awesome as usual. The teachers were just wonderful in creating a compassionate and peaceful reflective community. I had a chance to clear away incessant mental noise and find peace. That I could do this with fellow members of the LGBTQI+ community was magical beyond expectation. I have always felt welcomed at Gaia House. Being a gay man at an LGBTQI+ retreat I felt more than that, I felt home.”*

**Tom**

*“Having a LGBTQI+ specific space made me feel safe and at ease in a way is sometimes difficult to feel in spiritual spaces. Knowing Gaia House is supportive of our community means a lot! Also, I greatly appreciate the support I got with disability here.”*

**Anonymous**

*“This was a special and very affirming retreat. I am delighted that Gaia House decided to host a retreat for the queer LGBTQI+ community. Please make this a regular. It is so important for our community! It has been a beautiful experience to be surrounded by queer folk and to practice together. The vibe has been so supportive and positive. There are few spaces which bring the dharma and queerness together in the UK – this is very unique and important! It has been such a joy!”*

**Alison Cullingworth**

### River Wolton (Teacher)

As you read these reflections from teachers and participants perhaps concerns arise: 'Doesn't foregrounding identity contradict the teaching of anattā (not-self)? Are we not all one?'. In response to questions such as these, Larry Yang writes: 'The beauty of the Dharma is that everything – everything, even all the particulars of identity – is integral to our spiritual practice. Accordingly, freedom is not just about transcending identity but embracing it until what is beyond the experience of identity reveals itself' \*

At this year's Rainbow Dharma retreat and other LGBTQI+ retreats, I've found a deep and unexpected joy, a home-coming rooted in courage, tenderness and community. I've wondered what the source is for this delight, why does it matter and how does it fit with Buddhist teachings? In consciously creating and entering these spaces we come out to ourselves and each other; we find our ground, particular and shared, within many intersecting and conditioned identities, within a social context that assumes and privileges hetero- and cis-gendered normativity, and within a global context where LGBTQI+ people endure systemic persecution, imprisonment and death sentences. We confront and disrupt the ways human embodiment has been bound by shame, repression or denial. We awaken to the question: 'What and who is being excluded?', aligning with a path of compassion and wisdom, and strengthening our practice in the service of liberation for all.

\*Larry Yang, 'Awakening Together: The Spiritual Practice of Inclusivity and Community'. Wisdom Publications (2017). p xviii



## REFLECTIONS ON A WORK RETREAT

Daniel Enström

During this past summer, I spent two weeks as a work retreatant at Gaia House. It was my first time at the centre, even though I had been wanting to go for quite some time, even before the pandemic started.

Living on the Swedish west coast means getting to Devon is not as straightforward as one might expect when travelling by means other than car or plane. When I was a boy there were still ferries from my native Gothenburg to Newcastle. Now even the lines from Denmark are cancelled.

Travelling by train instead meant numerous changes and delays in central Europe. But this longer transition from everyday life to retreat life turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Re-aligning oneself to be fully focused on an upcoming retreat is often quite slow, so I found it valuable to have an extra few days of semi-silent travel and reflection before reaching Gaia House.

Upon arrival, I was struck by how genuinely welcomed I felt by everyone. I was assigned to work in the kitchen as well as some smaller tasks around the house. It was a bit to take in at first, but I got the hang of it quite quickly. More importantly, I felt that the attitude of the coordinators and staff made me feel comfortable and confident in what I was doing rather than fretting about getting something wrong. I was mostly doing different anatta and samadhi practices and found it nice to have work to balance the formal practice. Even if I sometimes missed being able

to dive deeper as one is able to do on more intensive retreat settings, I also found that being on a work retreat held great benefits.

During intensive retreats, one may build up expectations that put a lot of pressure on the practice. Doing work in between sessions made it easier to be aware of any expectations and not take the practice too seriously. This broader perspective also enabled me to avoid falling into the trap of expecting the next session to turn out as the previous one had. Having less time for formal practice while still being in a retreat setting was also a great motivator to really give oneself to each formal session. Looking back on the last two or three years, I have attended several retreat settings that deviated a bit from standard silent retreats where the main focus is on long periods of sitting. I feel that experiences such as this work retreat have opened up and broadened my view of the practice. Attending to more subtle changes of moods and mind states outside of sits seems much more important to me now. Also, I've increasingly started to incorporate the objects of the outer world and the thoughts and images of the inner into my practice. Practice is more about the whole world rather than the more narrowly defined world I was previously attending to during sits. Suffice to say, I'm grateful to Gaia House for giving me such a special opportunity to practise. And I hope to come again sooner rather than later!



