



# Gay Buddhist Fellowship

FALL 2017 NEWSLETTER

## *The Sisters Talk Dharma*

**Since their first appearance in San Francisco on Holy Saturday, 1979, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence have devoted themselves in artistic expression, community service, ministry to those on the margins, and to promoting human rights, respect for diversity and spiritual enlightenment. As the original holy hearts spelled out in the group's mission, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence are devoted to the promulgation of universal joy and the expiation of stigmatic guilt. For 38 years, the order has blended a variety of spiritual traditions in an organized chaos that benefits the community as it advances the variant practices of the individuals. Joining us today are Sister Merry Peter, Sister Arianna Badtrippe, Sister maeJoy B. withU, and sangha member Sister Mary Media.**

**Sister Mary Media:** Thank you for inviting us back. A short history of how I got involved in this group. I was one of the original members. Like many people I came to San Francisco during the mass migrations of gay people in the 1970s. All the tops moved to New York and the bottoms came to San Francisco. It was a period of sexual liberation and exhilaration.

That lasted for a little while but then I found myself over the Labor Day weekend of 1979 with Harry Hay, Mitch Walker, John Burnside and Don Kilhefner who had organized the first gathering of Radical Faeries. It was called the spiritual conference for radical faeries. That was in the desert of Arizona. A group of people who had started getting to know each other in San Francisco really bonded at that gathering. My experience of it was that it was a giant step outside the patriarchy. It was the first time I had experienced a community of men who reveled in being sissies, who were not buying into what was going on in San Francisco at the time, and probably in other cities too, which I felt was kind of a fetishization of hyper-masculinity. It was the era of the Castro clone.

It was extremely liberating to bond with people who rejected that paradigm of being a gay person. When we got back to the city, we wanted to find some way to continue that expression in the community. Out of that, the idea came forth of moving forward and forming an order, because some men on Easter weekend earlier that year had gone out to Land's End wearing habits and had discovered that, well, this was too good. They were getting all this attention. They were transforming the energy around that. This was a way that we could possibly play with that and see where that took us. Because Sister Hysterectoria had a non-profit dance company for gay men, we were able to take advantage of a program of the city of San Francisco at that time, the Costume Bank, where if you provided them a minimal \$10 fee and the materials, they would prepare costumes for a non-profit dance company. So

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.

“I think we take the nun  
outside the convent wall  
and put her in the streets  
where she belongs.  
That’s where we start,  
in the need of the  
community.”

that’s what we did. How do you not love a city that provides you with drag? This is actually one of those habits that cost me 10 bucks. It’s lasted all this time.

**Sister Merry Peter:** For me, I’m the generation of Act Up and Queer Nation people. In Toronto I was in an intentional community and I was having a lot of work as a divinity student, trying to get a divinity degree. It was a rough time in the city. Everyone I knew was dying. The organizations that were holding my intellect weren’t really saying anything about it in any meaningful way, so I was having what epistemologically would be called a nervous breakdown. A really good friend who was a Jesuit priest who was the head of my college said, “Here’s the dilemma. I think you’re a priest, but you don’t have a church. You’re a doctor but you don’t have a hospital. You’re a teacher but you don’t have a school. Why are you spending so much time trying to get back into the building?” That was the first kind of koan of Jesuit enlightenment for me.

He said, “Why don’t you just go out into the street where people are really needing you and do your work there?” That was liberation. Shortly after, a friend gave me a car and said, “You’re really not well. Let’s get you out of here.” I had been aware of the Radical Faerie community for a while as part of my work, but I had never gone to a place called Short Mountain in Tennessee. It was a radical faerie sanctuary. I drove down from Toronto on the solstice weekend and I parked the car and the first person I saw was this very short gay man with a big white beard who looked sort of like Santa on acid. All he did, he was just really fussy, he’s like, “There’s a lot to do. I’ve got goats to feed, things to do. Just put your stuff down, follow me.” Being young and impressionable, that’s what I did.

Over the next three days, it took us a while to figure out as he was telling me his story and I was telling him mine, that we were all talking about the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. I had been researching at the Lesbian and Gay Archives in Toronto and I’d found this little shoebox of articles about these queer men who had dressed up like nuns in Toronto.

