Gay Buddhist Fellowship

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 Bay Area, the United States, and the world. GBF’s mission includes cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.

Five Givens of Life
by David Richo

The Things We Cannot Change:
EVERYTHING CHANGES AND ENDS
SUFFERING IS PART OF GROWTH
THINGS DO NOT ALWAYS GO ACCORDING TO PLAN
THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS FAIR
PEOPLE ARE NOT LOVING AND LOYAL ALL THE TIME

These are examples not just of the conditions of existing, but also of evolving. They are the prerequisites for us humans to be able to unfold with character, purpose, and meaning. They make us the fascinating characters we are; they make our human story the intriguing plot that
GBF Committees
We always welcome and need interested participants, so please, JOIN US! Call the contact person on the committee, or talk to him (or anyone on that committee) at a GBF sitting or event. This is a great practice opportunity and a wonderful way to serve your Sangha.

Steering Committee
Terry Stein
Call 415.974.9878  Jim Stewart
Teng How Bae    Larry White
Marty Cole    Snake Woolington
Justin Hecht
Hal Hershey
David Holmes

Newsletter Committee
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Larry Hermsen    Editorial Consultants
Art Director     Francis Gates,
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Mailing List    Snake Woolington

Website Committee
Joe Kukulka
Webmaster
webmaster@gaybuddhist.org

Hamilton House
Clint Seiter, Contact

Sunday Sitting Facilitators & Hosts
Justin Hecht
Coordinator

The following committees are currently without chairs:
Development Committee
Social Committee
Practice Committee

If you would like to volunteer, please contact us at 415.974.9878.

it is. Only in a transitory world do we keep aiming for the timeless. Only through suffering do we find our inner strength and our need for others, too. Only in an unpredictable universe do we expend all the effort we can muster. Only in the face of injustice do we work for justice and act with mercy. Only among people who sometimes hurt or betray us do we find the choice of love over retaliation, and thereby grow in compassion.

Han Hung says: “The biggest risk is to trust that these conditions are all that we need to be ourselves.” Life is continually baffling us with its contradictions. We can be overwhelmed and demoralized by them or we can allow them to pass through us with equipoise. Then we find ways to be both defense-less and resource-full. This ends our quarrel with the givens and we relate to them without blame or anger. Jung suggests “an unconditional yes to the conditions of existence without protest.” Then we find in and through them the best of Buddhist practice and of depth psychology:

EVERYTHING CHANGES AND ENDS, yet can be renewed. This is our entry into the archetype of resurrection.

SUFFERING IS PART OF GROWTH, yet we keep finding ways to bring good from evil. This opens the archetype of redemption.

THINGS DO NOT ALWAYS GO ACCORDING TO PLAN, yet we can find the equanimity to say yes to what is and thanks for what has been. This is the archetype of synchronicity and of a divine plan that makes our destiny a larger one than ever we imagined.

THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS FAIR, yet we can be fair and even generous. This gives us a sense of justice and strengthens our commitment to fight for it. It is the archetype of Karma and of atonement and forgiveness.

PEOPLE ARE NOT LOVING AND LOYAL ALL THE TIME, yet we do not have to retaliate, but can ourselves act with love and loyalty, never giving up on others. This is the archetype of unconditional love.

From: Unexpected Miracles: The Gift of Synchronicity and How to Open It by David Richo, PhD
A Letter from Prison

Dear GBF,

Greetings in love, hope, and perseverance! This particular Wednesday is colored with opaque energy, a feeling of dullness expectant of some purpose larger than the promise of the day, but an expectation that today most likely will remain unrevealed. And so, this day moves hour to hour, long and exhausting. But one immediate joy is unfolding before me. Writing you. I’ll tell you a short story.

My humorous and delightful cellie is off to court today. He anxiously will be confronted with his sentence—a fate of more incarceration. So, last night we prayed together. Before bedding down in our interminably rigid steel-framed bunks, standing facing each other, I took his hands, moist with anxiety. I drew them together, like cold hands grasping and caressing a hot glazed ceramic mug generously warmed by that first brew of morning coffee.

I asked his permission to sing a song I learned as a boy from the Book of Psalms, the 27th chapter, first verse. The expression in his eyes of surprise, curiosity and a semi-embarrassment coated with an equal dose of welcome told me this would be new for him. After a moment, he forthrightly accepted the invitation. I sang.

When I finished my song, the echo of my tone gave way, yielding to quiet in the order of an ancient liturgy moving freely from one rubric to the next. Silence took center stage. I let the eloquent void fill our cubicle as it permeated the entire jail. One could not see or feel the sober pathos of thick concrete walls and floors, the solid clasp of high voltage electronic locks on the one pale blue door. In that moment of solemnity, neither of us could acknowledge the bold, (continued on the next page)
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. Last year we 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.

proud, venomous pledge of the County Sheriff, “If there is one escape, we’ll close the jail down, along with my job,” or so the story goes among the inmates.