# NEW TEACHERS AT GAIA HOUSE IN RECENT YEARS

In the last three years we have seen a new generation of teachers. We are thrilled to welcome this dedicated group of Dharma practitioners to our teaching community.



**BERNAT FONT-CLOS** met the dharma at a very young age and has practised in Europe, India and Myanmar, gradually putting aside his artistic career. He was mentored by Stephen Batchelor and completed his training as Dharma teacher with Bodhi College in 2022. He is also doing a PhD in Buddhist Studies.



**JUHA PENTTILÄ** has been practising meditation since 2002 and has spent extended periods of time on retreats and in monasteries in Asia and Europe. He is one of the founding members of Nirodha, the Finnish Insight Meditation practice community. Juha completed his Insight Meditation teacher training in 2020 guided by Rob Burbea, Martine Batchelor and Caroline Jones. In addition to exploring meditation, Juha's teaching is influenced by the current climate crisis and engaged perspectives into the Dharma.



**JULIA WALLOND** has been meditating regularly since 2005, mainly with teachers at Gaia House and completed her training as Dharma teacher with Bodhi College in 2022. She teaches with her local community meditation group in Machynlleth, Wales. She enjoys exploring Dharma in everyday life and particularly how it can support us in engaging with the climate and social crises of our times.



**KATRIN AUF DER HEYDE** grew up in South Africa where she practised in both Zen and Theravada traditions. A physiotherapist and yoga teacher by training she is interested in an embodied practice that integrates sitting, walking and movement. Katrin completed her Dharma teacher training under the guidance of Martine Batchelor and teaches in South Africa and in the UK.

**RAMIRO ORTEGA** has practised Buddhist meditation since 2005 and completed his training as Dharma teacher with Bodhi College in 2022. He also teaches mindfulness courses and retreats. Ramiro has a background in Western philosophy and is interested in exploring the parallels between Ancient Greek philosophy and the Dharma. He is also a philosophical counsellor.



**RIVER WOLTON** attended her first Insight Meditation retreat in 2000, and subsequently helped to establish Sheffield Insight Meditation and became a Community Dharma Leader. A former Derbyshire Poet Laureate, she has led writing and arts projects for many years, and is an activist in the LGBTQI+ community.



**SARI MARKKANEN** started to practise Insight meditation in 2005 on long retreats at Gaia House, in Finland and in monasteries in Thailand. Sari became a Community Dharma Leader and has been sharing Dharma for many years in Nirodha, the Finnish Insight Meditation community. She completed her Insight Meditation teacher training in 2020 guided by Rob Burbea, Martine Batchelor and Caroline Jones. Previously, Sari taught secular mindfulness (MBSR) and Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) and she was a pioneer in teaching mindfulness in schools in Finland.



**TONY O'CONNOR** has been practising meditation since the mid 90's in both the Insight Meditation and Korean Seon traditions, trained under the guidance of Martine Batchelor and completed his training as Dharma teacher with Bodhi College in 2022. He is interested in exploring how Dharma teachings can be integrated into our daily lives and inform the issues of our time.



**YAHIEL AVIGUR** is a devoted meditator and Dharma teacher. In 2013, after practising in Theravada and Insight Meditation traditions, he met the Dharma teacher Rob Burbea and became his student. He was encouraged by Rob to teach the complete path of Emptiness as he articulated it, as well as his particular approach to Jhana practice and to train in teaching Soulmaking Dharma. Yahiel is also trained in the Hakomi approach of assisted self study.



# SITTING GROUPS

A network of meditation groups has developed throughout the UK and beyond, often set up by people who have participated on retreats at Gaia House and wish to keep a connection to Gaia House and find mutual support in practice.

If you run a sitting-meditation group and you would like your details to be featured here, please let us know and we can add you to this list and our website. Please also email [comms@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:comms@gaiahouse.co.uk) to inform us of any changes to your group information.

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Please see London Insight website for list of further groups across London [www.londoninsight.org](http://www.londoninsight.org)

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# LISTINGS CONNECTED TO GAIA HOUSE

These groups offer retreats often led by teachers associated with Gaia House as well as regular groups for meditation practice.

