

# Gay Buddhist fellowship

JUNE / JULY 2008 NEWSLETTER

The gay Buddhist rellowship supports Buddhist practice in the gay men's community. it is a focum that brings together the diverse Buddhist traditions to address the spiritual concerns of gay men in the san francisco Bay Area, the united states, and the world. GBF's mission includes cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.

# Awakening Joy

BY JAMES BARAZ

James Baraz has practiced Vipassana meditation since 1974 and taught since 1980. He is a founding teacher of Spirit Rock Meditation Center. James coordinates both the Community Dharma Leader program and the Kalyana Mitta Network, and he is the teacher-advisor to the Spirit Rock Family and Teen program. In addition, he is on the International Advisory Board of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. James leads an ongoing meditation class in the East Bay and is increasingly known for his repeating 10-month experiential course 'Awakening Joy' that that has helped develop the natural capacity for well-being and happiness for over 1500 people in numerous countries. He spoke to GBF on November 11, 2007.

want to talk about this subject that's been a focus of mine for the last few years. This year I'm writing a book, which is for me my first book. The essence of the topic is the Buddha dharma as a path of happiness, although it's not solely geared to dharma practitioners. The course that I teach and the name of the book is *Awakening* Joy. I'll say a little about my own journey with the Buddhist path as far as happiness goes, and then share a little with you about what I've been experimenting with the last few years.

I am so deeply indebted and grateful to the Buddha and the dharma and certainly the sangha for showing me possibilities of real happiness. And at times I have gotten to be a serious practitioner. If you consider yourself to be a serious practitioner, it's a double-edged sword. I don't know if "sword" is the right word, but it's a blessing and a curse. If you're very dedicated and sincere, and your heart is in it and you're inspired, sometimes we can get very serious. As one of my teachers said, he got dead serious in his practice. And there can be so much emphasis on the first noble truth on suffering, and even when the Buddha was asked what he taught, he said, "I teach about suffering and the end of suffering." You don't hear too much about happiness; you hear about suffering and the end of suffering. And yet the Buddha was called the Happy One. And that's what the end of suffering is, the highest path he gave us. And he did say, "If you aim for the highest happiness, all the other levels of happiness become available to you." The Dalai Lama starts out his book *The Art of Happiness* by saying, "The purpose of life is to be happy." It's a great opening line for a book. I'll read that one!

But we can, as I say, get a little bit sidetracked in the seriousness and solemnity of practice. There are some reasons why this can be so, why there can be a misunderstanding of the teaching. I, for one, after having been inspired for a number of years in my heart and with my whole being on fire for waking up, got into a dark period for some time. I misunderstood some aspects of the teachings, and I'll share with you a couple of ways this misunderstanding can come. This one principle of inspiring

one's practice is what's called *samvega*. This is the definition of *samvega*: "The oppressive sense of shock, dismay, and alienation that comes with realizing the futility and meaninglessness of life as it is normally led. A chastening sense of one's own complacency and foolishness in having let oneself live so blindly and an anxious sense of urgency in trying to find a way out of the meaningless cycle." How does that grab you?

Now this is actually, when understood, a very important concept because we have to be motivated in some way to get off our complacency in thinking, "Oh, well, maybe *this* will make me happy, or maybe this will make me happy." But it's also easy to understand that as seeing life as a drag and thinking, "Let's get out of here as quickly as we can." The operative phrase in that definition is "realizing the futility and meaninglessness of life as it's normally lived." But you can

all the time. Empty—it's all empty. But he had this incredible love and brightness and delight and joy, and I asked him lots of questions. "Give me all your questions, all your questions." And near the end of my visit, I said, "I have one question, Papajee." "Give me your question." I said, "You know, when Buddhists talk about emptiness, it's so serious, so solemn and heavy. Yes, we have to realize emptiness. When you talk about emptiness, you're laughing, you've got an aura of love and there's this tremendous energy that comes out from you. Why is your emptiness so much more fun than what I'm used to hearing and talking about?"