They had gone to our AIDS hospice hospital and comforted the dying when no one would touch them, and sang queer Christmas carols against the archbishop. When hundreds of gay men were arrested in bathhouse raids on the main drag of our city and broadcast on CBC and humiliated and shamed, they helped organize the resistance the day after and the Pride parade that followed. But, just a few years later, no one could tell me anything about them, but I knew somehow those people, something about what they did meant something to who I was.

Then this little radical faerie said, “Well actually, my name is Sister Missionary Position. I’m the founder of the order and it’s very nice to meet you.” Before I knew it, she had me in front of a bonfire with a hundred faeries and a couple of nuns, slapped a white veil on me, I took the name Merry Peter, and she missioned me back north to go rebuild the convent. I was probably in about Ohio when I realized, I don’t have a manual. How do I do this?

Becoming a nun was really a journey of self-discovery, and it was a journey of my community telling me who I was. In Toronto I did a lot of work on the streets. I’m a former street worker myself. There were a lot of young people selling themselves for drugs and shelter, so those were the first people I worked with. There were a lot of people raising money for AIDS so it felt natural for a nun to call bingo at a gay bar. It was natural to sit on the steps of a coffeehouse and people said, “Sister, hear my confession.” So I did. Then I anointed them with glitter and said, “Go sin some more.” In that exchange of the community’s need and my trying to become real, something happened. In that experience of being a nun we take vows. Some people think we mock nuns. I think we take the nun outside the convent wall and put her in the streets where she belongs. That’s where we start, in the need of the community.

I just want to say that kind of like the five-fold path, the vows for me hold me here. They give me focus. When I do wear the habit or I paint my face or even when I’m just walking through the streets, the vows are a mantra that come to me and remind me to focus.

**Sister Arianna Badtrippe:** For me, I actually wanted to be a sister from the moment I first laid eyes on a sister. I wasn’t sure if girls could be sisters, but I found out we could be. The white face piece, when I started getting close to it, became very challenging for me. I think in this country a person can’t put white on their face and not feel that there are some racial overtones to that, which were troubling to me. Also, although I’d been raised a girl, I’d never worn makeup except for once in junior high and my best friend asked me how I got that black eye. That was my first and last encounter with makeup.

One of my early encounters was actually at the Trans march. One of the encounters gave me different ways of thinking about the face. There was these young ... well, they presented as very young, I think they were in their 60s, but they were so delighted to see me. They began to tell me right away that their family was from the

Philippines and they weren't able to stay there and then they left their family and they came to San Francisco and they were so alone. Then people started dying around them and they were experiencing such grief and loss, but the sisters were there and the sisters were such a comfort.

By this time we were there in Dolores Park and I'm holding them and they're sobbing and I'm sobbing and they're going on with this story, and I realized they're actually not talking to me at all. They're talking to all of the sisters that they ever knew. It became very clear to me at that moment that when I manifest, I'm not manifesting myself at all. I'm really manifesting all of the sisters that have gone before me, and I have the great gift of carrying that experience forward, and the great gift of receiving the love that they've given back from people who know us and recognize us.

Last Pride, the sisters were invited to walk behind the contingent that held the faces of all of those who'd been killed in the Pulse tragedy in Orlando. That was again like a moment of realizing I'm not me. I'm really representing all the sisters that have ever offered any kind of comfort. I remember a man who just had tears streaming down his face and I went over and we hugged each other, and he said to me, "I thought this was behind us."

Then, thirty seconds later, I had moved further down the parade line and there's a person saying, "This is my first Pride and I'm getting to see a sister!" Part of my initial response there was, "What?" Again, learning to be open to that emotion that this person was having and not judge it and accept it and welcome it and allow it to flow through me without attaching to it, but to experience it as well, within. To experience the sorrow and to experience the joy and the light. I really realize that they saw me as a leprechaun that they were getting to see. Not everybody gets to see a leprechaun the first time they're out for their first Pride.

Then, one last moment that will always be in my heart. We were at Union Square for Sisters on Ice, a drag queen ice-skating event. What happened was very simple. A family came around the corner, a Latino family, and there was a very young, tiny little boy. He came around the corner and he looked up and he saw three of us, and he jumped up and down three times and again, running in circles. It was so beautiful. He was just running in circles. He didn't know what to do with this, it was so amazing. I realized that people experience us in many different ways. We're also ridiculous and absurd and when people see us looking ridiculous and absurd, they realize they have a little bit more room to expand and express.