## **Bristol**

Insight [www.bristolmeditation.org.uk](http://www.bristolmeditation.org.uk)

## **London**

Insight Meditation [www.londonisight.org](http://www.londonisight.org)

**North East** (Whitley Bay, near Newcastle upon Tyne)  
Insight <https://insightnortheast.org>

## **Oxford**

Insight Meditation  
[www.oxfordinsightmeditation.org](http://www.oxfordinsightmeditation.org)

## **Sheffield**

Insight Meditation  
[www.sheffieldinsightmeditation.org.uk](http://www.sheffieldinsightmeditation.org.uk)

## **BODHI COLLEGE**

<https://bodhi-college.org>

Bodhi College is an educational initiative that aims to develop fresh ways of understanding the Dharma today through rediscovering the core insights of early Buddhist teachings. They offer a year-round programme of courses, workshops, lectures and colloquia which enable students to access the rich and often untapped resources of the early texts.

## **SANGHASEVA**

Sanghaseva Meditation in Action offers retreats and events led by Zohar Lavie and Nathan Glyde that combine the inner activity of meditation with the outward movement of inter-action, participating in humanitarian and ecological projects in ways that support deeper and more meaningful lives.  
[www.sanghaseva.org](http://www.sanghaseva.org)

For an overview of retreats offered around the UK by teachers connected to Gaia House you can also check our Regional Retreat web page:

<https://gaiahouse.co.uk/events-outside-gaia/regional-retreats>

## **Amaravati**

<https://amaravati.org>

Buddhist monastery in Hertfordshire which follows the Thai Forest tradition of Buddhism.

## **Chithurst**

<https://www.cittaviveka.org>

Monastery in West Sussex – a branch monastery of Amaravati.

## **Anukhampa**

<https://anukampaproject.org>

Promotes the teachings and practices of Early Buddhism and has established the first “Forest Monastery” in England where women can train towards full (bhikkhuni) ordination. They offer retreats, talks and discussion groups.

## **Bodhi tree Brighton**

[www.bodhitreebrighton.org.uk](http://www.bodhitreebrighton.org.uk)

## **Freely Given Retreats**

<http://www.freelygivenretreats.org>

Offers weeklong and daylong retreats on donation basis.

## **Satipanya**

<https://www.satipanya.org.uk>

Retreats in Powys, Wales, in the Mahasi tradition of Theravada Buddhism.

## **Sharpham Trust**

<https://www.sharphamtrust.org>

Provides opportunities for mindfulness meditation, yoga, and shorter retreats.

# 2023 PROGRAMME





# ABOUT OUR ONLINE PROGRAMME

Our online programme offers the high-quality teaching that you would expect from Gaia House, with the added bonus of making it possible to integrate silent meditation practice into your everyday life.

We are shaping a vision of a rich, innovative and vibrant online programme that contributes greatly to the sharing of the Dharma. When bringing the teachings directly to your home, we present a variety of formats and a diversity of voices, and we hope this means there will be something accessible and of interest to everyone.

Registration for our online events is on a sliding scale so you are invited to pay at a level appropriate to your circumstances. Our intention is to make the Dharma more widely available to all, and create a welcoming and inclusive worldwide sangha that can support the establishment or continued cultivation of a regular meditation practice. In these times of financial and ecological crises, and as we emerge from the pandemic, easier access to the Dharma has never been more important.

In 2023 we will offer numerous livestreamed retreats, which provide a window into the meditation hall and to the live teachings. We know this is hugely appreciated by our friends who have a love for Gaia House but are unable to come as regularly as they would like, if at all.

## Online Dharma Hall

We host three Online Dharma Hall sessions per week, held by Gaia House teachers, Community Dharma Leaders (CDL) and trainee teachers, at the following times:

- Thursdays at 11.00 am
- Saturdays at 5.00 pm
- Sundays at 9.30 am

Each meeting includes some meditation, Dharma teachings and time for questions, and lasts around 1.5 hours, with the invitation to give a donation to support the teachers and Gaia House.

