



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER

The gay Buddhist Fellowship supports Buddhist practice and the spiritual concerns of the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies in the San Francisco Bay Area, the United States and throughout the world. GBF's mission includes offering the wisdom and compassion of diverse Buddhist traditions, and cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.

The Buddha's Last Words

By Trip Weil

Trip Weil has been practicing the Theravādan tradition since 2004. He's a graduate of Spirit Rock's Community Dharma Leaders and Dedicated Practitioners Programs. And he serves on the board of San Francisco Insight, where he also leads sitting groups and teaches meditation. Trip is a psychotherapist in private practice in San Francisco. Welcome, Trip.

Hi, everyone. It's great to see you and be back with you. I was thinking... for me, one of the things that I find kind of difficult about giving a talk is just getting rolling. It kind of takes a little while to get into what I want to talk about. So, I thought today I'd offer a little bit of the stream of consciousness of how I came to this topic.

It started, as several things have started recently, by reading *People* magazine online. It's one of those things that, before the pandemic, I probably just wouldn't have found myself doing, and now, it's like, "Sure, why not?" So, I was browsing on *People*, and saw a little article about Steve Irwin, the Crocodile Hunter guy from Australia, who was killed about 15 years ago now.

The story was about his daughter, who was having a first baby, and about her imagining how her father would respond. That made me wonder about what really happened at the time of his death, and his last moments. As this TV zookeeper/naturalist guy, he was filming for one of his TV shows in Australia, in the water. Apparently, they were just filming because it was a rainy day and they weren't able to do what they had planned to do. He was with this giant stingray. He wasn't afraid of them; they tend to be pretty skittish. And as he was being filmed, it was the last scene they were planning to do. He was kind of swimming away from the stingray, and the stingray suddenly attacked him, and just jabbed him with the stinger in his heart a multiple number of times.

They managed to get him into an inflatable raft, and they were trying to speed him to get some treatment. But he was mortally wounded. His friend/colleague was saying to him, "Hang in there. Hang in there. Remember your family," this kind of thing. And his friend said, "And he just sort of calmly looked up at me and said, 'I'm dying.' That was the last thing he said."

Just think about that. That sense of being at the point where all there is left to do is to just accept that it's ending. Where the fight to live is pointless, and there's an understanding and a kind of acceptance. And maybe just attending to reality. "I'm dying." "That's what's actually happening here." I can't really imagine or know what it was like. But it was a very grounding thought for me. And it brought to mind the story of the Buddha's death, and his last words. So that's really what I want to focus on today, the Buddha's last words. I'll set the scene for that, too. It may be a familiar story to many of you.

So, the Buddha actually understood that he was going to die. About three months before he died, he announced to the sangha, "I'll be dying in three months." And it came to pass that in three months, he was dying!

So, there's this famous *sutta*, the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, which describes in detail—it's a really long one—all the things that he was doing as his death was approaching, and the final teachings that he was offering his sangha, which had grown to be hundreds of people at that point. At the very end,

he's surrounded by hundreds of followers, and he gets through all the things that he has wanted to tell them, to prepare them. And then, he basically asks them if anyone has any final questions for him. I'll read from the *sutta*:

Then the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus, saying, "It may be, bhikkhus... ('monks or sangha members, practitioners') ... that one of you is in doubt or perplexity as to the Buddha, the dharma or the sangha, the path or the practice. Then question, bhikkhus, do not be given to remorse later on with the thought, 'The master was with us face to face, yet face to face, we failed to ask him.'"

So, [the Buddha's] final offerings are, first of all, a reminder of impermanence, "All compounded beings are subject to vanish," and then this last teaching, this last exhortation:

Strive with earnestness.

So, there he is in his final moments. This huge act of compassion, thinking about his followers, what it's going to be like for them afterwards. And thinking one of the main things for them is that there might be something they may need to know. And that this is their opportunity, so they should do it, they should ask. Just wanting to give them that.

Adding just a little bit to the deep compassion that that expresses, it is known that the Buddha was actually a reluctant teacher. When he first became enlightened, he really didn't want to teach. And the story goes that a *deva*, a heavenly body, came to him. He didn't want to teach because he thought it would be too hard, that the dharma was too subtle, too hard to communicate. He thought it would just be frustrating and annoying for him to teach. (This is after he is fully awakened.) And the *deva* comes and says,

There are those with but little dust in their eyes, people who could benefit.

