



# Gay Buddhist Fellowship

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2014 NEWSLETTER

## Buddhism and Art-Making

BY JOE GOODE

**Joe Goode is the Artistic Director of the Joe Goode Performance Group and a professor in the Department of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies at UC Berkeley. He has had a meditation practice since 1979 and has incorporated Buddhist principles and meditation practices into his choreographic works. His work blends theater, dance, and spoken word and focuses on the fallibility, the imperfection, of being human. Goode believes that the creative impulse is a step toward the alleviation of suffering. He teaches workshops for people interested in unearthing the impulse called “Writing from the Body,” “Start Simple,” and “Finding the Bones.”**

JIM STEWART, WHOM YOU ALL KNOW, ASKED ME TO TALK ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF Buddhist practice on my art-making practice. I gave a similar talk at the Hartford Street Zen Center a while ago, and Jim asked, “Why are you doing it over there and not doing it over here?” And I said, “Well, they asked me.” So I will give a similar talk, but I do want to say that when I talk about art-making, for me it’s choreography, but it could be gardening or making a cake or building a fence or whatever artistic thing that you do.

A few years ago I participated in a project called Awake, which was about Buddhist art in America, although we had a lot of visiting artists from Japan and Poland and all over the world. And that was really the first time that I considered making public my Buddhist influences. I don’t think of myself as a Buddhist scholar. I know there are people in this room who are much more immersed in the scholarship than I am—I am Buddhist Light—but the talks that I’ve heard and the books that I’ve read have deeply influenced my art practice, and hopefully I’ll be able to explain that.

There is a great paradox in art-making: the paradox is that for art to be strong and inhabited, the artist must risk being revealed. You can’t hold back. You have to be brave, and you have to stand on the precipice of what’s scary for you. This is what I believe. You have to ask yourself the hard questions, and in doing so, you get kind of naked, particularly the performing artist. You have your body, your voice, your personality on the line. And you are revealing your fragile humanity, hopefully, so that the audience can see their own broken imperfect selves through you and ruminate. But it’s a vulnerable place to be.

And there is one big problem with it: it’s all about you. Your ego is all tied up in what you are offering because it’s you, it’s your wisdom, it’s your beauty, it’s your skill, it’s your insight that’s being placed in front of people. And they can either love it, or they can dismiss it and not feel connected to it. So a lot of artists feel they are only as good or as worthy as their last artistic creation. Was it well received? Did the critics love me? Will I win another award for excellence? You can see the *dukkha* and the suffering that’s written all over that. And you also as an artist can become a little bit infantilized, in that you are always, always, always looking for approval, to be loved, to be accepted, to be celebrated.

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.

To place one's full concentration outside of the self, on a sound or a movement or a brushstroke or whatever it is that you do, this is when art-making becomes a practice, not unlike meditation. And the same tools really are employed because there is a lot of noise and a lot of things that want to come in and disturb that immersion, that sense of concentration. And you just gently ask them to step aside, and you acknowledge them, you take them in, you hold them, you feel friendly towards them, hopefully, and then you let them drift away, so you can go back into your thing.

So that's the ego side of art making, and it's pretty hard to get away from that. It's a very, very strong impulse, very automatic. I also think it's a little bit cultural. In our culture, we view the art experience as very evaluative, so we are always looking for virtuosity, and we want to put an artist up on a pedestal because of their enormous skills, kind of separate from us, which is a safer place to have them. They are a little more distant, and in a way they don't have to get in our business quite so much, or they can just be spectacular. We want artists to be monolithic, to be unassailably great and to wow us. But I feel like there is an othering that happens there. Again in Western culture, where we don't feel that we are participating or in that art with them necessarily, we are just objective viewers, evaluators—loved it, hated it.

There's something about magic. We want magic to happen, magic that's exotic and comes from some other place that we don't understand, maybe we don't want to understand. So this perpetuates the artist as pleaser in a way. He or she is trying to be magical and phenomenal and monolithic, and that's tiresome as you can imagine. And I did that for a long, long time. A few years ago, I won this big award at the Guggenheim Fellowship, and it's a big deal. It's a culmination of many things that you do in your career, and you get this thing. And the minute that I got it—I had been thinking about it for a long time, I'll admit, like, well, I am going to get that someday. I finally got it, and I immediately started thinking, "Why don't I have a

MacArthur Fellowship? My God! What's wrong, people?" So there is this striving, this kind of desire to please, that's just crazy, and it started to make me crazy.