**Sister maejoy B. withU:** I work in infectious disease and I work with runaway kids and HIV and AIDS and drugs and people who use needles. I was taking care of myself cognitively and after about a year and a half, all the hours I was spending taking care of myself, I had some free time to start finding other things and habits to support that work that I had learned while doing that. I went to someone and I said, "Hey, I'd really like to study with you." She was a Wiccan priestess from Scotland, which is my national background. "I'd love to be your student. May

I practice Wicca with you?" She said, "Well, if you'd like to do that with me you have to sit zazen (silent meditation). I was like, what? What is zazen? I started practicing zazen and I'm in my fifth or sixth year of really practicing with a daily practice. I'm really grateful for the practice that zazen is and the forms that keep us all together.

Jump back to the spring of '82, high school field trip from a small town in California to the Golden Gate Theatre to see A Chorus Line. In the middle of the show or at some point in the show, I saw this person manifested as a Sister of Perpetual Indulgence. I was 17 and was blown away. Blown away. I didn't know, I didn't know, and for the rest of my life ... I learned afterwards that that was a Sister of Perpetual Indulgence, and the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence were someone that I immediately just felt affinity for. If I was in my activism or in my fundraising or in my marches and in my work, just trying to be who I was and be queer and do what was important to me, if I saw a Sister of Perpetual Indulgence at the event, that was my pat on the back. I'd say, "Wow. If they're here, this is the right thing. Keep doing the right thing." Ongoingly, I began to march with sisters and meet sisters and became the person that would always go up to the sister if I ever saw a sister no matter where they were, I'd walk across the street and just thank them for being a sister and doing what they were.

I became the guy that thanked the sisters. That went on for probably a year, a year and a half. I said that my work was in infectious disease and talking to people about sex and drugs and healthcare. One of the things that I do is draw blood and collect specimen. One day I was drawing this person's blood and they had a sister pin on. I said, "Oh. What do you know about the Sisters?" That individual told me that they were a Sister of Perpetual Indulgence. I was like, "Oh. Thank you for being a Sister of Perpetual Indulgence!"

That person immediately looked at me and said, "You know, I've been working with you the last six months and have seen the transitive skills that you have with the community. Just in working with me, you are a nun." Very shortly, I began the work to become a sister, and this month

**“when people see us looking ridiculous and absurd, they realize they have a little bit more room to expand and express.”**

is my eleventh year being fully professed as a Sister of Perpetual Indulgence.

**Sister Mary Media:** I think people got intuitively that we were promoting community. A lot of people moved here, they were rejected by their families at that time. That was before there was wide acceptance of gay people. I think they saw us as being out, dressed in drag, and we were forming a community. We were forming a family in a way that resonated with what people did when they moved here. I think that that's part of why people trust us and they've opened up to us, because they recognize that we're accepting. That we're looking for that connection of community.

I do feel that being a sister for me is a form of practice. It's a way of trying to get beyond ego and into a space where anything is possible. It's like what Arianna was saying. That we transform the street when we're out on the street. People suddenly turn from these hulking muscle guys into little Catholic schoolgirls and they need to be spanked. I think what we do is we give people permission, and they can get spanks.

**Sister maeJoy B. withU:** I kind of have a mysterious connection. In the school of Buddhism, often when people are sitting on the mat, it's all like, "Who am I?" Right? The question is, who are you right now? Right now who are you? My ministry this morning was in the back of a Lyft, with someone who lived in San Francisco who had no idea I was what I was. I'm thinking, oh my gosh, who am I? My "Who am I?" Buddhist saga right now answer to these is ... My boots are women's pioneer boots that I ordered from Texas. They've walked from San Francisco to Sacramento in 2008 for human rights after the '80 same sex da da da da. My name tag that I have today says Laetitia Vobiscum. Latin for "may joy be with you." It's often interesting to me, Catholics

**“if you want to change something, the smallest incremental change extended on a day-to-day basis over a longer time, you will become it because you're working towards it.”**

in elevators and they're reading the name tag, "That says Laetitia Vobiscum!" "I'm like, "Yes it does!"

