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## Teaching Issue

Volume 9, Number 10 / December 2009

### COMING SOON

#### Live Internet Broadcast With Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Join us from your computer on Sunday, January 3, for a guided dzogchen practice with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche via live Internet broadcast. Hours: 1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. Eastern Time U.S. (New York Time). [More information/enter the broadcast site >>](#)



### Teachings

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#### 'A View of Confession: As Myth, as a Meditation, and as a Means of Moving On' — an edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, summer 2009

*Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche presented teachings from the A-Tri dzogchen tradition of Tibetan Bon Buddhism during Ligmincha Institute's 2009 Summer Retreat. In this excerpt Rinpoche explains the practice of confession (admitting your misdeeds), one of the practices that comprise the A-Tri Ngondro or preliminary practices.*



If you are to engage in the practice of confession in a way that is natural, authentic, and therefore life changing, it must make sense to you personally. In the Tibetan spiritual traditions all forms of negative physical actions, negative speech, and negative thoughts are considered misdeeds, as are addictions like smoking and alcohol abuse. The role of confession is to help you to transform and overcome these negative habits.

For example, we may have problems with anger and say hurtful things as a result. In order to change our habits and particularly to overcome our addictions, first we need to be conscious that these are misdeeds. Additionally, we must be conscious of them in a very immediate and direct way, more than intellectually. It is very important to be aware of our negative actions, speech, and thought. This does not mean feeling pressured to confess or else we will go to hell. If we feel pressured to confess our misdeeds

when we are not truly aware of them, then that is not likely to do us much good. But becoming aware of our misdeeds is a good thing.

Take a look at all the positive changes that you've made in your life, when you were headed in the right direction of healing or of having a positive, healthy lifestyle. Most of those changes probably came about not because you felt bad or guilty, but because you became fully aware of what wasn't right. When you can become fully aware that one of your actions of body, speech, or mind is truly not right, there is strength in the authenticity of that awareness. And from that place of strength, you are able to make changes.

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### Bookstore & Tibet Shop

Ligmincha's online store is **currently offline** because of staffing issues.

We hope it will return soon.

In the meantime, visit the Bookstore & Tibet Shop when you come to Serenity Ridge Retreat Center. Most books published through Sacred Sky Press, Ligmincha International's publishing arm which supports books on Bon teachings and translations of texts, are available through [lulu.com](#).

### About Voice of Clear Light

**Voice of Clear Light** is a free email publication of Ligmincha International. Your suggestions and contributions to *Voice of Clear Light* are welcome. To contact us, send an email to: [voiceofclearlight@ligmincha.org](mailto:voiceofclearlight@ligmincha.org)

For more information about Ligmincha International, the teachings of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, or retreats at Serenity Ridge or our other regional centers, please contact us at:

Ligmincha International  
554 Drumheller Lane  
Shipman, VA 22971  
[office@ligmincha.org](mailto:office@ligmincha.org)

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### Stay in Touch

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The point that I'm making here, especially for those who have some discomfort about the practice of confession, is that we need to clarify our view of confession. Obviously, there is nothing wrong with being aware of your misdeeds. That is the only way that you are going to be able to make some changes, right? But having the right kind of awareness is important. As you contemplate your misdeeds you might not feel so good, and that is okay when it helps to motivate you to change. But if contemplating them makes you feel depressed, then there is something subtly wrong with the way you are aware of them.

It is possible that you do not have enough support for making a change. It is important to know the antidotes to your negative emotions, to believe in the potential for healing, and to trust in the refuge tree. Clearly, when you have a real, true wish to change and you have the right supports, then when you face one of your misdeeds you will think to yourself, "Yes! I'm going to do it, I will make changes."

From a commonsense point of view, sometimes we don't seek help for addictions when we need it. We may think, "Why do I have to ask anybody? I know what I'm doing." Somehow, we are unwilling to turn to anybody for help. For sure, there is a very strong ego there. The ego is the one who developed that addiction in the first place, the ego is the one who successfully maintains it, and clearly the ego is the one who has the hardest time changing it. It is the ego, too, who is the one who is not willing to ask for anyone's help when help is needed.