To get to the other side of the paradox, I started to really ask myself, "Why do this? If it's just for the striving and that's so stressful and so full of suffering, what other way could I possibly do it?" So I started thinking about the beauty, the thing that I love, which is being immersed in the task, in the moment, in the thing that you are working on, where you really feel no sense of self, you can actually get lost inside of this thing, and I do it. I'm lucky to do it with other people, so there is also a community of us who are kind of lost together in the task, which is really an amazing thing.

To place one's full concentration outside of the self, on a sound or a movement or a brushstroke or whatever it is that you do, this is when art-making becomes a practice, not unlike meditation. And the same tools really are employed because there is a lot of noise and a lot of things that want to come in and disturb that immersion, that sense of concentration. And you just gently ask them to step aside, and you acknowledge them, you take them in, you hold them, you feel friendly towards them, hopefully, and then you let them drift away, so you can go back into your thing.

As I went further and further into this way of thinking, I realized that because you are in a moment of presence with the task, you have to be compassionate; you have to use a kind of *metta* with yourself, particularly when the other thoughts come in, and when the ego thoughts come in. And that's the hardest thing for an artist, I think, especially a professional artist, and I have that dubious title. Is it good? Is it going to sell tickets? Does anybody care? Those questions just want to come up right at the first day of our rehearsal. You don't even know what you're doing yet, and you're already stressing out about this thing. So it's really important to be able to say, "I'm really sympathetic with you, Joe, that you're thinking about that, and I even love you a little bit for having to wrangle with that, but it's really not important yet. Let's delay that for a while and let's do the thing."

The other thing that I want to say about that is that when I started approaching my own art-making that way, I actually felt like I was practicing life skills. I was practicing being more skillful in my life and allowing myself to flounder and have ego arise and not succumb to it totally.

The great teacher, Pema Chödrön, whom I love, has a chapter in one of her books in which she talks about how we undo our own happiness by setting benchmarks and having expectations of something that's finished or perfect or happy, arrived. And she asserts that we are always in the state of becoming but we never in fact become. And the phrase that she uses that I just love is, "Abandon all hope of fruition." It's like something out of *The Wizard of Oz*: just turn back now. I love that so much, and I think it's become a guide for me in my art-making practice in that the minute I start to think about where I'm going to arrive or what the result is going to be, I know I'm in trouble. I know that I'm just then fabricating something to please or to stun or to overwhelm my audience, but I'm not actually doing. I'm not actually learning anything from it. I'm not actually investigating anything.

I think there is something about accepting that it's never what you planned, and it's never what you wanted it to be, it's never what you thought it would be. You have arrived at a place that's new and unfamiliar, and you can be curious about it and discover it, and acknowledge that it's imperfect, and still find some beauty in it, or you jump over it and go, "Well, but that's not what I planned. I've got to get to what I planned. I've got to get to my preconceived idea of what this was going to be." And that's just death to art-making, in my opinion.

So in a strange way, making something isn't about doing but more about being with the small moments that arise, the complications, the little disturbing bits that don't seem to fit, and in that being with, having a truthful response to what arises. And that's where art can come from.

I'm going to read you a little something that I love. This is from *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom* but it's actually a poem by Pablo Neruda:

Now we will count to twelve  
and we will all keep still.

For once on the face of the earth,  
let's not speak in any language;  
let's stop for one second,  
and not move our arms so much.

It would be an exotic moment  
without rush, without engines;  
we would all be together  
in a sudden strangeness.

Fisherman in the cold sea  
would not harm whales  
and the man gathering salt  
would look at his hurt hands.

Those who prepare green wars,  
wars with gas, wars with fire,  
victories with no survivors,  
would put on clean clothes  
and walk about with their brothers  
in the shade, doing nothing.

What I want should not be confused  
with total inactivity.  
Life is what it is about;  
I want no truck with death.

If we were not so single-minded  
about keeping our lives moving,  
and for once could do nothing,  
perhaps a huge silence  
might interrupt this sadness  
of never understanding ourselves  
and of threatening ourselves with death.  
Perhaps the earth can teach us  
as when everything seems dead  
and later proves to be alive.

