The Four Noble Truths

By David Lewis

David Lewis has been a member of Gay Buddhist Fellowship for five years. He has a degree in comparative religious studies and has been a Dharma practitioner for 40 years, first in the Vajrayana tradition and more recently in the Vipassana tradition. He is a graduate of the Spirit Rock Meditation Center’s dedicated practitioner’s program and he shares the Dharma at several sanghas in the Bay Area. He gave the following talk at GBF on January 10, 2010.

I really am happy to be here this morning. Our speakers say that all the time, and it kind of sounds perfunctory, but I’m really kind of happy this morning.

I’ve been thinking about the Four Noble Truths and doing a little bit of reminder kind of research, so it has been my focus for a couple of weeks. I thought about speaking without notes, but I just don’t quite have the nerve. So they’re here, and I might get off script. Thirty-five years in practice is a little misleading. I did indeed go on my first meditation retreat when I was a teenager, when I was like seventeen years old. I had a double major in college, and one of my majors was Comparative Religion. It was kind of focused on eastern religions and Buddhism. I kind of identified more with Buddhism than any of the other religions, but I’m really interested in all of them. For thirty-five years Buddhism has been my thing, but I really didn’t practice very much or very seriously until the last five years or less. And I can tell you it’s a whole different ballgame when you start practicing seriously. I used to read Buddhist books and liked Thich Nhat Hanh and would go on a retreat every once in a while, listen to speakers. But the Buddha taught and emphasized that what he was putting forth was a practice, a path. It’s something you do; it’s not something you wrap your mind around. It’s not something you can learn or understand. You don’t have to be intelligent to get the Buddha’s path and to move far along. Buddhism is not really a religion. It was kind of made a religion by Western missionaries and explorers in the nineteenth century, who named it Buddhism. Buddhism wasn’t called Buddhism before Westerners named it that. If you asked a practitioner in Tibet or Japan or Southeast Asia before the nineteenth century what they did, they’d say they were following the path or following in the steps of the Buddha or doing the practice. And sometimes it was more devotional and sometimes it was more meditative, but it was something you did, not something you studied or understood. So there’s a little bit of misunderstanding about that, and a lot of what I want to talk about this morning is some of the misconceptions around the Four Noble Truths and the practice.

One misconception of Buddhism in the West is that it’s some kind of a New Age practice. We like Buddhism because it’s affirmative, and there are New Age affirmations that make us feel good, as opposed to some of the other religions that are practiced in the West. Another misconception is that it’s an esoteric metaphysical thing that is kind of far away and hard to understand and interesting, but I’m never going to get there, I’m never going to reach nirvana, because that’s something that’s just impossible. Another misconception is that it’s about mystical states, again something that might not be applicable to me. None of those things are true, in my opinion, in Buddhist practice. The Buddha has
sometimes been metaphorically described as a doctor, and that
certainly applies to his teachings around the Four Noble Truths.
A doctor diagnoses a problem, identifies its cause and pre-
scribes a cure, and the Four Noble Truths do exactly that. The
First Noble Truth, dukkha, is the identification of the problem.
The Second Noble Truth, which is the cause of dukkha, is the
cause of the problem. And the Third and Fourth Noble Truths
about freedom and the cure are the cure of the path. It’s some-
thing you do. And hopefully it’s not something we think about
doing at some point in the future. It’s something we all just did
as we were sitting this morning as we let our minds rest and let
our minds relax, watched our thoughts, experienced our
thoughts as being temporary things that pass in and out, that
Teach us impermanence. One of the central teachings of
the Buddha is impermanence. That’s something we experienced
when we sat this morning. So we all practiced, and I’ll bet
a bunch of people in this room had moments of awakening. You
might not have seen it that way, this morning as you were sit-
ting, but the moment of awakening is any time when we let go
of clinging to thoughts: anytime we just let them go, let them
be—our thoughts, our feelings, our sensations—and realize
them as impermanent mental states that don’t really belong to
us. They just pass through us. So awakening is available here
and now. Not a big deal. We get kind of caught up in this idea
of nirvana as something far away, but nirvana is simply awak-
ening. And nirvana is a permanent state of that freedom from
clinging to thoughts, ideas, desires, but we can experience that
state on a temporary level, and it brings real relief and real re-
lease in our lives—even just this morning.

So true happiness, the way Buddha taught it, is not about acquir-
ing anything, and it’s not about gaining some esoteric knowledge,
and it’s not about studying. True happiness is about letting go of
our illusions of what we think we want and what we need, and
revealing our true nature. In the Mahayana tradition, our true na-
ture is called our Buddha nature, and it’s something that we already
have. What we’re seeking is something that we already have. My
favorite depiction of this in the West is the Wizard of Oz. It’s one
of my favorite movies. But it’s an incredible drama story. Dorothy
falls in the delusion; she gets chopped in the head, but she falls in
delusion. She goes to this magical place; she’s shown a path to
follow to get back to what she wants, to get home. Dorothy wants
to go home. She’s shown a path, the Yellow Brick Road. And along
the way on that path she meets other deluded characters. She meets
a Scarecrow who thinks he doesn’t have a brain. The Tin Man
thinks he doesn’t have a heart. The Lion thinks he doesn’t have
courage. And they all follow this path, this complicated path, with
challenges and complications and end up at this place—you re-
member at the end—where Dorothy realizes she always has been
at home. She didn’t have to do all of that. Or maybe she had to do
that to realize that what she was seeking she already had. She
already was home. The Tin Man already had a heart. He had a huge
heart. We saw it during the course of the movie. But he was de-
cluded; he didn’t think he had one. The Lion had courage. They all
had what they were seeking. And the whole process of exploration
was finding that which they already had.