And he said, in essence, "If you have touched something very profound in the stillness of meditation, it can easily be equated that stillness is where the depth of awakening is, and that the emptiness is about that stillness, and anything other

# This is right effort: when you're feeling in the middle of a wholesome state, it's skillful to maintain and increase that feeling of well-being.

kind of skip over that part and just say, "Yeah, life is meaningless and futile, and I want to get out."

I sat with a group of a Burmese master who in every talk would say, "May you speedily attain Nirvana and get off the wheel of samsara." And he was saying it from a very loving and compassionate place, but I kept on hearing, "We've got to get out of this place." And then there's another concept that can create the sense of getting out and life is a drag. Is anyone familiar with the term nibbida? I'll read to you one translation: "Seeing things directly as they are and seeing what is impermanent as impermanent with right view, therefore one should abide in utter disgust for the aggregates, the aggregates being this mind-body process." And another translation: "With a practitioner's practice in accordance with the dharma, he should dwell in gross revulsion toward the aggregates." You hear that? No wonder there's this sense of life is not fun, and it's not okay to feel good about life.

Actually, those are incomplete translations of the word nibbida because what the word means actually is disenchantment, and when you are disenchanted, it's like you're breaking the spell of enchantment, of being enthralled by this or by that, or by this mind-body process, or other mind-body processes out there. Disenchantment, breaking the spell of that enthrallment, is very different from utter disgust and revulsion. But in my own confusion, I heard those terms and got the sense that we should have utter revulsion for mindbody process and that everything is meaningless, and I went through this dark period for a while because I love to celebrate life, and I'm a very passionate and intense person. Fortunately, I got intense about something that pulled me out of this. And that's meditation. But for quite a while, I went through this inner conflict about letting my devotion, my bahkti nature, come out, and I thought that I wasn't being a good Buddhist if I was enjoying my life.

This went on for a while, and actually what really woke me up from that trance was being around a teacher named Papajee. I went to India in 1990, and he talked about emptiness than that stillness, the world of vitality and appearances, can seem antithetical, so you can get lost in this idea of the profundity being equated with stillness, which is serious and solemn." He said, "My emptiness rejects nothing. There is love and there's confusion, and there's joy and there's intensity. Nothing is rejected from my emptiness." And then he laughed: "Ha, ha, ha!"

I said, "That's it. I've been misled." Because that's exactly what in my heart I think of as the totality of life, that there's nothing excluded. And it actually brought me back to my original joy of the dharma. I was looking at it through a narrow lens of a particular Burmese Theravadan slant, through one particular approach, and I started to look back and say, "Well, wait a second, what did the Buddha really teach?" Because if he got that whole truth, there must be something more than just getting out of this miserable existence. And I started to look at his teachings and see that there are many aspects of the Buddhist teachings that point to joy and happiness. Joy is one of the seven factors of enlightenment, one of the four Brahma Viharas, along with loving-kindness, compassion, and equanimity. It's a factor in awakening. In one list, he talks about suffering being the causative factor of faith, faith being a causative factor for gladness, gladness being a causative factor for joy, which is a causative factor for happiness, contentment, equanimity, all the way up to full awakening.

There are many, many different flavors from *piti* (rapture) and *pamoja* (delight) and *suka* (happiness), and I started to see, "Well, wait a second, as Thich Nhat Hanh says, "Suffering is not enough. You can't just stop there." Okay, I understand suffering and the end of suffering. You've got to see that what opens my heart and makes me connect with life makes me want to be participating in life because if it's only about getting out of suffering, it's a very insular and limited focus. So I started to look at these teachings and reformulate them, and there are some incredibly powerful teachings that I've been using through these last few years in this course that I teach.

First, there are three principles that are the essence of my

exploration. The first principle has to do with Right Effort. You might think, "Oh, that doesn't sound very fun." There are four Right Efforts in the classical teachings. Two have to do with unwholesome states, guarding against unwholesome states that haven't arisen, and overcoming unwholesome states that have arisen. It's very useful, good stuff, and we're probably very familiar with those.