Now I'll count up to twelve  
and you keep quiet and I will go.

So I love that because I teach in the university, and it's very odd to teach art-making in the university, but it's Berkeley, so they are very smart students, and they just want to assert their brilliance all the time; they just want to do and do and do. And I always have to remind them to maybe just listen to the first thing you did instead of doing twenty more things. So that's kind of what that's about for me.

So I'll try to get a little more specific about how my practice works. I have this group of people, small, six, seven of us. We start on the floor doing a gentle, kind of loosening of the joints, very much a *metta* practice, not so much about stretching or improving flexibility or strength, but more about noticing what's there without judging it as a negative. If it's tight or constricted or inflamed or problematic, we just try to bring a curiosity and a loving intention into the body.

Now these are professional dancers, and they are used to being pushed very hard. They have spent their careers pushing their bodies and having unreasonable demands placed on their bodies, so for most people who come to work for me, there is a real learning curve. But once they understand that befriending the body in this way, and noticing where it is without asking it to be better than it is, once they see that this will prepare them for a deeper kind of work, to go places physically without fear, because you're going there with the befriended body, then they love it and they need it and they crave it, and they want it, and we can't rush our rehearsal. We always have to have that hour and sometimes more at the very beginning.

I also teach at this Saturday morning class, which I call "Movement for Humans," which is just for people, not for dancers. It's very much the same process, just *metta* in the body. But after this long physical and vocal *metta* practice, we turn to a partner, and we try to do very simple things. Again it's not massage, it's not corrective, and it's not assistance in the sense that somebody has knowledge that they are bringing to somebody else. It's just kind of being with each other in a shared space, noticing what you notice without words, a little bit of touch, a little bit of weight sharing. It's very contemplative and slow, and it's really about the beginnings of compassion: not having an expectation of how your partner is supposed to touch you, not having a point of arrival, not having a judgment, such as "her back is really tight and she must be neurotic," but to just explore what's there and be in the moment with it.

So as you can imagine, this is all very time consuming. We are halfway into a five-hour rehearsal now, and we haven't done anything, really. But that is the process, and I really believe in it. It's a way of building a deep community, a trusting environment, where you can get very bold and very wild and feel like there is a blending place for that. If you skipped it, and you try to get wild, it might be scary and dangerous.

It's hard to give up that desire to be brilliant, to be surprising, to be funny or just be clever. For some reason, that's a persona we have in the world, that's who we identify as, especially again as artists. Those are the things we get paid to be, so to give them up feels vulnerable, feels really tricky. But the payoff is that once you set that identity aside, other kinds of transferences can happen where you are in this kind of groundless territory, where it's not me and you. I'm really feeling what you are feeling, just as much as

I'm feeling what I'm feeling. We get in this glorious place of mutuality that's pretty amazing. I think that when it's working and all familiar identities have been blurred and set aside, you have this groundless territory that you are in together, a place where real discovery can happen, real invention, real surprising things can emerge. And it's not directed by anyone. I call myself the director, but I'm not really directing much.

This is Pema Chödrön on cultivating compassion: "Just as nurturing our ability to love is a way of awakening *bodhichitta*, so also is nurturing our ability to feel compassion. Compassion, however, is more emotionally challenging than loving-kindness because it involves the willingness to feel pain. It definitely requires the training of a warrior. For arousing compassion, the nineteenth-century yogi, Patrul Rinpoche, suggested imagining beings in torment, an animal about to be slaughtered, a person awaiting execution. To make it more immediate, he recommends imagining ourselves in their place. Particularly painful is his image of a mother with no arms watching as a raging river sweeps her child away. To contact the suffering of another being fully and directly is as painful as being in that woman's shoes. For most of us, even to consider such a thing is frightening. When we practice generating compassion, we can expect to experience our fear of pain. Compassion practice is daring. It involves learning to relax and allowing ourselves to move gently toward what scares us. The trick to doing this is to stay with emotional distress without tightening into aversion, to let fear soften us rather than harden into resistance. It can be difficult to even think about beings in torment, let alone to act on their behalf. Recognizing this, we begin with a practice that is fairly easy. We cultivate bravery through making aspirations. We make the wish that all beings, including ourselves and those we dislike, be free of suffering and the root of suffering."

