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Land of Joy

Buddhist Retreat Community

Spiritual Newsletter - December 2025



"Some of you might think, 'Oh, I want to have nothing to do with Jesus, nothing to do with the Bible.' This is a very angry, emotional attitude to have towards Christianity. If you really understood, you would recognise that what Jesus taught was, 'Love!' It is as simple and profound as that. If you had true love within you, I am sure you would feel much more peaceful than you do now."

- Lama Yeshe, 'Silent Mind, Holy Mind' -

As we arrive at the final newsletter of 2025, we pause to reflect on a year of profound practice, deep connection, and joyful service together.

December invites us into a season of both completion and renewal - a time to honour the teachings we've received, the practice we've cultivated, and the sangha bonds we've strengthened throughout the year. Today is the winter solstice and the year is drawing to a close, we're reminded that endings are also beginnings, and that each moment of practice plants seeds for future awakening.

Thank you for walking this path with us. Your presence, practice, and dedication make Land of Joy the refuge it is. May the merit of this year's practice benefit all beings, and may the coming year bring us all closer to wisdom and compassion.

Celebrating Lama Tsongkhapa Day



On December 14th, we marked the anniversary of Lama Tsongkhapa's parinirvana, one of the most auspicious days in the Tibetan Buddhist calendar.

Light Offerings

Following Lama Zopa Rinpoche's encouragement, practitioners around the world offered countless lights—candles, Christmas lights, lamps—creating "nets of light offerings" inside and outside homes and centers.

By offering even a single light, the cause was created for:

- Enlightenment and liberation
- Future life happiness
- Success in this life

Practices Offered:

- Light offerings to Lama Tsongkhapa & the Three Jewels

- Lama Chöpa with Tsog offering
- Recitation of Chanting the Names of Noble Manjushri (advised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama)
- Aspirations and dedications
- Swift Return Prayers for Lama Zopa Rinpoche

This powerful day allowed us to accumulate merit and make prayers for ourselves, our teachers, and all beings.

May the light of wisdom dispel all darkness 🙏



The Gift of Time: Why Longer Retreats Matter

When we engage in retreat for a longer time, something shifts. The mind begins to settle in ways that aren't possible when we're constantly moving between meditation cushion and daily obligations. Continuous, uninterrupted practice allows us to build a strong foundation in mindfulness, concentration, and compassion - moving these practices from theoretical understanding into lived, experiential wisdom.

Perhaps most significantly, longer retreats allow us to relate directly to our own minds. By removing external stimuli, we see our mental patterns and habits

with clarity. This can be challenging, but it's also deeply liberating. With the support of experienced teachers and a dedicated community, we learn to work skillfully with difficult states and discover profound stillness and peace.

Retreats are not a modern innovation - they're a central, ancient part of the Buddhist path, echoing practices recommended by the Buddha himself. The structured routine of alternating meditation, dharma talks, mindful meals, and quiet work creates a container for practice to deepen naturally, day by day.

While intensive, these retreats are also deeply supportive. The focused environment can be incredibly transformative, fostering a deeper connection to our true nature and genuine freedom from suffering. What we discover on the cushion during retreat becomes the foundation for how we live when we return home, with greater resilience, clarity, and compassion for ourselves and all beings.

We invite you to consider joining one of our longer retreats in 2026. The gift you give yourself through extended practice ripples out to benefit all those you encounter.

- Mahamudra Retreat, 7th - 14th February
- White Tara Long Life Retreat, 23rd February - 4th March
- Vajrayogini Enabling Action Retreat, 10th April - 7th May
- The Bridge from Samatha to Vipassana, 26th - 31st May
- The Two Wings of Wisdom & Bodhichitta: An Exploration of the Lam Rim, 3rd - 11th July
- Samatha Retreat, 25th September - 3rd October
- Yamantaka Generation & Completion Stage Practices, 9th -16th October

Full details can be found [here](#).

Recent Retreats



Yamantaka Solitary Hero Nearing Retreat

This November and December, we hosted a one-month Yamantaka Solitary Hero Nearing Retreat led by Ven Wangchuk, his fourth retreat at Land of Joy. Ven Wangchuk's clear teachings and deep experience guided practitioners through this powerful practice.