And the two other aspects of right effort are about wholesome states, developing wholesome states that have not yet arisen, like loving-kindness or compassion or equanimity, etc. The fourth is maintaining and increasing wholesome states when they have arisen. This is right effort: when you're feeling in the middle of a wholesome state, it's skillful to maintain and increase that feeling of well-being. In a little known discourse, the Buddha says, "In the middle of an act, in the middle of a wholesome state, tune into it," and the words are, "Be generous." He says in the middle of being generous, it's useful to say to yourself, it's skillful to say to yourself, "I'm being generous right now." Then the words are, "Thinking I'm generous, one gladdens the heart, one delights in the meaning, one gains inspiration in the meaning and in the dharma."

Now, he's not saying, "Check it out, aren't I a generous guy?" All you're doing then is reifying a sense of self. But he is saying, "Feel how good it feels for that impulse of generosity to move through you." And as you tune into it, you actually experience a kind of gladness. And then the line in this discourse is, "That gladness connected with what is wholesome, I call an equipment of mind for overcoming ill-will and hostility." I'll say it again. In the wholesome state, you feel this gladness, and he says, "That gladness that arises, that gladness connecting with the wholesome, I call an equipment of mind

another discourse, is very straightforward and I think very profound. He says, "Whatever the practitioner frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of their mind." Can you argue with that? Whatever you frequently think and ponder upon will become the inclination of your mind. If you practice seeing how life is a drag and everyone around you disappoints you, you'll get ample confirmation. If you practice seeing that there is a lot of goodness in life, there's beauty around and goodness in people, or that it feels good to be generous or kind, that becomes the inclination of your mind.

And now in the last decade or so, current brain research is corroborating this. This is not news, but it's very clearly substantiated. You can measure these synaptic connections and neural pathways that lead to a great sense of well-being, and you deepen your mediation practice, and as you practice certain states of well-being, you kind of suppress the amygdula, which gets activated in fear very easily and leads us to agitation and unskillfulness and confusion.

So as I said I was looking into this for a while, and getting really really intrigued by it, and along the way as I was exploring this, my wife gave me a book—this was in 1999—for my birthday, and it's a book not by Buddhists, but by two guys who became friends. They are a couple, Rick Foster and Greg Hick, and their book is called *How We Choose to Be Happy*. They're corporate facilitators and organizational people. But they decided to explore happiness because they said the people they worked with were some of the most unhappy people. Rick said, "Let's write a book on what we do." Greg said, "Who wants to be around unhappy people?" Then Rick said, "Well, let's check out happy people." And they spent the next

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to overcome ill-will and hostility." It's in your tool kit to overcome anger and any kind of negativity, to feel that gladness. He says this is a really good thing. I thought, "Oh, far out. So it's okay not only to feel good, it's skillful to feel good if that feeling good is connected with really wholesome things."

Then there's a third principle. First is maintaining and increasing wholesome states. Second is experiencing the gladness that arises with them. And then the third principle, in

three years interviewing three hundred plus people, identifiable, certifiable, extremely happy people.

And they go to a town in rural Alabama, for instance, and go to the diner, and say, "Who's the happiest person in town?" And people at the diner would agree, "Oh, Shirley, she's the happy one." They'd go to Shirley and ask, "Well, are you happy?" "Yeah, pretty happy." "Can we ask someone who might know you in a different light?" They'd ask one of her

co-workers or family members. "Yeah, Shirley is pretty happy." Then they'd have an in-depth interview. "Why are you so happy?" And after three years, and researching all these people, they distilled nine common denominators that all these people had, consciously or unconsciously. And that's the book, these nine secrets, these nine choices of extremely happy people. And I read this, and it's a very fun, delicious book. It's the book that I use for the course until mine is written. They now give me credit and acknowledge me in the acknowledgment section because they've sold a whole lot of books because of me. And they've come to Spirit Rock, etc. etc. And I said, "Okay, all of these or most of these are Buddhist principles, just about all of them."