These realities that choke our daily appetite for release became invisible in that brief, ancient, eternal moment of silence—it was pure. It was our gift. We accepted it with humility and honor.

Then I spoke. Briefly. As if walking among fine crystal. No words can better the silence. But I knew both of us came from religious traditions replete with words. It felt soothing, familiar, and necessary to speak, but only briefly. My tone and rhythm was of benediction quality. It was time to close this event, this aberration of jail life and cell mate precautions and distance.

“In Jesus’ name,” I said. Jesus. Our friend. The One who walks with us as a father might walk with his son to his first Tee-ball tryout. The boy fearful of his first public competition, separate from the battle scars of experience from sibling rivalry. Tee-ball is for real! With dad alongside, the boy can make the journey. This is the Jesus both my cellie and I know. This was the Jesus, and for me in a quieter place in my soul, the sweet Buddha, in whose name we closed the prayer.

It was finished. It was begun. There was a pleasant aftertaste of no time. For a moment, the Universe stood still, while at the same time happily, playfully spinning... spinning like a top, twirled by the delight, glee and pleasure of the Eternal Child—God’s laughter.

For my cellie, it was a “Thank You Jesus Drama.” For me, too. Jesus is sweet, warm, and worthy of praise. Yet, also in my heart, a dwelling grows for sweet Buddha, in the nature of ubiquitous love.

For this openness to all of creation, I am grateful to the Gay Buddhist Fellowship and to my Christian family and friends who encourage me on my journey. Amen. Om. ▼

Howard DePorte is a member of GBF presently an inmate at San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, California.
GBF Calendar

June/July 2000
San Francisco/Bay Area Events

Sunday Morning Sittings, 10:30am:
San Francisco Buddhist Center, 37 Bartlett St., between 21st & 22nd,
one block west of Mission St.

June 4       Jim Wilson 
Monthly Speaker

June 11      Wes Nisker¹

June 18      Steve Peskin²

June 25      Discussion by 
Sangha members

July 2        Jim Wilson 
Monthly Speaker

July 9        Blase Hents³

July 16       Discussion by 
Sangha members

July 23       Julie Henderson

July 30       Discussion by 
Sangha members

¹Wes Nisker is the author of Crazy 
Wisdom, (Ten Speed Press); and 
Buddha's Nature, (Bantam Books); 
and editor of the vipassana journal 
Inquiring Mind. He has been 
practicing Buddhist meditation for 
30 years, and teaching for ten years in 
various venues. He is affiliated with 
Spirit Rock Center, and has his own 
sitting group in Berkeley. In his other 
carnation, he is Scoop Nisker, local 
radio commentator, currently doing 
pieces for KFOG.

²Steve Peskind has been a Buddhist 
student and practitioner since 1973, 
and an HIV/AIDS counselor and 
educator since 1981. He is a co-
founder of Coming Home Hospice 
and the San Francisco Shanti Project, 
where he trained volunteers and 
co-facilitated the first support groups 
in San Francisco for people living 
with AIDS and their families and 
friends. Founding Director of Services 
(1985) of the AIDS Services 
Foundation of Orange County, CA., 
and founding Executive Director 
(1987) of Laguna Shanti in Laguna 
Beach, CA., Steve is now a counselor 
for people living with Traumatic 
Brain Injury in the San Francisco 
Bay Area, a free-lance writer, and 
Volunteer/Coordinator of the 
Buddhist AIDS Project. With BAP, 
he is currently writing and volunteer 
editing the anthology Heart Lessons 
from an Epidemic: Buddhist Practice 
and Living with HIV for Parallax 
Press.

³Blase Hents has been a student of 
Buddhism for almost 15 years. 
Having first met Buddhism in travels 
to Asia, Blase continued his spiritual 
path here in the West, focusing on the 
Tibetan Buddhist lineage. Formerly 
the Spiritual Program Coordinator 
at Tse Chen Ling Center for Tibetan 
Buddhist Studies in San Francisco, 
he is currently director of the Tsa 
Tsa Studio/Center for Tibetan Sacred 
Art. The Tsa Tsa Studio provides 
education, practice and placement 
programs devoted to sacred art.

Tuesday, June 13, 7:30pm: 
Steering Committee Meeting 
(open to all GBF participants), at 
the home of Jim Stewart, SF.

Saturday, June 10, 3–6:30pm: 
Preparation and serving of dinner 
for homeless families, Hamilton 
Family Center, SF. Information: 
call Clint Seiter

Saturday, June 24, 7pm: GBF 
Potluck Dinner at the home of 
Richard Saiz, SF.

GBF Homeless Project
If you are available to volunteer 
your time to the Hamilton 
Family Center on the second 
Saturday of any month, please 
contact Clint Seiter

GBF volunteers 
prepare a dinner, funded by GBF, 
for homeless families.