And that was enough for him. So, he taught. And then here we have him at the end of his life, and all he's really thinking about is teaching; he has completely inhabited the role. And his last thoughts are of his students.

So, he says, "Question!" and no one does. And he says it again, and no one questions. And he says it a third time, and still, no one speaks up. And then he says,

If it's out of respect for the teacher that you don't ask, let a friend inform a friend.

I think what he means when he says that is, "If you're too shy to ask, whisper to your friend, and your friend could ask for you." Or maybe he means, "If you're too shy to ask because you're thinking of me as your teacher, you could think of me as a friend." Like, this is just a friend asking a friend. I'm not quite sure exactly what it means. But either way, what he's definitely saying is, "Don't let this opportunity pass. If there's a question, you need to ask it." And still, no one says anything.

So, Ānanda, his faithful follower and sidekick, basically, who always gets things mostly right, although the Buddha always has a little something to add to his understanding... Ānanda says, "I have great faith that, basically, the reason no one is saying anything is because no one here does have any doubt as to the Buddha, the dhamma or the sangha, the path or the practice." And the Buddha responds to Ānanda,

Yes, you have faith in that. And I actually have **knowledge** about that; I know that it is true that no one here has any doubt. Everyone here,

he says,

has obtained at least the first stage of awakening, 'the stream-enterer' [which is characterized by letting go of doubt].

So, Ānanda says,

I have faith.

And Buddha basically says, "I'll see your faith and raise it to actual certainty. There are no questions here." Then he offers his final teaching:

And the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus, saying, 'Behold, now, bhikkhus, I exhort you. All compounded things are subject to vanish. Strive with earnestness.' This was the last word of the Tathāgata.

So, his final offerings are, first of all, a reminder of impermanence, "All compounded beings are subject to vanish," and then this last teaching, this last exhortation:

Strive with earnestness.

So, at least according to this translation, the last thing he said is this word, "earnestness." I'd like to explore that with you. What was he really saying? It was the last thing he wanted people to hear. What was he imparting?

The Pali word is *appamāda*. It's one of those words that has lots of different translations. It has been translated here as "earnestness." Another way it's often translated is "heedfulness." In some traditions, it's translated as "with diligence" or "unrelaxed mindfulness," "vigilance," "wariness," "care." The Pali root, *a-pamāda*, is actually a negation. The "a-" bit at the beginning is basically like "not" or "without." So actually, the root of the word is "what is **not** *pamāda*." And *pamāda*, I was reading, is a kind of carelessness that is like the carelessness of a young child, or the carelessness of one who's intoxicated, a kind of stumbling around, without even the capacity to manage that. And this is the opposite of that. *Appamāda*.

Thānissaro Bhikkhu has an essay on *appamāda* that's titled, "The Practice in a Word." "The practice in a word"—as if all of the practice can be summed up in this word, *appamāda*, the Buddha's last word! Thānissaro Bhikkhu writes,

In light of these different interpretations (like 'unrelaxed mindfulness' or 'vigilance,' 'wariness,' 'earnestness,' 'heedfulness') ... in light of these interpretations, the Buddha's final message wasn't simply to persevere.

It wasn't just, "Stay with it." It was something deeper. He was saying (Thānissaro writes),

Don't be complacent. Watch out for danger. Protect the mind's good qualities. Don't get caught with your guard down.

This reminds me of a couple of things that have come up in my own practice, a couple of experiences—this sense of watching out, or being reminded to watch out for danger. I was thinking about how the first time I sat a long retreat, a month at Spirit Rock, at the end of the retreat... it was a good, deep retreat for pretty much everyone there, I think, with lots of deep silence toward the end... but at the end of the retreat they were encouraging us to come out of silence and talk a little bit. It was a day where we were starting to integrate speaking again, trying to make the transition work. And then in the evening, basically “all hell broke loose.” I think they had done some sort of final talk, and out in the foyer outside the meditation hall at Spirit Rock, which many of you might be familiar with, they set up tables with literature, like starting to get a lot of energy going. And people are talking and then they are really chatting. And then they’re *chattering*. It’s loud. The teachers are aware of this, of course, and they’re ringing the bell, which usually brings people into silence, right? Ringing the bell, ringing the bell, but nothing, nothing helped.

