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Land of Joy

Buddhist Retreat Community



"Your up and down emotions are like clouds in the sky; beyond them, the real, basic human nature is clear and pure."

- Lama Thubten Yeshe

We are entering the precious month of Saka Dawa, a time of heightened awareness, of turning our hearts toward the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and parinirvana, and of remembering that every act of virtue (no matter how small) carries with it an extraordinary multiplying power. May we use this auspicious month wisely, generously, and with great joy.

At Land of Joy, the spirit of practice is alive and flourishing. We are delighted to share news of upcoming retreats that offer opportunities to deepen your path, whether you are joining us here in Northumberland or holding us in your heart from afar. Each retreat is a gift, and we warmly invite you to explore what is on offer this season.

As always, this newsletter is sent with love and gratitude for your continued support and connection to our community. You are the heart of Land of Joy.

Saka Dawa



Saka Dawa is on May 31st this year, commemorating the three most profound events in Shakyamuni Buddha's life: his birth, his enlightenment, and his parinirvana.

On this most auspicious day, the karmic weight of every action - positive or negative - is multiplied by 300 million times. It is an invitation of generosity from

the universe itself, urging us to turn our hearts, our energy, and our time toward virtue.

Suggested Practices:



Take the Eight Mahayana Precepts



Sutra Recitation and Prayer

Lama Zopa Rinpoche especially recommends the recitation of the [Sutra Remembering the Three Jewels](#) on merit-multiplying days. Additional practices deeply encouraged by FPMT include:

- The **Vajra Cutter Sutra**
- **Chanting the Names of Manjushri**
- The **King of Prayers** (Samantabhadra's Aspiration)
- The **Sutra of Great Liberation**

Even the sincere recitation of a single mala of *Om Mani Padme Hum* with a compassionate heart on this day carries incalculable benefit, for yourself and for all beings.



Meditation on Bodhichitta and Emptiness

Saka Dawa Duchen is a precious time to sit quietly and turn the mind inward. Lama Zopa Rinpoche encourages practitioners to focus their meditation on **bodhichitta** — the awakening mind that holds all sentient beings in its embrace — and on **emptiness**, the ultimate nature of all phenomena. Even a few minutes of genuine practice, offered with pure motivation for the benefit of all beings, ripples outward in ways we cannot fully imagine.



Acts of Generosity

Giving is one of the six perfections, and on a day when merit is multiplied so extraordinarily, generosity becomes a gateway to liberation, for giver and receiver alike.

While Saka Dawa Duchen on May 31 is the most auspicious single day, the entire month from May 17 to June 15 carries heightened blessing. Every act of kindness, every prayer, every moment of mindfulness during this period is amplified. You need not wait for the 31st - begin now, and let the whole month

be an offering.

"It is important to understand that true practice is something we do from moment to moment, from day to day. We do whatever we can, with whatever wisdom we have, and dedicate it all to the benefit of others." —

Lama Thubten Yeshe

Celebrating our Local Volunteers

Land of Joy is fortunate to have a dedicated circle of local volunteers whose presence, skill, and heartfelt commitment sustain so much of what we do here at the centre.



Lou brings both beauty and nourishment to Land of Joy. She tends the kitchen garden, coordinates plant and maintenance care, and has an eye for interior design that shapes the warmth and atmosphere guests feel the moment they arrive. Lou also leads retreats and guides our Wednesday evening meditation sessions alongside fellow volunteer Gwennie, offering practitioners consistent, grounded support.



Fichou is someone whose hands seem to be everywhere at once. As our groundskeeper, he cares for the land, but his contribution extends so much further - assisting with fire pujas, supporting our book club and Q&A sessions, and now taking on the exciting work of helping coordinate and build our new retreat huts (just as he helped construct the existing ones). His dedication to our community is in everything he does.



Di is a steadfast and important presence in our community - supporting the book club and Q&A sessions, attending and assisting with pujas and practices, and leading retreats with the quiet confidence of a deeply seasoned practitioner.