And I wanted to do something with my Berkeley group. If you're ever in Berkeley on Thursday nights, please come and sit with us. The information is in the Spirit Rock newsletter. I said, "Okay, folks, I want to explore happiness, and we're going to look at these principles, but I'm going to speak about them through a dharma lens, and through Buddha dharma." They don't have practices, exactly, and that's one of the wonderful things about Buddhism, the practices. I said, "We're going to do this for the next three months. And we got happier and happier and happier." Not everyone. There was one person who just said, "I can't stand any more of this happiness." And she had a hard time.

But most everyone was just not only getting the ideas, but we were doing practices, and I said, "This is far out." So I started to write at that point. This was a while ago, and in the writing, I said, "I'm going to do a course and I'm going to test out the theories with people who don't come to me for sittings, and sit with you who maybe aren't even Buddhists," and I started doing these Awakening Joy courses which started out as six months. It's now ten months, using not just the principles that they use. Actually, there are ten principles, some of them are in here, and some of them aren't. But

I can't do ten months in ten minutes, but in the remaining time, I just want to give you a little bit of the sense of it.

First, let's talk about inclining the mind toward the wholesome. There are many different wholesome states. It starts with the intention to be happy. This is not one that comes naturally to many people. We might have the intention to be successful or to be loved or to have all kinds of wonderful things happen to us that make us feel good, but to start out with the intention to be happy, that's the first choice that these people had. And you have to really get clear on that because if your intention is other than that, you won't necessarily arrive where you want to be. You might have the intention to be a very dedicated practitioner, but if happiness isn't in there—the Dalai Lama said, "The purpose of life is to be happy." Then you can get very serious in thinking, "Oh, yes, I'm a Buddhist meditator, and this is good for me. I know it's good for me. It doesn't feel so good, so it must be good." To get in touch with the intention for great well-being is not only a gift to yourself but to everyone that you meet, because the more you're in touch with your own goodness, the more it shines through. So if you're depriving yourself and being a martyr, or being some very serious practitioner or some idea of what you think a practitioner should look like, and not going for what your heart says real happiness is, you're going to be missing something. Now the key is to see where real happiness lies. As that samvega quote says, "Real happiness does not lie in getting the next goodie as quickly as you can."

And we are subject to tremendous mind manipulation. We have to counteract these messages. As an example, this is an ad that just typifies what we're up against. It's called the Gold Shivers. A beautiful woman in a two-page ad—someone gave me this a while ago. "The Gold Shivers, that electric excitement, that thrilling warmth. Every piece of gold jewelry ignites it once again. Nothing makes you feel as good as gold." This is the second part. "What is the real substance of a new piece

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they're what I've seen as the Buddhist path of happiness. In the first course, there were two groups of twenty, and then in the next one—people told people—there were a hundred, and the next one had two hundred, and the next one had five hundred. People can do it online. It's not just live; you couldn't have 500 people live. This one has 700 and people are doing it in New Zealand, and England, and all over the place.

We do one theme a month, a wholesome state, with supportive practices, meditation, and things like that. There's no pressure, no guilt, no failing. Singing every day really makes a difference. You won't find that in the Pali canon! I didn't find that there. Using your body regularly. Having a buddy to connect with. A gratitude practice, and things like that. And it works, if you've got the intention, it works.

of gold jewelry? Emotion, pure and powerful from the first small shiver of excitement when a shimmering necklace of gold beads captures a woman's eye, to the great shivers of delight when the coveted object actually becomes hers. Among life's pleasures, count this deeply felt euphoria as unique. The only way to get the Gold Shivers is by getting the gold."