And finally, one of the teachers, one of my close teachers, Eugene Cash, who comes here, too... starts really almost yelling. He’s like, “You’re all suffering! You’re all suffering!” It was kind of funny. And it was also just *so helpful!*

Like here we are, we had spent this month in practice, and suddenly, we had let go of this concern about whether we were suffering or not. We were suffering without even really caring. We wanted to talk! Like that was all we wanted. Hearing him say that quieted people down.

So that’s what came up for me, this quality of heedfulness or earnestness—like, paying attention to suffering.

And then that reminded me of another experience I had had during another long retreat, where an insight had arisen, when I was just sitting with it for awhile, trying to make sense of it. And the thought came into my mind, “Oh, wow. It’s time to get serious about suffering.” That was the way it came up. “It’s time to get *serious* about suffering.”

The Pali word [for “earnestness”] is appamāda... The “a-” bit at the beginning is basically like “not” or “without.” So actually, the root of the word is “what is not pamāda.” And pamāda... is a kind of carelessness that is like the carelessness of a young child, or the carelessness of one who’s intoxicated, a kind of stumbling around... And this is the opposite of that. Appamāda.

It was interesting to me that it was coming up in this moment of ease. To think I would have this thought to return to suffering, actually to pay more attention to suffering, in a moment of ease! I think that was a very helpful thing to bring to mind. Because what I was really seeing was that there are these many ways that I haven’t, and still don’t, care about suffering. I mean I care about “the big S suffering” a lot... I pay a lot of attention to that. But there are lots of little moments of suffering which I feel I just don’t really take very seriously. I kind of don’t bother with them. It’s like, “Oh well, whatever.”

So that’s how I’m holding this word *appamāda*: as taking suffering seriously. Caring about it, caring about even the little bits of suffering that might arise and fall away pretty quickly. Letting them matter, letting them *land*. Being earnest and heedful to those moments of suffering.

So... I’m trying to be heedful of or pay attention to... these things that come up over and over again in practice... in life. I’m trying to care about these forms of suffering: the suffering in being swept in sense pleasure; the suffering in not having the right balance in practice, too loose or too tight; the suffering in being overwhelmed by aversion.

So, I’ll describe a few of the garden variety kinds of suffering that I think I’m experiencing kind of often, like maybe 75% of the little bits of suffering that happen in a day for me, that I’m aware of, at least. And the invitation is to think about what they might be for you. Or, if you want to take a step back from that, to think about, “What is this thing that the Buddha is pointing to, that could be translated as ‘earnestness’ or ‘heedfulness?’” For me, it resonates as this idea of paying attention to suffering, caring about it. But maybe for you there’s another way that that resonates.

So much of the dharma is just, how does it really land for us? It’s going to land differently for each of us in a unique way. That’s the beauty of it. So, as I’m speaking, just maybe allow that to be in the back of your mind. How does this land for *you*? What does it mean to be earnest or heedful? Or, what are the forms of suffering that *you* might not notice?

The first one that comes up for me is just the way that I can get lost in sense pleasure, kind of over and over again. Not like major, major sense pleasure, but just kind of simple sense pleasures... something tasty or a pleasant smell, or something visually pleasing. Basically, just using the senses as a kind of refuge—like, “Oh, good. I don’t have to be in unpleasantness for this moment.” And it’s really easy for me to just allow that to happen. They come and go. Whatever the pleasant thing is, at some point it goes away. Usually, I’m pretty much okay with that, like the suffering of feeling kind of invested in it is really pretty mild. I don’t cry, I don’t beat my chest. It’s just like, “Oh, okay. Oh well, that’s gone.”

So, that’s a form of suffering that I think comes up a lot. Just like a really simple attachment, an investment in a sense pleasure. Not just noticing that it’s pleasant, and even appreciating that it’s pleasant, but actually kind of *investing* in it. Like, “Oh, this is *how it’s supposed to be*. I know it’s not going to be this way forever, but it is how it’s *supposed to be*. That’s kind of nice.”

