



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2009 NEWSLETTER

The gay Buddhist fellowship supports Buddhist practice in the gay men's community. It is a forum 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.

“There’s No Me In This”: Service and the Larkin Street Youth Center

Every month, a group of volunteers from GBF cooks a meal at the Larkin Street Youth Center. On May 24, 2009, two representatives of the Larkin Street Youth Center, Megan and Beck, shared their stories with GBF.

PETER: Today I'm very pleased to have some representatives from the Larkin Street Youth Center, and Clint Seiter is actually the main person who is our liaison, so I'm going to turn it over to Clint. We have Megan and Beck today. And so I'll turn it over to Clint, to sort of say a little bit about what we do there.

CLINT: Just to give a very brief history of the project: It must have been like about 15 years ago, which is incredible to think about, that we started preparing a meal once a month. At that time it was at Hamilton Family Center, which was a shelter for homeless families. And GBF would provide us with some money and we'd plan a menu and we'd cook it and present it to the people who were living there. The Hamilton Family Center closed about three years ago. So we had this project going, we had the team together, and we all were very much enthusiastic about it. We wanted to continue it. Fortunately, we were able to hook up the Hamilton family with the Larkin Street Youth Center. And so we just continued doing what we were doing before. Once a month we prepare a meal and we go for the kind of comfort food stuff, like the casseroles and the pasta dishes and the side dishes and salads and cakes and pies, everything made from scratch. And it's been a real pleasure working with the Larkin Street residents. You get a lot of youthful energy. You walk in there, and you just feel a really good sense of energy and that something good is happening here.

And so, that's basically it. We've been doing this, like I said, for I guess about three years. And it's been a joy working with the volunteers doing this, and I want to single out Kei Matsuda. Kei has been an incredible contribution to the group. He buys the groceries, and he brings all these great supplies to help prepare the meals. So I just want to single him out. But I also acknowledge the efforts of the other people that participate in this project. I'll turn it over to our speakers now.

MEGAN: My name is Megan, and I have worked at Larkin Street for almost four years now. I just want to start by just saying thank you so much for what you bring to our community. For those of you who haven't been to the Larkin, that's where the meal that Clint's talking about is served every month. It's a 40-bed emergency shelter for 18 to 24 year olds. They can stay there for a maximum of 120 nights, and they start getting case management services while they're there, with the hope of transitioning them into either

transitional housing or independent living, whatever their goals may be. And it can be a really intense environment to be in, for the young people particularly. For the people from all different walks of life, in all various levels of crisis, various different states of mental health, different situations of substance use. And they are in close quarters. They don't have a lot of privacy. It's very dorm style, you know, little twin beds next to each other. And it's hard. It's really a lot for anyone to be in that situation. And I think there's something really wonderful and powerful about them seeing people in the community care about them in the way that your group coming to this shelter shows them that. And that's more than even I can convey as a staff person who works there every day. The act of volunteering in this way and giving your time, and wanting to be there, not even knowing who they are, where they're from. Especially for many of them who have not had that experience with the most important adults in their lives. So you're strangers, and you care about them, you want to break bread with them, you want to share yourselves with them, and many of them have not yet had that experience.

So I know, in one way, it's like one meal a month. But in another way, it's incredibly powerful and meaningful. Even as a staff person there, to see the way that the young people talk about the meals, get excited about you coming, are aware they have something to look forward to, knowing you'll be there—all of those kinds of things. And I think building that consistency and that stability and even just something as simple as knowing what day of the week you're going to be there—stuff like that, in really chaotic times, it can be especially grounding. So having said all of that, thank you. If you haven't been, I encourage you to go. I think it's an incredible place and working with these young people and getting to learn about them and have them share their stories is what's kept me there, you know, for four years. It's incredibly rewarding to have the opportunity just to hear, you know, to bear witness to what they're going through, and to be able to be a person to share that with them and be part of their lives in that way.

So Beck can give the best testimony to his experience in particular and then give you some understanding of what it looks like to go through Larkin Street. But I can give you a little bit of history. I think it's probably more meaningful to hear from him, but I can kind of give you a quick run-down.

Larkin Street was started in 1984, in the Tenderloin area, out of concern by community members—church, businesses—with the amount of young people engaging in the street economy there during that time. And so they came together, and they started talking about these services. In 1987, the first drop-in center was opened and on its first day, it served eight youths in that neighborhood. And it started like that, just a little store-front drop-in center.

