



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

FALL 2016 NEWSLETTER

Intimacy with the Moment of Experience

BY DOROTHY HUNT

Dorothy Hunt serves as the spiritual director of Moon Mountain Sangha, teaching at the request of Adyashanti. She has practiced psychotherapy since 1967 and is the founder of the San Francisco Center for Meditation and Psychotherapy. Self-Inquiry as taught by Ramana Maharshi led to the first of a series of awakenings. She is the author of *Only This and Leaves from Moon Mountain*, a contributing author to *The Sacred Mirror, Listening from the Heart of Silence*, and the online journal *Undivided*. She offers satsang retreats and private meetings in the Bay Area and elsewhere by invitation. Dorothy graced us with a guided meditation:

So, I would like to invite all of us into this present moment . . . It is only now that we can be awake, and only now that we are actually living . . . Here, in this moment, there is nowhere we need to go, nothing we need to accomplish, nothing to do or undo . . . Here, we can begin to sense the Presence that is always available when we stop, and simply notice . . . Is something already silent? Already still? Already at peace? . . . What is here when we stop, even for a moment, trying to get somewhere else? . . . What is awake in each one of us is simply here now for what is here . . . So, I invite our attention to move deeper and deeper into that dimension of our Being that is here, before thought, before ideas, before feelings, prior to any image we may have of a “self,” but is intimately aware of each moment and each movement as Itself . . . Just let yourself rest in this Mystery that cannot be spoken, but can be sensed . . . Let the Mystery reveal itself in whatever way it does in your own experience . . . just here, just now, just this.

Thank you. I appreciate the invitation to come back. I have been with some of you right here in the past. It’s a pleasure to be here.

I was thinking as we went around and spoke our names: are you your name? It’s not that you’re not identified with your name, but what are you, really? We come to know ourself, right?, through all the ways we are different, or appear separated from. For instance, what does it mean to be a gay Buddhist, or a straight Bud

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.

dhist? Or an American Buddhist? Or a Japanese Buddhist? Or even Buddhist? What does it mean, to be a Democrat, a Republican? A Hillary supporter or a Bernie supporter? All the ways that we identify a self. We identify a self so frequently by what we are not. I am not this, but I am this, whether it's good or so-called bad. There's this sense of constantly returning again and again to the mind of thought to tell us who we are. But is that really who we are, in the deepest, deepest way, in the deepest place?

We divide ourselves even within the so-called self, in

coming back after the *me*. "I'm going to find it out there. I'm going to find it in this religion or this person or this practice, or this whatever, I'm going to find something that I'm looking for out there." The truth of ourself, the freedom of ourself, is never going to be found out there. When we find it here, we see that it's everywhere. It's not about bringing in another division of us, them, that, me. It's really about finding that which you truly are, which can't be put into words. It's not a something; we can't make an object of it. We try. We use

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myriad ways, don't we? I'm good at this; I'm bad at this; I'm really, you know ... I love myself; I hate myself. Isn't that interesting? Who's the I? Who's the myself? When we go to those kinds of thoughts, we see that they can only live in duality. It can only live in time.

We're not making any of these distinctions wrong. We're not saying you shouldn't have a name, or you shouldn't identify in some way with a group that you feel that you belong to or that you feel welcomed by, or whatever. But when we take those identifications to be who we are, now we're setting ourselves up for division. The division that we have even within ourself is so often characterized by the amount of time we all spend trying to tinker with the self, make it better, stay away from the things we don't like, and so forth. We're constantly trying to pull the weeds, so to speak. Pull the weeds, or hold on to those beautiful lovely experiences that we never want to end. So we're busy, in one dimension or the other attaching to certain things or rejecting other things. Yet right in the midst of this kind of activity - we might call it the egoic trance - not separate from it, is the wholeness of your being: the wholeness that doesn't exclude anything, and yet it's not identified as separate from anything.

When it comes to even our feelings, how often are you trying to separate yourself from what's arising in your mind? And yet this that you are, this that we are, it doesn't separate itself from anything, and that's why it's free. We come in to the spiritual quest with an idea usually of either escaping where we are, getting rid of suffering. Very few actually come into the quest really wanting to know what's true. We want to feel better, don't we? We come because we want to feel better. There's nothing wrong with wanting to feel better.

But as I'm sure some of you have experienced, you think you're going for something out there—awakening, Buddha nature, feeling better, not suffering—and then, at some point, the search turns itself around, and it starts

words - Buddha nature, true nature, true heart, Christ consciousness, whatever. We use words but it's not words. What we are is not a word. It can't be spoken.