Or, a more common version of that is investing in the “sixth sense.” In Buddhism, there are six senses, actually: sight, sound, smell, touch, taste, and then also *the sense of the mind*, the activities of the mind. And I take refuge in that all the time, too, without really noticing it as suffering. The repetitive thought-process. There’s a way that it can seem like it’s productive!

You know, I was sitting, just now, in a thought process about this talk—how it’s going to go, what I’m going to say, and all that kind of stuff. It definitely was helpful to have planned the talk. But there was also an awareness like, “I’m not planning right now... I’m not planning at all... I’m just spinning!” And what I’m really doing is

trying to feel okay in myself. I'm trying to feel okay in myself because I'm just a little nervous. And I'm not sure how it's going to go. And I want it to go well. All that kind of natural stuff that comes up.

But what I'm doing is, I'm constantly thinking, "How can I make things better?" Or, "How can I get something done?" Or, "Have I upset somebody? And if so, what can I do about it?" I'm constantly just scheming and tinkering in the mind. Just, "Well, maybe I could do this," or da-da-da-da-da... *that* thought process, just on and on and on, constantly. It's not a huge form of suffering, you know. Very human. Very common, I'm sure. But it's suffering.

This is... Thānissaro Bhikkhu's paraphrase of the Buddha's last instruction...

Whatever you're doing, and especially when you don't seem to be doing anything at all, don't be complacent. Look carefully, again and again, for even the slightest stress or disturbance you might be causing inadvertently. And learn how to drop whatever you're doing that's causing it. Keep at this until there's nothing more to be dropped.

I heard a talk recently from Ajahn Sucitto. He was pointing to how that kind of thought process... First of all, it is right there on the Path: "the chain of dependent origination," the Buddha's really profound teaching on how suffering gets created... it's that part of the Path, of that process, that's called "becoming." It's when we start to inhabit an experience as if it's "us," it's "me." And he pointed out, too, that it's a certain kind of conceit or arrogance, in a way. It's like, "Well, *I'm* doing this. I'm *in charge*. This is for me to *take control over*." And even when it's practice, it has that same kind of energy. "I'm kind of *mastering the dharma!*"

Ajahn pointed out, it doesn't really work that way. It's not like we're building something, or we're creating something. It's more like we're growing something, and we're not even really growing it. We're *not growing the dharma; the dharma is growing*. We're just creating a set of circumstances where, hopefully, that can happen. Hopefully, good things will come up. We can set that intention, at least. And we can be heedful or mindful. "Is that how it's going, or is it not how it's going?" "Are we creating the circumstances that are going to lead to freedom, or are we creating circumstances that are adding to difficulty?"

But again, it's about looking at real simple versions of difficulty, just the little moments. That's really the way to work with this particular kind of suffering, I think. Just that kind of renunciation, of letting go. Like, "I'm not going to try to control this. My role is to be present. My role is to return to just awareness, and what's going on." And then look to see, "What do I do from here?" Just, "What's the next step from here?"

And there's often a kind of relief in seeing things from that perspective, I think. It's like the suffering ends quickly—like, "Oh, yeah, that's right, I'm just here, I'm in a room... we'll see what the next words are." The chatter in the mind quiets, and there's just more presence in the body. *Here we are*. So, this is one form of suffering that, in my experience, is around all the time.

Another form of suffering, that I find myself not really paying enough attention to, is the suffering of my practice or my awareness being just a little bit off somehow, either too tight or too loose. I'm kind of daydreaming, and I don't really care. Or I'm kind of agitated, and while I care, I'm sort of allowing myself to be swept up in that agitation, rather than being constructive, or being aware of it and working with it.

There's a famous *sutta* about Venerable Sona, one of the Buddha's followers, who was a real strong, ardent practitioner. He worked really hard at practice. But he was struggling. He was really pushing, pushing. And he was getting frustrated because it wasn't bearing fruit, all this practice, all this effort.

So, this was at the end of a day, a long day of walking. It's said he was walking so much, the soles of his feet were split and bleeding. And he basically just had this thought, "Maybe I should give it all up. Maybe this is just pointless. I should just stop." And the Buddha, it's said, heard the thought. He was generally nearby, but he wasn't right there, and he certainly wasn't talking to Sona. But he heard the thought! And he instantly manifested himself in front of Sona.