Pauline Graham-King provides ongoing support of our practices, offering a weekly commitment to performing practices on behalf of the centre. Her regularity and sincerity are a true gift to the whole community.

What unites all of our local volunteers is their dedication. These genuine practitioners understand the Dharma, they live it, and they bring that spiritual richness into everything they offer here. Land of Joy would simply not be what it is without them.

To each of you: **thank you**. You are seen, valued, and deeply appreciated.

Would you like to be a local volunteer?

We are always warmly welcoming new local volunteers! Whether your talents lie in gardening, painting, housekeeping, cooking, woodland care, or something else entirely - if you feel called to offer your time and energy to our community, we would love to hear from you.

Please reach out to us at volunteering@landofjoy.co.uk

We Give a Hoot About Our Tawny Owls

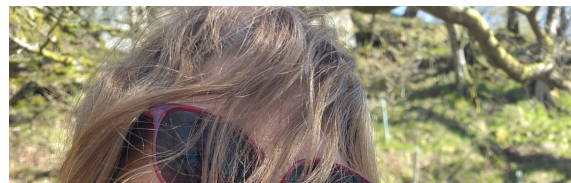
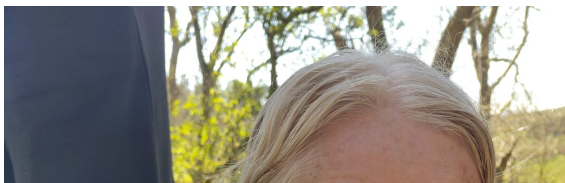


Nature continues to bless us here at Land of Joy. We recently welcomed a special visitor to the grounds - a wildlife warden from the National Park - who came to check on our resident Tawny Owls.

Our director, Beth, shared the story behind these beautiful images:

"There is a wildlife warden who works for the national park that comes to Land of Joy each year to check our three Tawny Owl boxes which are on trees around the grounds. He first comes to see how many eggs there are and then returns to see how many have hatched. Once they are this size they are measured, weighed and tagged to see how they are doing and then track them after they fledge. They often lay more eggs in our boxes than elsewhere in the park which interesting. Great to see they are doing well this year - so cute! "

It is a joy to provide a safe sanctuary for these little ones to flourish. 🦉

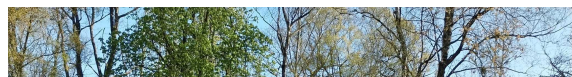




Rooted in Joy



🌱 Seeds in the ground, intentions in the heart. The Land of Joy garden is being planted up for the season ahead - potatoes, onions, and beans under the open sky, with lettuce, cucumber, and brassica sheltered in the polytunnel. As the earth warms and things begin to grow, we're reminded that care and patience bear the most beautiful fruit.





Upcoming Retreats



Falling in Love with the Future

With Paul Wielgus, Friday 19th to Monday 22nd June

This Summer Solstice gathering at Land of Joy is an invitation to pause, to breathe, and to remember what it feels like to be truly alive, rooted in nature, in community, and in yourself.

Over a long golden weekend at the height of summer, we will rest in the stillness of the land, share in meditation, breath, and gentle movement under open skies, gather around the fire in the long evenings, and practice the simple, radical art of being human together. The theme - *Fall in Love with the Future* - is not about optimism or escapism, but about something deeper: discovering that joy, hope, and creative response are acts of genuine courage, and that our

wellbeing is inseparable from the living world around us.

This gathering is for anyone who feels the pull toward something more nourishing - the curious, the weary, the wild-hearted. No experience is needed, just a willingness to show up and be surprised by your own aliveness.

