



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

WINTER 2020 NEWSLETTER

The gay Buddhist
fellowship supports
Buddhist practice and
the spiritual concerns of
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GBF's mission includes
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compassion of diverse
Buddhist traditions, and
cultivating a social
environment that is
inclusive and caring.

Peace

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. In meeting Adyashanti, she was invited to see beyond identifications with either the Absolute or the relative. Dorothy 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. Dorothy offers satsang, retreats, and private meetings in the Bay area and elsewhere by invitation. For more information, please visit www.dorothyhunt.org

It is a pleasure to be back with you. I see a number of faces that are familiar to me from my other times joining you and welcome to any people who are new. I'm coming to you from my dining room this morning and what I would like to have us feed on for our time together is peace. Not a piece of this or that but the deep peace that you and I truly are when we discover our Buddha nature. Many years ago I was privileged to attend a retreat for psychotherapists in the Rocky Mountains in Colorado with Thich Nhat Hanh. One of the very first things he said to us was this—and I wrote it down because I thought it was an important way to begin our time together—he said, "Peace is important but not as important as our capacity to enjoy it. Peace is right here in the present moment but we find it boring so we look elsewhere: drugs, alcohol, sex, thinking, worrying."

And so, I would ask you, is peace boring? Is peace boring? Who would you be in the absence of conflict? What I'm going to talk about today is finding peace in the midst of conflict and chaos and all the things that we have going on in our own lives today: the pandemic, political upheaval, systemic racism, fires, air that we can't breathe, et cetera. You know as well as I do, all that we've been faced with in many months actually. Of course, there's also the beauty of nature, the trees that are turning, some of them, the sky when it is blue—right now where I am it's still pretty foggy. But I think it's you, Christian, that has this cat picture that I just was so drawn to because I had a cat that looked just like that, a tabby, that lived to be 19 years old. So, anyway, I just love that little kitty picture. We have pets, we have friends, we have children or family. There are many, many things that are on the other side of the chaos.

However, it's often really difficult to imagine that peace is here regardless of conditions. I just would ask you this question: "Is peace boring?" Do you find, as many of us probably do, that your mind would rather be entertained or even agitated rather than quiet? I'm not suggesting the mind needs to be quiet but only that the mind itself is pretty restless and when we think we're going to find peace there, we're often disappointed. There's something in the egoic consciousness aspect of ourselves that is always wanting to control life rather than accept it; it's always projecting a fearful future or frequently projecting a fearful future rather than living here and now. The present moment is really the only place we can find our true nature, it's the only place we can be awake and it's the only place where it's possible to discover the peace that's here in every moment, without regard to what the mind is doing or thinking or what circumstances are.

I guess my question is, “Could we just observe our own mind?” And like Anthony de Mello said, “Let’s observe it as a birdwatcher would and not as a dog trainer.” When we really can observe the mind, we understand what hooks us, where our attention is constantly trying to find its magnet, whether it’s drama or victimhood or conflict or rage or sadness. It moves around, of course, but can we observe our mind really lovingly without judging it and get to know what the dramas are and how they create an emotional and energetic field? As you know, a single thought can project into our emotional field, our energetic field, and we can see how we remain really rigidly attached to our opinions, our judgments, our narratives, whatever those may be. Even when we touch a profound peace, how quickly the mind wants to return, right? Return from there to reassert itself in time and in a separate identity—a so-called separate identity.

Do you find, as many of us probably do, that your mind would rather be entertained or even agitated rather than quiet?

We may long for peace but usually our conditioned mind imagines that it is a peace that isn’t here now. How would you complete the following phrase? “I would be at peace, or I will be at peace when...” Fill in the blank. We imagine peace is going to require conditions to be different. However, have you noticed—most of us have noticed—that our thought of peace when... never really delivers peace now and it’s not because it’s not here now, it’s because we want something else. And you know in your own experience, when you get something that you want, you’re happy for a moment and the reason you’re happy is not actually because you got something that you wanted, it’s because you stopped wanting to be somewhere else. You stopped for a moment imagining that something else would bring you what you wanted. You got what you wanted but we’ve all known, in our own experience, how short-lived that can be, whether it’s a relationship or a new car or a new job or a different political situation or whatever—there’s a short-lived peace when we stop trying to be someplace else. When we get what the conditioned mind imagines will bring us what we want.