Our organization has grown tremendously over the past 25 years, and even in the four years that I've been there. We have 25

programs now, at 13 different locations. So that's everything from emergency housing, medical clinic, drop-in centers, transitional housing. We've really grown, and we've kind of become the leader in being able to provide those services for young people all the way across the board. Last year we served over 3,500 young people. And definitely the expectation for this year is that there's just more and more need that's going to continue to grow.

I personally work at our employment and education center. It's called Higher Up. I've had a few different positions while I've been at Larkin Street, but I'm currently overseeing an internship program that Beck actually graduated from, where we place young people in the community at different businesses, non-profits, who are willing and interested in providing our young people 20 hours of work a week. We provide them the stipend for that work. And then I'm able to provide some support around that,



both to the supervisor and the issues that may come up working with our young people, and to the young people, whatever issues are going to come up for them in the work place.

So we have pretty comprehensive services as far as all of that goes. We have an outreach team. We have an HIV-prevention department. So we do testing at our clinic, and then a lot of outreach. We go to other clinics and try to engage young people in conversation. We operate under a harm-reduction model, which means non-judgment, client-centered, "Tell me what you want and let's see how we can get you there." And then as far as "harm-reduction" goes, it's exactly what it sounds like. "Let's see how we can make it a little less heavy or hard or dangerous than it is." We definitely have found that our clients, leading their own journey and identifying their own goals and telling us is much more effective than our coming in and saying, "You know, your life would be better if you did things this way." That's not practical or reasonable. I don't want to be told that. I know that, and it takes time. It takes a lot of time. And I'm going to hand it over to Beck. But I think Beck is an incredible example of what is possible. I will say that while Larkin Street provided some structural possibilities for Beck, that Beck's story is uniquely Beck's. That this has everything to do with this young man and who he is and what he brings to his life. And I've told him this before, but mostly with Beck, and with all of our clients,

it's really just bearing witness to their journey. There's not that much we do. I can give referrals and I can give support and I can sit there. But nobody does the work except for the young person. So I'm going to let Beck talk.

BECK: So my name is Beck. It's been an interesting path for me. I came to Larkin Street about a year and a half ago. I couldn't live with my parents any more. Things were very difficult. My mother supported a family of four on minimum wage. And I decided I couldn't live the type of life that they were living any more. Some friends brought me to Larkin Street, and I felt really comfortable right away. There was a staff person there who identified as gender queer, and that made me feel very comfortable, because I was going through my own experience. I didn't have words or language to put to it, to describe to people what was happening with me. But I'd never felt right trying to be a girl. I'd never been particularly feminine, and I could never live up to the expectations of how society says a girl's supposed to act.

During my time at Larkin Street, I ended up getting kicked out of the living situation that I set up for myself when I first came to San Francisco, and I went to their emergency shelter. It was hard for me at that point in time, because I wasn't in a good state of mind. My thinking was driving me berserk. And there were a lot of people, as Megan said, and it was hard for me to handle. I had a lot of issues around violence, and there was a lot of yelling, and if somebody even raised their voice in my presence I would check out completely. I was here physically, but mentally I was gone.

I was grateful for one thing about Larkin, which is that they always saw the innate health in me. They never looked at me as somebody who couldn't achieve anything. And when they were able to see the innate health in me, I came to them motivated. When they didn't treat me like I wasn't going to accomplish anything, I came to them and told them what I wanted to accomplish and asked them how they could help me and what I would need to do to receive that help. And I pulled through, case management meeting after case management meeting.

Larkin is one of those programs that can change your life, but only if you're willing to help yourself. They give you a hand up, not a hand-out. I went through the transitional housing programs, and during that time, Larkin did something for me that really changed my life. Because while they were helping my physical needs be met with transitional housing, they gave me an internship that changed my life. They gave me an internship that helped me work on my emotional, psycho-social aspect of things. It was through that amalgamation of having my physical needs met to where I could focus on the psycho-social and the emotional in order to keep up the physical. Because I was unmotivated. I was apathetic. I didn't care if I lived or died. So why would I care about trying to maintain meeting the physical necessities of clothing, shelter and food?