The inability to change often boils down to a lack of trust. It may be that you haven't changed a negative habit because you don't have a clear sense of trust in your ability, your potentiality, your inner power, your inner space, your inner awareness. Maybe you don't have enough trust in the refuge tree, or the sangha, the teacher, friends, or family. You can say, "Well, I consulted with my therapist, and I went to the retreat, and I even Googled it, and nothing helped me to overcome this problem." Many people think in this way. If that is the case for you, maybe it is not that you didn't look for a solution, but rather that you didn't trust. You are still in the place of doubt. If you could have had trust in even one of these supports, there might have been a true connection and something might have changed.

In the dharma, taking refuge begins with trust. And taking refuge—inviting the refuge tree as your witness—is the first of the four powers of confession. The second power of confession is to bring forth your misdeed and confess it. Then third, you naturally feel strong regret and remorse and make a vow not to repeat the misdeed. Fourth, you apply the antidote; for example, if you have acted in anger, then in your practice of confession you cultivate love, which is the antidote to anger. Each of these four points is essential to the confession practice.

Creating a place of refuge is not something that is done externally. Rather, you visualize the enlightened beings in front of you and bring them into your pure awareness. These images represent your inner truth and inner essence. The experience of refuge is very confidential and personal. Unless you truly feel this intimate connection, the visualization will not support you. Without enough support and trust in the enlightened beings and enlightened qualities, or in the sangha, friends, or family, then it can be very difficult to change no matter how much you think you want to.

After connecting with the experience of refuge, you must commit to change. If you don't make a firm commitment, such as "I will not do this for one week" or "I will never do this again," you are likely to return rapidly to your negative habits. There will be nothing to prevent you from repeating your misdeeds. Just thinking "I don't want to do it anymore" is not strong enough.

Ask yourself: "What are the consequences if I don't change and the benefits if I do change?" Pay more attention to the results of your actions. Maybe you would not change for yourself, but you would change for others, for your partner, your family, your community, or the world. Maybe it is not always, "I need to change for me." Can you see how overcoming your anger can benefit other people's lives? What are the negative consequences for those you love if you don't change? These may be good enough reasons to make a change.

The best way to approach confession is to lay out all your misdeeds in front of you and invite the refuge tree as your witness. The refuge tree is the outer manifestation of the clearest aspect of your self. It is your self. With this clear self-awareness of your misdeeds, you work with the four powers, and there is no way that you cannot purify your negative actions, negative speech, and negative thought. You can transform anything, purify anything.



## Sangha Sharing

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### Giving Thanks

*A letter from senior student Polly Turner to sangha and other friends on Thanksgiving Day, 2009*



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Rinpoche on



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Dear friends,

Some years ago when Yongdzin (Lopon) Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche was teaching at Serenity Ridge, I arranged an appointment to meet with him. When I entered the shrine room in the lama house, I asked him if he would activate my new thangka for me, and he did so.



Usually when we go in to meet with a great master it is good if we have a question to ask or some other clear intent, but all I wanted to do was share one brief statement. So after Yongdzin Rinpoche wrote the Tibetan syllables on the back of the thangka and sat back to see what our meeting would entail, I said to him:

"Rinpoche has been a very pure teacher to me."

There was a moment of silence, and I worried it would be an awkward one. But Yongdzin Rinpoche suddenly broke into laughter and spouted out:

"Thank you!"

He repeated "Thank you!" several times over, laughing all the time.

That was the end of the visit, and I left, feeling a bit stunned but glad I had said something that had made him so happy. It was as though I had given Yongdzin Rinpoche the biggest gift I could ever have given him, and I didn't know quite why this was.

