



SPRING / SUMMER 2010

# Mid America Dharma News



## New Sliding Scale Encourages Generosity

Mid America Dharma recently created a new payment system for retreats. The new system now has a sliding scale that allows Sangha members in need to benefit from the generosity of their fellow retreatants. Those Sangha members who have more may choose to give additional funds above the base registration fee. These additional contributions serve two purposes; first they are used for scholarship funds for retreatants in need and second they help Mid America Dharma to defray the cost of the retreat so that we can maintain affordable registration fees.

The sliding scale was launched with Ginny Morgan's New Years Retreat and it was a huge success. The generosity of the Sangha helped replenish the scholarship fund and allowed Mid America Dharma to break even on the costs of the retreat.

For two thousand years our teachings, teachers and Sangha have been sustained through Dana (Generosity). It is inspiring to see that tradition continue to support a diverse and rich Buddhist community in the heartland.

## Want to Find a Sitting Group?

Go to our web site for information about Buddhist organizations and sitting groups in the heartland.

[www.midamericadharmadharma.org](http://www.midamericadharmadharma.org)

## “Pull Back the Curtain”

by Philip Jones

Near the end of the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy stands before the great and rather intimidating Wizard of Oz asking him to fulfill his promise to help her get home to Kansas. While they are arguing about whether the Wizard will do as he promised, Dorothy's little dog Toto runs over to the curtain by the Wizard's throne and pulls it back. In this moment Dorothy sees that The Great Oz is merely an illusion created by a little old man working the controls of a machine. (Continue page 2)

## Upcoming Event

### Joseph Goldstein Public Discussion

**7pm, July 5<sup>th</sup> at Eliot Chapel, Kirkwood MO**

Mid America Dharma will be hosting a **FREE** public discussion with Joseph Goldstein, renowned teacher and cofounder of the Insight Meditation Society. The event will take place at Eliot Chapel, in Kirkwood, Missouri. The evening will start with a guided meditation with a Q&A session to follow. This will be a rare chance to discuss Buddhism with one of our country's preeminent leaders.

# Pull Back the Curtain

by Philip Jones



*Continued from page 1*

*The Wizard of Oz* is a delightful example of the power of thought to create illusions that entertain us. Thought has allowed humans to develop marvelous civilizations with great art, amazing technologies and significant material comforts. But thought also has the ability to create dreams that distance us from our lives and keep us caught on the wheel of hope and disappointment.

One of the illusions of thought is time; the idea that there's a past, a future and a present that occurs between the two. To call this an illusion may seem absurd. We can clearly recall the tastes, smells and colors of what we had for dinner last night. We may vividly recall playing tag with childhood friends on a hot and sticky summer evening as the fireflies were blinking on and off and an owl hooted in the woods nearby. And when we recall a time when we were hurt by another's actions, the pain can still be quite intense and we can still react with strong emotions.

But the past—and the future—is only thought, emotion and sensation arising and passing now. When we fail to see the true nature of this moment, we are caught in the

thought, in the story, in the dream. Then we're unable to truly open our hearts to this moment and to let it be. Instead we struggle and suffer and may act in ways that are painful for others as well.

Suppose we begin to think about a relationship where we felt deeply hurt. We remember things that the other person said or did that cut us like a knife. We remember the unhappiness we felt with them. And we imagine telling others about how this person behaved behind closed doors. As this happens we get caught up in anger towards them once again even though the relationship ended years ago. Whose peace of mind and heart is actually disturbed by this? Not the other person's. Only our own, because we haven't clearly seen that it's just thoughts about the past arising now. We still think it is real and by believing in the illusion we keep it alive in our own hearts.

The Buddha said ""Let a person not revive the past nor on the future build their hopes, for the past has been left behind and the future has not been reached. In the present let them dwell having insight into each presently arisen state."

