

Men's Winter Retreat

"Dark of the Year, Return of the Light"

20-27 December 2024

About the Retreat

Smritiratna writes: "We begin this retreat around the time of the Winter Solstice, which we shall be celebrating, as of old, the following evening. This is the darkest time of the year, when the short days begin to increase again, the nights drawing back as the daylight returns. We live at a dark time in human history too, with multiple dangers looming. At such a time it is natural to feel gloomy. Yet at just such a time we can rekindle our faith in humanity and the human potential for Enlightenment. This retreat is an opportunity to gather and rediscover that faith in meditation, shared communication and ritual.

This year we'll be exploring the four Buddhist love meditations to warm our hearts at the dark of the year. These are mettā bhāvanā, karunā bhāvanā, muditā bhāvanā, upekkhā bhāvanā — love, compassion, rejoicing and serenity."

Is there anything special I need to bring?

On the second evening we'll hold a feast to celebrate the retreat theme. If you have a relevant poem, song or quotation, please bring it along to share.

Also bring whatever you need for comfortable meditation - loose clothes for example. And bring a full set of waterproofs (jacket and trousers) and boots so you can roam about in the beautiful surroundings whatever the Scottish weather - often very cold and often wet at this time of year. So plenty of layers and thermal underwear would be a useful extra.

What can I expect from the programme?

The retreat day starts at 6.30am with a rising bell then a meditation at 7.00. There'll be up to six meditation sittings a day, each lasting up to 40 minutes. Each day there'll also be one or two short explanatory talks and the day will end with Buddhist devotional practice - puja or mantra.

There will be long periods of silence on the retreat so we can attend more fully to immediate experience. Saturday night until Thursday afternoon will be without conversation except for teachings and 1:1 practice reviews. Then we leave the next day.

The retreat runs across 25th December but we'll not be celebrating Christmas as such. All through however our aim will be peace on earth and goodwill to all men - and countless other sentient beings!

About the retreat team

Smritiratna has meditated regularly for over forty years and led nearly 200 retreats. He will be joined by an experienced team. Retreatants will receive regular meditation mentoring through 1:1 practice reviews.