



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

Newsletter

A Monthly Publication of the Gay Buddhist Fellowship, San Francisco

January, 1995

What GBF Means To Me

by Mark Picciano

[The following article is the second in an ongoing series. We encourage others to share their perspectives about GBF. —GBF Newsletter Committee]

There are at least as many opinions about the purpose of GBF as there are participants. I'd like to share some thoughts about GBF, and the name of our group is a convenient structure. I hope these observations stimulate more reflection and discussion about this unique group.

GAY. Why do we need a group with the specific designation of sexual orientation? As a member of a minority group, I feel a special comfort and connection with gay men, and that affinity is strengthened when spirituality is the focus of the organization. Could I pursue my path with a group of people from both sexes, representing the full spectrum of sexual orientation? Sure, but the added dimension of shared sexuality increases the odds of finding people who can appreciate me, and with whom I can develop relationships.

BUDDHIST. I have been meditating for four years, and only recently have begun to apply the label "Buddhist" to myself, and I'm willing to admit I have not completely figured out what it means! Having experienced a very structured religious environment throughout childhood and adolescence, I am leery of organized spirituality. Buddhism appeals to me as a non-theistic path whose hierarchies are concerned with helping people to end suffer-

ing rather than promoting political careers.

The loose structure of GBF offers me the opportunity to explore the different Buddhist traditions and meet men who are following those paths. I have not chosen a specific tradition, and may never do so. Maybe that means I am not a true Buddhist, but the message of compassion and wisdom strikes me as profoundly true, and GBF is an access to the world of people following that path. The men I meet through GBF show me how the Buddha's teachings can be integrated into everyday life, and they support my efforts to do the same.

FELLOWSHIP. There is a special camaraderie in GBF, but only if you get involved. I overcame my natural fear of commitment, after attending GBF events for 2 years, and began to volunteer. And after taking that major step, a new level of fellowship/sangha is unfolding.

Thich Nhat Hanh led a day of mindfulness at Spirit Rock last year and he addressed the concern about appropriate community/sangha. He warned against looking for "the perfect sangha" and urged us to work where we are. I intend to stick with GBF, and help it grow to meet the changing needs of our Gay Buddhist Fellowship. ♡

February 18 Workshop to Focus on Gay Buddhism

Once each year the Gay Buddhist Fellowship has sponsored a retreat on Buddhist practice. Our regular meetings each month focus briefly on Buddhism and related topics. What we have not done thus far is to spend a whole day looking at gay Buddhism and the Gay Buddhist Fellowship.

On February 18 we plan to do just that. We have arranged with Sangha House, located near UC-Berkeley, to use their space for a one-day workshop where we will explore issues dealing with our practice, our community, our experiences in everyday life, and developing a vision for the GBF.

Sangha House was, until recently, a Korean Zen Center but is now a group residence. There is a tremendous feeling of peace and tranquility in the

large space on the first floor of Sangha House that lends itself to a creative discussion of who we are and where we are going. This program is being planned by a committee of GBF and will be described in greater detail in next month's newsletter. Enrollment will be limited since the space accommodates approximately 35-40 people. The cost for the workshop, including lunch, is \$10.00.

To those of you who live outside the Bay Area and who have been unable to attend the Sunday morning meetings, we urge you to consider attending this special workshop and making a weekend of it in the Bay Area. For a successful workshop, we

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- **BDSC Berkeley**
Dharmadhatu/Shambhala Center: 2288 Fulton Street, Berkeley. 510/841-6475 or 510/549-1481.
- **GGF Green Gulch Farm (SF Zen Center)** 1601 Shoreline Highway, Sausalito. 415/383-3134.
- **HBC Healing Buddha Center/Medicine Buddha Healing Clinic.** Two locations: (1) Unitarian Universalist Church, corner of Cedar & Bonita in North Berkeley, 2nd floor, Fireside Room; (2) 702 Solano Ave., Albany. 510/525-7835.
- **KDK Kagyu Drogen Kunchab:** PO Box 170370, SF, CA 94117. 415/752-5454.
- **LMB Land of Medicine Buddha:** 5800 Prescott Road, Soquel. 408/462-8383.
- **NI Nyingma Institute:** 1815 Highland Place, Berkeley. 510/843-6812.
- **ODD Orgyen Dorje Den/ Bay Area Yeshe Nyingpo,** 410 Townsend #406, SF. 415/826-7181.
- **POL PÖL Pema Ösei Ling,** 2013 Eureka Canyon Road, Corralitos. 408/761-6266.
- **RF Rigpa Fellowship,** 816 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA. 510/644-1858.
- **SFDSC San Francisco Dharmadhatu/Shambhala Center,** 1630 Taraval St., SF. 415/731-4426.
- **SFZC SF Zen Center,** 300 Page Street, SF. 415/863-3136.
- **SR Spirit Rock/Insight Meditation West,** 5000 Sir Frances Drake Blvd., Woodacre. 415/488-0170 and 488-0164.
- **TCL Tse Chen Ling Center,** 4469-23rd St., SF. 415/641-0671.

