



# Gay Buddhist Fellowship

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2012 NEWSLETTER

## Freedom and Happiness

BY LARRY ROBINSON

**Larry Robinson has been practicing meditation since 1969. He's a student of both the Zen tradition and the Vipassana tradition through Spirit Rock. He's a certified psychotherapist whose work focuses on eco-psychology. Larry served on the Sebastopol City Council from 1998 until recently, including two terms as mayor. Larry's passion is the restoration of the oral tradition of poetry. He gave the following talk at GBF on February 19, 2012.**

**T**hank you all for inviting me to be with you this morning. It's always a pleasure and a deep gift to sit with people like you. "You don't have to be good." These are the words of Mary Oliver.

You do not have to be good.  
You do not have to walk on your knees  
For a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves.  
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on.  
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
are moving across the landscapes,  
over the prairies and the deep trees,  
the mountains and the rivers.  
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,  
are heading home again.  
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—  
over and over announcing your place  
in the family of things

So Mary's words point at what I want to talk with you about this morning: freedom and happiness. I think that there are some seriously misleading ideas and understandings of what freedom is in our society and what leads to happiness. Probably the most common understanding of freedom—and the most deluded—is the idea that freedom means to do whatever you feel like. When you really think about it, doing whatever you feel like is another name for addiction, isn't it? Which may be the greatest tyranny there is. More than something else or somebody else controlling us, an inner-compulsion, unexamined, that runs our lives, is the greatest tyranny. Freedom is really about expressing our true nature, and this is where happiness comes in. We are taught to believe, in our consumer-

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.

ist culture, that happiness is something that can be attained or achieved if we can only have that—whatever it is out there: a certain lifestyle, a certain partner or other, a certain status in society, a certain amount of money. If we are just healthy enough, or if we floss our teeth enough, or exercise enough or whatever it is—something out there, we’re taught, is what leads to happiness.

I was recently in a little country in the Himalayas called Bhutan—one of the few remaining Himalayan Buddhist kingdoms, and there, they are engaged in a very interesting project. They call it the gross domestic happiness project. And this is kind of a tongue-in-cheek, but also very serious, contrast to how we, in the West, measure our quality of life, which is by gross domestic product. In other words, how much of the world’s resources we are able to consume is our standard for how we’re doing as a people. In Bhutan, a generation ago they saw that they were coming into relationship with the outside world whether they wanted it or not. They saw that television was coming, roads were coming, consumer products were coming, and the question was not whether we keep it out or not, but how we can hold what’s coming our way in a way that doesn’t destroy the basis of our culture. So the previous king decreed that they would measure their progress toward development by a new measure called gross domestic happiness, which is a whole series of indices, but includes factors like education level, protection in the environment, protection of the local indigenous culture, access to healthcare, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, those kinds of things. But they also understood that these things did not cause happiness—they were the pillars of happiness, but not the cause of happiness. There, they practice Vajrayana Buddhism, like they do in Tibet. And the understanding there is that happiness is something that is inherent in our very existence—what we call in the Buddhist tradition *bodhichitta*, the Buddha mind, the awakened mind—and that without the conditions for the pillars of happiness, it’s hard to do the work, it’s hard to do the practices that will facilitate the realization of freedom and happiness. If you’re struggling just to keep a roof over your head, or dealing with poverty on a day-to-day basis, or political oppression, or living in a degraded environment, it’s very hard to focus your efforts on the practice. But they understand that it is the practice that leads to the realization of freedom and happiness.

We are so blessed in our culture. Look at all of us here on a Sunday morning. We have the gift of the leisure of being able to sit together, to deepen our practice, to share this depth of experience. It’s a rare thing. It’s said that only once in a hundred thousand births does one have the opportunity to take birth in a human body. And it’s only once in every 10,000 human incarnations that one has the opportunity to hear the dharma. And it’s only once in every thousand of those incarnations that one has the opportunity to find a sangha. So we are blessed; we are truly gifted to be able to hear the dharma, to practice it, and to practice together.