So, when we just stop—if you don't go to a thought—what's actually here? We're just present to this moment. The mind is constantly pulling that carrot in front of us, or the stick. When you get here, when you get better, when you perfect yourself, when you do whatever, then maybe you'll find what you are. Then maybe you'll discover yourself worthy of this incredible, unconditional love that you truly are in the deepest place.

No. It's here now. You don't have to find it somewhere else. The invitation is to come back home. Come back to what you are, what you've always been, what we all are. We share the same ground, regardless of our differences, regardless of how this is showing itself. When we get more interested in the ground out of which everything springs, all the causes and conditions for life being as it is this very moment all arising from the source; when we get more interested in that than pulling the weeds or holding on to the flowers, now we come back into our natural freedom, our natural way of looking and seeing—seeing in the world, seeing in ourselves. It's so simple but the mind doesn't really believe it's simple. It's going to take a hundred years on the cushion before we can find it. Who knows? Maybe it will, but I don't think so.

The direct path that I'm pointing to is pointing us back to what's always here. It doesn't depend on conditions because it's unconditioned. It doesn't depend on arriving because it's not in time. It doesn't depend on being something because it's simply being. It's being every moment. It's being every thing. This that's unconditioned is moving as conditioned. We're all conditioned. We wouldn't be here if we weren't conditioned. An oak tree wouldn't be an oak tree. A daffodil wouldn't be a daffodil without conditioning. Conditioning is not our enemy, but when we see it as the only

thing that we are, now we are *constricted*. Now we don't feel the freedom of our true nature, because something has identified itself with our limitation.

Now, even when we recognize that, even when we're cognizant that that happens, there's such a tendency to judge it as something the *me* is doing wrong. I am not seeing clearly. But what I have discovered—and you may discover it in some other way—but this that's awake, that's not born, that doesn't die, this that's aware of every moment, when it moves in the body-mind, it moves as our consciousness, doesn't it? It moves as what's awake in us, as what's conscious of the moment. It's the knowing of the moment. How is it that you know how you feel, whether your belly is empty or full, or whether you're having a feeling of judgment or no judgment? What knows that? What's awake to that moment? It's always here. It's our birthright. It's this that's awake, not some other time or place, but right here.

What awakening does it actually brings us back to the present, to what's in front of us. It brings us back to here and now. It's not about getting somewhere else. That's kind of a downer, to the mind. It wanted to land someplace where there would be this extended experience of whatever, whether we call it Nirvana or the end of something or the beginning of something else. It isn't a state. It's the non-state. This that's awake is empty of definition. Check it out right now: your own awareness, before we add a thought, a judgment, a la-

minates what's in front of it. It illuminates those bricks, but in itself, it's not attached to the bricks. It's not pushing them away, it simply lights it up - like our true nature, it's always shining. It illuminates what's here. You may like or dislike, from your mind's conditioned perspective, what's here, but what's seeing it, what's noticing it? That's where our freedom is. It's not what we thought. It's coming back to the moment that you're in.

You all know it's pretty easy to stay awake in heaven. Right? You're having a great experience. It's very pleasurable and joyful. It's easy to feel awake there. Our whole being is being engaged in that moment. But this is awakened in the hellish ones as well.

There's a story I always enjoyed about Rama Maharshi. He had originally a devotee who was incredibly devoted to him, just incredibly so, he was his attendant, as well. Ramana at some point decided that someone else would be his attendant, and this guy got very upset with that, and everything just turned around. He then became an enemy, and he brought lawsuits, and he said, "This was my land," and—I won't go into the whole story. He wrote a book that was full of untruths about this sage. Ramana himself says, "Let's sell that book at the gate. There will be fewer people who'll come." I mean, he wasn't the least bit upset that this was happening, because he wasn't identified as a self. He was identified as this that we all are, and that isn't even an identification one can hold on to. The minute you try to hold onto it, it becomes another thought.

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bel, just this that's aware. It's empty, isn't it? We fill it with all kinds of things - all kinds of learning, all kinds of labels, all kinds of divisions, liking and disliking.

This moves in a body-mind. It's the own expression of a body-mind, and it seems to be loving itself so much it identifies with its own creation. It identifies with its own expression, and now we have what we call the separate self, or egoic thought. There's an identification with how we use that thought of who we are to actually stay away from discovering what we are. We use what we are not to keep this dream identification going, but there's something that sees beyond that. It's like the light coming in a skylight. It illu-

At any rate, at the end of this man's life, the guy who had turned against him, he comes to see Ramana. He's so sick, he has to be brought in a cart. He can't walk. He came to apologize. He said, "I'm so sorry. I've done some very evil things in my life. Please don't forget about me." Ramana said, "Even if you forget about me, I could never forget about you." The man said, "Yes, but I'll be in hell," and Ramana said, "I'll be there too."