I came to understand better years later, when I learned the story from my teacher, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, of the extent of the responsibility that had been placed on his shoulders by his root teacher. Lopon had escaped from Tibet during the Chinese Cultural Revolution with a gunshot wound, and was among only two other senior Bon lamas of his generation who managed to escape to the West. Many of the lamas and other Bonpos who escaped with their lives underwent great hardship and unimaginable stress on arriving in India and Nepal, and some died while doing road work in the hot sun.

Countless Bon monasteries and precious texts and ritual items were destroyed in Tibet during the Cultural Revolution. Lopon and the current spiritual leader of the Bon tradition, His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima, knew that their ancient tradition, which had been passed in an unbroken lineage from master to student for centuries, was on the verge of complete extinction. With help from others they managed to save some texts of the teachings and bring them to the West. In India and Nepal they founded Tibetan communities and built monasteries from the ground up.

But without also preserving the knowledge in people — transmitting the wisdom knowledge to others — they knew all of their struggles would be fruitless.

As a young monk at Menri Monastery in Dolanji, India, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche was among a select few monks who were first to receive their geshe degrees there after studying rigorously for upwards of 12 years toward the degree, day in and day out. Rinpoche felt great responsibility to learn all the teachings and rituals, with the knowledge that he and his fellow monks were very likely the last hope for this beautiful and amazing wisdom tradition. This message was conveyed to him by Lopon, and he took it to heart.

Rinpoche somehow ended up teaching in the West, and we students have been the beneficiaries of his mission.

When I told Yongdzin (Lopon) Rinpoche that Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche had been a very pure teacher to me, I meant that there has not been one moment in all the many teachings I've received from him, in my private consultations with him, or in my volunteer work, where he has sacrificed the purity of the teacher-student relationship and where I have not felt that what Rinpoche has done or said has been a very pure and direct teaching to me. Sometimes it takes a while before I realize what the teaching is, but I never have had a moment's question about the purity of this relationship, and I have experienced it as a long series of countless gifts, one after another, over the years.

And now, I can see what a gift it is for Rinpoche's teacher, Yongdzin Rinpoche.

Normally I don't make that much of Thanksgiving, but for some reason, these days on the meditation cushion I am feeling a huge amount of gratitude. This seems a good day to say "Thank you!"

In Bon,  
Polly

Charlottesville, Va.



## New Interactive Online Course

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### Join Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche for a three-week online Tibetan Sound Healing Workshop



We are delighted to announce that a three-week Tibetan Sound Healing course will be offered in a new interactive online format, from Jan. 16 through Feb. 7, 2010. Through instructional videos, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will explain, demonstrate and guide the practice of ancient sound healing techniques. Now you can join him out of the comfort and privacy of your own home. As you progress through the practices, Rinpoche will make himself available to provide guidance and answer questions.

[More information/register at www.glidewing.com](http://www.glidewing.com) >

#### Introducing New Online Format!

- Instruction is via Internet-based video
- Three weeks of ongoing support from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche as you work with the practices
- No set class times, instructional videos remain available throughout the course
- Practice on your own schedule in the comfort of your home
- Share your experiences and learn from other practitioners through forums, chats, blogs and instant messaging
- Easy-to-use and easy-to-navigate workshop site
- All you need is a broadband Internet connection such as DSL or cable.

**Workshop dates: January 16 to February 7, 2010**

#### About Tibetan Sound Healing

Since ancient times meditative practices from many spiritual traditions have used sound and its vibration as an essential tool for healing and spiritual development. Through the singing and chanting, spiritual practitioners and healers could access purification and restore harmony within physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. The Tibetan Bön Buddhist tradition is one of the oldest unbroken lineages of wisdom that uses sound for the well-being of its practitioners.

In this course you will learn to use the healing power of five sacred syllables referred to as the *Five Warrior Syllables*. Guided by the mind and carried by the breath through subtle channels and chakras of the body, the power of sound will open the potential to bring joy and love to your life, facilitate personal healing, dissolve energetic disturbances, and awaken positive action in the world around you. Through practicing with these five sacred and powerful sounds, you can transform your life and discern a clear path that begins with openness and leads to spontaneous, virtuous action in the world.