Let the land love you back. 🌿

[Register Here](#)



The Two Wings of Wisdom & Bodhichitta: An Exploration of the Lam Rim

With Ven Mary Reavey, Friday 3rd to Saturday 11th July

The Buddhist path to awakening is often described as two wings of a bird: wisdom and bodhichitta. Only when both wings are fully developed can we truly take flight. In this retreat, Ven. Mary Reavey will guide us in exploring these two essential aspects of practice. We will look more deeply into the Lamrim—the graduated path to enlightenment—focusing on cultivating wisdom and the compassionate intention of bodhichitta. The emphasis will be not only on intellectual understanding, but on using meditation to feel and experience the teachings directly, so that they become a living part of our practice.

[Register Here](#)



Building Inner Strength: 16 Guidelines (Level 1)

With Wendy Ridley, Friday 17th to Sunday 19th July

Feeling overwhelmed by global crises, work, family, or personal challenges? Seeking practical tools for positive change and emotional resilience? This experiential weekend retreat is designed for you.

We will explore embodied mindfulness and universal ethical values in this Level 1 of the 16 Guidelines for Life Program developed by the Foundation for Developing Compassion and Wisdom (FDCW). The program offers a simple yet profound framework for reflecting on how we think, act, relate to others, and find meaning. Through mindfulness, self-inquiry, and ethical reflection, we will gain tools to foster well-being, purpose, and inner strength.

[**Register Here**](#)



The Heart Sutra: Exploring the Wisdom of Emptiness

With Geshe Thubten Sherab, Wednesday, 22nd to Sunday, 26th July

Land of Joy warmly welcomes Geshe Thubten Sherab for a retreat exploring the profound wisdom of The Heart Sutra, one of the most treasured and widely studied texts of the Mahayana Buddhist tradition. Though brief in length, the Heart Sutra contains the essence of the Buddha's teachings on emptiness, pointing directly to the nature of reality and the wisdom that frees the mind from confusion and suffering.

During this retreat, Geshe Thubten Sherab will guide participants through the meaning of the Heart Sutra with clarity and warmth, helping to unpack its essential message and its relevance for daily life and spiritual practice. Through teachings, meditation, and discussion, the retreat offers a valuable opportunity to explore this foundational text in a supportive environment.

Each day will include periods of teaching, guided meditation, and time for questions and discussion, allowing participants to reflect on the teachings and deepen their understanding. Time will also be set aside for quiet contemplation and personal practice, creating space for the insights of the Heart Sutra to settle and become more experiential.

[**Register Here**](#)



Mindful Movement with Body & Breath

With Lou Beaumont, Friday, 28th to Sunday, 30th August

Mindful Movement with Body & Breath is a gentle and nourishing retreat designed to reconnect you with your body's natural rhythm and subtle energy.

Through the combined practices of pranayama (yogic breathwork) and qigong (mindful movement), we explore how breath and movement can harmonise the body, calm the mind, and support overall wellbeing. These ancient systems complement each other beautifully—breath guiding awareness inward, and movement allowing energy to flow freely.

Together, they create a grounded and accessible pathway into meditation, helping you feel more present, balanced, and at ease.

[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 - 11th June | 11th - 19th November | 2nd - 19th December

Retreat Hut 2: 3rd - 19th November | 8th - 28th January

Retreat Hut 3: 17th - 28th October | 17th - 25th November | 10th - 19th December

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

“I was very happy to see so much wildlife now - I saw an otter twice, bats, two herons, and three white-tailed deer! Happy sentient beings!”

-Sheri, a recent retreatant in a private retreat hut-

A recipe from the Land of Joy kitchen



Oatmeal Cookie Dough Balls - Ingredients

- 1.5 cups rolled oats
- 11 large medjool dates, pitted
- 1/2 cup peanut butter (or nut butter of choice)
- 3 tbsp maple syrup
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/3 cup mini chocolate chips

Instructions

1. Add rolled oats, pitted medjool dates, peanut butter, maple syrup, cinnamon, vanilla extract, and salt to a food processor. Process until a sticky, pinchable dough is formed.
2. Transfer oatmeal cookie dough to a large bowl. Pour mini chocolate chips over the dough. Use clean hands to fold the chocolate chips into the dough.
3. Use a cookie scoop or tablespoon to scoop the dough into 12 rounds. Roll the dough into evenly formed balls. Enjoy!