You see, he wasn't talking about a place. We all have our own hell, don't we? We all have our own heaven, in our mind's division of things. But this that we are, it doesn't divide. It doesn't divide itself, because it's whole,

and yet it's moving as this moment, as these expressions, as this that's speaking. It moves as the statue, the flower, the candles, the light. It moves as the whole of itself.

We all have known what it's like to be in prison, even if we've never been inside a jail. It's the prison of our own thought, the prison of our own mind. Have you noticed how you can get caught in the prison of thought? The bars are just made of thoughts, and you imagine that there's somebody inside. Check it out, see! See if there's someone inside. Who's inside those thoughts?

This is an example from my own life, rather recently, that kind of illuminates what I'm talking about. I am a very big Warriors fan. In fact, I've got to get home to watch the game this afternoon. Happily, it's not happening this morning, so I can be here undivided from what we're doing here now. At any rate, last Christmas, my son, who's in his 40s, all he wanted for Christmas was that the two of us would go to a basketball game together. Last November, we chose a game in March. We waited - it was a Clippers game. It would be my first Warriors game, I've never, ever been, I've just watched on television. We're going, and I'm so excited, and there's this sort of open-hearted feeling. I'm so excited to go to the game. We get on the BART station in Embarcadero and there isn't a seat to be had. It's an evening game, so it's rush hour and everyone's standing. Everyone's packed. Then, immediately when I get on, there's this lovely young man who gets up and gives his seat to me. And I'm like, "Aww, thank you." I'm so grateful. It's even *more*, in that moment, open-hearted sense.

Then, there is a thought. And the thought was, "Oh my gosh, now I'm one of those old ladies that people think they

thing knows when you're having the thought like, "Oh my gosh! Now I'm an old lady." It sees that thought. But when we're moving from an awakened perspective, we just see it as a thought. It doesn't define us. It's not who we are. It's not who you are, either, regardless of what you think about your so-called self.

When this moves more and more deeply, it moves as love and compassion. Once again, if there's a meaning of things, "I have to be loving and compassionate," we're looking in the wrong place. There's a me, then, that has to do that. When we just step back, sit back, take a seat in our true self—I'm going like this (*motioning downward*) because the felt sense of it, in the body, is down low. It's not up here, it's taking a seat in yourself. It's a sense of verticality. It doesn't mean you have to be rigidly upright all the time, but you know when you're moving, when you're sitting, when you're sensing that you're at home. There's a sense of verticality, because now we're also engaged in the timeless dimension.

Still our life is moving in time, or we could say the dream is moving in time. The mind lives in time, so it's looking at life from that perspective. That's what it does. It's not a bad mind or a wrong mind, it's just what it does. There's something deeper than that that sees that; it's not caught by it, and yet it's moving. It's constantly moving. Causes and conditions are continually being as they are. But to see clearly is to see from your true nature. It's to see, even for a moment—and I'm sure all of us have had many of those moments, where suddenly you're seeing something without the overlay of thought and judgment and opinion and liking and disliking. You're just seeing clearly. We can do that with our thought as well. We see clearly.

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have to give their seat up to." It was just such a perfect example of how, if that thought were to have been believed, I could have put myself in a really bad space. It's not that the thought won't necessarily arise, but can we see it for what it is? In that moment, what my mind did is what all of minds do from time to time. It projected itself out into how it imagined someone else was seeing me. But that's not what we are. We're *what's* seeing, what's looking through your eyes right now, what's aware of my voice, what knows itself when it reveals itself in the silence.

Ramana said, "Silence is unceasing eloquence." It's not denying anything, is it? It's allowing everything to be as it is. As soon as we think, "My mind has to be able to do that," now we're trying to be what we're not, because the thing that can accept life as it is is not the mind that lives in duality, is it? Something sees that mind moving - I'm using mind here equal to thought, not Big Mind in the Buddhist sense. The mind of thought, something sees that. Some

What we may not see so clearly is how attached we are to those thoughts. I still have an attachment to how a dishwasher should be loaded. It's quite humorous. There's a belief that there really is a right way. Something is beyond that, happily, and can laugh about it, but this is our human experience, isn't it? We may see clearly that there's a thought that's creating suffering, that's creating division, but we may not realize what's attaching to it. It isn't the thought that makes us un-free, un-enlightened. It's the attachment to the thought. And the biggest attachment to the thought is the I-thought. The thought of who we are, rather than the truth of who we are.