Practice offers an alternative to being seduced by the dream maker of our thoughts. With mindfulness we recognize past and future as just thoughts that are occurring right now. As we do so, we let go more and more of the mirages created by thought. We encounter our own lives. We pay attention to the sensory level of experience where our lives are actually happening moment by moment. We experience the pains but also the joys of life. We discover that awareness is large enough to contain it all. When we meet life just as it is, we stop pouring gasoline on the fire of our emotions. The fire settles down and burns itself out. What is left is a coolness, a peacefulness and the joy of this very life.

Pull back the curtain. See the dream maker for what it is. Find the coolness of clear seeing. Come and see.

*Phil Jones will be leading a non-residential retreat, *Thinking and Non-Thinking: Exploring the Role of Thought in Suffering and Freedom*, in St. Louis from Sept. 24-26.*

## Mid America Dharma Now on Facebook

That's right folks, Mid America Dharma has a Facebook page. In an effort to reach more of our Sangha, Mid America Dharma will now be posting retreats and events on Facebook. In addition to event posting the page also has a discussion board for issues such as ride sharing and community events. If you have a Facebook account simply search Mid America Dharma in your search bar and become a fan of our page. We welcome your comments and questions, feel free to drop us a message now and then.

# Mid America Dharma Retreats

## Joseph Goldstein with Annie Nugent and Will Kabat-Zinn



The practice of Insight Meditation helps us to see with greater clarity the nature of reality and in that moment the mind is not clinging. As we go deeper in practice, non-clinging has increasingly far-reaching implications. It touches the depths of what binds and limits us, and brings us to the edge of what we are willing to let go of in our lives. This retreat aims to strengthen our mindfulness to take us past our conditioned bonds of ignorance and lead us to a greater expression of compassion and wisdom in our lives.

**July 6<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

The Mercy Center in St. Louis, Missouri.

Cost: \$580 - \$870 *this retreat is currently full with a waiting list*



## Philip Jones

Philip Jones has practiced meditation since 1987 and has been teaching insight meditation since 1996. His primary teacher has been Matthew Flickstein, although he has also studied with Bhante Gunaratana and teachers from the Insight Meditation Society and Spirit Rock Meditation Center. In addition to being trained to teach by Matthew, Philip completed Spirit Rock Meditation Center's first Community Dharma Leader Program. Phil serves on the board of directors of Mid America Dharma, the regional retreat organization.

**September 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010 (Non-Residential, weekend retreat)**

St. Louis, Missouri.

Cost: \$60-\$90

*registration opens June 24<sup>th</sup> and closes September 10<sup>th</sup>*



## Ginny Morgan

Ginny Morgan lives in Columbia, Missouri. She is a guiding teacher for Show Me Dharma Center (Columbia, MO) and a former President of the Board of Mid America Dharma, the regional retreat organization. After working as a play therapist for acutely and chronically ill children for many years, she has shifted her focus to Dharma teaching, and to working exclusively for Dharma activities. She studied with Ram Dass, Munindra-ji, Matthew Flickstein and teachers from Insight Meditation Society and Spirit Rock Meditation Center

*Ginny will be leading two retreats this year.*

**September 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010 (Non-Residential, weekend retreat)**

Kansas City, Missouri.

Cost: \$60-\$90

*registration opens June 24<sup>th</sup> and closes September 10<sup>th</sup>*

**December 30<sup>th</sup> 2010– January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011 (Residential New Years Retreat)**

St. Louis, Missouri.

Cost: \$270-\$400

*registration opens September 30<sup>th</sup> and closes December 16<sup>th</sup>*

# Mid America Dharma Retreat Info and Registration

**INSIGHT MEDITATION:** offers an easily accessible way to free the mind from the distortions of self-centeredness, negativity and confusion. Through concentrated awareness, we see that our experience is a constantly changing process, in which all aspects of life are accepted with increasing balance and equanimity. This insight leads to the possibility of living each moment fully, with compassion and genuine freedom. Insight Meditation requires no belief commitments and is compatible with religious affiliations. Unless specified in, no previous meditation experience is required.

**RETREAT FORMAT:** Periods of sitting meditation and/or dharma teachings alternate with walking meditation. Retreats are held in silence, with talking only during specified teaching periods. Beginners should be present from the start of the retreat to receive initial instructions.