In the Vajrayana tradition of Buddhism they also say that we are born again and again in a state of delusion because of three factors: greed, hatred, and ignorance. And these are all based in a misunderstanding of our true nature. Existence itself consists of four characteristics: one is impermanence; another is no self; and the third is *dukkha*, or suffering. By impermanence, what we mean is that there is nothing that exists

in itself, and nothing that is not in constant flux. And when you really meditate on this profoundly, you understand what a great blessing this is. Our conditioned mind wants to hold on to things and make them permanent and solid. But holding on to what is not permanent is the very root of our suffering, as is believing in the existence of a separate self. If we believe that we are real, then there is something for us to defend. And as we defend our opinions about who we are against other people’s opinions about who we are or who we think we ought to be, we build the illusion of solidity, which is always slipping away from us. And the more we try to hold onto that, the more we are grasping for something permanent in ourselves or in the world around us, the more suffering we create for ourselves and those around us.

Freedom is our natural state. But the realization of our freedom doesn’t come without the practice that we do here when we sit. The sitting, whether you’re working with a mantra or your breath or a koan or your posture—whatever your practice is on the cushion—this is practice for the real practice, which comes when we get up from our cushion and go to our place of work, or get in our car and get in traffic, and our reactions immediately arise to “somebody is doing something that threatens my sense of who I am or where I ought to be or how I ought to be able to be in the world,” and our reactions of anger or resentment or grasping arise, and we lose our equanimity.

So the practice of the practice really comes when we get up from our cushion, when we get out there in the world and we remember. As that driver is cutting us off, we’re noticing our reaction of rage, and just in the noticing of that is a moment of enlightenment. That’s where our freedom is. Freedom is not acting on our impulse to blow the horn or give that guy the finger, but to notice our reaction and choose not to act it out.

The four great wisdom practices of this tradition—the *paramitas*, they’re called: loving-kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity—lead to the realization of freedom. The loving-kindness practice is really the practice of blessing. And blessing is something that comes to you by doing. As we bless our world and our fellow pilgrims in this world, we are blessed in the process. In the words of John O’Donahue:

On the day when  
the weight deadens  
on your shoulders  
and you stumble,  
may the clay dance  
to balance you.

And when your eyes  
freeze behind  
the grey window  
and the ghost of loss  
gets in you,  
may a flock of colours,  
indigo, red, green,  
and azure blue  
come to awaken in you  
a meadow of delight.

When the canvas frays  
in the currach of thought

and a stain of ocean  
blackens beneath you,  
may there come across the waters  
a path of yellow moonlight  
to bring you safely home.

May the nourishment of the earth be yours,  
may the clarity of light be yours,  
may the fluency of the ocean be yours,  
may the protection of the ancestors be yours.  
And so may a slow  
wind work these words  
of love around you,  
an invisible cloak  
to mind your life.

So as I say these words to you, there is a blessing that's coming through me—not from me—but through me and to you and beyond to wherever you choose to continue that flow. But as I deliver it, I feel my heart softening and opening, and that is the blessing for me. The practice of loving-kindness is to bestow blessings. And in its simplest form, the practice, traditionally, begins with myself:

May I be happy.  
May I be free from fear and danger.  
May I be at peace.

May my friends and loved ones be happy.  
May they be free from fear and danger.  
May they be at peace.

And then we take it a little bit further to those people we have some trouble with. Maybe even with our enemies.

May my enemies be happy.  
May they be free from fear and danger.  
May my enemies be at peace.

And that's a difficult one to practice, and when we first start out doing that, we don't really believe it. We may want to. But in the wanting to and in the struggle to offer that blessing to those people we don't want to offer that to, the muscles of our heart begin to relax and soften. And we find all of our resistance coming up and the opportunity to examine our own resistance and become friends with that and soften around that, and eventually you really are able to bless those people that are enemies.

For years, I used to keep Dick Cheney on my altar and offer him that blessing every morning:

May he be happy.  
May he be free of suffering.  
May he be at peace.