If we want to use other language, we could use the words of dharma and karma, using dharma as truth and karma as a conditioned, illusory aspect of our lives. Both are here, but to live awake is to live the truth in

the midst, to live dharma in the midst of karma, we might say. Then something's free. It's free to have the experience that's here.

We always imagined it would be when only this experience is present, and these are never here. Even if you come to feel beyond your own suffering, you're in the face of suffering, because there's suffering in the

It's a moment of sorrow or a moment of anger or a moment of whatever is here. When we're not separating a self from it, there's an intimacy with the moment of experience. There's nothing that's refusing that moment, and therefore it doesn't have a struggle. It just is what it is, and it's gone.

But that really means living now. It means at least sometimes experimenting a bit with how it is to let

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world, isn't there? It's a Buddhist first noble truth: there is suffering. Even when there isn't suffering here, you're going to encounter it. It isn't about holding onto a state in which this or that always or never happens. It's really about being awake now to what's here. "But I don't want to be awake to what's here." That's what our mind says. All right, you don't have to. You don't have to accept reality, but if you have a fight with reality, reality is going to win every time.

This is how our egoic mind, our egoic trance—it's not really a person or a thing called ego, it's a movement of mind—this is how it keeps itself going, by what it's refusing, by what it's struggling against. When we have those moments of happiness, of contentment, of peace, we're frequently imagining that the reason is because something happened that we wanted to happen. We got the job, or the partner loves us, or whatever it is that we wanted to happen. Oh, now I'm happy. We imagine the happiness is depending on this that's out there, but really the happiness was here all along when we weren't wanting to be somewhere else. Just imagine if that were the case each moment.

When I was about to have surgery for cancer some years back, I was talking to Adyashanti about that, and he said to me, "You wouldn't miss this experience for the world." Something was very much *wanting* to miss that experience for the world, but I found out it was actually true. This, that's present, it doesn't want to miss the experience of the moment, because *it's being it all*. It's being the experience of the moment. It's just not attached to a separate me, the minute that we can have the experience that's *here* without the story.

You all know, something will happen and there will be a moment of reactivity, right? Where anger, sadness, whatever it is, fear, and how can we keep that experience going? That's the story. That's how we keep it going. He shouldn't have, they shouldn't have, I shouldn't have, you know, they should have, whatever it is, that story we can keep cranked up for a lifetime - the things that we're blaming and judging and all of that. This, you know, it's just having the experience of the moment. It has a really short shelf life. Check it out. Any kind of feeling has a really short shelf life if we don't go back to the story about it. It's just been what it is.

yourself have an experience that you're intimate with, that you're not trying to get rid of in that moment, but you're seeing it from this that's simply awake and aware. Our awareness can go anywhere. It doesn't have any boundaries whatsoever, and therefore it can come into even the most challenging situations.

My husband died about a year and a half ago. We'd been together over fifty years. It was very interesting just to see how—some of you may know this when a loved one has died—how intense the grief could be. It would come at unexpected times. There was nothing that was trying to manipulate it in any way or say it shouldn't be here. It was just like *whoosh*. When it was allowed to simply be what it is, it would go. It would come and it would go. It would come and it would go. I'm sure some of you have had that experience.

The other thing that has been so fascinating about that experience is that sense of any one, any thing that we have deeply loved is still present. It's present in our heart, isn't it? It's present in our heart, in our memory. The spirit that didn't get born and didn't die is as it always is, as it always has been. Therefore, the truth of what we are simply continues to be the truth of what we are, and yet the form has gone, that particular form. Yet the essence, the presence, it doesn't go anywhere. When Ramana was dying, they said, "Oh, please don't die. Don't leave us, don't leave us," and he says, "Where would I go? I am here." That's what we are, too. Our dharma isn't to be like Ramana Maharshi or Buddha or Jesus or Gandhi or Martin Luther King. That's not all of our dharma, but we're here to be *this* expression, this once.

There's a love of that, when you let yourself be, when you come into the heart that we share, the one that's open. There's a love, a compassion that just arises naturally. I'm sure some of you have experienced, when you're not trying to get away from something, you're letting yourself be present to it, there's a transformation that begins to happen, and it happens because we're not at war. We're not divided. We're not separated from it.

Anyway, it's great to be here. It was a great thing. Thank you for inviting me. Thank you all for your presence. I don't think anyone went to sleep. I must have had a really good subject. Do enjoy yourself. ■

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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 12pm. Everyone is then welcome to stay and socialize over refreshments till approximately 12:30pm, 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.