Please bring a meditation cushion or bench and a soft floor pad for meditation. Standard chairs are available and may also be used. Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothes. Please do not wear or bring strongly scented lotions, perfumes or incense.

**Residential retreats** begin with check-in at 4 pm on the first day and run through lunch on the last day. Participants are guided through group or private interviews and daily general lectures. Meals are plain vegetarian. A tea table is provided.

**REGISTRATION:** Information about retreat site, starting times, etc., is available online or will be sent after you register.

**FEES:** Residential: a minimum deposit of \$75 must accompany registration; full payment is due at the start of the retreat. **Non-residential retreats:** please pay the full fee when you register.

**Registration Opening Dates and Deadlines:** ... are listed on the preceding page. Registrations are not accepted prior to the beginning date for each retreat. Registrations received after the deadline are subject to a \$25 late fee.

**Retreat Costs:** ... are listed on the Registration Form, below.

**Sliding Scale:** Each retreat cost is listed as a range. The lowest fee listed is the base cost of providing the retreat for each retreatant. Any amount paid above that will be a tax-deductible contribution used to defray retreat expenses, scholarships and other activities.

**Refunds:** We will refund fees if requested before the deadline.

**Scholarships:** We do not want inability to pay to prevent you from attending, and have established a scholarship fund to provide assistance where needed. Deferred payment is also available. Contact the Registrar for a copy of the scholarship and deferred payment criteria. Written applications for scholarship must be received by the Registrar no later than three weeks prior to the retreat.

**DANA (or generosity):** Our retreats are led by teachers who freely give the teachings without any payment. All retreat fees go for retreat expenses, such as facility rental and meals. It is central to this tradition that students support teachers through their donations. There is no expected amount, but please give to the extent you are able. Dana is totally voluntary.

## Retreat Registration Form

To register please send this form with a check payable to **Mid America Dharma** to the Registrar of the retreat you plan to attend (see p. 4). If registering for multiple retreats, please send a separate copy of this form with payment to the registrar listed for each retreat. A \$75 deposit is required for all residential retreats. **We now also offer online registration**, at: [www.midamericadharm.org/retreats](http://www.midamericadharm.org/retreats). Please register as early as you can, as this greatly helps our planning. Thank you.

\_\_\_\_\_ July 6<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> 2010      **Fee Amount** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Goldstein, Nugent and Kabat-Zinn**, Residential,  
 St. Louis, MO      Cost: \$580-\$870

\_\_\_\_\_ September 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> 2010      **Fee Amount** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Ginny Morgan**, Non-Residential, Kansas City, MO  
 Cost: \$60-\$90

\_\_\_\_\_ September 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> 2010      **Fee Amount** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Philip Jones**, Non-Residential, St. Louis, MO  
 Cost \$60-\$90

\_\_\_\_\_ Dec. 30<sup>th</sup> 2010 – Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011      **Fee Amount** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Ginny Morgan**, Residential, St. Louis, MO  
 Cost: \$270-\$400

If you have special needs, please contact the listed registrar.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

For Residential Retreatants only:

Gender:                  F                  M

Will you arrive after 7pm on the first day?      Y      N

Is this your first insight meditation retreat?      Y      N

Do you snore?    Y      N

# Behind the Scenes

## *What Goes Into Hosting a Retreat?*

by Jon Yaffe

Work is done, then forgotten  
Therefore it lasts forever

- Tao Te Ching

When the retreat you attend is well planned and managed, things unfold on time, without apparent effort. That's as it should be. You should be free to immerse, and deepen your practice.

But retreats do take effort and planning. Here's a peek at what goes into each retreat we host.

Mid America Dharma hosts six retreats a year. Our Retreat Coordinator begins planning two years ahead, consulting regularly with the Board of Directors as plans come together. Why so much lead time? First, for each retreat we need to decide:

- Which dharma teacher to invite as leader?
- Should it be residential or non-residential; how long should it be?
- When should it be held, and in what location?
- What facility should we use, given the expected attendance?