According to a book called *Culture Jam*, the average American gets 3,000 messages like this every day through media, billboards, whatever, saying, "This is going to make you happy." So the Buddha was radical to say, "Where does happiness really lie?" In fact, you might know that he was motivated to teach when he became enlightened, and he saw that everyone wants to be happy, and most everyone is doing exactly the things that will lead to more suffering. And that's

what motivated him. We're looking in all the wrong places.

So I'll give you a taste of one practice. I'll mention some of these practices and some of the themes, starting with Intention. Mindfulness, noticing what is good around you, is a very important practice. As you incline the mind, it doesn't mean that you're pretending everything is hunky dory. You don't want to live in dreamland, naively, but if you keep on

kindness, and that's a practice, and service, and equanimity. There's well-being that comes from gratitude. As I close, I'll do a little bit of a gratitude exercise. So just notice how it feels inside. So just close your eyes for a moment.

Just go inside and think of someone or something that you're grateful for in your life. You might have an image of them or that situation, and let that picture be even bigger so

You can train your mind and heart to go anywhere. If you don't train it, it will go down the habitual pathways that are usually tinged with grief, hatred, and delusion....The Buddha said the source of our happiness is getting in touch with states that come from non-greed or generosity, or the ability to let go, generosity being the most positive expression of that. Non-hatred or kindness, basically kindness. Non-delusion or clarity or wisdom. Those are the sources of happiness.

looking for what's good, you'll find it, not only in things but in people and in yourself. For instance, if someone comes into a room and they see all of your flaws, how do you feel? Flawed, don't you? Exposed, vulnerable, whatever. You can get a sense that judgmental mind has a loud radar on it. Someone else might come into a room and they might know all your flaws, but they are seeing and you can sense they're seeing how beautiful you are. How do you feel? Beautiful, don't you? Or Buddha-full. That's why it's so great being around the Dalai Lama, because he's seeing everyone as a Buddha, and you start feeling, "Hey, maybe he's right. Maybe I am a Buddha." So that's one thing, to incline the mind and look for what's good and what's uplifting. It allows you to hold all the sorrows. I'm sure you know the Ten Thousand Joys and the Ten Thousand Sorrows. If you're only looking for what's wrong, it's a very despairing view, but if you open up to all the joys, it allows you to hold and make the space for all the sorrows.

Another one of these wholesome states themes is embracing our suffering as a path to joy, which is this list of suffering leading to faith. There are ways that you can hold your suffering that aren't in denial but that process it and lead to even deeper understanding and compassion. There is the joy that comes from loving God, and there are many aspects of that. Or the joy that comes from what the Buddha called the Bliss of Blamelessness—acting with integrity, and how good that feels. And so with each wholesome state, whether or not you do this course, there's something you might take with you when you're feeling you're acting with real integrity and you take the high road. As he suggests, let yourself feel how good it feels. This is good. You're doing good now. And as you let it register in your awareness and in your body, there's a sense of well-being that is extraordinary and overcomes ill will and hostility.

There is the well-being of course that comes from loving-

you can connect with them. And you might just feel the blessing of that. Notice how it feels in your body. Perhaps silently say even to that person or to life, I'm so grateful for this. I'm really grateful to you for this. Just grateful to you.

Now let your awareness feel what it feels like to feel that gratitude, how good it feels. And bring someone else to mind and many, many blessings. Buddha has this beautiful discourse on blessings. Bring someone else or something else to mind that really opens you. Appreciate the blessing in your life. Have an image. And once again, express silently the gratitude to that person or to life for that. Let yourself breathe that in and just relax into that sense of gratitude and how it feels. Let your awareness really tune into the wholesomeness, that gladness of the wholesome. Then very gently as you come out, stay connected to that space, whatever you've touched. Did you feel something?