How do we increase our capacity to enjoy peace, to enjoy silence, to enjoy our breath, our body, this earth, one another? How do we increase our capacity to enjoy the peace that Thich Nhat Hanh was asking us if we actually found boring? I think, of course, we have to discover where it is before we can enjoy it, otherwise, it’s just a thought. We have to have an experience that’s conscious in terms of our ability to touch that deeper reality that’s in each one of us. It’s not just in each one of us, it’s what we are—the deep truth of our nature is peace, is openness, is awake. Your own awakens, every one of us, that’s our birthright. We were born with that. And it really means being willing to be truly alive in the present moment, not continually trying to manipulate or change or repress or be at war with or struggle with ourselves in the moment in which we find ourselves.

Life is this just endless creation, moment to moment, our own lives, the life of the universe. It’s constantly, constantly moving itself in and out of form, in and out of whatever situation we find ourselves in. Where are we going to find this often elusive peace? And I guess what I want to invite you to do right now is to *just stop*. Just stop. Stop. And ask yourself, is there something that’s already quiet? Is there something that’s already silent? Is there something that’s already open? Open through your looking, open through your listening, already open before you try to become

open or silent. Is there something already at peace, regardless of what your mind may be thinking or how your body may be feeling or what the situation is, even in the world today? It’s not that there aren’t many things that we want to address that we might not have a solution for, that we have compassion for and so forth. You can find peace just by stopping—*just stopping*. And this that’s awake in you and myself, it’s not trying to change the moment. There’s nothing we could know or think or experience ever without this awareness, this awake awareness, that we are, that each of us is, whether we are that knowingly or not, it’s true.

There is a Zen quote I like that says something like, “If we understand, life is just what it is; if we don’t understand, life is just what it is.” It’s kind of like we’re going to get what’s here whether we know where it’s coming from or not, but when you have the sense of the *Nirvana* that’s right here in the midst of *Samsara*, you know—as you’ve heard many times because you’re a Buddhist group—there’s no lotus without mud. Our lives are rooted in whatever they are rooted in and I’m not talking about the deep and profound mystery of the ground of being, I’m just talking about the mud of our life, the mud of our stuff, the mud of our neuroses or our ways of dealing with the world defensively and all of those things. But can we see through that to the ground that we actually all share? The deep ground of being. Being is always here, being itself, in you and me, in this world. We may wish it were being some other way but, as you know, it’s being however it is, moment to moment, based on causes and conditions. Causes and conditions are constantly defining and refining and moving and so forth and so on.

We often think we’re going to find peace of mind, right? Now I’m not talking about Big Mind in the Buddhist sense of Big Mind, I’m talking about conditioned mind. We say we want peace and we’re longing for it often, our mind is wanting peace and so forth, but I want to read to you a dialogue that a student had with Nisargadatta Maharaj. Maybe some of you know of him—he was a guru in the last century in India. It’s a little lengthy but I think it’s worth sharing with you because I think we can all relate.

...but can we observe our mind really lovingly, without judging it and get to know what the dramas are and how they create an emotional and energetic field?

The student comes to him and he says, “I seek peace of mind. I got disgusted with all the cruel things done by the so-called Christians in the name of Christ, so for some time I was without religion. Then I got attracted to yoga.” And Nisargadatta says, “What did you gain?” The student replies, “Well, I studied the philosophy of yoga and it did help me.” So then Nisargadatta asks, “In what way? In what way did it help you? By what signs did you conclude that you had been helped?” “Well,” the student replies, “Good health is something quite tangible.” And Maharaj says, “No doubt it is very pleasant to feel fit. Is pleasure all you expected from yoga?” And he replies, “No, the joy of wellbeing is the reward of Hatha Yoga. But yoga in general yields more than that, it answers many questions.” So then he was asked by Nisargadatta, “What do you mean by yoga?” He says, “The whole teaching of India: evolution, reincarnation, karma and so on.” So then Maharaj says, “All right, you got all the knowledge you wanted but in what way are you benefited by it?” He says, “It gave me peace of mind.”

And then Nisargadatta questions him, “Did it? Did it? Is your mind at peace? Is your search over?” “Well, no, not yet,” he confesses.