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche is your guide and teacher in this workshop. With the capacity to translate ancient texts into modern Western idiom, he will present these teachings and instruct the meditations in a way that is clear and practical.

**Workshop dates: January 16 to February 7, 2010**

**Registration: \$295.00**

**Please note: space is limited**

**This workshop is created in cooperation with GlideWing Productions. For more information and to enroll in the workshop, visit [www.glidewing.com](http://www.glidewing.com) or write to us at [programs@glidewing.com](mailto:programs@glidewing.com)**

*"These are known in Bon as the Five Warrior Syllables. The reason these seed syllables are called warriors is because they are powerful and indestructible. They are associated with the Five Wisdoms — and it is wisdom that is able to penetrate fear and ignorance to cut the roots of samsara. Our negative emotions, even physical illness, are a result of ignorance. Using sound in this way can be very healing on many levels."*

### —Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Tibetan teacher Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche is the founder and spiritual director of Ligmincha Institute in Shipman, Va., a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the Bon Buddhist tradition and introducing it to the Western world. Rinpoche is a beloved teacher throughout the United States, Mexico, and Europe, and author of many books including *Tibetan Sound Healing: Seven Guided Practices for Clearing Obstacles, Accessing Positive Qualities, and Uncovering Your Inherent Wisdom*. Sounds True, 2006. Available from [Ligmincha Institute's Bookstore and Tibet Shop >](#)



## Families on Retreat

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### Please Let Us Know Your Interest

If you have ever thought of bringing your children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews to a Tibetan Bon or Buddhist retreat please help us plan by filling out the survey found at this link:

<http://www.questionpro.com/akira/gateway/1335683-0-0>



There have been several requests from parents for some special programs for children at Ligmincha's Serenity Ridge retreat center in Nelson County, Va. In response to the need Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche recently announced that Lhari-la Kalsang Nyima has agreed to teach at a special retreat for families in 2010. Our topic will likely be the Five Elements.

We are very fortunate to have Lhari-la with us, as he not only has a strong meditation background but also is trained as a thangka painter and well versed in Bonpo arts. He was responsible for educating the young monks at his monastery in Sikkim, India. We are planning a children's program during this retreat that will include time for dharma arts, simple meditation and prayers, support for parenting with a spiritual perspective, community caretaking, and fun and relaxation for the whole family.

You can show your potential interest in this program by filling out the survey at

<http://www.questionpro.com/akira/gateway/1335683-0-0>

In addition, please let other like-minded families know about this opportunity by forwarding this message and link.

Hope to see you there,  
Cindy Jackson, M.Ed.  
and the Family Camp Planning Committee



## Past and Future at Serenity Ridge

### An End-of-Year Update

As 2009 draws to a close, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Norman Dill inform about recent developments at the retreat center and about plans for the months and years ahead. Your tax-deductible year-end donations are greatly appreciated.

### A Letter From Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

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Dear students, friends and supporters of the Dharma,

I send you my heartfelt wishes for a healthy and happy New Year.

I feel that Ligmincha and our sangha continue to mature and grow. The changes at our retreat center, Serenity Ridge, have helped to support our growing sangha through teachings, practice, special events and improved facilities. I want to thank everyone for their support over this past year. The dedication and

support of our sangha are widely felt and appreciated!

We have been able to accomplish some important cost-saving improvements this year, including moving our Charlottesville administrative offices and consolidating them at our Serenity Ridge retreat center, paying down our loan on the second wing of the Garuda House, renovating the Teachers' House so that our administrative offices can reside there, upgrading the garage so that the bookstore has a permanent space there. We also now have wireless Internet available for retreat participants in the downstairs dining area and out on the new bookstore deck.