And finally we extend that practice to all beings—human, animal, gods and demigods, those born and those yet to be born.

May we all be happy.  
May we all be free of fear and danger and suffering.  
May we all be at peace.

And in doing this, our world becomes a little softer and a little gentler. This is the practice of loving-kindness.

And the practice of compassion is a recognition of our shared suffering, a recognition that whatever depths of sorrow you've known, there is no one else who has also not known

similar suffering. If we truly knew the depths of someone else's suffering, we would not be able to judge or hate anyone.

Naomi Shihab Nye says:

Before you know what kindness really is  
you must lose things,  
feel the future dissolve in a moment  
like salt in a weakened broth.  
What you held in your hand,  
what you counted and carefully saved,  
all this must go so you know  
how desolate the landscape can be  
between the regions of kindness.  
How you ride and ride  
thinking the bus will never stop,  
the passengers eating maize and chicken  
will stare out the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness,  
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho  
lies dead by the side of the road.  
You must see how this could be you,  
how he too was someone  
who journeyed through the night with plans  
and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,  
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.  
You must wake up with sorrow.  
You must speak to it till your voice  
catches the thread of all sorrows  
and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,  
only kindness that ties your shoes  
and sends you out into the day to mail letters and  
purchase bread,  
only kindness that raises its head  
from the crowd of the world to say  
it is I you have been looking for,  
and then goes with you every where  
like a shadow or a friend.

Someone once asked the Dalai Lama about his religion: "What is your religion?" He said one word, "kindness." When you know that we are of one substance, one spirit, like Mary Oliver says in her poem "Wild Geese," "knowing our part in the family of things," our place in the family of things, how can you not feel the suffering of everybody else, and want to do something about it, to ease that suffering? Because that suffering is our suffering. It's not your suffering and my suffering. This is not a zero-sum game that we're in. If we can reduce the suffering of one person, we're reducing the suffering of everyone, including ourselves. And one of the most important ways to reduce suffering is to bring joy into the world.

The third of the *paramitas* is to cultivate joy. And we can do that through music, through poetry, through art, through just experiencing the beauty of this world and the beauty of each other. David Budbill says:

Han Shan, that great and crazy, wonder-filled Chinese poet of a thousand years ago, said:

We're just like bugs in a bowl. All day going around never leaving their bowl.

I say, That's right! Every day climbing up the steep sides, sliding back.

Over and over again. Around and around. Up and back down.

Sit in the bottom of the bowl, head in your hands, cry, moan, feel sorry for yourself.

Or: Look around. See your fellow bugs. Walk around.

Say, Hey, how you doin'?  
Say, Nice Bowl!

If we can just greet our fellow bugs and appreciate this nice bowl and share that joy, we are easing the suffering of all beings.

And the fourth *paramita* is equanimity. That means a balanced spirit, not getting caught up in these contradictions that we often feel we have to choose between: good and bad, pleasure and pain, fame and disgrace, approval and disapproval. Those false choices are what catch us up in hatred, greed, and delusion. So cultivating equanimity in the face of the challenging times that we're in—which certainly we're in these days, aren't we? It seems to be accelerating. So here's a little recipe for equanimity:

Let go of fear and rest in that which is.  
For peace, like love, comes to those who allow it.  
Watch the breath rise and fall.  
Watch the tides rise and fall.  
Watch towers rise and fall.  
Watch walls rise and fall.  
Watch empires rise and fall.  
Watch the breath rise and fall.  
Let go of fear and rest in the arms of the one who has always held you,  
The one who holds oceans and empires and atoms and stars.  
Let go of fear and watch what happens next.

So having some perspective on the flow of events in our own lives can help us remember our equanimity, which is part of our natural inheritance too.