At the internship, I was able to experience something that is so formless it's hard to put words to. But it helped me see past all my stories. It helped me see past my thinking, and where that can get me. No thought is real, and when I was able to see that and drop my stories of other people, then I was able to project out love and kindness and joy on to others. Thinking still happens, but the difference today is that I'm able, if an emotion arises, I'm able to sit there and see if it's true. And most of the time it's not.

I stopped trying to be right and learned how to just be happy. And that was a huge difference for me, because I was a person who always needed to be right. The only thing that I had in my entire life, growing up, was that I could prove that I was the most logical, could make the most sense, could justify anything and prove I was right. And I was miserable. And it stopped feeling right to be miserable.

I did so well at that internship because I started getting healthy. I started getting free, and I started getting motivated to take charge of my life. I decided I wanted my pink slip back. I realized that I was the one creating my reality. And if I was the one creating my reality, it was going to be a kick-ass reality.

I did so well that my supervisor spoke to Larkin Street about extending my internship on the possibility of getting the education I would need to be certified. And today I'm a certified domestic-violence facilitator for batterers and prevention programs in the state of California. We are willing to work with victims and by all means help them from what they've been through, but it's really important to work with the offender, the batterer, because these are the people that go back into the communities and if something isn't done re-offend and hurt more people. And so we work with them to find their own health, and be able to see through their thinking and where it's taking them. Because if they're there, most of them see that their best thinking has gotten them in jail and gotten people they love really hurt, and that there has to be something better out there, and they just don't know what it is yet.

While I was at Larkin Street, I also obtained my GED. I'm the first person in my family to ever go to college, and I'm starting in fall. And they told me that that was going to be impossible because I had a learning disability, they told me. I hadn't learned to tie my shoes until I was 18 years old. They told me that I had no fine motor skills whatsoever, and that I would be lucky if I could ever live a life as a functional adult, with the combination of physical issues that I had and the emotional state of mind that I was in. I'm supposed to be locked up, doing ten-to-life right now. And I'm not. When I stopped listening to people telling me what I can and can't do, and decided to just see what is, I found out that I can tie my shoes, I can go to college. It doesn't mean that some things don't take me a little bit longer time than others. But what's time? Time is also just thought. It's not real, either. If I don't have a reference point of how long things take other people, then I just am. And this is what I'm doing and how long it takes me.

I moved from the transitional housing program in February of my own free will. It's generally a two-year program, but I had achieved such a point of health that I decided to take the savings that I had built up with the transitional housing program. They charge you 30% of your income as rent, and then they give it back to you when you leave the program. And I had saved up just enough for a deposit on an apartment. So I decided to leave early and give that space to someone else, who was in more desperate need of it than I. And so I went from being a homeless, emotional, suicidal brat to living independently, having my GED, going on to college, facilitating batterers and prevention groups. and watching my life change there and the lives of people around me change every single day. And I would not have had that opportunity if it wasn't for Larkin. And even if I had come across that opportunity, I wouldn't have been in a state to be able to keep it. Because

when the physical needs aren't met, I would be more concerned about finding my next meal than showing up and doing what I needed to do. And my emotional health wasn't even something that I knew was important to me. And Larkin was able to help me do that by just seeing what was in me all along.

PETER: Thank you both so much. I had one brief question. And I'm sure that people also have other questions. But is Larkin Street specifically for LGBT youth, or it's open to all youth?

MEGAN: Any young person, aged 12 to 24, can walk-in, anybody who's under 25.

PETER: And you mentioned that the housing—the emergency housing—is for 18 to 24 year olds.

MEGAN: Yes. So we have two separate shelters. One is for under-age youth. That's our Diamond Youth Shelter. That's being rebuilt right now. And then the Larkin is for over-age youth. And then we do have a housing program that is LGBTQ-specific, called the Castro Youth Housing Initiative. That's also transitional housing and it's similar to what Beck referred to, as far as you get your own place, and then you're expected to pay 30% of your income towards rent, and then at the end of your two years there, you get that money back. And there's case-management throughout that, so they're working on educational and employment goals and all that throughout that time.

Q: A few years ago, I looked into being in a so-called Mentor Program. I was trying to do it, but some difficulties took place in my life, and I just couldn't be in it, so I had to stop. Do you still have that?

MEGAN: Absolutely.

Q: I might be interested to get back into that.