I want to assure everyone that we are doing our best to use your donations wisely and to save money wherever we can. We have ideas for new projects at Serenity Ridge, so that our retreat center continues to expand with new opportunities for practice for our worldwide sangha.

I look forward to an upcoming year of continued growth. We are planning a number of additional activities.

We welcome Lharila Kalsang Nyima to Serenity Ridge as our resident lama. We are pleased to announce some additions to our retreat center schedule: Beginning in January, Lharila will perform a ritual each month, such as the Healing Waters of Yeshe Walmo or Soul Retrieval. Lharila will also teach a five-day Ngondro retreat in March. We are also very happy that Menri Lopon Rinpoche will return to our retreat center this year to teach the Experiential Transmission, Part 2. We are inviting sangha to arrive before and after most retreats to do personal practice. And, we also plan to have a 10-day period scheduled for personal practice during the spring. I hope that many of you will join me at Serenity Ridge this year to receive the precious Bon teachings, experience support as we gather together as sangha, and deepen in your study and practice.

We will continue to develop our retreat center this coming year so that we can accommodate more retreats and other events. We plan to make improvements to our kitchen and dining hall, continue to improve the furnishings in the dormitories, improve the signage at Serenity Ridge, and continue to pay down the loan on the second wing of the Garuda House.

For those of you who are able to send a financial contribution, we appreciate it greatly.

With my heartfelt blessings and best wishes for 2010,

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

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### **Business Report From Norman Dill, Director of Finance**

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This year, 2009, has been a very good year for Ligmincha. We have made significant efforts to save money. In April we moved our Charlottesville center and administrative offices to our Serenity Ridge retreat center, thus saving Ligmincha the monthly rental expense for that space. We paid down a significant amount of our mortgage — just under \$50,000 — for the recently completed second dorm wing. This means that donations have paid for more than half the cost of the new wing, bringing the total amount now owed to \$600,000. As well, we refinanced the loan on the second dorm wing at a substantial savings.

Because of the enormous amount of professional volunteer work done for Ligmincha Institute, we have very low operating expenses and have been able to invest money to improve the buildings and grounds at Serenity Ridge. The generous support of the sangha has enabled us to create the wonderful setting we have now. Further support will be used to improve our kitchen and dining facilities and eventually to expand the teaching hall.

When you donate to the development of the Serenity Ridge retreat center, 100 percent of your donation goes to expand the retreat center. Our administrative and operating costs are covered by retreat fees. Please consider a year-end gift to Ligmincha Institute of any size to support Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's vision of a dynamic Bon Buddhist retreat center in the West.

To donate by Visa, Mastercard or American Express, go to [Ligmincha.org](http://Ligmincha.org) and click on "Donate" or use the link below.

To donate by check, please make your check payable to "Ligmincha Institute" and in the memo field, indicate where you would like us to direct your donation — for example "Retreat Center Development," "Lishu Institute" or "General Donation." Mail your check to:

Ligmincha Institute  
554 Drumheller Lane  
Shipman, VA 22971

I would be glad to discuss our finances with any interested sangha member who would like more information.

Norman Dill  
Director of Finance

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## New on YouTube

### Dream Yoga Video

The state of your mind as you fall asleep can determine the course of your dreams ... and the course of your life. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche explains the purpose of the ancient practice of Dream Yoga in a new 9-minute video he recently created for YouTube. View the video at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GIs65GDMGQ>



## Upcoming Retreats

### Ligmincha's Serenity Ridge Retreat Center

New on the schedule: Ngondro practice retreat Feb. 5-7; Ngondro teachings March 10-14. The retreats described below will take place at Serenity Ridge, Ligmincha Institute's retreat center in Nelson County, Va. To register or for more information, click on the links below, or contact us at [Ligmincha@aol.com](mailto:Ligmincha@aol.com) or 434-263-6304.

**Dec. 27, 2009 - Jan. 1, 2010**

#### **The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, Part 2 Annual Winter Retreat with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche**

This retreat is full. To join our waiting list, contact Ligmincha at [Ligmincha@aol.com](mailto:Ligmincha@aol.com).