So now the Buddha is sitting in front of Sona, just after he's had this thought, "Maybe I should give it up." And the Blessed One said to him,

Just now, as you were meditating in seclusion, did this train of thought appear to your awareness? (Then he's quoting the train of thought.) 'Of the Blessed One's disciples, who have aroused their persistence, I am one. I, Sona, am one. But my mind is not released from the fermentations. What if I were to disavow the training? Return to the lower life, enjoy wealth and make merit?'

And Sona's like, "Yeah, that's exactly what I was thinking." Sona says,

—Yes, Lord.

—Now, what do you think, Sona? Before, when you were a house-dweller, were you skilled at playing the *vina*?

(The *vina* being this ancient instrument, kind of like a lute.)

—Yes, Lord.

—And what do you think? When the strings of your *vina* were too taut, was your *vina* in tune and playable?

—No, Lord.

—And what do you think? When the strings of your *vina* were too loose, was your *vina* in tune and playable?

—No, Lord.

—And what do you think? When the strings of your *vina* were neither too taut nor too loose, but tuned to be right on pitch, was your *vina* in tune and playable?

—Yes, Lord.

—In the same way, Sona, over-aroused persistence leads to restlessness. Overly slack persistence leads to laziness. Thus, you should determine the right pitch for your persistence. At-tune the pitch of the five faculties to that. And there, pick up your theme.

He was basically saying, “You just have to pay attention if you’re too tight or you’re too loose, and then just make an adjustment.” Just bring a little more energy when the spiritual faculties are too loose. Or perhaps bring in a little more concentration, a little more equanimity, if things are too tight, relax a little.

And this is the kind of thing that I find is obvious, in a certain way—very smart, as a teaching—but also very easy, unfortunately easy, to ignore, because we go like, “Oh, well, the mind will sort itself out. It doesn’t ever stay too sleepy for long, because eventually I’ll take a nap, or something.” Or if I’m agitated, “Well, that agitation will eventually pass. I’m just going to go with it, and it’ll move along eventually.” I’ll let things sort themselves out.

So, this is one I’m really trying to pay attention to in my own practice. And by practice, I also mean day-to-day, moment-to-moment experience. I notice that the mind is too tight or too loose, and I get interested in that, as opposed to letting it run its course. It’s very helpful, I think. It was helpful for Sonā. He awakened after that. That was what he needed to hear.

So, that’s another form of just workaday, mild, moment-to-moment suffering. I hope that flavor’s coming through. The way I’m relating to this teaching of *appamāda* is, like, what’s it pointing to in moment-to-moment experience that just would be easy to slough off, and not even get involved with? Like getting caught in sense pleasure or the thinking mind. Just not caring if the mind is a little agitated or a little too lazy.

And then, I’ll offer one more that I find coming up a lot, which is **aversion**: not liking, or wanting to push something away. It’s a form of suffering that I indulge in a lot. I feel like I’ve actually been indulging in it a lot over the past few years, with the political situation. And indulging in it in the last year with the pandemic, too. It’s like I feel, “Well, I *deserve* to be aversive. This sucks.”... or... “Of course I want to push this away.” And not seeing the suffering in that... not seeing the pain, really, in that. Not in the situation that I’m responding to, but in the response. The pain that’s embedded in that rejection.

Again, something that helped me work through this was remembering something that had come up in my own practice. It has to do with sensations in the body. When I would practice, I used to get this kind of pain in my nose. It’s like pressure, just a pushing down—like someone was pushing on my nose. It would come up with practice that otherwise felt like it was helpful, fruitful. This pain would come in, or this pressure. And I’d become fixated on it. Like, “Ah, this is getting in the way. I’m having a good sit, and now this thing is here again. And I hate it. Make it go away!” Sometimes it would go away on its own—like, “Whew! finally I’ve broken through!” But it kept coming back, and I would keep having that same kind of relationship to it.