I've chaplained at San Francisco General. That's been amazing. I also was able to participate in the year-long training program on spiritual discernment in the Christian Centering prayer practice. It was important to me to, when I practiced chaplaining and when I practiced in order to get the certificate, that the name on the certificate and what I'd be called when I did those things was maeJoy B. withU, because I felt that honor in my spiritualness. People are recognizing me as a sister out there. I don't have to dress like this to do that. To have that name on a certificate gave a little bit of validation, besides all the ministry that we do in the back of Lyfts and in where we go.

This collar is the collar of my great-great-grandmother. Her tradition was before you go out into the community, put your collar on. This is the reminder that you are out on the street for your community, and be ready at any given time. If you're ever burned out and need to get home, to take the collar off, do that. Last thing before I go out the door is put on the collar. First thing home, take the collar off. Eleven years of doing this with this collar.

Headpiece. My tenth-year anniversary gift. This black veil given to me from a radical faerie that was moving to Istanbul and came back and said, "You need a black veil," so this has just been my black veil. That's very fast who am I, whoever we are. The first lesson, going back to my beginning in Buddhism, is it's not who you are, it's what you wear. Oh no! I got it backwards. Oh no, no! It's the other way around. Oh!

**GBF:** You're probably as individuals very sex-positive. Sex is a good thing, you're not shaming about sex, but how do you keep a sex-positive perspective and at the same time help kids who may have entered that area where they could be in danger for doing exactly what they're doing?

**Sister Merry Peter:** I'll share a little on that. Sex is not the focus. Exploitation is. In my own journey as a sex worker and also as someone who was working intimately with particularly young people, and in Toronto a lot of young immigrant kids, the issue I had to deal with was trust. The first time I walked out onto the street like this, the first thing was, "What are you ...?" The thing about sex-working kids is they have a really good radar and an instinct for people, and in an instant they know what you're about. This confused everybody because it wasn't clear what I was about. I wasn't a fetish that they could identify. It wasn't a particular economic strata or whatever. It just sort of did this (loud clap). That's the moment that you have to work. That's why I wear a mirror. A lot of people see a nun and they get lost and start saying things like, "Oh, you're so pretty." Blah blah blah. This is just a mirror, reflecting back and amplifying what I'm seeing.

Each young person presented something different, and the first thing I had to do was just create a safe space for us to have a conversation. The first radical act is just to be present and let someone define themselves. Then to

determine if I have the capacity to offer anything. Just starting with simple mentioning back. It's not my job to interpret and name what you're feeling. It's my job to validate that you're having a feeling and that that's really worthwhile. I think for me, it's really understanding what we're all dealing with in a culture that commodifies and objectifies and exploits and is about power and resources.

**Sister maeJoy B. withU:** At a very young age, I was someone that if you told me not to do something, I'm going to do it right in front of your nose. Right away. Although, after years of my cognitive work, I might wait eleven minutes these days. Secondly, I was also sexually assaulted very young, at 14, and because it's a small community it got out of hand and it was very, very bad. What you're talking about in the possible risk for the folks in the community that I work with - totally true. I've lived that and I've done a lot of work to be present, but I've also done a lot of work on the other side.

What I can attach to is staying present and offering great listening, and asking for small, incremental change. Really validating that person that's in front of you, expressing enough loving kindness to them that they know that they rock and they matter, and I'm not going to judge them. When I can be honest with people and give them 20 minutes with me and give them one pearl that they might take out to use themselves and practice, whether it's using an alcohol pad, whether it's thinking about carrying a condom, whether it's about getting high after the sex act rather than before, whether it's about having a plan. By never underestimating small, incremental change, no matter how small it is for any one of you, if you want to change something, the smallest incremental change extended on a day-to-day basis over a longer time, you will become it because you're working towards it.

**GBF:** It's so cool, and you allow that mirror. You allow people to be themselves and not be judged. You almost stamp out stigma because you're so real and authentic and vulnerable. I just want to thank you. I'm going to be canoodling on this for about a month.

**Sister Mary Media:** It's interesting what you said about making it real, because I had this moment that kind of threw me a little bit. It was at the Women's March the day after the inauguration this year. A woman came up to me and said, "Oh Sister, I'm so glad you're here. Now it feels real." She's saying this to a man dressed as a nun. That's what's going on. Reality is so much bigger than we allow for most of the time.