MEGAN: Yes. So we have our general volunteer program. And then a component of that is the mentor program. Anybody who comes and volunteers can be placed at any of our programs. So you could be working at the drop-in center, playing ping-pong, doing art, just hanging out, or helping with free meals or whatever. And then specifically with the mentorship program, it's matching up a young person with an adult in the community, and that relationship, I think, is one that's really special and unique, and sort of what you get to build there. You're not a staff person. It's more than a volunteer. You really become a part of this person's life in a way. I know a lot of our mentors who take our young people out to have a meal, or to the movies. Or a lot of times we get tickets to shows and performances and stuff like that. Just being a part of their lives in that way, as a caring adult, and being someone outside of the staff at Larkin Street, to play a role in their life. And there is a kind of matching process involved in that, so that, you know, it makes sense.

Q: I am very impressed, Beck. In my spiritual path and many

spiritual and religious paths that I've been part of, service is a core part of all of them. And you're living that service, and I'm sure you'd be the first one to say, you know, I remember hearing you say, that you've received more than you've given. And I know that's true for many. And yet, in all the spiritual paths that I'm familiar with that talk about service, doing it quietly, without ego, really seems to be the key. So I find I'm able to talk about what I'm doing because it's not quite a service. It becomes ego-oriented at times when it goes over the line. And your presentation was so free of ego! And it was quiet, even though you were sharing a lot of your own personal issues and experiences and joys and pain. And that subtlety was so important for me to hear, that you could be quiet and yet not so quiet, in a sense. And still be very effective.

BECK: That's because there's no me in this. How could I not, after the experiences that I've had, how can I not want to do whatever it takes and bring this to other people. By doing this presentation, I'm helping Larkin Street, my agency, and you guys help more people. So it's continuing the paying for the love and compassion and caring.

Q: Hmm. You're a Buddhist. Did you know that?

Q: I actually was going to ask if you have been following the dharma yourself because I'm new to the dharma, and you just inspired me to keep going, keep going, keep going.

BECK: You know, I've heard of some of the basic principles of Buddhism. I'm not really deep into study of it. But there are just some things that just make sense.

HOWARD: Well, both of you, thank you so much for being here today and for offering the time. And, Beck, for your vulnerability, open heart, transparency with us this day. And, first of all, I was just impressed with your intellect. And you're so articulate. And your thoughts flow so freely. And you articulate them with such clarity. I just wanted to validate that.

BECK: I hadn't noticed.

HOWARD: You're in, man. Yeah. Whew. You do really well. And I'm going to ask your permission for even more vulnerability.

BECK: Oh. There is no question that's off limits.

HOWARD: Well, this may just touch that.

BECK: There's nothing that anyone could ask me that I'm uncomfortable with. And I look forward to somebody asking me something that I am, because that means that that's some thinking that I haven't dealt with yet, that I wasn't aware of. So then I get to deal with that and become free of that, as well.

HOWARD: Sheesh. Will you be our teacher every week? My question is this. Where are you at in your journey with your queer gender identity?

BECK: I've been on testosterone for eight months now. And I'm saving up to get my top surgery. Umm, for those of you who aren't aware, that's a surgery that removes the breast tissue. Umm, I'm living stealth with my room mates right now. Actually, they have no idea of how I was born. At all. And most of the people that I interact with on a daily basis who didn't know me, either early on or before my transition, have not the slightest idea.

HOWARD: Wow. I want to thank you for that. Just one other comment. You know, each time I walk in there to help volunteer with providing a meal, you walk down these stairs and there's anywhere from five to ten young people walking around and you get to traverse through the group and get to the kitchen in the

going to learn from them, etc., etc.?" But Beck, I was extremely impressed by your presentation. I've listened to a lot of people come here and done a lot of formal sitting, and a lot of Buddhist this or Buddhist that. But your direct and personal experience by not identifying your thoughts as reality, and not identifying with your story, and stepping out of that story, is extremely impressive. More than many of the other "senior" Buddhist practitioners I've seen come here. So, thank you.

BECK: Thanks.

PETER: I'm sure there are lots of questions of how many of us are inspired to give more, I think. Is there a web site?



back. And as you walk down the stairs they all look at you and they think, "Oh, here comes the gay Buddhist..." That's my projection. That's my shit. Does the fact that we are gay and Buddhist stir conversation, curiosity, interest?