You can incline your mind anywhere. That's the whole point. You can train your mind and heart to go anywhere. If you don't train it, it will go down the habitual pathways that are usually tinged with grief, hatred, and delusion. That's just the way it happens to often be. Or attachment, aversion, and ignorance. If you do train it to see where it really feels good, then Buddha said the source of our happiness is getting in touch with states that come from non-greed or generosity, or the ability to let go, generosity being the most positive expression of that. Non-hatred or kindness, basically kindness. Non-delusion or clarity or wisdom. Those are the sources of happiness. So all of the training is to develop those. The Buddha said, "If it were not possible to free the mind of greed, hatred, and delusion, I wouldn't tell you to do so. But it is possible." So this is what I've been exploring for the last few years and it's just so exciting to know we can train ourselves not to be automatons on the cushion, but to more and more come from that place in our daily life.

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# June 14—Mount Tamalpais Steep Ravine Hike

Come join GBF this June 14 (Saturday) on a hike under the shade of the redwoods and by a series of cascades down Steep Ravine trail on Mt. Tam. This is an easy 3-4 mile hike, all downhill, that ends in the town of Stinson Beach. We'll hang out in Stinson Beach, have lunch in one of the cafes, and then drive back up to the parking lot. Nature and the comforts of civilization, all in one day. Who could ask for more?

Hikers will meet in front of 37 Bartlett St. at 9:30. (Yes, I know that's early, but the parking lot at the trailhead gets full quickly, and we have to be there early.) Bring sunscreen, sturdy shoes and water. Rain cancels.

For further information, call Clint at (415) 271-2780.

# July 12—Mount Tamalpais Sun and Redwood Hike

Now that we've hiked Steep Ravine, let's do a higher altitude hike on Mt. Tamalpais as well. Just a half hour north of San Francisco, Mt. Tam offers some of the most spectacular hikes in the Bay Area. This particular hike will be about 4 miles long, with modest gradient increases and decreases. The first half will be in exposed areas offering sweeping views of the Pacific and San Francisco off in the distance. We'll loop back through the redwoods, in shade. Pack a lunch, water, sunscreen and a jacket (in case it gets breezy). We will meet in front of the GBF center (37 Bartlett St.) at 10:00 a.m. and carpool out. Rain cancels. For further information, call Clint at (415) 271-2780.

# September Retreat to Focus on Spiritual Friendship

BY MICHAEL MURPHY, RETREAT COORDINATOR

Spiritual Friendship (kalyana mitta) will be the focus of GBF's 17th Annual Fall Retreat at Vajrapani Institute in Boulder Creek (the Santa Cruz Mountains), scheduled for September 19-21 (Friday evening through Sunday afternoon), 2008. Last year we returned to GBF's original tradition of a "teacherless" retreat, striking a lovely balance of contemplative and interactive time. Members of our community shared their unique expressions of the dharma, and are invited to do so again this year. It's sangha as teacher! Please consider joining us at beautiful Vajrapani for a weekend of intimate connection. The flyer/registration form will soon appear on the website.

# How to Reach Us

www.gaybuddhist.org

For general questions about GBF write to: inquiry@gaybuddhist.org

To contact Program Committee with suggestions for speakers and comments: www.gaybuddhist.org/programs

Mail correspondence:

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Address changes or to subscribe or unsubscribe to the newsletter: mailinglist@gaybuddhist.org

GBF Newsletter. Send submissions to:

editor@gaybuddhist.org

#### **GBF Yahoo Discussion Group**

There is now a GBF discussion group for the general membership (and others) on Yahoo. Join the discussion at:

www.groups.yahoo.com/group/gaybuddhistfellowship

# Calendar

### **Sunday Sittings**

#### 10:30 am to 12 noon

Every Sunday at 10:30am we meditate together for 30 minutes, followed by a talk or discussion till 12 noon. Everyone is then welcome to stay and socialize over refreshments till approximately 12:30, after which those who are interested usually go somewhere local for lunch. Our sittings are held at the San Francisco Buddhist Center, 37 Bartlett Street. (Look for the red door near 21st St between Mission and Valencia Streets).