In Buddhism they talk about the three treasures: the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha. And when you take vows in any Buddhist order, you take refuge—a beautiful word, a beautiful concept—you take refuge in the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha. And that means, to me, letting go of this belief in myself that I have to protect and defend and continually reconstruct, and surrendering to the awakening mind. This is really what “Buddha” means. It's not some historical personage or a celestial being that's going to come down with rays of light and save us. It is the awakening mind that is our very nature. And if we can let ourselves be held by that awakening mind, then there is nothing to fear. And taking refuge in the dharma can be interpreted as taking refuge in the teachings, in the traditions, in the wisdom of Buddhism. But another older, deeper meaning for dharma is the nature of things, or things as they are. And to me, this is where I find the greatest comfort: in the surrender to what is, letting go of the resistance to the changing flow of existence,

and holding it with a sense of curiosity. “What will happen next?” We all have our ideas of what will happen next, but truly, we don't know. When we think we have it figured out, life will surprise us. It may surprise us with some wonderful person we're going to meet when we step out the door. It could surprise us with a medical diagnosis we had no idea was coming. When we think we know, we're trying to shape reality to fit our pictures. So if we can cultivate a sense of friendly curiosity, both toward the world and toward what might arise within us in response to that, we find the gateway to our freedom.

And the third treasure, the sangha, is, on one level, the community of fellow practitioners on the path, but it's also the whole community of beings, awakened and unawakened, humans, animals, gods, rocks and trees. All of us are part of that family of things that Mary Oliver speaks of. Gary Snyder, a wonderful Buddhist teacher and poet, has this poem that he titles “For the Children” that I'll end with. He says:

The rising hills, the slopes,  
of statistics  
lie before us.  
the steep climb  
of everything, going up,  
up, as we all  
go down.

In the next century  
or the one beyond that,  
they say,  
are valleys, pastures,  
we can meet there in peace  
if we make it.

To climb these coming crests  
one word to you, to  
you and your children:

stay together  
learn the flowers  
go light

Thank you very much for your time and attention.

**Sangha member:** Since you have the experience of being a mayor, I imagine you're accustomed to people who feel very passionate about difficult issues and conflicts. How do you maintain your equanimity in a bowl like that?

**Larry Robinson:** With great difficulty. But it's when the practice is difficult that we make the most progress, isn't it? There are two practices that were very helpful for me in that. When someone would come to the podium to denounce me or the council for whatever, the practice of loving-kindness, of *Mettā*, was a lifesaver for me: “May you be happy, may you be free from danger and fear, may you be at peace.” So I would pay as deep attention as I could to what was motivating their aggression, and generally it's fear. They're afraid they're not going to be heard or they're not going to get what they want, so they're coming at you with full force. By not resisting it, but by opening my heart to them, I would find, in almost all cases, their anger would dissipate as they felt heard. Not in all cases. But by not resisting, I didn't create more anger and hatred in myself

In the Himalayan Buddhist traditions, you often see images of wrathful deities. And these were originally demons that Padmasambhava, who was an enlightened being who brought Buddhism into the Himalayas, converted. And the way he converted them was by finding what their gift was and enlisting them in the service of the dharma by giving them enough of what they really needed so that they no longer needed to be enemies. And one of the practices in Tibetan Buddhism, called *chöd*, involves imagining the demons that are attacking you, whether they're outside or inside, and inviting them to a feast. For the feast, you cut off your own head—which is, essentially, about letting go of your belief in your own specialness—and turning it upside down into a cauldron, chopping your body into little pieces, putting them in there and making a soup. You cook the soup down and then invite the demons to come and eat until they are full and satisfied. Then you ask them what gifts they bring, and then they serve you. So that's how they serve the dharma.

There is another practice—also based in the Vajrayana tradition—called tonglen, which is almost the opposite of the New Age meditation tradition, which is breathing in the light and breathing out the darkness. In tonglen, you breathe in the anger that is coming your way and you transmute it and you breathe out love. You breathe in the rage, and you breathe out forgiveness. Breathe in fear, breathe out peace. Those practices were life-savers to me in my political work. I'm not by nature an extrovert. I've learned to talk to groups, but it was very difficult and painful for me, so the practice was my refuge as I learned to do that.