So another way that the Buddha described the path was that it’s
something you master, it’s something you learn. It’s like learning
how to play an instrument, or learning a sport. The
Buddha very often used music because he was musically
trained. He was a wealthy guy, a wealthy prince, and he’d been
musically trained, so he used that as a metaphor. So it’s some-
thing you learn, and meditation, which is what we all come here
to do in the morning, is only part of the path, but it’s the training
part of the path. In terms of comparing it with music, meditation
is like playing scales. It’s something we do to become conver-
sant with the music that we’re hoping to practice. But playing
scales isn’t what music is all about. It’s just part of what we do,
and I’m going to come back to this a little bit later.

In a way, we could spend the whole year talking about the
Four Noble Truths. When I told one of my teachers I was going
to be talking about the Four Noble Truths, he just chuckled
and said, “There’s only one dharma talk—it’s the Four Noble
Truths.” Everything in Buddhism can be contained in the Four
Noble Truths; no matter what you talk about, it can somehow
be fitted with the Four Noble Truths. The Four Noble Truths
are: First one, dukkha. Life is difficult; it’s inherently challeng-
ing because it requires constant accommodation to changing,
often painful conditions. (I’ll come back to this again.) The
Second Noble Truth: Suffering is the insatiable need to have
things other than they are. That’s the cause of suffering—the
need to have things other than they are. (I want more of this; I
want less of that.) Third Noble Truth: Freedom from suffering
is possible because peace and happiness do not depend on
what’s going on in our lives, but how we respond to it. My
favorite expression of this is, “Pain is inevitable, but suffering
is optional.” Suffering is what we add to pain.” So suffering
isn’t something that happens out there, suffering is how we
respond to what happens out there. And the Fourth Noble Truth
is the doctor’s prescription. It’s a program of practices to
promote freedom and happiness.

Coming back to the First Noble Truth, dukkha, I’m trying not to
use the word “suffering” too much, and that’s the common Eng-
lish translation for dukkha, because I think it misleads us, and
even if it doesn’t mislead us, we tend to be terrified of suffering.
Suffering is what we turn away from. That’s what we’re condi-
tioned to do in our culture. We avoid suffering. Suffering happens;
we do something else. We distract ourselves. But dukkha—well,
let me give you some other words that have been used. These are
all accurate translations in their own way. Dukkha can be dissiat-
sation, discomfort, stress. I know one of my favorite Buddhist
teachers never says suffering; he always says stress. Dukkha is
stress, anxiety, remorse, instability, disappointment, lack of con-
trol. Anyone ever had that in their lives? That’s dukkha. Anger.
Longing. Simply wanting more of this and less of that, wanting
things to be different. Again we’re conditioned to be resistant and,
especially in our culture, we’re conditioned to be resistant to
suffering and to turn away from it. What the First Noble Truth asks
us to do is to just sit with our suffering. Don’t turn away from it.
Don’t fall into it whole-heartedly. Just notice it. Allow it to be—to
be with our suffering rather than wanting it to go away.
Some of you were here last week for Daniel's talk, which I just thought was wonderful. It was really inspirational. He referred to the Buddha's upbringing and life as a prince. The Buddha was a pampered prince, and his father was worried because a soothsayer or psychic had said when the Buddha was born that he would either be a great king or a great spiritual leader. And the Buddha's father, being a king, wanted him to be a king, wanted him to stay in the family business. So the way the Buddha's father dealt with this was to distract him: to give him everything he wanted, to give him women, wine, song, dance, sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll. The Buddha had everything he wanted, whenever he wanted it, and he found dissatisfaction in this life. The Buddha had wisdom even in the midst of all that delusion. The Buddha knew that that wasn't quite enough, something was missing in his life. He went out looking for it. The story of the Buddha's early life is why I think that Buddhism is so incredibly appropriate for our age, because I think in modern America we're all princes. We're all really wealthy people in this room, compared with people in third-world countries, in most of the world. Even if we don't think of ourselves as wealthy, if you have a TV, if you have the Internet, if you have a roof over your head, enough to eat, a cell phone, you've got more than an awful lot of people in this world have. You're wealthy—like the Buddha. And like the Buddha you have a phenomenal number of distractions available to you. You can watch TV. If you are in a relationship you don't like, you can change it. Nobody in the world has that option. If you have a job you don't like, you can change it. If you don't like your house, your apartment, you can move. If you don't like your town, you can move. If you're not satisfied with where you live, you can change. We have this phenomenal range of options. There was an ad they were running before Christmas in the New York Times, from AT&T. It was for their smartphone, for the iPhone: the biggest printed ad, full page ad, orange. You probably might have seen it. The biggest print was, "Now you can talk and surf the net at the same time." On your cell phone, you can walk and talk and surf the net at the same time—this was the selling point. As a mindfulness practitioner, that gave me the creeps. But if you went down and read the fine print underneath, that's not all. "And there's a hundred thousand apps available." A hundred thousand ways of distracting yourself. You know you never have to sit at a bus stop in the peace of your own mind again. In fact, you never have to sit in the peace of your mind ever again. You have a hundred thousand apps available to you. So like the Buddha we have distractions available to us. And those distractions—many of them, not all of them, but many of them—are about turning away from suffering. They give us the opportunity not to be with our suffering. So you might say, "Why not? Why not turn away from our suffering?" Because the Buddha realized—and you and I can realize through practice, try this out for yourself—that when you turn away from your suffering, it merely perpetuates the suffering. If you stuff your grief, the grief’s not going to go away. So the First Noble Truth is really about simply being in the moment. Whatever's going on—whether it's pleasant, whether it's painful—just be in the moment. And you'll realize, as we realized this morning when we were meditating, that whatever is going on is temporary. Bad mood, just let it be a bad mood. It will pass. Good mood, unfortunately that's going to pass, too.

