



LONG BEACH MEDITATION

APRIL 2023 NEWSLETTER: ISSUE 3

- **Letter from Jokai**
- **Beach Clean-Up**
- **Breath**
- **Sustaining Member**
- **Upcoming Retreat**
- **Book Club Reflection**

Letter from our Guiding Teacher

Dear Friends,

Spring greetings to you all! As we welcome this season of growth and renewal it is an opportune time to reflect on the important developments within our community. I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to each one of you. Thanks to your presence and participation, Long Beach Meditation (LBM) has emerged from the difficulties of the pandemic era with strengthened bonds and renewed purpose: Our teachers continue to study and deepen their dharma understanding, new staff and board members are sharing fresh energy as we develop exciting plans, and longtime practitioners maintain the heart of the practice. Each week, new faces appear to sit beside us. Our wonderful, welcoming book club is thriving, and daylong events, and multi-week classes are well attended. The new year is off to a good start!

It continues to be a privilege to extend this invaluable offering to our community in Long Beach and beyond. Although the positive benefits of meditation are now more commonly acknowledged in

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our society, authentic, consistent, full-fledged practice is still rare. The three jewels of Buddhism: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha form the basis of our work together. Our Sangha (community), can be understood as our shared life, our collective dharma expression—the wisdom of the Buddha's teachings is always evident in connection with each other. Sitting alone is difficult; sitting within a supportive and kind community is a true blessing.

In our ongoing efforts to share the benefits of meditation widely, we have been working to improve the depth and scope of our online resources. We continue to invest intentionally and thoughtfully in technology which supports our purpose of connecting with one

another and sharing the practice of meditation freely and generously. Currently, we are in the process of creating a new and improved website. The new site will feature a wealth of information and useful content, including expanded video resources, which better reflect the essence of LBM's unique and inclusive gifts.

Recently, LBM participated in a local Beach Cleanup event. What an uplifting and important way to be of service to Long Beach! After volunteering, Franz Manfredi offered meditation on the beach for all who wished to join, and several newcomers took part and expressed enthusiasm. We have decided to make this opportunity for community action a regular, quarterly event. This spring season, let's continue our essential work, fostering wholehearted connections within our local community! In doing so, we create a ripple effect; the concentration, insight, and well-being we cultivate together extends far beyond our immediate surroundings.

I encourage you to continue to support one another in your practice and to share the compassionate heart of meditation with those around you. Our world urgently needs the depth of transformative awareness and attention that naturally emerges from a deep and consistent meditation practice. To meditate is to nourish the very ground of our being; to take care of one another and ourselves. It is the way of valuing all for the benefit of all. Let us inhabit the radical understanding that all of life is practice and use every ordinary opportunity to continue this profound work.

As always, I welcome your reaching out to me directly at jokai@longbeachmeditation.org. Thank you for your contributions and continued support.

Bows,

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Jokai Blackwell Roshi



January's Beach Clean-Up

This past January, LBM participated in a beach clean-up organized by the Community Action Team (CAT). After the cleanup, Franz Manfredi hosted a 30-minute guided meditation. This was the first of what will be a quarterly activity. LBM has a goal to strengthen our community connections and acts of service.

As a reflection piece, Heidi Colón, a sangha member, was interviewed to share her experience.

I have always wanted to do a beach cleanup, but didn't want to just show up to one where nobody knew me, so I was happy to learn about the opportunity made available through Long Beach Meditation, because I am comfortable with the people there. When I showed up to the beach cleanup on Saturday, January 21, 2023, the weather was chilly but sunny, under a clear blue sky. I was happy to see some of the people I know from the LBM book club and meditation classes, and to put some names to faces.



The event was well organized, and after signing in and receiving a large trash bag, we started working. Within a few minutes I was warm enough to take off my sweatshirt. The beach wasn't too crowded, so we had room to walk and scour for trash.



I was surprised by how much trash there was! Not just washed-up organic items like seaweed or driftwood, but lots and lots of plastic. My trash bag was completely full of plastic trash. After about an hour, we gathered to participate in a standing guided meditation by Franz Manfredi.

A couple of people who didn't know LBM joined us, and one of them, Gloria, has started coming to our Monday Night Meditation. Last week, she bought cookies for people to share and get to know each other! The thing I most liked about this experience was that all of us who were there have more than just meditation in common; we were all there because we care about taking care of our beaches.

Sangha Member,

Heidi Colón



Breath, Spring is in the air

Falling back one sees
The great vastness is infinite
I Spring forward!

– Sherab Wangchuk



The seasons can be a wonderful reminder for us of the impermanent nature of all we experience. Yet, we still seem to forget and struggle. But even the struggle, or what the Buddha described as suffering, is impermanent. In one of the early Pali discourses, Dukkhatāsutta, the Buddha described three kinds of suffering. The suffering of pain, the suffering caused by conditioned existence, and the suffering due to change. Pain is pretty straightforward.

A headache can be very painful. Straightforward pain. Conditioned existence points to the fact that everything depends on everything. Everything is everything. If we investigate, can we find any "thing" that is independent of any other "thing"? The truth is that any "thing" is in "dependence" on other things. That is why all the great masters say we will never find true happiness in samsara, the wheel of existence.

Temporary happiness, perhaps. But its nature is suffering. Why? Because it is conditioned. Bound to change. The good news? Pain is also conditioned. And will shift, sooner or later. And that brings us to the third kind of suffering, change. Let's look again at the change of seasons. Is the nature of winter suffering? Ultimately, no. Relatively? It depends!