**Sangha member:** First of all, thanks so much for coming back, and I feel we've done a disservice by describing you just as someone who recites poetry. You pull wisdom from the poems and weave it together. This is one of the most lucid and succinct dharma talks I've heard. It's wonderful. What do you think is the key to staying mindful of these things that you talk about, understanding reality and who we are and what we're not, on a day-to-day, moment-to-moment basis? How do we stay that way?

**Larry Robinson:** Well you hit the nail on the head there: We don't stay in that; we lose it continually, and we remember it. It's in the remembering of it that we have that moment of enlightenment. So practicing on the cushion—we're counting our breaths, for instance, or whatever our practice is—our minds will drift off into “Oh, what am I going to do for lunch? I should have done this. Oh, I've got to take care of . . .” We're all familiar with what the mind does. That is the nature of the mind, and that's its job. We don't stop it. But what we do when we sit on the cushion is, when we do remember that we're doing it, we notice, “Ah, thinking” or “planning” or “emotions” or “sensation.” It's just in that moment that we call it back and we wake up again. So as we sit on the cushion, we strengthen the recall muscle. And the more we do that, the more likely we are to have that available to us when we're living our daily life, when we're actually in the crucible of interactions.

**Sangha member:** So are you saying that having a regular meditation practice is vital to the remembering muscle?

**Larry Robinson:** I would say it's absolutely vital. Even if you're only sitting ten or fifteen minutes a day, that makes a huge difference in your ability to be mindful during the rest of the day. And over time, it does get stronger. And you can put up post-it notes in

your mirror or in your car to remind yourself, but really it's just about the practice of remembering to be awake. And this is the gift of impermanence and of suffering, because when we notice that we're suffering, if we had just an occasional experience of awakening on the cushion, when the suffering arises in our lives, the memory of the awakening will arise with it. That's the gift.

**Sangha member:** Sometimes with practice and the nature of suffering things can get heavy. Thank you for mentioning the importance of cultivating the practice of joy. I was wondering if you could speak a little more about that, its importance.

**Larry Robinson:** Well, let me offer one poem from Wendell Berry:

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

The natural world is one of the places where I go to recover my joy and attentiveness. There is so much that is broken in our world that we can focus on. And I think we are called to repair what's broken, but we're also called to remember the beauty and the wonder of this world. If you can find a place at night without a lot of ambient light and look at the stars—my God, what an amazing thing that is! And just how rare this beautiful blue pearl we're spinning on is in all of this vast existence, and then bring our focus down to the blades of grass, and all the life under the soil—how the ants and the moles and the gophers are constantly turning it over; and how utterly dependent our food supply is on the billions and trillions of ants. I could go on and on about the interplay of all life and what an absolute miracle it is, and I don't believe anybody designed it or created it. Life, evolution, is an open-source movement; it's just unfolding on its own, and we don't know where it's going. But just to pay attention to a few inches of grass will remind you of that. And let your mind expand on the wonder of the interconnectedness of it all. How can you not feel joy? And to open your throat and sing, even if you think you can't sing. Let your voice find some song that is yours because we each do have a song to sing. We each do have a gift that we have come here to deliver. And it can be depressing and lonely to be wandering for years, trying to deliver that gift, and not finding a place where it belongs so much so that we can forget that the gift we're carrying really is precious and really does belong somewhere, to the point that we begin to devalue it and not appreciate it. But the reality is that we have all come here to deliver a precious gift. And it may be our pain, our own particular suffering that is the gift that someone else needs to hear, that is their medicine. So telling the story of your pain may be the gift that the world needs for its completion.

Another way to cultivate joy is to look around at your fellow bugs. And truly wonder at the miracle of this man's life. How has he gotten here? How is it that he's come through so much to be here, to be able to look me in the eye and see another, me? ■

# GBF

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# GBF Thanksgiving Potluck

Come celebrate Thanksgiving Day with the Gay Buddhist Fellowship.

This will be a time for GBF members and friends to come together and celebrate sangha over an abundant meal. Kei Matsuda and his partner Chuck have once again offered up their home in the East Bay for annual festivities. The gathering will start on Thanksgiving Day at 4:00 p.m.