**GBF:** There's something so honest about your presentation. You're turning everything inside out. The expiation of guilt. Honoring. We're all in perpetual indulgence in one way or the other. To turn that inside out is such a gift.

**Sister Merry Peter:** It's humbling because it's a gift that we receive from you. Really, it is the relationship that makes the nun. I want to offer just a real word of humility, self-spoken, because I think it's certainly important, especially in a city like San Francisco where, you know, we're a brand. People know

## “Reality is so much bigger than we allow for most of the time.”

what we are now. We've seen this amazing multiplication of sisterhood across the globe. We've got sisters in over 60 cities in the US now. I think what's important almost 40 years in is people can begin to get attached to the brand. Just like people in a sangha who can get attached to the cushion, or how pretty is the Buddha behind me, or am I paying the bills and keeping the space open? There's a lot of ego in the sisterhood. You don't dress like this because you're a wallflower.

I've been around long enough to watch sisters get trapped in that. That's samsara. Then I am trying to become a persona. It kills the relationship with yourself and the community. I think just like practicing, these are all tools. I'm using tools for my enlightenment. I am asleep and I'm trying to wake up. You help me wake up. The more we're awake, the more wonderful things happen because the whole flow of the universe is conscious.

We don't all do it well. You may meet a nun who's as high as a kite or on a little bad trip of her own and full of arrogance and you're not in her program. I just ask for your support in just being honest in front of that sister, and saying, "Hey Sis Girl." We need teachers. It's about becoming awake together. It's about becoming a manifestation of your community's need and then giving that back to them.

I'm very conscious in practicing that there is an empty bowl that calls us into meditation. For me, being a sister is a crucible and I'm pouring all the stuff of my life into that, and I'm hoping that the heat and the intensity of the journey will create some alchemy and turn out something wonderful. I am not in control of that. The fire will burn however hot or cold in the moment, but it is the submission to being the bowl that is transforming me.

When you talk to a nun, we can talk about expiating stigmatic guilt. It sounds sexy. Everybody in this room knows what guilt is. Talking about joy is harder. What is joy? A feeling like happiness? An objective to be achieved? A destination? When I feel it or I'm there, or I create it, then what? I don't know. For me, joy is like a Buddhist practice. Joy is the experience once you've gone through the tears, when you are at peace with all of the feelings. When you sit with a sense of equanimity. That's joy for me.

Buddhists make great nuns. Just that sense of humble gratitude to you is a seed of joy. I'm really grateful to sit in with you, but also I want to be humble about it. Not every nun is there at every moment. I'm not there at every moment. When we're not and we're in a relationship, just like in the honesty of the sangha, I hope you'll let us know. ■

# GBF

## Board of Directors

Michael Altshuler  
Richard Azzolini  
Michael Murphy

## Treasurer

Peter Washburn

## Assistant Treasurer

Pat McGraw

## SUNDAY SITTINGS

### Program Committee

Hal Hershey  
Jeff Lindemood

### Facilitator Coordinator

Jim Stewart

### Facilitators

Tom Bruein  
Roy King  
Oswaldo Garcia  
Grecia Haigwood  
Joe Goode  
Michael Murphy

### Host Coordinator

Cass Brayton

### Hosts

Richard Azzolini  
Cass Brayton  
David Cannon  
Joe Castrovinci  
Kenny Chew  
George Gibbs  
Mike Gorman  
Mark Hoffheimer  
Jerry Jones  
Dave Limcaco  
Pat McGraw  
Jim Stewart

## NEWSLETTER

### Editor

Jim Stewart

### Design & Production

Michael Gabel

### Mailing List

Joe Castrovinci

### Newsletter Mailing

Jack Busby

### Mail

Tom Bruein

## LARKIN STREET YOUTH CENTER

### Volunteer Coordinator

Clint Seiter

## WEBSITE

Henry Rabinowitz

## YAHOO GROUP MODERATOR

Tom Bruein

## SOUND / RECORDINGS

George Hubbard

## RETREAT COORDINATOR

Richard Azzolini

# 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 22nd St, walk 1 1/2 blocks.

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

Mail correspondence:

### GBF

2261 MARKET STREET #456-A  
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)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/gaybuddhistfellowship](http://www.facebook.com/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 3 Steven Tierney

Steven Tierney, EdD, LPCC is Professor of Community Mental Health and Chair of the Masters in Counseling Psychology Core Curriculum at CIIS, a licensed psychotherapist in California (LPCC) and is a nationally certified counselor (NCC). Steven is an ordained Buddhist priest and is the co-founder and chief education officer of the San Francisco Mindfulness Foundation. Steven's areas of interest include Buddhist psychology and mindfulness-based therapies for addiction, recovery and resiliency services. He will be teacher for the 26th Annual GBF Retreat at Vajrapani on October 27th-October 29th.