**Feb. 5 - 7, 2010**

#### **Zhiné: The Medicine of Tranquility With Gabriel Rocco**

The annual zhiné practice retreat affords an opportunity to step out of the stress and demands of daily life and come home to yourself. Zhiné is a form of meditation that enhances your ability to maintain focused attention and abide in clear, open awareness. You can relate to zhiné as a medicine, a tonic of tranquility that helps you disengage from the destructive mental patterns that obscure your true nature.

[Learn more or register >>](#)

**Feb. 5 - 7, 2010**

#### **Ngondro Practice Retreat With Marcy Vaughn**

Students who have received ngondro teachings and transmission are warmly invited to attend this practice retreat, which will focus on the practice of ngondro. This retreat will take place concurrently with the Zhine retreat with Gabriel Rocco.

[Learn more or register >>](#)

**March 10 - 14, 2010**

#### **Ngondro: Part 1 of the Experiential Transmission With Lhari-la Kalsang Nyima**

The Ngondro, Part 1 of the Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, is the entrance to a cycle of Bon dzogchen, or "Great Perfection," teachings, which until the past decade were part of a secret transmission passed one-to-one from master to student. The ngondro teachings, a complete set of practices in themselves, offer instructions for "taming" oneself, for purifying, and for perfecting; and are the prerequisite for further study of the Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung.

[Learn more or register >>](#)

**April 14 - 18, 2010**

**Sacred Waters: The Healing Practice of Sipe Gyalmo  
With Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche**

Join Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche at Serenity Ridge this spring when he offers a special healing experience for the general public, health care professionals, and anyone who is currently encountering illness.

[Learn more or register >>](#)

**June 2 - 6, 2010**

**Introduction to the Nature of Mind: The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, Part 2  
With Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche**

This year we are again very fortunate to have Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche, the head teacher of Menri Monastery in Dolanji, India, teaching these beautiful and essential practices to us. The concise and essential practice manual of the Experiential Transmission, the *Chag Tri*, provides pith instructions for those who aspire to practice dzogchen, the path of self-liberation.

[Learn more or register >>](#)

**June 20 - 26, 2009**

**Summer Work Retreat**

Free of charge. Whether you join us for one afternoon or the full week, this is a wonderful time to share with sangha and to be of joyful service. Our work retreat includes vigorous work periods, daily meditation practice, and ample time for a swim in the pool or a walk along the Rockfish River.

Participants are provided with free tenting and meals, and for those who participate in the entire work retreat there will be a 50 percent discount on one week of the summer retreat.

**For more information or to register**, please email Ligmincha at [ligmincha@aol.com](mailto:ligmincha@aol.com) or call us at (434) 263-6304.

**June 27, 2010 - July 17, 2010**

**Awakening the Self, Discovering Joy: Self-Realization Through the Three Doors of Body, Speech and Mind**

**19th Annual Summer Retreat With Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche**

Our own body, speech and mind can offer direct access to profound inner transformation. The keys to effectively unlocking these three doors are found in the ancient Bon Buddhist tradition of Tibet, whose powerful meditation practices help to remove physical, energetic, and mental blockages that keep us from achieving our highest potential. Join us for a unique, life-changing opportunity to discover your unbounded being, the source of authentic joy. Registration is available for one, two, or all three weeks.

[Learn more or register >>](#)

**To register for any of the above retreats**, or for more information about teachings in the Bon Buddhist tradition of Tibet, please contact us at [Ligmincha@aol.com](mailto:Ligmincha@aol.com) or 434-263-6304, or go to:

<https://www.ligmincha.org/retreats/retreats.html>

Serenity Ridge Retreat Center  
Headquarters of Ligmincha International  
554 Drumheller Lane  
Shipman, VA 22971  
Serenity Ridge office: +1-434-263-6304  
Ligmincha International office: (+1) 434-263-3657

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