## Confirmed livestream offerings for 2023 :

- **Metta & insight** with Zohar Lavie & Nathan Glyde, 27 January - 2 February
- **The heart of wisdom & compassion** with Yanai Postelnik & River Wolton, 28 March - 2 April
- **Rainbow dharma with a retreat for the LGBTQI+ community** with River Wolton, Katrin Auf der Heyde & Bernat Font-Clos, 3 - 7 July
- **Expanding the heart** with Zohar Lavie & Nathan Glyde, 2 - 10 August
- **This precious human life: contemplating our mortality** with Yanai Postelnik, 7 - 10 December
- **New year's dana retreat 2023** with Kirsten Kratz, 28 December - 2 January 2024

In addition, we will offer various one-off evening and daylong events, online retreats of various lengths, plus a variety of multi-week courses and multi-month programmes. These will include:

- **COURSE: Transforming the inner critic** with Laura Bridgman & Gavin Milne, 17 February - 27 March
- **RETREAT: Penetrating the veils — exploring the four distortions of perception** with Laura Bridgman and Ayya Santacitta, 5 - 8 May
- **RETREAT: Jhanas, insight & dependent origination** with Leigh Brasington assisted by Matt Harve, 16 - 26 July

# IN SERVICE OF A BOUNDLESS HEART

## New online six-month programme

**Saturday, 18 March – Sunday, 3 September 2023**

Zohar Lavie and Nathan Glyde will be offering a six-month programme for those who offer service, whether voluntary or employed, who would like to bring their practice into their service.

The teachers are defining service as anything you do, with care, for anyone (not just humans). This can include your current occupation, parenting, caring for others...Or an activity like litter picking, conservation volunteering, activism, supporting social projects.

This programme welcomes all levels of meditation experience and it is possible to join from anywhere in the world while offering service in your local community.

The aspiration for this extended programme is to not only touch more aspects of our lives, but also turn them towards beauty and release, unbinding the heart.

We will have ample opportunity to immerse ourselves in wisdom and compassion teachings; regularly gathering in the wholesome goodness of community; and through it all, we will explore interconnection, ethics, and service.

## The six-month programme comprises:

- two weekend online retreats (18-19 March 2023 and 2-3 September 2023)
- an online day retreat (10 June 2023)
- monthly group meetings
- a weekly act of service (as defined above)

## And also encourages participants to engage with:

- an online forum
- peer-group meetings
- one-on-one meetings with the teachers

## Registration:

Sliding scale £119 - £309 (if this amount is too high, please feel welcome to pay what is appropriate for your current circumstances).



# ABOUT OUR RESIDENTIAL RETREATS

Our retreats are predominantly based in the practices of Insight (Vipassana), Loving-kindness (Metta) and Zen meditation, and are taught by leading meditation teachers. All retreats are held in silence.

## Group retreats

Group retreats are teacher-led and our programme includes retreats suitable for beginners as well as experienced meditators.

Retreatants receive guidance and support from the teachers through Dharma teachings, meditation instructions and discussion in small groups and/or individual meetings. 'Dharma' is the term used in the Buddhist tradition, to refer to the teachings of the Buddha. The teacher aims to clarify the nature of meditation practice, explore its application in daily life, and/or explore the nature of human experience in the light of Dharma teachings.

Retreats begin in the early evening of the first day, and we ask that you arrive between 2 and 5pm to enable you to register and settle in before tea at 6pm. Retreats of two or three nights will end at around 4pm and longer retreats finish at 12.30 pm on the last day (or 1.30pm if you wish to stay for lunch). The teachers and staff of Gaia House ask that you only book if you are able to commit to attending the entire retreat. In this way we foster a sense of safety and respect and minimise disruption to everyone.

The group joins together in following the daily schedule, offering a peaceful and safe experience for newcomers. The daily retreat schedule at Gaia House consists of alternating periods of walking and sitting meditation. Sitting meditation may be done on cushions, a meditation stool or bench, or you may wish to

sit on a chair. You can use the posture you find most comfortable. Sitting meditation is divided into manageable sessions throughout the day, so that you get plenty of time to stretch your legs and enjoy the beautiful grounds.

Retreatants participate in a one-hour work period to help look after the house and gardens, and there is a rest period after lunch.

The silence is lifted during registration, and at the end of each retreat there is also a short non-silent period.

## Personal and work retreats

For experienced meditators seeking longer-term solitary retreat, we offer personal and work retreats with regular guidance from our teachers. These retreats are available to those with prior experience of at least two one-week long Insight (Vipassana) or Zen meditation retreat, and an established meditation practice.