**MUNI:** 14 Mission or 49 Van Ness-Mission, alight at 21st St, walk 1/2 block.

**BART:** 24th and Mission, walk 31/2 blocks. **PARKING:** on street (meters free on Sundays) or in adjacent New Mission Bartlett Garage. The Center is handicapped accessible.

## Sunday Speakers

#### June I Lee Lipp

Lee Lipp, Ph.D., has a therapy practice in San Francisco and supervises at Haight Ashbury Psychological Services. She has been a member of Thich Nhat Hahn's Order of Interbeing, practicing Zen and Vipassana, since 1990. She is the Diversity/Outreach Coordinator at the San Francisco Zen Center. She teaches "Transforming Depression" classes in venues that include Spirit Rock Meditation Center, Insight Meditation Socety, Zen Hospice Project, Tassajara Mountain Center, and the San Francisco Zen Center. She is presently teaching for the San Francisco Mental Health Association and the San Francisco Department of Mental Health.

#### June 8 Jangchup Phelgyal

Shortly following the Stonewall Riot, Hawkins Mitchell, Ph.D., joined and was active in the Gay Liberation Front. He returned to the Bay Area and worked with Robert Bly in the Men's Movement. After designing and for four years heading The Dream Lodge Experience (a support to men seeking to integrate their spiritual, erotic and emotional selves), on his forty-eighth birthday, while attending a weekend lecture on Buddhism, he was allowed to take Refuge. Three years later, he received full ordination at Ganden Shartse Monastery in Southern India. Under his ordination name, Jangchup Phelgyal currently practices at Vajrapani Retreat Center where he lives in a trailer with his dog, Bodhisattva.

#### June 15 Tom Thurston

Tom Thurston grew up in a small town in east Tennessee and spent 15 years in a religious order of the Roman Catholic Church called the Christian Brothers. His degrees are in theology. He taught high school religion for six years in the Mid

west, and then went to Manila, the Philippines, to teach theology at a university run by the Brothers there. He came to the Bay Area in 1982 to do doctoral studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, where he completed a Ph.D. and wrote his dissertation on Homosexuality and Roman Catholic Sexual Ethics. During this time he came out of the closet and left the Brothers.

He remained an academic at heart. He saw how people who left the religion of their youth often put together a hodgepodge of incomplete ideas that ended up working no better for them than the religion they left behind. He thought he could make the whole process uncomplicated. To address this issue he wrote a book called *The Meaning of Life in Three Easy Steps*. Currently he is looking for an agent for his book.

June 22	Dharma Duo	
Mark Tilley and Marty Dooley		
June 29	Open Discussion	
luly 6	To Be Announced	

#### July 13 Joe Rodriquez

Joe Rodriguez is a Zen Buddhist practitioner who is curious about applying Buddhist principles to all areas of human life. Following the teachings of Suzuki Roshi, Reb Anderson, Jack Kornfield, and Pema Chodron, Joe practices conducting his everyday activities—including participating in a business meeting, going shopping, sitting in zazen, discussing politics—in a more mindful and an embodied way.

#### July 20 Ray Dyer

Long-time GBF member Ray Dyer has been a professional body worker and caregiver for over 20 years, and has led many mindful touch workshops during that time. He pioneered using massage to care for men with HIV, and volunteered on the AIDS ward at SF General every week for seven years. He will lead us in an experiential, diad structured, very safe and supportive process exploring touch as a foundation for mindfulness and community. This will be an especially gracious space for anyone who has any longstanding issues about touch to ease towards healing.

#### July 27 Poetry Day with Dean Bellerby

Back by popular demand, Poetry Day is an invitation to members to bring a reading from a favorite poem or prose selection that captures something you want to share with the men of GBF.

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by the power and truth of this practice, may all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness, may all be free from sorrow and the causes of sorrow, may all never be separated from the sacred happiness which is without sorrow, and may all live in equanimity, without too much attachment or too much aversion, and live believing in the equality of all that lives.

—gbf pedication of Merit