Yamantaka, the wrathful manifestation of Mañjuśrī and Lama Tsongkhapa's personal deity, is considered one of the most important yidam practices in the Gelugpa tradition. As Lama Zopa Rinpoche taught: "Yamantaka retreat has two benefits: 1) to pacify obstacles, and 2) to develop wisdom."

Practitioners engaged in four daily sadhana sessions with instruction gradually building throughout the month. The retreat culminated in a beautiful fire puja performed outdoors, with those who completed the mantra count making

offerings through sacred flames.

Behind the scenes, our dedicated volunteers provided meals, maintained the grounds, and quietly held space, their compassionate service making this intensive practice possible.

Upcoming Retreats



Making Space for Joy: Learning to Let Go

With Alison Murdoch & Anna Colao

Friday 30th January – Sunday 1st February 2026

As we step into a new year, this weekend retreat offers an opportunity to slow down, release what no longer serves us, and reconnect with our inner capacity for joy and wholeness.

Drawing on the deep wisdom of the Buddha, we'll explore how letting go-of craving, aversion, and confusion-creates the space for joy to naturally arise. The basic premise of this retreat is that every living being has a natural capacity for compassion, wisdom, clarity, and spaciousness-what the Buddha called our Buddha nature. However, it's easy to lose sight of this in the rough and tumble of everyday life and to hold on to unhelpful patterns of thought that block our capacity for happiness.

This retreat offers a rare opportunity to step out of the noise of daily life and into a safe, nurturing space where we can reconnect with our body, align heart

and mind, and begin to understand the habitual patterns that obscure our natural clarity. Together we'll explore what it means to let go with warmth, playfulness, and self-compassion so that we can be a more beneficial presence in the world.

This weekend blends meditation, reflection, and somatic practice rooted in Buddhist teachings. We'll identify patterns of thought and behavior that don't bring happiness to ourselves and those around us, and cultivate those that do.

Each day will include:

- Guided meditation and mindful movement
- Group discussion and personal reflection
- Times of silence and sharing
- Opportunities to be in nature or rest with a book from our extensive library
- Saturday evening: Optional creative activity

Our aim is to create a warm, loving environment where you can settle, soften, and rediscover the freedom of simply being, helping each of us start the year in the best possible way.

[**Learn More and Register Here**](#)



Mahamudra: Nature of Mind Retreat

With Roy Sutherwood**Saturday 7th – Saturday 14th February 2026**

Mahamudra, "the great seal," is one of the most profound and direct paths within Tibetan Buddhism, a way of recognising the true nature of mind, beyond concepts, leading to deep inner freedom.

Land of Joy warmly welcomes back our much-loved annual Mahamudra retreat. In the dark winter days, join us to turn inward under the guidance of experienced and kind-hearted teacher Roy Sutherwood. The retreat is open to both newer and more experienced meditators, and is most suitable for those with some stability in meditation.

The Practice

In the Tibetan tradition presented here, we begin by resting in the clarity and awareness of mind, like a mirror becoming self-aware, and gradually move towards recognising the mirror's own emptiness. Each day includes short guided meditation sessions supported by mindful movement to help sustain focus without over-exhaustion.

What to Expect

- Guided meditations introducing the stages of Mahamudra practice
- Clear explanations of the view and approach to resting in awareness
- Gentle mindful exercises and group discussions
- Space for personal reflection and silence within supportive conditions

This step-by-step approach offers a profound method to realise liberation and enlightenment.

[Learn More and Register Here](#)



White Tara Long Life Retreat

For the Long Life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

With Phara Khenchen Rinpoche (Tulku-la) & Di Carroll

Monday 23rd February – Wednesday 4th March 2026

We are delighted to host a 10-day White Tara Long Life Retreat during the Days of Miracles—the auspicious period after Losar when virtuous actions are powerfully multiplied. Join Buddhist communities worldwide in offering prayers for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's long life as we mark his 90th year.

This will be the first retreat Phara Khenchen Rinpoche (Tulku-la) will lead at Land of Joy, and we are extremely grateful to him for offering his precious time and knowledge, supported by Di Carroll.