So, I started to really explore that pushing, both the pushing on my nose, but also what happened as I reacted to it. And what I found was that the harder I tried to push it away, the stronger it got. It was like some kind of curse. Like the thing I most want to get rid of is the thing that is happening more and more and more. And it just felt, like, really unfair. So, I’d push a little bit harder, like, “Let’s get through this.” Then I would kind of ease up and it would ease up. And I’d think, “Hah. It’s playing with me.” And it was really like this thought, “This thing is toying with me.” There was really that strong sense that there’s me, and then there’s it, and it’s messing with me. And I’m trying to figure out how to mess back with it! And... you get the idea.

But what finally shifted for me was that I had this understanding that as I was pushing and I was feeling more pressure, I was actual-

ly feeling my own pushing. Like, I was both the pusher and the pushee! I was identified with being the pusher. I was *sure* I was the pusher. It’s like, “Get away, get away, get away.” But it was also, “*Get away, get away, get away!*” It was like coming in to *me*. The aversion was actually coming *at* me. Not just going away from me, but coming *at* me! And that was a real “aha moment” for me.

That’s how I think aversion really works. It feels more like we’re trying to get rid of something, and it’s painful that we’re not able to. But it’s also that something’s trying to get rid of *us*! And that’s painful. It’s really painful. Something is basically saying, “*You’re* not right. You’re not doing it *right*. What’s *wrong* with you? Make it better! I’m sick of this! Do something about it!” And that is *us*, I think. That’s our own mind. And it’s very painful to feel it. It’s very painful to be on the other side of that. At least, that’s my perspective.

Like I said, the political situation was a key trip for me around this. And the pandemic. It’s like there’ve been so many moments where I’ve thought, “This really needs to change.” Like, “Someone, do something about this.” And I’ve seen my own suffering increase in those moments, and I can really see and appreciate that... my own version of it is that there’s this part of me that, like, shifts into high gear. It’s like, “Oh, Trip’s in trouble. We need to do something. He needs help. He’s going down, here. What can we do?! What can we do?!” It’s like the panic is coming from *inside*. It’s like I’m codependent with myself! I hear myself complaining. It’s like, “Oh, my gosh. We’re going to have to do something about that. He’s going to lose it! It’s going to be terrible!”

So, for me, the practice has been to really identify and hold both sides of that. And if I find myself in that kind of state, like, “Oh, this is horrible, this is horrible,” I try to stop myself and come back, and actually identify with the complainer and move into that role. And be the one who says, “Oh, yeah. Complaining. This isn’t helping. I’m sorry. Let’s just try to deal with reality as it is.”

Anyway, that’s the third form of suffering that comes up a lot for me, this aversion, and realizing that it’s actually really painful, and seeing if there’s a way to let go of the pushing away. Seeing if there’s a way to understand that when I reach out, when I’m trying to slap the world, that slap only lands on my face. No one else feels it. Just me.

So, that’s what I’m trying to be heedful of or pay attention to... these things that come up over and over again in practice... in life. I’m trying to care about these forms of suffering: the suffering in being swept in sense pleasure; the suffering in not having the right balance in practice, too loose or too tight; the suffering in being overwhelmed by aversion. But again, the invitation is just to think about how it resonates for you, these last words of the Buddha.

I’ll let Thānissaro Bhikkhu have the last word on the last words. This is really Thānissaro Bhikkhu’s paraphrase of the Buddha’s last instruction. He writes,

Whatever you’re doing, and especially when you don’t seem to be doing anything at all, don’t be complacent. Look carefully, again and again, for even the slightest stress or disturbance you might be causing inadvertently. And learn how to drop whatever you’re doing that’s causing it. Keep at this until there’s nothing more to be dropped.

Thank you for your attention.

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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.

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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

How to Reach Us

www.gaybuddhist.org

Mail correspondence:

GBF

**2261 Market Street, #456-A
 San Francisco, CA 94114**

To contact Gay Buddhist Fellowship with general questions, suggestions for speakers, address changes, or to subscribe or unsubscribe to the newsletter:

inquiry@gaybuddhist.org

If you would like to join the GBF Google Group email list, please go to **<http://gaybuddhist.org/v3-wp/email-list/>** for instructions.

Find us on Facebook **[@gaybuddhistfellowship](https://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.