We have five work retreat places, which are available for a minimum of two weeks and maximum of three months. Work retreats consist of five hours of physical work and four periods of meditation a day. One day a week is set aside as a retreat day and once a week there is a facilitated weekly group meeting with a teacher, as well as meeting individually with the teacher.

To apply, we invite you to complete a Retreat Application Form (available on our website), which is submitted for teacher approval.

## Meals and accommodation

Gaia House offers a balanced, plant-based diet of world cuisine at lunch and tea, with dairy products available as part of breakfast and for hot drinks. Breakfast and lunch are substantial meals, with a lighter supper of soup and bread.

Wheat/gluten-free options can be requested when you complete your pre-retreat questionnaire.

At lunch we also offer a 'Simple Diet' consisting of a gluten-free wholegrain, steamed vegetables and plain pulses, egg or tofu. This diet is intended to meet nutritional needs whilst being as plain as possible. This can be requested when you when you complete your pre-retreat questionnaire.

If the above does not meet your needs, or if there is a medical need for a different diet, please contact the kitchen manager before booking a retreat.

We offer comfortable but basic single-sex accommodation, mostly in rooms for two or three people, although younger retreatants may be in a dormitory of up to six people. We have a limited number of single rooms and these are allocated according to medical needs, followed by considerations of age.

During the summer months we offer a few camping places at a reduced rate for those attending our group retreats only. We can only accommodate small one/two-person tents and each retreatant must have their own tent. Please be aware that if there is poor weather, we may be unable to accommodate campers in the house.

## HOW TO BOOK

To book a group retreat or apply for a personal or work retreat placement, please visit [www.gaiahouse.co.uk](http://www.gaiahouse.co.uk). If you need further assistance, please contact our reception team on 01626 333613 or [info@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:info@gaiahouse.co.uk).

## Important information

When booking your retreat we ask you to carefully read the **Booking & Cancellation** and **Frequently Asked Question** sections on our website.

### These sections cover:

- Deposits and payments
- Waiting lists
- Changes to your booking
- Cancellations and refunds
- Retreat start and finish times
- Travelling to Gaia House
- Accommodation
- Access for people with disabilities
- Our food policy
- Retreat guidelines

This information is reviewed and updated on a regular basis, so please ensure you read it even if you are a returning visitor to Gaia House.

# 2023 GAIA HOUSE GROUP RETREAT PROGRAMME • WWW.GAIAHOUSEGROUP.COM

DATES	RETREAT TITLE	TEACHERS	KEY	RATES (£)					
				ST	BASIC	SUP	CAMP	FAB	YP
<b>7 - 14 Jan</b>	Rest and Renewal	Jaya Rudgard Nathan Glyde	<b>A</b>	<b>679</b>	525	434		263	158
<b>20 - 23 Jan</b>	Dana Retreat: Returning to the Heart	Yanai Postelnik Julia Wallond	<b>A</b>		60				
<b>27 Jan - 2 Feb</b>	Metta and Insight	Zohar Lavie Nathan Glyde Tony O'Connor	<b>A</b>	<b>582</b>	450	372		225	135
<b>7 - 12 Feb</b>	Seon Retreat	Martine Batchelor Katrin auf der Heyde Tony O'Connor	<b>E</b>	<b>485</b>	375	310		188	113
<b>17 - 22 Feb</b>	Liberation Through Loving Awareness	Jaya Rudgard Zohar Lavie	<b>A</b>	<b>485</b>	375	310		188	113
<b>27 Feb - 3 Mar</b>	Perspectives on Meditation: Cultivating a Path of Freedom	Jenny Wilks Ramiro Ortega	<b>A</b> <b>B</b>	<b>388</b>	300	248		150	90
<b>7 - 11 Mar</b>	Awakening the Heart	Zohar Lavie Jake Dartington	<b>A</b>	<b>388</b>	300	248		150	90
<b>16 - 23 Mar</b>	Meeting Life with Compassion and Courage	Kirsten Kratz Dene Donalds	<b>A</b>	<b>679</b>	525	434		263	158
<b>28 Mar - 2 Apr</b>	The Heart of Wisdom and Compassion	Yanai Postelnik River Wolton	<b>A</b>	<b>485</b>	375	310		188	113
<b>6 - 10 Apr</b>	Your Body, Buddha's Body	Catherine McGee Yahel Avigur	<b>A</b>	<b>388</b>	300	248	225	150	90
<b>14 - 17 Apr</b>	Young Person's Retreat: A Path of Connection and Belonging	Gavin Milne River Wolton Lucy Chan	<b>C</b>	<b>95</b>	72	59	54	36	
<b>21 Apr</b>	Impermanence as a Doorway to Peace: Meditation Day	River Wolton	<b>A</b>		40			20	12
<b>25 - 30 Apr</b>	Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind	Ingen Breen	<b>A</b>	<b>485</b>	375	310	281	188	113