BECK: Well, my experience may be different than some of the other clients. I can only speak for me. But, for me, I actually wasn't aware at first. You know, because we have volunteers through lots of different organizations. It was only through my conversations with one of the people who was baking the cake that I found out that you were the gay Buddhists. And, for me, that was beneficial, being that there is a portion of the community in the shelters that is LGBT. And so, for me, it was a positive experience that I could have conversations about some of the things that I was experiencing and going through. As far as that goes, that some of these youth are comfortable—I wasn't in a state of mind then where I was comfortable talking to the regular staff about it. I was having issues because I was identifying as gender queer at that point in time, and they were making me stay in the girls' dorm. They said it was for safety reasons and blah-de-blah-de-blah-de. And I'm not saying that I can't see the wisdom in that. But it was a difficult thing in mind for me. And so, to be able to be around positive queer-identified adults, to set a good example, was beneficial for me.

Q: Well, this is just to both of you, to Megan and Beck. When I came in this morning I said, "Oh, young people—What am I

MEGAN: There is a web site if you just want to learn more: larksinstreetyouth.org. And then I would say, more specifically, getting in touch with our volunteer program manager, who I think Clint is connected to, Liz. She does all the placement. And if you're interested in that mentor program in particular, or just knowing how to get involved with other events and other things, even outside of cooking meals and that.

PETER: Great. And, Clint, I have had the pleasure of going to Larkin once, but how do we get involved?

CLINT: Well, I'll tell you. First, I just want to add one thing. I'm this middle-aged guy that hangs out with a bunch of other middle-aged people. And I think it's true for a lot, if not most, of the volunteers. It's great to have young people in my life through doing this. You really do see things from a different perspective when you get that youthful energy there. So it's been a real delight to feed on that energy. As far as volunteering, just approach me. We do kind of rotate the volunteers because we only need a certain number of people. We have more volunteers than that. So there would be a matter of rotation. The good news is there is a very strong possibility we'll be doing this twice a month. And Bill Webber, if he can get this off the ground, will be meeting the other Saturday. So that will open up the opportunity to volunteer as well. But meanwhile, just give me your name and a telephone number, and I'll put you on a volunteer list and I'll get back to you.

PETER: Any other comments or questions for our guests, our teachers?

Q: One of the most moving moments I had in your whole presentation was your look at Megan. When you finished, you just looked at her with such love it brought tears to my eyes. Thank you so much. You are what we call a "bodhisattva." And you're going to have to find out on your own what that means. That's not a bad word. ■

GBF

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GBF Fall Retreat Registration is Now Open

The Gay Buddhist Fellowship's 18th Annual Fall Retreat is scheduled for Friday evening, September 18th, through Sunday afternoon, September 20th. We return to beautiful Vajrapani Institute, nestled among redwoods and streams in the Santa Cruz mountains near Boulder Creek.

This weekend blends elements of a traditional, silent retreat—sitting and walking meditation—with interactive experiences presented by sangha members. We draw on the individual and collective wisdom of the sangha as our “teacher.” It is an opportunity to deepen both our practices and our connections to one another. This year's theme is “Metta-morphosis: Cultivating Loving-kindness Toward Ourselves and Others.” Come join us in this exploration!

Registration is open. A printable PDF version of the registration form, which includes information about cost, accommodations and scholarships, is available at <http://gaybuddhist.org/retreat.pdf>. The registration deadline is Monday, September 7. If you have further questions or feel inspired to be part of the program by sharing a talent or skill, you may contact the retreat coordinator, Michael Murphy, at gbfretreat@att.net.

Mount Tam Steep Ravine Hike

Come join us on August 22 in another GBF summer tradition: the Mount Tam Steep Ravine hike. This is a beautiful shady hike under redwoods and along a creek, ending in Stinson Beach. The hike (about three miles) is all downhill; we will arrange it so that we'll drive back up to the trailhead afterwards, so you get to see spectacular scenery at an easy pace. While in Stinson Beach, we'll have lunch in the Sand Dollar restaurant. We will meet at the GBF center (37 Bartlett St) at 9:00 am to carpool. (Yes, that's early for a Saturday morning, but the Mt Tam parking spaces disappear quickly.) Rain cancels. For more information, you can call Clint Seiter at (415) 271-2780.