An answer to one of these questions often impacts others. We may invite a dharma teacher to lead a Fall retreat, for example, but learn she's only available in the Spring. Do we revise our schedule, or invite a different teacher? It can take months to work out the year's schedule.

With the schedule set we get to work on the details. Setting registration fees is very challenging. For each retreat, our Treasurer combines direct retreatant costs (food and lodging) with a pro-rated share of all indirect costs (meditation hall/meeting room charges, teacher travel and living costs, insurance, advertising, etc.) to work up suggested fees to present the Board for approval. The pro-rating is based on estimated attendance. If fewer people attend, we don't cover our costs.

Then, for each retreat, we:

- Recruit a Manager and Registrar.
- Arrange publicity: create flyers, send email announcements, purchase ads in *Inquiring Mind*, and publish the schedule via our website and newsletter. We often invite teachers to write articles for the newsletter, which encourages attendance.
- Create a retreat-specific website, which lets people see the retreat flyer, register online, and find helpful information about the teacher, facility and schedule.

Even done online, registration is a complex process. There are questions about the retreat and scholarships to answer, registration information to computerize, payment checks to

record and deposit. Cancellations must be acknowledged, and then people on our waiting to call with the good news that there's now an opening for them. Final roster information is passed to the Retreat Manager and Registrar.

Scholarship requests go to the Scholarship Committee, who decides what amounts to grant based on each applicant's request and circumstances. Then applicants, Registration Coordinator, Treasurer and retreat staff all need to be informed.

The Manager assigns rooms, responds to special requests, passes on suggested menus and dietary requests to facility cooks, and prepares information packets for each retreatant. There are travel arrangements to help with, and more.

Teas and other supplies are replenished and then, along with sitting gear and other equipment, are driven to the retreat facility, sometimes cross-state.

The Manager and Registrar arrive at the facility early. They set out supplies, arrange the meditation hall, then welcome and orient retreatants as they arrive. The registrar collects any outstanding fees, and records these accurately to avoid later confusion. The manager helps the dharma teacher settle-in, makes opening announcements, prepares and delivers the Dana Talk, handles emergencies great and small, assures the tea room is stocked, solicits evaluations, and stays on call throughout the retreat.

When the retreat ends, the manager sees to the departing dharma teacher and retreatants, supervises clean-up and packing equipment and supplies, reviews retreatant evaluations and distributes a report to the board, gets final receipts to the treasurer - and then remembers to breathe.

This happens, "effortlessly", six times a year. The nine persons on our Board, plus a handful of additional persons serving as retreat managers and registrars, make all this happen. All are unpaid volunteers, who love the Dharma and take genuine pleasure in knowing we help share the precious gift of these teachings with all of you.





## Mid America Dharma Upcoming Retreats

July 6<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> 2010 -----**Goldstein, Nugent and Kabat-Zinn**, Residential, St. Louis, MO

September 24<sup>th</sup>- 26<sup>th</sup> 2010 -----**Ginny Morgan**, Non-Residential, Kansas City, MO

September 24<sup>th</sup>- 26<sup>th</sup> 2010 -----**Philip Jones**, Non-Residential, St. Louis, MO

December 30<sup>th</sup> 2010 – January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011 -----**Ginny Morgan**, Residential, St. Louis, MO

*For the latest information on retreats, events and a full listing of Midwestern Buddhist groups please visit our website:*

**[registrar@midamericadharm.org](mailto:registrar@midamericadharm.org)**

**Please Note:** If you receive the printed newsletter and your code (found above your name) has a "99" in it, you are due to be dropped from the mailing list next spring.. To continue to receive the newsletter, please contact Marnie Hammer, 455 E 80th Ter, KCMO 64131, or email [marniehammer@att.net](mailto:marniehammer@att.net) and put MAD Newsletter as the subject. Or **subscribe to the online newsletter by contacting Marnie at the same email address.** We are always glad to accept donations to help defray the cost of sending the newsletter by mail.

Mid America Dharma

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Kansas City, MO 64131-2120

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