## Rates

**ST** = Standard **BASIC** = Basic **SUP** = Supported **CAMP** = Camping **FAB** = FAB Fund **YP** = Young Persons

Please see overleaf for information about our rates.

For a full description of each retreat and a brief biography of the teachers and assistants, please visit our website.

DATES	RETREAT TITLE	TEACHERS	KEY	RATES (£)					
				ST	BASIC	SUP	CAMP	FAB	YP
<b>5 - 8 May</b>	Mahasi Retreat	Bhante Bodhidhamma	<b>C</b>	<b>315</b>	240	198	180	120	72
<b>12 May</b>	Cultivating Joy: Meditation Day	Ramiro Ortega	<b>A</b>		40			20	12
<b>16 - 21 May</b>	Exploring What Is	Alan Lewis Laura Bridgman	<b>A</b>	<b>485</b>	375	310	281	188	113
<b>27 - 30 May</b>	Family Retreat	Gavin Milne Sari Markkanen	<b>A</b>	<b>315</b>	240	198	180	120	72
<b>3 - 7 Jun</b>	Living with Illness and Loss	Zohar Lavie Nathan Glyde Tony O'Connor	<b>C</b>	<b>349</b>	270	223	203	135	81
<b>14 - 18 Jun</b>	Awakening Through Work and Service	Gavin Milne Ramiro Ortega	<b>A</b>		75		56		
<b>23 - 28 Jun</b>	Insight Meditation and Yoga	Yanai Postelnik Helen Stephenson	<b>A</b>	<b>485</b>	375	310	281	188	113
<b>3 - 7 Jul</b>	Rainbow Dharma: A Retreat for the LGBTQI+ Community	Katrin Auf Der Heyde River Wolton Bernat Font Clos	<b>C</b>	<b>388</b>	300	248	225	150	90
<b>11 - 20 Jul</b>	Unrestricted Awareness	Ajahn Sucitto Laura Bridgman	<b>E</b>	<b>792</b>	612	504	459	306	184
<b>24 - 28 Jul</b>	Mahasi Retreat	Noirin Sheahan Carl Fooks	<b>C</b>	<b>388</b>	300	248	225	150	90
<b>2 - 10 Aug</b>	Expanding the Heart	Zohar Lavie Nathan Glyde	<b>A</b>	<b>776</b>	600	496	450	300	180
<b>15 - 22 Aug</b>	Deep Ground Practice	Leela Sarti	<b>E</b>	<b>679</b>	525	434	394	263	158
<b>26 - 28 Aug</b>	Looking and Seeing: How We Experience the World	Laura Bridgman Tony O'Connor	<b>AB</b>	<b>210</b>	160	132	120	80	48