Do you want a Dharma center's events listed here? Send a note with information on special events, or better yet, arrange for their mailings to be sent regularly to: Mark Picciano, Local Dharma Calendar,

LOCAL DHARMA

January, 1995

ONGOING EVENTS

Sundays Dharmadhatu Introductory Open House. Dharmadhatu is dedicated to promoting an uplifting environment for students to practice meditation and to study Dharma, as taught by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Intended for new students and visitors. Features various local speakers. Meditation instruction available. 9-noon. Free-of-charge. BDSC

Sundays Shambhala Community Practice Day. Includes open house, sitting practice session, and Shambhala practice session. Meditation instruction is available during all practice sessions. SFDSC

San Francisco Schedule:

Open House. 9:30-12 noon.
Shambhala Practice, 9-12 noon;
1:30-4:30 pm.
Sitting Practice, 9:30-12 noon.

Sundays Sunday Morning Kum Nye. Each session of this drop-in class introduces several practices for exploring a specific experiential theme, using the gentle movement exercises of Kum Nye. Experienced and beginning students welcome. 10 am-1 pm. \$10 per session. NI

Sundays Sunday Evening Practice and Dharma Talk. Nyingma Institute welcomes visitors, students, and friends to join in a public meditation and talk every Sunday. Meditation and chanting at 5 pm; Dharma talk at 6 pm. Free. NI

Sundays Weekly Vipassana Sitting with Eugene Cash. 45-minute silent meditation followed by discussion. 7-9 pm.

Tuesdays Guided Meditation on the Lam.rim. Lam.rim, the Graduated Path to Enlightenment, is one of the most profound teachings of the Gelugpa Tradition. The Lam.rim presents a concise view of the entire Buddhist path, and is a timeless source of inspiration. Appropriate for experienced and new students of Buddhist philosophy. 7 pm. TCL

Tuesdays Weekly Vipassana Sitting with Howard Cohn. SF. 7:30-9:30 pm.

Fridays Healing Circle Berkeley. Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists, corner of Cedar & Bonita, Fireside Room, 2nd floor, Berkeley. 7:30 pm. By donation. HBC

Thursdays Weekly Vipassana Sitting with James Baraz. Albany United Methodist Church, 980 Stannage (at Marin), 2 blocks up from San Pablo, Berkeley. 7:30-9:30 pm. Call 510/525-7546.

Zen Center Classes. The Zen Center organizes the study of Buddhism into a Five Root curriculum:

- I: Life of the Buddha and Early Texts
- II: Buddhist Psychology
- III: Buddhist Wisdom
- IV: Ethics and Compassion:
Jan 8 - Feb 12 (Sun. mornings)
- V: Zen: Jan 8 - Feb 12 (Sun. am)
Jan 9-Feb 13 (Mon. eves)
Jan 10-Feb 14 (Tues. evs)

New students should begin with the introductory class, "The Life of the Buddha." Class fees are \$30 members/\$40 non-members. Study Session V begins 23 Dec. 1994. Call for details. GGF

SPECIAL EVENTS

4 Jan. Medicine Buddha Healing Meditation. 7pm. TCL

7 Jan. Meditation and Inquiry. One-day vipassana sitting with Howard Cohn. 9am-5pm. \$20. Contact Code HC1. SR

11 Jan. Praises to 21 Taras with Lama Chopal/Tsog. 7pm. TCL

14 Jan. One-Day Sesshins. 5am-6pm. \$30 non-members; \$25 members. GGF

15 Jan. Day of Metta Practice with Sylvia Boorstein. 10am-5pm. \$20. Contact Code SB1. SR

20-23 Jan. Nature of Mind. Ven. Robina Courtin, a fully ordained nun in the Tibetan tradition, leads these sessions. Suggested donation: \$10 per session; \$25 for all sessions. Friday, 7-9pm; Sat., Sun., 10am-1pm. TCL

26 Jan. Vajrayogini Self Initiation. 7pm. Call for information. TCL

29 Jan. Vipassana Day-Long with Jack Kornfield. 9am-5pm. \$30. Contact Code JK3. SR

Feb. 2-4. An Exploration into Emptiness with the Ven. Thubten Pende. Feb 2-3, 7-9pm; Feb 4, 10am-1pm. \$10 per session; \$25 entire program. TCL