Annual GBF Summer Picnic

Come celebrate summer with fellow GBFers at GBF's annual summer potluck picnic. This year the picnic will be held on Saturday, August 8, in Golden Gate Park, at Tables 15 and 16, Speedway Meadow (John F. Kennedy Drive and 25th Avenue). People are encouraged to start coming at around 11:00 a.m. (We'll start eating about 12:00 noon.) A barbecue grill should be available, but better check with Clint Seiter (415-271-2780) closer to the date to make sure that it's in working order. Bring a dish or beverage you can share with others. Afterwards, there are a variety of possible hikes available for those interested. For further information call Clint Seiter or email him at clint_seiter@hotmail.com.

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

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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/gay-buddhistfellowship

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 3 1/2 blocks. **PARKING:** on street (meters free on Sundays) or in adjacent New Mission Bartlett Garage. The Center is handicapped accessible.

Sunday Speakers

August 2 Dean Bellerby

What would it be like to stop interfering with our experience? To stop filtering each thing that happens to us through our history (why) and our future (what if), but to relax and experience it fully as it happens? Dean Bellerby is bringing this question to his Integral Coaching® practice and 'A Year To Live' groups, as well as to his own exploration of what it means to be fully human, fully spirit, and fully queer in the world. Dean has been a born-again Christian (including participating in an ex-gay ministry), an arguer with God, a Buddhist, and a Diamond Approach practitioner. He hasn't got a clue who he is now.

August 9 Teng How Bae

Teng How Bae is a Tai-Qi master teaching every weekend in Dolores Street Park in San Francisco. He discovered Tai-Qi back in the early 80's while running with Front Runners. He started his first class in South City and six months later he was hooked.

Teng How has been practicing daily for over 20 years. Of Tai-Qi he says, "Tai-Qi has been giving me a life force in many directions, e.g., focus, centering, calmness, alertness, energy, and body circulation. Tai-Qi is like food that I have to consume every day."

Teng How has been the GBF Treasurer for over 17 years, among his numerous other services to the sangha and larger community. His presentation will include beginner movements.

August 16 Open Discussion

Following our sitting meditation and tapping into our local wisdom, a facilitated small group Open Discussion will guide the dharma teaching period. Open Discussion becomes a prime opportunity to deepen our relationships with sangha members.

August 23 Jeffery Schneider

Jeffery Schneider is a priest at San Francisco Zen Center, where he has practiced since 1978. He began the Zen Center's program for people in recovery in 2000 and has taught and led retreats on Buddhism and Recovery in various places in California, Texas, Missouri and North Carolina. He is a member of the California Association of Alcohol/Drug Educators.

August 30 Shahara Godfrey

Shahara Godfrey has followed the teachings of the Buddha for over fourteen years with her primary practices in compassion and social activism. She has completed the Community Dharma Leaders training and the Path of Engagement programs at Spirit Rock. Shahara also is a teacher at the East Bay Meditation Center.

September 6 Inspirational Readings

Bring a favorite inspirational reading to share with the sangha following our regular 30 minute sitting. Keep it to 1-2 minutes in length. We welcome a brief and succinct personal commentary (1 minute) revealing how the reading you've selected to share has impacted your practice, your life. The genre of inspirational readings is limitless. In the past some have brought songs! You may bring poetry, scripture, prose, etc—anything you have read that is a source of insight.

September 13 Carol Newhouse

Carol Osmer Newhouse has studied Insight Meditation for more than twenty years and has been teaching for ten. Her root teacher is Ruth Denison, who was empowered by the great meditation master U Ba Khin of Burma. She has also studied with Dr. Rina Sircar at CIIS and Dr. Thynn Thynn in Daily Life Practice. She is the founding teacher of the Lesbian Buddhist Sangha in Berkeley.

September 20 Open Discussion

September 27 Barry Friedman

Barry has been studying Buddhism for twenty years, practicing meditation, prayer and martial arts. With graduate degrees in psychology, divinity studies and South Asian languages and civilizations, he combines a practice of depth psychotherapy with a study in the history of religions and world mythology. Barry is a licensed psychotherapist practicing in Oakland. He also teaches "Archetypal Mythology and Dreamwork" and facilitates a speaking circle at the Sophia Center of Holy Names University. His talk is called "Bringing the Shadow into the Light."

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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 dedication of merit