And then—this is sort of the heart of what I want to share with you—Nisargadatta says, “Naturally, there will be no end to it because there is no such thing as peace of mind. Mind means disturbance, restlessness itself is mind. Yoga is not an attribute of the mind nor is it a state of mind. Examine closely and you will see that the mind is seething with thoughts. It may go blank occasionally, but it does it for a time and reverts to its usual restlessness. A becalmed mind is not a peaceful mind. You say you want to pacify your mind. Is he who wants to pacify the mind himself peaceful?” So, then the guy says, “No, I’m not at peace. I take the help of yoga.” And then Maharaj says, “Don’t you see the contradiction? For many years, you sought your peace of mind. You could not find it for a thing essentially restless cannot be at peace.” Then the student says, “Well, there’s some improvement.”

We can relate to that —*there’s some improvement*. And then Maharaj said, “The peace you claim to

have found is very brittle. Any little thing can crack it. What you call peace is only an absence of disturbance.” I thought this was an incredibly important thing to consider. “What you call peace is only absence of disturbance. It’s hardly worth the name. The real peace cannot be disturbed. Can you claim peace of mind that is unassailable?” And the guys says, “Well, I’m striving.” Nisargadatta says, “Striving, too, is a form of restlessness.” So, the student asks, “So, what remains?” And the answer from Nisargadatta is, “The Self does not need to be put to rest. It is peace itself, not at peace.”

And, of course, the Self he’s talking about is with a capital S. Some would call that No Self; some would call it Self. He goes on, “It’s peace itself, not at peace. Only the mind is restless, all it knows is restlessness, with its many modes and grades. The pleasant are considered superior and the painful are discounted. What we call progress is merely a change from the unpleasant to the pleasant. Think about that. What we call progress is merely a changeover from the unpleasant to the pleasant but changes by themselves cannot bring us to the changeless, for whatever has a beginning must have an end. The real does not begin, it only reveals itself as beginningless and endless, all pervading, all powerful, immovable, prime mover, timelessly, changeless. What has been attained may be lost again. Only when you realize the true peace, the peace you have never lost, that peace will remain with you for it was never away. Instead of searching for what you do not have, find out what it is that you have never lost. That which is there before the beginning and after the ending of everything, that to which there is no birth and no death.”

It goes on, but I’ll stop there. This dialogue between Nisargadatta and his student sheds so much light in terms of where we’re looking for peace, where we think we’re going to find it, and how the conditioned mind imagines peace will come when something else happens. But actually we miss the present moment where peace is already here, and it’s here because there’s nothing apart from true nature that’s the source of all, the source of everything, the source of all form, whether it’s thought form, feeling form, body form, tree form, bird form, whatever, both physical forms and mental forms, come from the same. The same. Same, same, same. And our Buddha nature, which is peace itself, awakeness itself, awareness itself. But none of those words can describe what we’re pointing to—that which we can’t really describe is here in every single experience, every single moment, whether we’re experiencing anger or fear or sadness or confusion or clarity of mind.

There’s something that’s clear even when the mind is confused, right? How do you know you’re confused? Something is aware of it; something is awake to that state of mind. It’s also awake to a state of mind that may be calm for a while, may be peaceful for a while, in the sense of being quiet.

But the mind lives in time and it lives in duality. That’s where it operates. It’s not wrong, we’re not making that an enemy. It’s just to see that the absolute and the relative really can’t be pulled apart except by a thought. So, we see that the absolute background of every single foreground of relative experience is the same. We can’t actually pull them apart unless we think that we can. When you really begin to see the non-dual nature of life itself, you realize everything is included; nothing is excluded. One of my friends who’s deceased, Suzanne Seagal, she once told us, “Well, where would you put something that you wanted to be rid of in the infinite you are? Where would you send it in the infinite that you are?” I always loved that.

Your own awakeness, every one of us, that’s our birthright. We were born with that.

The well-worn analogy of the waves in the ocean is still a good one because beneath the waves is an ocean of peace, and we’re always trying to change the wave, right? Manipulate it or suppress it or deny it or judge it or somehow make the moment other than it is. We think if we accept a moment, then the next moment will just be the same, but that’s not necessarily the case because the moment also has its response, doesn’t it? And when that response comes from the deeper dimension of ourselves, it’s much clearer, it’s more intelligent, it’s more compassionate and loving when we actually are seeing from that deeper dimension of ourselves. Sometimes we will and sometimes it will be the relative side. What notices which side is up? It’s the same thing that notices which side is up, it lives and moves in you and in me.