We might suffer (pain) from the freezing temperatures. Or we might be avid skiers and enjoy the winter wonderland! The same for conditioned existence. We might be happy that winter is a conditioned phenomenon and therefore will not last or we might be unhappy that the winter fun is over. It changed. We might think "I don't like winter and I'm happy when it changes to warmer weather."

But we forget or ignore that the warm weather will eventually change.

So, what is it that helps us realize the truth of suffering? As my teacher would say, "Awareness, awareness, awareness!" And how wonderful, that the world is not worried that we sometimes forget. It just keeps doing its thing. Reminding us. We can embrace the change of seasons. Notice the changes in temperature. The wildflowers bloom. Notice the leaves changing colors as Autumn approaches. We can say it's effortless. If we examine, it actually takes more effort to struggle and suffer with change. The world just does its thing. And all we have to do is pay attention. Keep the light of awareness on. Daylight savings tells us to change our clocks. Fall back, Spring forward. Awareness has room for both.

Teacher,

Jampa Kalsang

A background image showing a dirt road winding through a forest of tall pine trees. The sky is blue with wispy white clouds. A wooden fence runs along the right side of the road.

2023 Boundless Spring Retreat
April 20th - 23rd, 2023
at Yokoji Zen Mountain Center
with Jokai Blackwell Roshi

SUSTAINING MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

I joined LBM online in 2020 during the COVID shutdown to find the respectful, welcoming and inclusive community I was seeking. I am grateful for the diversity in teachers and subject content providing refuge and a fresh perspective on the challenges of daily life. I have been a member of the LBM Book Club since inception and participated in the first quarterly beach clean up. These activities provide additional opportunities to extend my meditation practice off the cushion into real life allowing me to develop meaningful friendships while serving my community. A heartfelt thank you to the hardworking volunteers of LBM for making a difference in the lives of many.

Sangha Member,

Diane Pavesic



SUSTAINING MEMBERS

An outpouring of gratitude to our generous sustaining members, who keep Long Beach Meditation afloat through thick and thin. We just wouldn't be without you.

This quarterly newsletter is our offering in parallel, with news, events, and feature articles written by our teachers and fellow sangha members. We hope it will cast a glimmer of light and joy into your daily routine. May we all meet again soon on the cushion!



Book Club Reflection

Months later and three books in, I continue to grow spiritually, socially and profoundly from being a part of the Long Beach Meditation Book Club. Each book has opened me to depths of Buddhism that I didn't know existed.

From Pema Chodron's *THE PLACES THAT SCARE YOU* where we learned about the rawness of a broken heart that can lead us to genuine sadness and compassion which we can share with all. This is the bodhichitta way (the way of the warrior). Letting go takes courage. Even beliefs and ideals can be a way to put up walls. As Pema Chodron asks, "Can we abide in the openness that presents itself when the bottom falls out of our dream?" Letting go and realizing that everything changes moment-to-moment will lead us to this path of loving kindness and the way of the Warrior.

To *SAY WHAT YOU MEAN: A mindful approach to nonviolent communication* by Oren Jay Sofer where we explored how communication involves projection, assumption, and bias and practiced ways in the safe environment of our Zoom rooms how to challenge these assumptions and create new ways of communicating in our lives. As Sofer says, "Communication practice is not about what we say. It's about where we're coming from and how we say it." This book was more linear and logical than our other two books, but it had a great deal to teach and helped many of us move forward in our personal and professional lives...

To Thich Nhat Hanh's *THE HEART OF THE BUDDHA'S TEACHING* where we are savoring the depths of Buddhism and learning all the ins and outs of The Four Noble Truths, The Noble Eightfold Path, the twos, the threes, the fours, the fives, the sixes and all the other frustratingly fascinating numbers of the Buddha. At one point, many of us cried out, "Enough with all these numbers," but then we went on to the next chapter and soaked up his words of enlightenment and felt spiritually renewed again.

This has shown me how much I have to learn and realized what a truly beautiful teacher he is. Having been raised in a different faith and having left that faith in my early twenties, this book has taught me so much about where I want my life to go now and how to “practice” and get there.

Along with the teachings in these books, the fellowship of the book club has been so enriching. Some have been with us from the beginning and others have joined just recently, but getting to know each other and share from our hearts has been such a blessing. We agree, disagree, question, support, learn from, and laugh, and I truly look forward to logging on every two weeks. When someone cannot show up, I miss them and to have this extended family/sangha-in-learning is a part of Long Beach Meditation that is truly a gift.

Sangha Member,

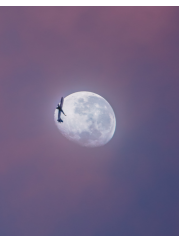
Susan Ball

Upcoming Programming April - June 2023

April 2nd	Sunday sit with founder Victor Byrd
April 7th	New! Friday afternoon meditation with Jampa
April 8th	Full moon meditation with Franz
April 11th	An evening of Zen with Jokai
April 15th	Quarterly beach cleanup & meditation with Rosamaria
April 16th	Sunday guest teacher with Lisa Kring
April 20-23rd	2023 boundless spring retreat with Jokai
May 20th	Daylong retreat on self-care with Rosamaria
June 3rd	Full moon meditation with Franz
June 24th	Daylong retreat with Jampa



375 Redondo Ave. #178
Long Beach CA 90814
562-448-6887
www.longbeachmeditation.org



Sunday

Meditation

Monday

Meditation

Full Moon

Meditation