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

Mail correspondence:

GBF

PMB 456

2215-R MARKET STREET

SAN FRANCISCO CA 94114

For general questions about GBF write to:

inquiry@gaybuddhist.org

To contact Program Committee with suggestions for speakers and comments:

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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

The Gay Buddhist Fellowship is a charitable organization pursuant to Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3) and California Revenue and Taxation Code #23701d.

Calendar

Sunday Speakers

September 4 **Open Discussion**

September 11 **Stuart Slovatsky**

Stuart is degreed from CIIS and Princeton. He has lived the “inner marriage” kundalini bhakti tantra for 40 years, and chanted Sanskrit benedictions privately for Yanez Drnovsec (chair of Unaligned Nations of the World) and for Sri Sri Ravi Shankar in India. He is author of *Advanced Spiritual Intimacy* endorsed by Robert Thurman and Ken Wilber and received the only federal grant to bring meditation into a juvenile facility, in 1977. He will lead kirtan meditation and discuss Spiritual Bypass vs. Surpass.

September 18 **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, to focus on the fallibility and imperfection of being human, believing that the creative impulse is a step toward the alleviation of being human.

September 25 **Eve Decker**

Eve Decker began practicing Vipassana meditation in 1991. She has been teaching dharma since 2006. She has released two CDs of original, dharma based music. She leads groups on ‘Metta-for-Self’ and a monthly ‘Sit-and-Sing-Sangha’ in her hometown of Berkeley California. She is a graduate of the Path of Engagement and Community Dharma Leader training programs at Spirit Rock Center in California. For more on Eve see her website at www.evedecker.com.

October 2 **Open Discussion**

October 9 **To Be Announced**

October 16 **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*. For more information, visit www.davericho.com.

October 23 **David Lewis**

David Lewis has been following the dharma path for over 40 years and has a degree in comparative religious studies. He started out in the Tibetan Shambhala tradition and has been practicing vipassana meditation since moving to San Francisco 30 years ago. For the past 10 years he has been teaching and practicing intensively. David is a member of the Mission Dharma sangha, where he teaches an introduction to insight meditation class. He is a long time member of the Gay Buddhist Fellowship and also leads a weekly sitting group for seniors every Friday morning. David is currently enrolled in the Spirit Rock Meditation Center’s Advanced Practitioners Program and has been on the teaching team for Spirit Rock retreats.

October 30 **Kevin Griffin**

Kevin Griffin is the author of *One Breath at a Time: Buddhism and the Twelve Steps* (Rodale Press 2004) and *A Burning Desire: Dharma God and the Path of Recovery*. A longtime Buddhist practitioner and 12 Step participant, he is a leader in the mindful recovery movement and one of the founders of the Buddhist Recovery Network.

November 6 **Joe Rodriguez**

Joe Rodriguez is a Soto Zen student from the Shunryu Suzuki lineage, studying under Furyu Nancy Schroeder (Abiding Abbess, Green Gulch Farm Zen Center) and serving as a board member of the San Francisco Zen Center. As a business executive and a long-time LGBT activist, his practice is to bring awareness, compassion, and forgiveness to daily life. His topic is “Meditating and Practicing with Donald Trump.”

November 13 **Emilio Gonzalez**

Emilio began his Tai Chi and Qigong practice in 1973 with Grand Master Kai Ying Tung and still studies with him today. For over forty years He’s taught classes in N. California and conducted workshops for Kaiser, the VA, persons with PTSD and HIV, and at recovery conferences. He taught Qigong at the first GLBT residential retreat at Spirit Rock in 1985. Since then most meditation centers have added daily Qigong exercises at all residential retreats. In 1995 he produced a three-part television series, “Qigong for Health”, broadcast nationally by PBS, and is still being aired in some cities.

November 20 **Jana Drakka**

“Gengetsu Junsei” received Dharma Transmission in the Soto Zen Buddhist Lineage from Zenkei Blanche Hartman. Jana is the first openly transgender Dharma Heir. Her nonprofit organization, Jana Drakka Community Services, provides a wide range of services including support groups, workshops, classes and talks. Jana’s community work is based in Harm Reduction Principles—a way to meet everyone with complete acceptance—and allows for a client-centered modality. There are three meditation groups a week in San Francisco which are free and open to everyone. Jana travels widely to teach ‘Harm Reduction Meditation’ in Universities, Churches, shelters and Zen Centers. Counseling and retreats are always available upon request.

November 27 **Open Discussion**

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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