Maybe some of you are familiar with John Daido Looi Roshi who lived in a monastery in New York before his passing. He spoke a lot about being the barrier, and that really has been my experience as well. How do we relate to those waves? The waves that may feel tumultuous, the waves that we wish weren’t there because we’ve identified what’s just this little boat or something trying to ride the waves, not knowing that that boat and those waves are also made of this ocean of awareness, this ocean of consciousness, this ocean of our true nature. When we talk about being the barrier, we allow ourselves to actually be the energy of the moment, especially those moments that are challenging. It’s like letting it fill your consciousness in that moment rather than asking what you can do to get rid of something. Can I *actually* experience this? Can I find out what it is; what it’s made of? Can I be at one with it? Because whatever we’re not separate from, we have less or no suffering around it.

It may be an intense feeling. Many of us, I’m sure, have felt a lot of anger at what’s happened in our country of late and maybe many other ways and times and whatnot. But what’s the felt sense of that energy if I take the narrative out of it, if I take the story out of it, even for a moment and I just feel at one with whatever the energy is? That’s when it begins to transform. We don’t do it to get rid of it. If we do, now we have a different agenda and it isn’t actually looking, it’s not actually being curious about what’s here now, but you begin to find out that there’s nothing, literally nothing, that can’t take us to our true nature if we’re willing to dive deeply enough into it. And it’s not about having to do that every minute or we have lives to live, we’re doing other things, but those things that keep coming back and coming back and coming back, there’s something that just wants to be seen, to be loved, to be understood,

to be held in the compassionate heart of awareness. It's not wrong that these things come up—they do come up and allow us to really investigate how often our mind is holding tightly onto some narrative about a self that is doing it right or doing it wrong.

But whatever that clench is—there's a clench maybe in the throat, in the heart, or the mind, or the gut—we're just invited to let it be met consciously by what's already here that's at peace. This that accepts the moment, this that is not struggling with the struggle. It's not saying don't struggle, it's saying *here's* struggle. Okay, there's something that's not struggle. What's the effect when we just allow this to consciously be felt together, not one or the other, but here, both? And this awareness that can go anywhere has no barriers, it just kind of moves inside the clench and it does its thing. It's not about, "I got to pull it apart, analyze everything and be in therapy for 35 years in order to get to the bottom of it." Actually, not that I'm against therapy, it was my profession for many years, but this is a much gentler and simpler and non-mental way of actually addressing something, energetically, that just wants to be here, to be held, to be brought back home, brought back home to what I call the heart of awareness.

“Instead of searching for what you do not have, find out what it is that you have never lost.”

(quote from Nisargadatta Maharaj)

We could call it Buddha nature, Christ consciousness—the words are not it but there's something that's here to be liberated, right? To be loved and to be liberated and the peace that you are begins to do that when we begin to notice that it's here. It's here and maybe we're even consciously inviting that and maybe we stop a hundred times a day to notice, "Okay, this that I thought I was seeking, is it already here, is something already awake? Is something already at peace? Is there something that's already quiet and open?" And it's not going to be found in our thoughts. That's the restless mind. It doesn't mean mind doesn't have a place, obviously, it does. It's an incredible tool. It makes a great, great servant, but the master is not our egoic mind. In fact, from the perspective of our true nature, it simply does not exist as some separate entity. There is no ego that's a thing—it's a movement of thought. And the more we can see into that dimension of ourselves, the more we're invited to look more deeply, to look at what we truly are. What's beneath that? Who is it that's feeling this or thinking this or seeing this? Who or what is that? Do you know?

And if we don't go to a thought, we can just stop and realize, "Hmm, I don't really know but I'll stay put with that experience of being here in the unknown." And as many of you have discovered in your own experience, something reveals itself. Can we say what it is? I can't. The *tao* that can be told is not the eternal *tao*. That seems very true. You can't really say what it is, but you can feel *that* it is, in you and in life. Here, before a beginning, here, after an ending, here, just here now, that's the eternal now, that's here in this moment. It's seeing from the timeless dimension of yourself. It's not seeing from the mind's perspective, the way that much of our life is being lived, seeing through the lens of our conditioned mind and all the ways that we've held onto our viewpoints. They're not wrong, they're not necessarily bad, but just the invitation is to see them for what they are and not for who you are or for who *they* are.