So that's only tangentially related to the art practice, but it is related in my mind. So I'm going to do a little something if you'll bear with me. You can do this right in your chair, on your cushion. It's really just the metta part of the art-making, but it's a little more than that. It's also about using the power of intention, taking an image and a physical action together and really letting your intention make those into something more. So we are just going to start by scrubbing with our fingers the sternum, and just a few times. I just want you to get the feeling, and the intention here is to wake up, unlock, the heart center, where all the feelings are, and you don't know what you are going to get, happy or sad. You are just cutting those fibers and cutting the cobwebs and unlocking it. So it's a good firm scrub, and then I just want you to do this, warming of hands, really warming the hands. And then take the palms out, close your eyes, and really think of opening the palms, but you are not sending out; you are taking in, taking in sound, taking in energy. And then we are going to cover the chest, the heart center, like a blanket with these two big hands. Cover it, protect it, hold it in, cradle it. And while we are doing that, with the eyes closed, just tilt the face up. And again it's not a sending out; it's taking in whatever the sunlight is bringing to your face, to your breath, as you feel your heart, as you feel your chest rise and fall. So let's do all of

that again. Let's do the whole thing with our eyes closed. I'll talk you through it.

Just start with the scrub, scrubbing at the sternum, cutting the fibers, loosening, opening up possibility of feeling, then the hands, then palms, take it in, then hold it, blanket it in your heart, and tip your face up. Just for you, not for anybody else, not for sharing. One more time, just see if you can deepen your intention, deepen your possibilities with these simple actions. They don't have to be the words that I am saying, let the actions bring whatever they bring. So here we go with a scrub, and palms, blanket, tip the face.

Good. So now, I think we have a few minutes for chatting, for questions, thoughts.

**GBF:** You call yourself a performance troop, which is different from a dance troop, and that's because you bring so many elements—voice and music and movement—into what you are trying to express. And there always seems to be some psychological movement or truth in what you're trying

The great teacher, Pema Chödrön, whom I love, has a chapter in one of her books in which she talks about how we undo our own happiness by setting benchmarks and having expectations of something that's finished or perfect or happy, arrived. And she asserts that we are always in the state of becoming but we never in fact become. And the phrase that she uses that I just love is, "Abandon all hope of fruition." It's like something out of *The Wizard of Oz*: just turn back now. I love that so much, and I think it's become a guide for me in my art-making practice in that the minute I start to think about where I'm going to arrive or what the result is going to be, I know I'm in trouble.

to portray in the performances that I've seen. And I'm just curious about what your process is in developing a piece, where you start.

**Joe:** I always like to start with a topic, a very loose kind of umbrella topic, and usually I have a mind towards my own queer sensibility, and also looking at fallibility and the fragility of being human, how imperfect and troubled and messed up we are. So that's usually somehow in the topic. And then we generate material, but it's very, very wide-open, and often very tangentially related to that topic. And that's usually voice, songs, movement partnering, character development, anything, and they are separate, discrete pools of material that we develop. This process goes on for weeks, so it's a long process, and we have no idea where it's going.

And then the next phase is when we start to collide these pools because often when you have two very different pools of material and you ask them to exist together, they create this third unexpected thing that is even more powerful. For instance, I might have a pool of material where somebody is standing on somebody's chest, and they are exploring obviously the discomfort of that, the pain of that, the dominant kind of gesture of that, all the ramifications of that, and then I might have a pool of material where somebody is saying, "I love you," like you would say it to a child at night right before they go to sleep. And they are turning that into a song, some kind of a lullaby that has all the tenderness of that moment. They work on that; they develop it—we call it felt material—we work on it until it's felt, until it's inhabited, until you can own it. So these two are very different pools of material, and what happens if you put them together? What happens if the person who is being stood on is the one who is singing the song? I don't know the answer; that's the beauty of it. This part of the process keeps me honest because I talk about not wanting to know the answer. When I do these collisions, I really don't know the answer. But we can all feel it in the room; we can all feel that "that's amazing, that's beautiful, that's important, we want to keep that." And then there is kind of an editing, arching. Is there some through-line in all those materials that keeps emerging that we want to stick with? It's about a nine to twelve month process, so it's very slow. But it's really fun.

**GBF:** Oftentimes, at a performance, someone will come out and make an announcement and say, "Enjoy the show." So I was wondering if you could talk to an audience before coming to a piece of yours about how to be as an audience, is there something you'd say about being an audience and being a participant?