3 Ingredient Raw Cacao Balls - Ingredients

- 1 cup walnuts
- 1 cup Medjool dates
- 2 tablespoon raw cacao

Instructions

- Place the walnuts in a food processor or a powerful blender (food processors work better) and blend until they have a crumbly texture.
- Add the dates and the cacao and blend again.
- Make balls with your hands and they're ready to serve.
- You can store the bites in a sealed container at room temperature, although I prefer to keep them in the fridge, especially in summer.

Apple Pie Bliss Bites - Ingredients

- 1 large diced apple
- 1 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 1/3 cup desiccated coconut plus extra for rolling
- 6 medjool dates
- 50g dried apple
- 25g sultanas
- 1 1/2 tsp cinnamon

Instructions

1. Add all the ingredients into a food processor with the s-blade attachment.
2. Process on high for around three minutes or until well combined and the ingredients are chopped finely.
3. Scoop a tablespoon of the mixture and roll to make a ball in between your hands.
4. Roll the ball lightly in the coconut to coat then roll again in your hands so that the coconut sticks to the ball. Repeat until all the mixture is used.
5. Store the bliss balls in the fridge in an airtight container.



Stories from Land of Joy

We're honoured to share this series written by Land of Joy volunteer Sandeep Krishnappa, who spent forty days in a volunteer room at Land of Joy. What began as a quiet corner for rest became a mirror for awakening.

The Room That Teaches: A 40-Day Journey from Seeking to Seeing is a collection of short, luminous stories—each born from an encounter with the ordinary. A drawer. A spider. A salad bowl. Each one a window into awareness.

This is not a book of reflections. It's a book of windows. Three minutes to read. A lifetime to live.



Story 7: The Window That Caught Joy in Motion

Every morning, he stands by my window with a cup of tea, hoping joy will show up like a sunrise on command.

He checks the sky, too grey.

The garden, too muddy.

The sheep on the hill, too uninterested.

He sighs, concludes it's not a "joy day," and turns to go. But just then, a gust of wind rushes through the trees.

A single leaf detaches, pirouettes midair, and lands softly on the windowpane.

He watches it stick there for a second, like a dancer pausing at the end of a perfect improvisation.

And then it slides down, leaving a small wet streak.

He laughs. Not a big laugh, just that small, sincere one that starts in the chest and ends in the eyes.

I've noticed that's how joy works, it doesn't wait to be staged; it appears mid-motion, unnoticed until you stop naming it.

Happiness is an arrival. Joy is a passing visitor you finally recognise.

Moral: When you stop grasping at happiness, you notice joy in motion.

COMMENTARY SECTION:

The commentary sections are for those who want deeper philosophical context. If

you prefer to stay with the stories and practices, that's perfect too.

Madhyamaka Reflection: Joy as Dependent Arising

The window reveals the play of impermanence and emptiness.

Joy does not exist as a fixed state. It is not hidden somewhere waiting to be found.

It arises through causes and conditions, a leaf, a breeze, an open gaze.

Nāgārjuna might say:

Joy is not inherent in the leaf or in the mind that sees it.

It is called joy in dependence upon motion, perception, and release from grasping.

When he stood searching for happiness, he created separation,
a seeker apart from what is sought.

But when the leaf fell, he saw without expectation.

In that instant, the duality collapsed.

This is the Middle Way of joy:

neither clinging to the pleasant nor rejecting the ordinary,
but seeing the dance of causes without needing them to perform for you.

When grasping ends, joy reveals itself as the natural shimmer of
interbeing,

form and emptiness meeting in a single gesture.

Zen Poetic Mirror: Thusness of Joy

Wind breathes.
A leaf turns once,
once more,
then rests.

A streak of water,
a laugh that forgets its name.

No arrival,
no leaving,
only motion understood by stillness.

The tea cools.
The world warms.