We're in a time of "us and them on steroids" in this country. The divisions are great, and I don't need to speak about it because you all know that sense of an us and them is not seeing from our Buddha nature. It's not seeing from that deepest dimension of our-

selves; it's not seeing from the mystery that really sees the common ground. Does that mean we'll agree with everything? No. We're here living this dream; we're here living this play, we might call it. The thing is, the same thing is playing all the roles and we may or may not like the role that we've been given to play in this relative world, but when you find out who is really living it, what is really living it, what is giving you life, could you be here without your breath? It's a gift from the infinite, every moment that the body is alive. It's sort of seeing from that dimension and when we do, we can't help but be grateful; we can't help but be grateful even though there are challenges. Those challenges are all opportunities to look more deeply.

I want to stop and hear from you all in the remaining time. I'd rather chat with you than keep talking. I might just add one thing before we do that because I did bring a couple of short poems that I could maybe read later but it seems like it's a possibility to read now and one of those is another thing from Thich Nhat Hanh called *For Warmth* and, as you know, he was a monk who lived in Vietnam. He saw his village destroyed many times, both by the Vietcong and United States forces, and it's not that he never felt angry—he will be very honest about this, but here's a poem he wrote about that.

He said, "I hold my face in my two hands..." and this is a very tender thing, "I hold my face between my hands. No, I am not crying. I hold my face between my hands to keep my loneliness warm. Two hands protecting, two hands nourishing, two hands to prevent my soul from leaving me in anger." We're not talking about denying anger, for example, or anything else, it's part of the wholeness of being, but how do we care for it?

And then the other poem I wanted to share with you is a Wendell Berry poem, *The Peace of Wild Things*, because we each need to find, and I'm sure you all have done this on your own too, where it's more possible, we might say, to feel the peace that's present. Wendell Berry says in his poem, "When despair grows in me and I wake in the night at the least sound, in fear for my life and my children's lives maybe, I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water and the great heron feeds. I come into the peace of wild things, who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief."

I'd be interested if any of you would want to share where you find it easiest to be connected with this peace that I've been trying to point to. Okay, I'm going to shut up and listen now for a little bit. Anyway, be happy to chat.

Lisa: I wanted to comment that when I have experienced the peace you're speaking of, where I've *been* the peace, there's an experience of emptiness and it triggers a somatic response of the loneliness from my childhood and the emptiness of my childhood and then that takes me right out of this present moment's experience of that peace or the being of the peace. That's what I'm trying to negotiate.

Dorothy Hunt: Yeah. It's something that many people learn they have to negotiate because if, when we were young and most open, life was cruel or we were abandoned or there was some trauma or whatever, then somatically, we have often associated that degree of openness with lack of safety. It's not safe to be that open, right? So then we get to the so-called spiritual life journey, whatever, and, of course, now we're interested in being open and now we realize that that openness ... emptiness is another

word for openness. The empty that we talk about is actually full of potential, it's not the way the mind imagines emptiness is, the emptiness of a lonely place in ourselves. That may occur but this is the space where we're all one, alone, all one. And so, it just takes kind of a continual dipping your toe, I think, into the feelings that want to be here when that happens, right?

Rather than trying to get rid of them. Can we bring them close? Can we bring those fears closer? Can we learn what they're made of? We think they have this incredible reality to them and I'm not saying the experience isn't real, it's a real experience if we feel fear, but there's a way that the body can handle it if we're willing to have the experience.

And I guess
what I want
to invite you
to do right now
is to *just stop*.
Just stop. Stop.

Jeff:

I was moved by so many things in your talk, but in particular by the Nisargadatta statement about, "There is no peace of mind." The mind, by nature, is restless. Peace is not really available there.