This retreat will be structured but gentle, creating the conditions to go deeper day by day. You will experience:

- Daily White Tara sadhana with mantra recitation
- Discussions with the retreat leaders
- Group prayers and dedications for the long life of His Holiness
- Spacious time for silence, reflection, and integration
- Supportive community conditions that help stabilise practice
- An opportunity to observe the eight Mahayana Precepts on one of the days

Requirements: Full kriya tantra empowerment or White Tara 'Je Nang' permission to practice. [See retreat information page]

[Learn More and Register Here](#)



Vajrayogini Enabling Action 100,000 Mantra Retreat

With Paula Chichester (Supported by Yeshe Palmo)

Sunday 12th April – Thursday 7th May 2026

Land of Joy warmly welcomes the return of this important retreat for those wishing to deepen their connection with Vajrayogini. Over 21 days, practitioners will complete the required 100,000 mantra recitations in supportive retreat conditions, conclude with the fire puja, and have the opportunity to engage in the extensive self-initiation.

Paula Chichester will lead the Vajrayogini meditations and discussions with warmth and insight. We're delighted to welcome Yeshe Palmo, who will offer daily Awareness Yoga sessions—a unique approach developed through decades of tantric practice and somatic work with the channels, winds, and drops.

Requirements: Vajrayogini (Naro Kacho) empowerment from Sakya or Gelug tradition; highest yoga tantra prerequisite initiation; familiarity with at least one Vajrayogini commentary; strong grounding in bodhicitta.

[Learn More and Register Here](#)

Retreat Hut Availability



Land of Joy is a wonderful environment for retreat. Our semi-rural location offers quiet, spacious and beautiful grounds which can be explored during your breaks whilst the retreat facilities provide a private space that will support your practice.

Our three private retreat huts are in a part of the woodland close to the main house overlooking the valley. We ask that you plan to stay for a minimum of one week and a maximum of three months.

We still have availability in 2026:

- **Retreat Hut 1:** 4th - 27th January, 2026
- **Retreat Hut 2:** 23rd February - 14th March, 2026
- **Retreat Hut 3:** 22nd - 28th May, 2026

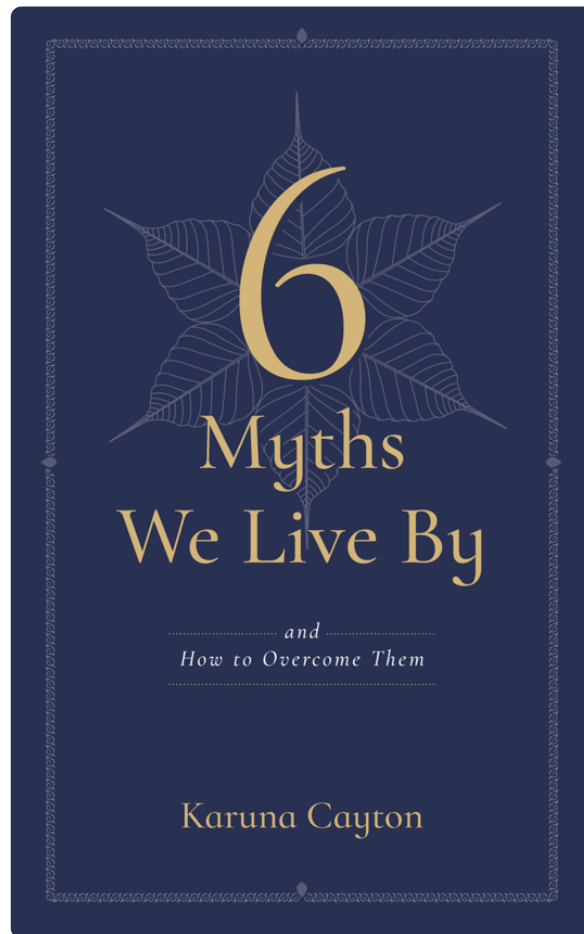
NOTE: Our retreat huts bookings are open to 2027, be sure to book in advance!

“I enjoyed my time at Land of Joy very much! The hut was cosy, the food delicious, and I loved how the nature contributed to the joyful atmosphere!”