DATES	RETREAT TITLE	TEACHERS	KEY	RATES (£)					
				ST	BASIC	SUP	CAMP	FAB	YP
<b>2 - 10 Sep</b>	The Eye of the Heart: Tracing a Path to Soulfulness	Catherine McGee Yahel Avigur	<b>CE</b>	<b>776</b>	600	496	450	300	180
<b>14 Sep</b>	Meditation Day: Equanimity	Gavin Milne	<b>A</b>		40			20	12
<b>18 - 23 Sep</b>	A Joyful Liberation	Martin Aylward	<b>A</b>	<b>485</b>	375	310	281	188	113
<b>27 Sep - 2 Oct</b>	Mindfulness, Insight, Liberation: MBCT/MBSR Foundations	Jake Darlington Julia Wallond	<b>C</b>	<b>485</b>	375	310		188	113
<b>9 - 15 Oct</b>	Liberating Ways of Looking	Kirsten Kratz Yahel Avigur	<b>E</b>	<b>582</b>	450	372		225	135
<b>20 - 28 Oct</b>	Embodying the Awakened Heart	Yanai Postelnik Leela Sarti	<b>A</b>	<b>776</b>	600	496		300	180
<b>2 - 30 Nov</b>	November Solitary	Yanai Postelnik Kirsten Kratz Laura Bridgman Yahel Avigur	<b>E</b>	<b>1960</b>	1512	1232		756	454
<b>2 - 16 Nov</b>	November Solitary - First Two Weeks	Yanai Postelnik Kirsten Kratz Laura Bridgman Yahel Avigur	<b>E</b>	<b>1064</b>	812	672		406	244
<b>16 - 30 Nov</b>	November Solitary - Second Two Weeks	Yanai Postelnik Kirsten Kratz Laura Bridgman Yahel Avigur	<b>E</b>	<b>1064</b>	812	672		406	244
<b>03 Dec</b>	Natural Ease in Practice: Meditation Day	Laura Bridgman	<b>A B</b>		40			20	12
<b>7 - 10 Dec</b>	This Precious Human Life: Contemplating our Mortality	Yanai Postelnik River Wolton	<b>A</b>	<b>315</b>	240	198		120	72
<b>15 - 19 Dec</b>	Bringing Body, Speech, and Mind to the Path of Practice	Laura Bridgman Jenny Wilks	<b>A</b>	<b>388</b>	300	248		150	90
<b>28 Dec - 2 Jan</b>	New Year Retreat	Kirsten Kratz Plus teachers TBC	<b>E</b>	<b>tbc</b>	tbc	tbc		tbc	tbc

**Key:** Indicates who the retreat is suitable for, i.e level of experience or where a retreat has specific requirements for attendance.

**A** = Suitable for all

**B** = Particularly suitable for beginners

**C** = Special criteria\*

**E** = For experienced meditators

\*Please see our website or ask our Reception team for details of specified criteria for attendance.

## ABOUT OUR RATES

The teaching and service from the teachers, coordinators and volunteers at Gaia House is offered freely. Our retreat rates cover the cost of food, accommodation and teachers' travel expenses. They also contribute to our overall operations costs, including administration and maintenance of our buildings and grounds.

### The practice of Dana

In the Buddhist tradition, the teachings are offered freely because they are considered priceless. 'Dana' is a Sanskrit/Pali word that connotes the virtue of generosity, and the practice of Dana means offering a donation given from the heart.

During your retreat you will be invited to offer Dana for the teachers who have guided your retreat or practice, for the coordinators who care for our retreatants and retreat space, and for the support of Gaia House. This is an invitation to participate in the spirit of generosity that has sustained the tradition and teachings for around 2,500 years.

### What each rate means

**Standard:** (ST) Includes a donation to the General Fund, which will help sustain Gaia House into the future.

**Basic rate:** Covers the very basic costs of running the retreat.

**Supported rate (SUP):** A subsidised rate to support practice.

**Camping rate (summer months only):** During the summer months we offer a small number of camping places at a reduced rate for those attending our Group retreats only. Please contact our Reception team to check availability and costs.

**Young Person (YP):** For young people aged 18-25 years for whom the financial cost of coming on retreat is too high, we offer a limited number of group retreat places at a 70% reduction off the Basic rate. To check availability and book your place, please phone our Reception team on 01626 333613.

**FAB Fund (FAB):** Further financial assistance for Group retreats is available from our Financial Assistance and Bursaries Fund (FAB Fund), which offers a 50% reduction off the Standard rate. Please contact our Reception team for more information: [info@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:info@gaiahouse.co.uk)/ 01626 333613.

### Lift Share Message Board

We encourage all our retreatants to make use of the lift share message board on our website.

By sharing a lift or a taxi from Newton Abbot train station you can help reduce the carbon footprint of your journey to Gaia House.

To request or offer a lift, please visit:

[www.gaiahouse.co.uk/getting-here/lift-share](http://www.gaiahouse.co.uk/getting-here/lift-share)

Please find the message board password within your retreat booking confirmation email.

## THANK YOU!

With heartfelt gratitude to our wonderful sangha for your support, care and ongoing commitment to Gaia House.

Your kindness is invaluable in sustaining our unique sanctuary and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to experience the refuge of peace and insight that Gaia House offers.



# GAIA HOUSE

INSIGHT MEDITATION IN THE BUDDHIST TRADITION

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