**Joe:** I think a trend that's happening more and more is that people are becoming less satisfied with that separation of "you are the audience, and I am the performer, and you sit in your chair, and I dance around in front of you." People are becoming less satisfied with that dynamic, but I think there are a lot of ways we can subvert that. It could be by giving somebody a message as they enter the door, by holding their hands, asking them to travel with you through the performance, not letting them sit in their chairs. I think about these things a lot and then I try to use whenever I can—anything that takes us out of that evaluative frame of mind because

**It's totally possible to walk through life under this veil of sadness because it's other, because it's not what you expected. You can just walk around like that, and I can walk around like that. And some of the practices that I've used in my art making have actually helped me lift that veil a little bit and not be so concerned about where I thought I should be or where I thought I was going.**

it's not a very receptive place to be. If we can ask people not to be there from the get-go, we'll find a way to let them not be there, and then they can have a different kind of experience, and they can participate, and they can feel like it's an event that they are part of.

**GBF:** So, you are a meditator, and you talked some about how Buddhism influences your art-making. Is there a way that you use stillness in your ensemble work as a source for stories or inspiration?

**Joe:** Yeah, I'm sure there is but it's not a conscious thing. Stillness is hard for dancers, and I think we tend to modify tempo of movement. If I tell them to be still, they get anxious. But if I can ask them to modify the tempo of a certain movement, or discover it in a smaller kinesphere, or even inside of the body with nothing external, but they are still moving, that they can relate to, that they can hook into, and that can be really effective.

**GBF:** Thank you for that powerful talk. It really moved me. You've touched on so many dharma practices, not ideas but practices, that you've converted in your artistic process. One thing that I was reminded of is when you were talking about how we should try not to anticipate the ways things are going to be is that the Buddha said, "However you anticipate or plan, it shall always be other." And it's true for life as well as art that as soon as we have an idea of the way things are going to turn out, we close the doors on all the other possibilities. It's going to be other anyway, so why bother?

**Joe:** And it's totally possible to walk through life under this veil of sadness because it's other, because it's not what you expected. You can just walk around like that, and I can walk around like that. And some of the practices that I've used in my art making have actually helped me lift that veil a little bit and not be so concerned about where I thought I should be or where I thought I was going. ■

# GBF

## **Steering Committee**

### **Board of Directors**

Michael Altschuler  
Richard Azzoni  
Jerry Jones  
Michael Murphy

### **Treasurer**

Peter Washburn

## **SUNDAY SITTINGS**

### **Program Committee**

Jeff Lindemood

### **Facilitator Coordinator**

Ray Dyer

### **Facilitators**

Tom Bruein  
Jeff Lindemood  
Oswaldo Garcia  
Len Pinna  
Joe Goode  
Michael Murphy

### **Host Coordinator**

Cass Brayton

### **Hosts**

Richard Azzolini  
Cass Brayton  
Joe Castrovinci  
Jim Christrup  
Mark Hoffheimer  
Tage Lilja  
Dave Limcoco  
Jerry Martin  
Shantanu Phukan  
Kei Matsuda  
Jim Stewart

## **NEWSLETTER**

### **Editor**

Michael Langdon

### **Design / Layout**

Michael Gabel

### **Mailing List**

Joe Castrovinci

### **Newsletter Mailing**

Jack Busby

### **Mail**

Tom Bruein

## **LARKIN STREET YOUTH CENTER**

### **Volunteer Coordinator**

Clint Seiter

## **PRISON OUTREACH**

### **Coordinator**

Baruch Golden

## **WEBSITE**

Joe Kukulka

## **YAHOO GROUP MODERATOR**

Tom Bruein

## **SOUND / RECORDINGS**

George Hubbard

## **RETREAT COORDINATOR**

Michael Murphy

# 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.

## How to Reach Us

[www.gaybuddhist.org](http://www.gaybuddhist.org)

Mail correspondence:

**GBF**

**PMB 456**

**2215-R MARKET STREET**

**SAN FRANCISCO CA 94114**

For general questions about GBF write to:

[inquiry@gaybuddhist.org](mailto:inquiry@gaybuddhist.org)

To contact Program Committee with suggestions for speakers and comments:

[programcommittee@gaybuddhist.org](mailto:programcommittee@gaybuddhist.org)

Address changes or to subscribe or unsubscribe to the newsletter:

[mailinglist@gaybuddhist.org](mailto:mailinglist@gaybuddhist.org)

GBF Newsletter. Send submissions to:

[editor@gaybuddhist.org](mailto: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](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

### February 2 Baruch Golden

Baruch Golden, a longtime GBF Member who has been practicing Vipassana meditation since 1998, completed Spirit Rock's Community Dharma Leaders program in 2012. He teaches dharma in the Bay Area. Baruch is also a registered nurse and has been doing hospice work for the past 14 years.