-Natalia, a recent retreating in a private retreat hut-

[Learn More, Check Availability and Book Your Stay](#)

From Misperception to Freedom: This Month's Book Recommendation



6 Myths We Live By

And How to Overcome Them by Karuna Cayton

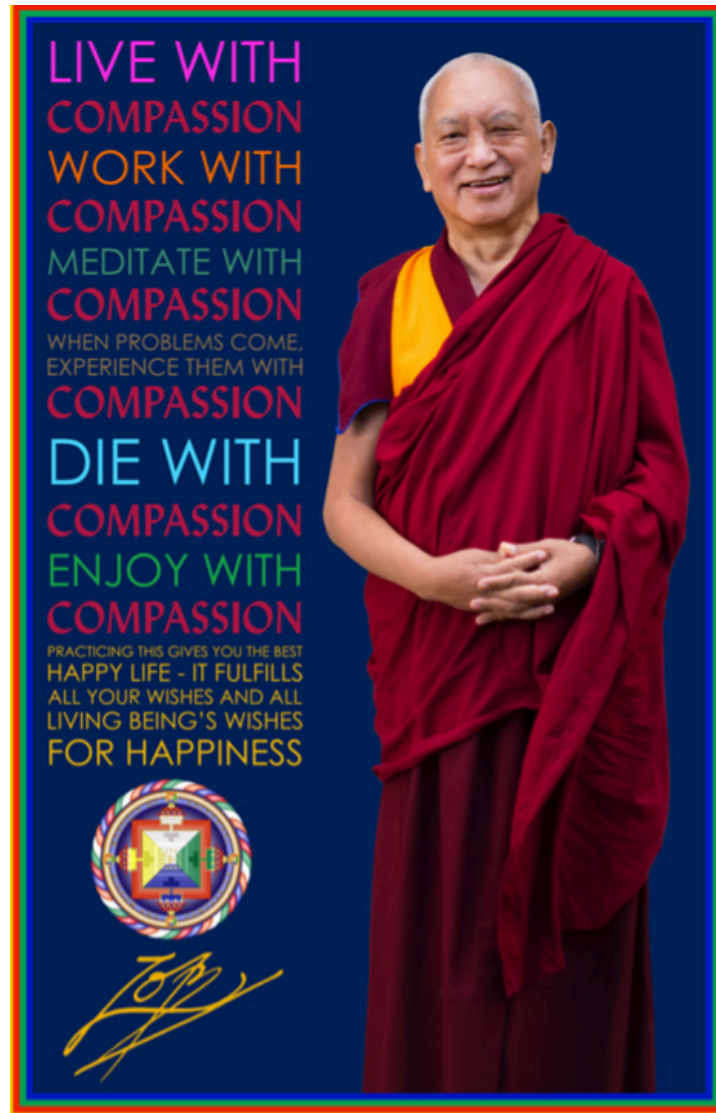
Buddhist wisdom meets practical psychology in this guide to uncovering the hidden myths that perpetuate our suffering.

Therapist and longtime Buddhist practitioner Karuna Cayton explores six common myths that offer comfort but keep us stuck: the myths of reality, identity, permanence, randomness, happiness, and living only once.

Through real-world examples, Buddhist principles, and meditation practices, Cayton shows how questioning these deeply held beliefs can transform our relationship with life's struggles and awaken us to our true potential.

A practical path from misperception to self-development.

Compassion: The Practice That Changes Everything



Whatever traditions you enjoy at this time of year, please consider taking Lama Zopa Rinpoche's teaching on compassion to heart:

Live with compassion

Work with compassion

Meditate with compassion

When problems come, experience them with compassion

Die with compassion

Enjoy with compassion

Practicing this gives you the best happy life

It fulfills all your wishes and all living beings' wishes for happiness.



How to Develop Compassion for All Beings

[Explore More Resources](#)

Nurturing Our Branches of Joy



We have updated our Branches of Joy programme, and are excited for this important initiative to bloom.

Our monthly donors help us:

- Maintain our retreat sanctuary and cover operating costs
- Offer retreats to everyone regardless of finances
- Fund improvements like new windows and guest spaces

Thanks to the generosity of the Branches of Joy, last year we were able to:

- Offer 22 group retreats serving 220 people
- Welcome Phara Khenchen Rinpoche as our first Minister of Religion
- Host 60 individuals for personal retreats (1 week to 3 months)

Your steady support allows our work to flourish!

Learn more about and join our Branches of Joy

A big thank you, as always, for your ongoing support of Land of Joy.
Please continue to visit us and support us in any way you can.

We hope to see you soon!





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