



## Guiding Teachers Announcement

*The SIMS Board*

The SIMS board is very happy to announce that at our meeting on June 19<sup>th</sup>, we unanimously decided to invite Tim Geil and Tuere Sala to be our guiding teachers for the sangha, removing the “interim” status that they have held for the past 4 years. They have both accepted the invitation and relayed their deep gratitude to the sangha for this honor.



SIMS holds high standards of practice for our teachers. The offering or teaching of meditation and Dharma (the practices and understandings of the Buddhist tradition) is a calling and is considered a spiritual discipline in itself. Held as an act of generosity and compassion, Dharma teaching allows teachers to share that which has benefited their life, and in doing so, to deepen their own understanding and foster the embodiment of their own Dharma, to inspire a life of mindfulness and loving-kindness. Although there are many teacher training courses available today, the Retreat Teacher Training offered by Spirit Rock and the Insight Meditation Society (IMS) is recognized as the highest level of teacher training offered within our western Insight Meditation community. It is an intimate 4-year process that, according to the Spirit Rock website, includes, “extensive study of traditional texts and contemporary Theravada teachings, a wide range of teaching skills and practices, mentoring and apprenticeship with senior teachers, as well as further training with meditation masters from a variety of lineages.”

Students cannot apply for this level of training. Instead, every 4 to 6 years, senior teachers recommend their best candidates – students who they believe have the profound depth of meditation practice, the wisdom, experience, compassion, maturity and teaching temperament to join the next training group. Among the pool of possible trainees, a group of 20 or so is selected to be invited into the next multi- year training. The selection looks for those with the most potential to skillfully carry, teach and embody the Buddhadharma, and also represents a

diverse group that can support and serve students in all communities. Both Tim and Tuere have been honored by acceptance to this program. Tim completed it in 2016 and is now recognized as a certified retreat teacher in the Insight Meditation Community. Tuere is now completing her first year of the training and the board expects that she will complete it within the next 3 years. Keri Pederson also completed the same training as Tim, in 2016.

Tuere and Tim's change from interim status has been a long time in coming. The SIMS board has known for quite a while that it needed to address this issue, but the intense work of the property search that happened the year after they became our interim guiding teachers pulled our focus elsewhere and delayed action on this. Decisions about guiding teachers are the most important decisions that a board faces. So before taking on this decision, the SIMS board reached out to long-term sangha members and lead volunteers to ask their feelings about making this change now. We heard strong support for their teaching and the removal of their interim designation so that we recognize them as our guiding teachers. Some sangha members expressed surprise that they were still designate as "interim" as they acknowledged the abundant commitment and energy that they both have given to SIMS over the past years. Many people pointed out how sensitively Tuere and Tim have held the sangha during times of upheaval and change. People also acknowledged how well their different teaching styles complement and balance each other and are enriched by the combination. Several people praised the new ideas and programs (Sunday sits, intensives) they have implemented and noted how these have been positive for SIMS. The board also reached out to Rodney Smith, in recognition of his role as first guiding teacher and founder of SIMS. Rodney gave his whole-hearted support for the decision.

Although the process has been long, we feel that it has helped us to thoughtfully come to this decision with grace and support from the sangha. We are grateful to both Tuere and Tim for all the time, energy and love they have given the sangha over these years and the patience they have had with the process. And we look forward to the future ahead with them as our guiding teachers.

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