

Kevala Retreat Greetings December 2023



Dear Friends,

All of us at Kevala Retreat wish you deep gladness of heart as we cozy into the natural qualities of stillness and reflection during this season. We welcome the stillness at the heart of all dhammas, no matter their guise and appearance. We invite you to a stillness of being that knows the wisdom of all unfoldings.

We extend a heartfelt thank you to all of you who have arrived for contemplative time, and all who have supported the work of Kevala from afar. It is deeply appreciated.

We extend a special thank you to Cindy and Bret Lortie, whom many will remember from the early days in Oak Park. Bret and Cindy have spent intermittent time at Kevala since July. They have jumped in to fill the gaps during crises that called us away, accomplished long overdue maintenance tasks, and companioned Jo Marie during her usual solo time while Santi is in Thailand. You can follow the Lorties on their year-long nomadic journey here: [Lortie Van Spirit](#)

2024 On-Line Courses and Retreats

On-line offerings continue in 2024. **Anapanasati Conversations** will continue to meet twice monthly on Tuesdays. **Monday Morning Meditations** will continue as well, but with a specific anapanasati focus. In January a new monthly book study will open with **Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree**. The **La Crosse Wednesday** sangha continues to gather both in person and on-line. To enroll in any of these offerings please visit: [On-Line Courses and Retreats](#)

Please save the date for a **January 21-27 on-line retreat**. Find more details and register here: [Mindfulness with Breathing: Contemplating Citta](#).

As always, we whole-heartedly invite your presence to enliven the valley with your in-person practice. Kevala will continue in her current form only with the regular and

sustained presence of those who value such spaces. [More information on retreating can be found here.](#)

Wonderings

As Kevala matures and her human caretakers age, we find ourselves with practical conundrums. Our original hopes had been to caretake Kevala as long as possible, in community with sangha and other caretakers, and to see Kevala continue beyond our founder roles. As elder years become more present to us, we must face the reality that day-to-day operations at Kevala are primarily a two-person labor of love. Retreat accommodations have consistently been filled at less than 30% capacity, and our volunteer force has dramatically decreased over the years as original workers have aged or moved from driving distance to Kevala.

We are aware of personal limitations that prevent more growth in interested retreatants and caretakers: we favor a word of mouth arrival of guests, and have abstained from advertising; neither of the founders have the charismatic people skills that might draw more numbers; we chose an isolated location that requires considerable travel commitment from guests and volunteers. And yet, given all these limitations, there have always been just enough resources and guests to continue, year by year.

Now, twenty years from our beginnings, we are respectfully aware that our physical ability to continue alone is limited. We are also increasingly aware of Kevala's financial dependence on Santi's teaching. Tending to his own financial sustainability in elderhood has taken, until recently, a back seat to supporting Kevala, and there is much financial catch up for both the founders to do. Jo Marie's time and attention are increasingly needed in her "third act" profession in psychotherapy.

So, we sit with large questions about the future of Kevala, the valley we love and tend, and her future incarnation. We welcome conversation. Please feel [free to contact us](#) with your questions, contemplations, longings and intuitions.

A Note from Santi, Teaching in Thailand:

Pāmojja, inspired gladness, is a current focus in my Dhamma study, teaching, and practice. According to Early Buddhist sources, gladness-inspiration arises in a variety of wholesome ways: when conscience is ethically clear, from reflection on Dhammic truths, and by working out mistaken beliefs and views. We find *pāmojja* has a healing influence on anxiety, depression, lack of purpose, grief, and other distressing conditions. Importantly, such wholesome gladness is accessible to all. That is, all of us can cultivate Dhammic gladness in our lives and strengthen the path of awakening. According to the suttas, *pāmojja* fosters joy, tranquility, and well-being. These healthy qualities are a natural foundation for inward composure and unification, which enables "seeing realities as they truly are," which is genuine insight. Although not named in the standard editions of the noble eightfold path, we can see *pāmojja* as a bridge among the second, fifth, and eighth path factors (right aspiration, right livelihood, right samadhi). It fosters liveliness and resilience, which enables more open-heartedness

and compassion in a distressed and distressing world. My sincere hope is that we all may incorporate these qualities in our lives as a path that doesn't require chasing after special experiences and superhuman attainments.

Donations to Kevala Retreat

As always, your financial contributions are gratefully received, and much needed. We rely on you for Kevala's continuance and hope you will consider Kevala for your end of year giving. [Follow this link to contribute.](#)

With Much Metta from the humans and critters at Kevala. May the season be one of warmth and inner joy.