A flyer will be available soon at our Sunday meetings with directions to Kei's place in El Cerrito and information on dishes to bring. You can also e-mail Kei at [GBFThanksgiving@hotmail.com](mailto:GBFThanksgiving@hotmail.com) to RSVP and to obtain additional information.

## Your Thrift Store

## Donations Earn Money for GBF

GBF members can donate their quality cast-offs to the Community Thrift Store (CTS) and GBF will receive a quarterly check based on the volume of items sold. This is a great way to support our Sangha, and the community. So far this year we have received over \$800 through members' generosity. Bring your extra clothing and other items to CTS at 623 Valencia St between 10am and 5pm, any day of the week. The donation door is around the corner on Sycamore Alley (parallel to and between 17th and 18th) between Valencia and Mission. Tell the worker you are donating to GBF. Our ID number is 40. Information: (415) 861-4910.

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GBF Newsletter. Send submissions to:

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### **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](http://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 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

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### October 7 Jurgen Mollers

Jurgen Mollers has been practicing Insight meditation for about fifteen years. A native German, he came to California in 1992 for post-doc work in philosophy. He is a graduate of Spirit Rock's Dedicated Practitioner Program and is teaching meditation to incarcerated men. In 2003, he founded a company called Storyzon, which helps people preserving life stories.

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### October 14 Bill Weber

Bill Weber is a senior Vipassana practitioner and a graduate from Spirit Rock's Community Dharma Leader program. He teaches beginning meditation classes and daylongs. He has studied for the past ten years with Eugene Cash, among others, and has fifteen years of extensive retreat practice. He is also a documentary filmmaker and video editor.

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### October 21 Dharmachari Viradhamma

David Viradhamma Creighton is a senior member of the Triratna Buddhist Order and on the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Buddhist Center. He has been a practicing Buddhist for over thirty-two years and was ordained in Bhaja, India, in 1994. His experience includes political activism in the environmental and Central American solidarity movements.

For the last seven years he has been traveling regularly to India where he works closely with the Dalit (formerly "untouchable") Buddhists who see the dharma as a means of both personal development and social liberation. In India he leads study retreats, speaks at public meetings, and teaches at a training center for young Buddhist social activists in Nagpur. He is the Director of Dharmajiva, a non-

profit organization working to publicize the Buddhist Renaissance in India. Viradhamma will share pictures and stories about social and dharma projects in India.

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### October 28 Jennifer Berezan

Jennifer Berezan is a unique blend of singer/songwriter, teacher, and activist. Over the course of eight albums, she has developed and explored recurring themes with a rare wisdom. Her lifelong involvement in environmental, women's, and other justice movements, as well as an interest in Buddhism and earth-based spirituality, is at the heart of her writing. She teaches at the California Institute of Integral Studies in the department of Philosophy and Religion. Her on-going class (since 1997) is entitled "The Healing Ecstasy of Sound" and explores music as a spiritual practice from a wide range of cross-cultural, traditional and contemporary perspectives.

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### November 4 George Gibbs

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### November 11 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.

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### November 18 Jon Bernie

Jon Bernie's first awakening experience at the age of sixteen led him to spend many years practicing in the Zen and Theravada Buddhist traditions, first as a monk in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, and then as an early student of Jack Kornfield.

In the late 1980s, Jon's spiritual trajectory was profoundly altered when he met Advaita and Kashmiri Yoga master Jean Klein, with whom he studied intensively for an extended period. Jon subsequently spent time with H.W.L. Poonja and Robert Adams, both direct disciples of Ramana Maharshi.

In addition to his work as a spiritual teacher, Jon is a certified Zero Balancing practitioner and a teacher of the Alexander Technique in private practice in San Francisco since 1981. Jon currently leads regular classes, retreats, and intensives in the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond.

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### November 25 Open Discussion

GBF NEWSLETTER  
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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, believing in the equality of all that lives.

—GBF Dedication of Merit