Sunday Speakers

June 6th 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

June 13th Jokai

Jokai relocated to California from the UK in 2000 to study with Tenshin Fletcher Roshi at Yokoji Zen Mountain Center. After completing formal study, encompassing over a decade of residential training and service, he received Dharma Transmission (full authorization to teach) in the White Plum Lineage of Zen Buddhism. He currently serves as Vice Abbot of Yokoji, Guiding Teacher for Long Beach Meditation, and as a Guiding Council Teacher at Insight Community of the Desert. Jokai emphasizes the direct experience of awakening using contemporary language and time-honored methods.

June 20th Donald Rothberg

Donald Rothberg, Ph.D., has practiced Insight Meditation since 1976, and has also received training in Tibetan Dzogchen and Mahamudra practice, the Hakomi approach to body-based psychotherapy, and trauma work. He regularly teaches insight and lovingkindness meditation, and on transforming the judgmental mind, mindful communication and wise speech, working skillfully with conflict, and socially engaged Buddhism. He is the author of *The Engaged Spiritual Life: A Buddhist Approach to Transforming Ourselves and the World*.

June 30th Open Discussion

July 4th Open Discussion

July 11th Vimalasara

Dr. Vimalasara (Valerie) Mason-John MA (hon.doc) is a senior teacher in the Triratna Buddhist Community. She is the award-winning author of 9 books, including her most recently published in 2020 *I'm Still Your Negro: An Homage to James Baldwin*, and is currently editing an anthology *African Wisdom: Black Liberation, Buddhism, and Beyond* published in 2021. She is also the author of *Detox Your Heart - Meditations for Emotional Trauma*, and the award-winning book, *Eight Step Recovery Using the Buddha's Teachings to Overcome Addiction*, with 8 Step meetings in several continents. Named as one of the leading African descent voices in the field of mindfulness approaches for addiction, she has co-founded the accredited program Mindfulness-Based Addiction Recovery MBAR. She works as a dharma teacher, public speaker, professional trainer, and mindfulness teacher.

July 18th Jennifer Berezan

Jennifer Berezan is a unique blend of singer/songwriter, producer, and activist. Over the course of ten albums, she has developed and explored recurring themes with a rare wisdom. Her lifelong involvement in environmental, women's, and other justice movements as well as an interest in Buddhism and earth-based spirituality are at the heart of her writing.

July 25th 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

August 1 John Martin

John Martin teaches Vipassana (Insight), Metta (Loving Kindness), and LGBTQI themed meditation retreats. He leads an on-going weekly Monday evening meditation group in the Castro, teaches both an Advanced Practitioners Program group and a Dedicated Practitioners Group and is the co-guiding teacher for the LGBTQe Sangha at the Insight Meditation Center in Redwood City. John serves on both the Spirit Rock Teachers Council and the Governing Teachers Council. He has had a dedicated practice while being engaged in the working world and emphasizes practice for daily life. He completed the SRMC/IMS/IRC 4-year teacher training in 2016. John served as hospice volunteer for many years, first with Shanti Project and more recently with Zen Hospice Project.

August 8th Rev. Liên Shut

Rev. Liên Shut is a Dharma Heir of Zenkei Blanche Hartman in the tradition of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. Born into a Buddhist family in Vietnam, she began her meditation practice in the Insight tradition of Spirit Rock. She was a founding member of the Buddhists of Color in 1998. Her Soto Zen training began at Tassajara monastery where she lived from 2002-2005; after which, she practiced monastically in Japan and Vietnam. Drawing from her monastic experiences, she endeavors to share ways in which the deep settledness of traditional practices can be brought into everyday life. Liên's strength as a teacher is in making Zen practice accessible to all.

August 15th 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 midwest, attended school in the east, and lived in New Orleans prior to coming to CA in 2004. Professionally, he works at the intersections of performing 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.

August 22th Open Discussion

August 29th Prasadachitta

As an ordained member of the Triratna Buddhist Community, Prasadachitta teaches meditation, yoga and Buddhism at the San Francisco Buddhist Center. His practice and teaching grows out of a valuing of friendship and community. He is interested in the Buddhist theories and poetic expressions that communicate links between lofty ideals and our ordinary life. He is also a photographer and aspiring filmmaker.

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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