### February 9 Jeff Lindemood

Jeff Lindemood, one of the group facilitators of the Sunday Sittings at GBF, will be presenting a slide-show of his recent journey to northern India.

### February 16 Donald Rothberg

Donald Rothberg, Ph.D., a member of the Teachers Council at Spirit Rock, has practiced Insight and Metta Meditation since 1976, and has also received training in Tibetan Dzogchen and Mahamudra practice and the Hakomi approach to body-based psychotherapy. Formerly on the faculties of the University of Kentucky, Kenyon College, and Saybrook Graduate School, he writes and teaches on meditation, daily life practice, spirituality and psychology, and socially engaged Buddhism. He is the author of *The Engaged Spiritual Life: A Buddhist Approach to Transforming Ourselves and the World*. For more information visit [www.donaldrothberg.com](http://www.donaldrothberg.com)

### February 23 Dave Richo

Dave Richo, Ph.D, MFT, is a psychologist, teacher, and writer in Santa Barbara and San Francisco who emphasizes Jungian, transpersonal, and spiritual perspectives in his work. He is the author of *How to Be an Adult in Relationships*.

### March 2 Bill Scheinman

Bill Scheinman is a mindfulness meditation teacher and life coach in San Francisco. He teaches eight-week classes in mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) as well as courses in mindfulness for reducing stress at Bay Area businesses. He is

the co-founder of Stress Reduction at Work and is the author of the mindfulness guide *Moment By Moment*. He is a graduate of the Dedicated Practitioner's Program at Spirit Rock Meditation Center and is the former president of the board of the San Francisco Insight Meditation Community.

### March 9 Tom Bruein

Tom Bruein has been practicing with the Gay Buddhist Fellowship since 2005. In this talk he will explore tonglen, or "taking and sending" meditation. Tonglen practice assists in developing *bodhichitta*, or compassion for the benefit of all sentient beings. The practice centers on using one's own challenges, struggles, and pain to help understand and connect with the suffering of others, and in so doing move toward awakening.

### March 16 Open Discussion

### March 23 David Zimmerman - "Getting To What Matters From a Zen Perspective"

Kanzan David Zimmerman has been practicing Zen for over 20 years, half of which have been in residence at San Francisco Zen Center. He was ordained as a Soto Zen priest in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi by Rev. Teah Strozer in 2006, and spent eight years at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, where he held a number of positions including monastery director and Head Monk (Shuso). David is now Program Director for SFZC and lives at the City Center temple. He also serves on the SFZC Diversity and Multiculturalism Committee, is a co-facilitator of Queer Dharma, and supports Dr. Lee Lipp with classes and workshops on "Transforming Depression and Anxiety."

### March 30 David Lewis

David Lewis, who has been following the dharma path for 40 years, has a degree in comparative religious studies. He attended his first retreat in the Shambhala tradition at the age of 17 and has been practicing insight meditation since moving to San Francisco over twenty-five years ago. David teaches an insight meditation course at the Mission Dharma sangha, led the Gay Buddhist Fellowship's 2013 fall residential retreat, and facilitates a weekly meditation group for seniors. He is a graduate of Spirit Rock Meditation Center's Dedicated Practitioners Program. David will be offering a three part series of talks on the three characteristics of existence: *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness), and *anatta* (not-self). The three characteristics are a core teaching of all Buddhist traditions. They are not a dogma, but rather a very pragmatic view of reality that is revealed through observation of our direct experience. The Buddha taught that deeply understanding the three characteristics, or the nature of reality, leads to wisdom and therefore freedom from suffering.

GBF NEWSLETTER  
PMB 456 2215-R MARKET STREET  
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94114  
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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