---

### September 10 Kevin Griffin

Kevin Griffin is an internationally respected Buddhist teacher and author known for his innovative work connecting dharma and recovery, especially through his 2004 book *One Breath at a Time: Buddhism and the Twelve Steps*. He has been a Buddhist practitioner for over thirty-five years and a teacher for two decades. With teachings firmly based in the Theravada Buddhist tradition, he reaches a broad range of audiences in dharma centers, wellness centers, and secular mindfulness settings.

---

### September 17 Eugene Cash

Eugene Cash is the founding teacher of the San Francisco Insight Meditation Community of San Francisco. He teaches at Spirit Rock Meditation Center and leads intensive meditation retreats internationally. His teaching is influenced by both Burmese and Thai streams of the Theravada tradition as well as Zen and Tibetan Buddhist practice. He is also a teacher of the Diamond Approach, a school of spiritual investigation and self-realization developed by A. H. Almaas.

---

### September 24 Walt Opie

Walt Opie was introduced to insight meditation in 1993 at Spirit Rock and attended his first residential retreat there in 2005. He is a graduate of both the Spirit Rock Community Dharma Leaders' (CDL4) program and the Sati Center Buddhist Chaplaincy program. Walt is a participant in the current Insight Meditation Society (IMS) Teacher Training program. He leads a monthly sitting group for people in recovery in Berkeley and serves as a volunteer Buddhist facilitator at Solano State Prison in Vacaville. In addition, he is Executive Director of the Buddhist Pathways Prison Project (BP3).

---

### October 1 Open Discussion

---

### October 8 Dhammachari Danadasa

The taste of freedom and the wisdom of the body  
The Buddha's teaching on anattā and emptiness are often mystifying to many Westerners, and the Buddha described these teachings as "deep, hard to see, hard to realize, beyond

the scope of reason, subtle". During this 4 week series, we will explore ways of approaching these teachings and ways of seeing these mysterious truths in our daily lives.

Dhammachari Danadasa has been practicing with the San Francisco Buddhist Center (SFBC) community since 1993 and was ordained in 2011. His current area of exploration is the cultivation of metta (universal loving kindness) as a response to all the hatred, discrimination and bigotry in the world out there. Through personal anecdotes and experiential exercises Danadasa will explore our relationship to ourselves and others, with a particular emphasis on our deeply ingrained tendency see others as different from us.

---

### October 15 Dhammachari Danadasa

Using the mind to free the mind

---

### October 22 Dhammachari Danadasa

The path of self-surrender and the path of self-discovery

---

### October 29 Dhammachari Danadasa

A universe imbued with compassion

---

### November 5 Larry Robinson

Larry Robinson has been a practicing Buddhist for 47 years, mostly in the Zen and Vipassana traditions. He is a member of the Occidental Laguna Sangha in Sebastopol, studying with Bruce Fortin in the lineage of Suzuki Roshi. A long-time environmental and social justice activist, he is a retired ecopsychologist and former mayor of Sebastopol. He serves on the board of directors of the Center for Climate Protection and the board of trustees of Meridian University. His "large and foolish project" (in the words of Rumi) is to restore the soul of the world through reawakening the oral tradition of poetry. He is also the founder and producer of Rumi's Caravan.

---

### November 12 Bill Weber

Bill Weber is a senior Vipassana practitioner and a graduate from Spirit Rock's Community Dharma Leaders program. He has twenty five years of extensive retreat practice and currently practices at home with his husband or sits with a small group of gay men. He is also a documentary filmmaker and video editor, whose latest projects are *To Be Takei* and *The Untold Tales of Armistead Maupin* which will air on Independent Lens early next year.

---

### November 19 David 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](http://www.davericho.com).

---

### November 26 Open Discussion

---

GBF NEWSLETTER  
2261 MARKET STREET #456A  
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