Dorothy Hunt:

And I think that when we reach a certain level of understanding or revelation, we might say, we can begin to feel that everything is okay, regardless of what it is, because of this dimension that you're speaking about, that you were touched by. It's okay if life is good, it's okay if life is not so good. Of course, we have a preference. I have a preference, you have a preference, we would rather have pleasant than unpleasant experiences. We're wired for health rather than illness but something's okay, regardless, when you can feel and sense into that dimension of yourself that actually isn't running away from anything nor is it grabbing hold. It's neither pushing away nor trying to hold on. Yeah, I found that dialogue really helpful myself the first time I read it. Because you think of, "How can I make my mind peaceful?" And he's saying, "Hey, that's the wrong place to look." Right? It's available, but not there. Of course, Big Mind in the Buddhist sense is the emptiness or the openness that does hold everything so we can quibble about terms but this is the nature of conditioned mind.

Mark:

Could you speak a little bit about the role of meditation in all of this? I resist meditation, though I try to keep a daily practice.

Dorothy Hunt:

Yes. I hesitate to say this to a strictly Buddhist group, if that's what this is, but I think that our definition of meditation has been

way too limited. If meditation can't be our life, it's not really going to do us a lot of good. We can become really good meditators and some people are drawn to it, which is beautiful. If you love *zazen*, you'll do it. But there are others who find other ways that bring them into the deepest dimension of their Self, themselves, you know. I can speak to Christian about just sitting on my back step, patting my cat, some of the best meditations I've had. Having a sip of your tea, really meditatively. Like Thich Nhat Hanh saying that the clouds and the sunshine and the whole universe is there in the cup of tea.

I'm not bashing sitting meditation at all, it's tremendously useful, and I have had many years of that, but the minute it becomes something that's only duty and there's no real presence there, I would question what good is it doing? But for those who are drawn to it, it's a great practice. We don't have to be sitting on our cushion to notice and to be imbibing the silence of our true nature. We can sit in a park or if you're lucky enough to have a backyard, or even looking out the window at the sky and there's a sense that we can step into the silence and that presence because meditation, at least for me, it's simply being here for what's here because that's what our true nature's doing. It's here for what's here, period. And you know on your meditation cushion, you might not want to be here for what's here because your mind is yapping or you're planning or you all know what happens when you try to sit but then, after a while, things do begin to quiet down, don't they? And then we can be in touch with that deeper dimension.

It has space when we allow it space to reveal itself. So, sitting meditation is wonderful but it's not the only form of meditation. And, of course, there are many types of meditation, but I'm really talking about the simplest thing of being totally present in the moment for this moment.

Joe:

Thank you so much, Dorothy, for a wonderful talk!

Dorothy Hunt:

Great to be with you all. Thanks again.



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Sunday Sittings

10:30 am to 12:00 pm

Every Sunday at 10:30 am we meditate together for 30 minutes, followed by a talk or discussion till 12:00 pm. Everyone is then welcome to stay and socialize until 12:30 pm.

Wednesday Night Live

7:30 pm to 9:00 pm

Similar to the Sunday format, without a formal dharma talk, we host a wide range of discussions which can include creative spiritual inspirations, pitfalls on the path, and applications of practice in everyday life. You are welcome to attend the Meditation (7:30 pm to 8:00 pm) only, and/or the Discussion (8:00 pm to 9:00 pm).

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

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<http://gaybuddhist.org/v3-wp/email-list/> for instructions.

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

Sunday Speakers

December 6 - Steven Tierney

Steven Tierney is Professor Emeritus of Counseling Psychology at CIIS. Steven began his Buddhist practice in 1993 and is now an ordained priest in the Soto Zen lineage of Suzuki Roshi. He is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice in San Francisco, specializing in addiction and recovery, life transitions and resilience. His therapeutic approaches are grounded in mindfulness-based, trauma-informed therapies. He is the co-founder and CEO of the San Francisco Mindfulness Foundation. Dr. Tierney is a certified suicide prevention and intervention trainer and offers community based workshops to promote safer, healthier communities.

December 13 - Ari Lathuras

Ari Lathuras has been practicing meditation for approximately 25 years. She has received teaching from many renowned Buddhist teachers over the years. Pema Chodron has been one of her main sources of dharma teachings. She studied and practiced with Ani Pema since the mid-90's. About 8 years ago she met Ani Pema's teacher, Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche and became a student of his. She has also attended several teachings with Mindrolling Kondro Rinpoche.