GBF needs volunteers to listen 
to recordings of Dharma Talks 
and transcribe them for 
publishation in the newsletter.

This is a great way to really listen 
to a talk! Contact David Holmes.

"Queer Dharma" is sponsored 
by several Sanghas of the Bay 
Area Gay and Lesbian community, including GBF. We need one 
of our members to be a liaison 
and GBF representative to the 
committee that plans events. 
Contact any member of the 
Steering Committee.

GBF Website
www.gaybuddhist.org

HOUSE SITTER available for any 
two weeks this summer at your 
apt or house in San Francisco. 
Call Dave
Local Dharma Centers
A list of local Dharma centers is available on our website and as a handout at our Sunday sittings. We encourage members to explore what these Dharma centers can offer to their practice.

Meditation Group in Sonoma County
A Buddhist meditation group meets near the town of Sonoma every other Wednesday evening starting at 7pm, and GBFers are always welcome. The group now has gay and nongay practitioners. For more information, contact Bob Hass.

Ongoing Meditation Group on Monday Nights
Led by Jon Bernie, a meditation teacher in San Francisco with thirty years' meditation experience (including eleven years of Zen Buddhist training and seven years of Vipassana training). The group is free and open to all; donations gratefully accepted. Quaker Meeting House, 65 9th Street (between Mission & Market), 7-9pm. For more information, call Jon

Local Dharma
June/July 2000
San Francisco/Bay Area Events

Tuesdays, Thursdays, & Fridays, 10:30am: HIV Sitting Group. Hartford Street Zen Center, 57 Hartford St, SF. Information: 415.863.2507.

Sundays, 3-5pm: "Buddhism for Gay Men." Gay Men's Buddhist Sangha. A 20-minute meditation followed by a presentation of the core teachings of the Buddha, designed specifically for the Gay community. New Leaf Center, 1874 Market St, SF. Information: 415.207.8113.

Buddhism at Millennium's Edge, series sponsored by SF Zen Center. Information (on any of the events below): 415.863.3133.

Saturday, June 3, 7:30pm: "Mindfulness as Western Religious Renewal," lecture by Sylvia Boorstein, co-founding teacher at Spirit Rock Meditation Center. Fee: $15. Unitarian Center, 1187 Franklin (at Geary), SF.

Sunday, June 4, all day: "Cultivating Awe and Practicing Lovingkindness," workshop led by Sylvia Boorstein. Fee: $75. Green Gulch Farm, Highway 1, Marin County.

Friday, July 28, 7:30pm: "Authentic Practice," lecture by Robert Aitken, retired roshi of the Honolulu Diamond Sangha. Fee: $15. Unitarian Center, 1187 Franklin (at Geary), SF.

Saturday, July 29, all day: "Practice and Interaction," workshop led by Robert Aitken. Fee: $75. Green Gulch Farm, Highway 1, Marin County.

If you would like to recommend a Dharma event for this column please e-mail information.
Registration Form

Eighth Annual GBF Summer Retreat
September 8 - 10

Name
Address
City
State Zip Phone
Email

Special Dietary or Health Considerations

Accommodations: (please check one)

( ) Dorm
( ) Campsite
( ) Semi-Private Cabin ($50 additional)

Carpooling:

( ) I can provide transportation
( ) I need transportation

Volunteer:
There are many small jobs which need to be done at the retreat. Which
ones can you do?

( ) I can help out with the retreat (i.e., bell-ringing, timekeeping, wel-
coming and orientation, cleaning-up, ceremony, early-morning reveille)

Payment:
Fee: $140. Scholarships are available. We want you there! Don't let lack
of money prevent you from coming!

Since a deposit to Vajrapani is due by July 30, we will offer a $10
discount for early full payments received before that date.

Enclosed is $ ____________________

( ) full payment
( ) deposit ($50 minimum)

Please mail form and check payable to GBF to:
Summer Retreat Registration
Gay Buddhist Fellowship
2215-R Market Street, PMB 456
San Francisco, CA 94114

Attend the Summer Retreat for Free
We need two men to organize and facilitate the GBF Summer Retreat. Advice and assistance
will be available from former organizer David Holmes. Contact
David Holmes or any member of the Steering Committee if you
are interested.
Q: When I see the ugliness in myself, I do not know how to accept it. I try to avoid it or change it rather than accept it.

A: Well, you do not have to hide it. You do not have to change it. Investigate it further. When you see the ugliness in yourself, that is just a preconception. You see it as ugliness, which is still connected with the ideas of “good” and “bad.” But you have to transcend even those words, “good” and “bad.” You have to get beyond words and conceptualized ideas and just get into what you are, deeper and deeper. The first glimpse is not quite enough: you have to examine the details without judging, without using words and concepts. Opening to oneself fully is opening to the world.

—Chögyam Trungpa, from *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, Shambhala Publications, 1973