December 20 - Paul Rosenblum

Ryuten Paul Rosenblum Roshi began his Zen practice in 1968 with Suzuki Roshi at the Tassajara Zen Mountain Center. He lived there for 10 years and practiced with Suzuki Roshi up until his death in 1971. He is a Dharma heir to Baker Roshi and Assistant Abbot at the ZBZS. He leads seminars at Zen Buddhistisches Zentrum Schwarzwald as well as in Berlin and in Vienna. He lives in San Anselmo, California.

December 27 - Open Discussion

January 3 - Open Discussion

January 10 - Dale Borglum

Dale Borglum is the founder and Executive Director of The Living/Dying Project. He is a pioneer in the conscious dying movement and has worked directly with thousands of people with life threatening illness and their families for over 30 years. In 1981, Dale founded the first residential facility for people who wished to die consciously in the United States, The Dying Center. He has taught and lectured extensively on the topics of spiritual support for those with life-threatening illness, caregiving as a spiritual practice, and healing at the edge of illness, of death, of loss, of crisis. Dale has a BS from UC Berkeley and a PhD from Stanford University. He is the co-author of *Journey of Awakening: A Meditator's Guidebook* and has taught meditation for the past 35 years.

January 17 - Dave Richo

David Richo 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.

January 24 - Dharma Duo

David Hunt & Jason Torres Hancock

David Hunt is a middle-aged, white, queer, cis man who has been studying and practicing Buddhism for several years in different traditions, most recently in the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions. He grew up in the mid-west, attended school in the east, and lived in New Orleans prior to coming to CA in 2004. Professionally, he works at the intersections of per-

forming arts (circus), education, and youth development as executive/artistic director for Prescott Circus Theatre, a 36 year old nonprofit in Oakland. His work as an educator and arts administrator has developed alongside training and performing in theater and circus. From 1994 to 2017, he performed juggling and on slack rope for theater, circuses, TV, and film (*Water for Elephants*), and in 2008, helped to create Circus Bella, an SF-based open air circus. David makes his home with his partner and dogs and has been a part of the parenting and caregiving for two college-aged not-really-anymore-children. He's been attending sessions with the Gay Buddhist Fellowship since 2016.

Jason Torres Hancock is a performing artist with a background as an actor both in the United States and in England and has performed as a dancer in ballet and modern dance in San Francisco, Chicago, Denver, and New York City. Since 2002, he has created dance/theatre works as a solo artist and for his performance collaborative, GROUP, focused on investigating the outsider experience shared by minority groups in American culture. He holds a M.A. in Mythological Studies with a Depth Psychology Emphasis from Pacifica Graduate Institute and a M. F.A. in Theatre: Contemporary Performance from Naropa University. At Naropa, he was introduced to Tibetan Buddhist contemplative practices and the lineage of Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. He currently brings his diverse background in the performing and moving arts with contemplative practices to offer private sessions in Life Coaching and Movement Coaching. Jason has been a member of GBF since 2016.

January 31 - Jon Bernie

Jon Bernie, author of *Ordinary Freedom* and *The Unbelievable Happiness of What Is*, is a contemporary spiritual teacher who offers a compassionate, heart-centered approach to spiritual awakening. A profound enlightenment experience as a teenager ignited Jon's spiritual search. In his early twenties he ordained as a monk in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, and spent the next four decades practicing and studying in the Zen, Theravada Buddhist, and Advaita traditions. Jon's most important mentors include Jean Klein, Robert Adams, and H.W. L. Poonja (Papaji), Brother David Steindl-Rast, and he was formally asked to teach by Adyashanti in 2002.

February 7 - Trip Weil

Trip Weil has been practicing in the Theravadan tradition since 2004. He is a graduate of Spirit Rock's Community Dharma Leader and Dedicated Practitioner programs. Trip serves on the board of San Francisco Insight, where he also leads sitting groups and teaches meditation classes. He is a psychotherapist in private practice in San Francisco and a former attorney.

February 14 - David Lewis

David Lewis has been following the dharma path for 49 years and has a degree in comparative religious studies. He is a graduate of Spirit Rock Meditation Center's Advanced Practitioners Program. In addition to the Gay Buddhist Fellowship, he shares the dharma at the Mission Dharma and Insight Upper Market sanghas and leads a weekly free drop-in meditation class (now on Zoom) for seniors.

February 21 - Danadasa Chan

Dharmachari 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 to see others as different from us.

February 28 - 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