So let's move on to the Second Noble Truth. The misconception around the Second Noble Truth is that it's desire. Ask a lot of people what the second noble truth is, what's the cause of suffering, and people say desire. It's not really desire. Well, yes, it is desire, but it's more than desire. Desire can be skillful or unskillful. So for instance, if you have a desire to intensify your spiritual path, or desire to meditate more, or desire for your children to be happy and healthy, those are skillful desires. Nothing wrong with that. What the Second Noble Truth is really all about is attachment to desire, our attachments. Sometimes it's called clinging. So even skillful desires—like a desire to follow the path more intensively—if we cling to them, can become unskillful. But an awful lot of our desires are inherently unskillful. And when we say desire it's not only wanting things. Desire is also about not wanting things. Desire is wanting things to be different than they are. So if you want more of this, that's desire. If you want less of that, that's desire, too. And the more intensively you want change, the more intensively you want more of this or less of that, the greater the desire is and, the Buddha would say, the greater the suffering. Clinging to desire is the cause of stress and anxiety. The Buddha said, "He who understands clinging and non-clinging understands all of the dharma." Simple as that.

So I've got a little example. When we think about suffering, a lot of times we think about the big sufferings, and it is kind of scary to think about old age, illness and death. But if you think of dukkha simply as dissatisfaction, sometimes on a really subtle level, then you start to understand what the Buddha taught about suffering being an aspect of our lives that's present in every moment of our lives. Dependent origination is a flow chart the Buddha came up with about how suffering happens. So let me try to simplify using a Snickers bar. Dependent origination is the path that leads from your coming into contact with an object—your senses, your eyes, your smell may—be—and what happens and how that leads to suffering. You know this Snickers bar is simply a thing I'm holding up, and you're seeing it. But your senses, your mind, are going through this whole kind of complicated trial of process around how you react to this. If you like this thing I'm holding up, here's the path, here's the flow, and if you meditate on this, you'll see it in your own experience. The first thing you experience—and you probably didn't notice this—was either a sense of pleasant

So true happiness, the way Buddha taught it, is not about acquiring anything, and it's not about gaining some esoteric knowledge, and it's not about studying. True happiness is about letting go of our illusions of what we think we want and what we need, and revealing our true nature. In the Mahayana tradition, our true nature is called our Buddha nature, and it's something that we already have.
or unpleasant. “When he held this up I had a pleasant reaction or an unpleasant reaction.” What followed on that was, “I like it or I don’t like it.” So let’s say you had a pleasant reaction. I held this up and you went, “Oooh, I like that.” Before you even got to the point of liking it, it was pleasant. And before you even got to the point of liking it, you named it. “Oh! that’s a Snickers. It’s pleasant. I like it.” Next step on the chain is, “I want it. I want one of those.” Or, “I wish I had that.” Next step on the chain is, “I’ve got to have that.” Next step on the chain is, “This is just kind of taking over my whole thought process. Now I’m really kind of obsessed on this Snickers bar. I’m a person that needs to have a Snickers bar.” So this is an oversimplified description, but you can see where I’m going with this. The suffering increases as your wanting, as your clinging increases. At the point where you see this, and you say that’s a pleasant thing, you’re not suffering. But every stage of the process, as it goes through the stages, you cling a little bit more to the point where “I’ve got to have that and I’m going to be unhappy if I don’t have that.” Likewise, if you don’t like Snickers, or you’re allergic to chocolate, or you’re allergic to peanuts, I hold this up, you’re going to have an “Oh, that’s unpleasant. I don’t like that.” That’s a Snickers bar—keep that away from me. Why is this guy holding this Snickers bar up in front of me? It’s really annoying me. I wish he’d put it away. I don’t want to see a Snickers bar; I really hate them.” That’s how hate comes about. That’s where hate comes from. So that’s called dependent origination. That’s the chain of dependent origination, and it happens to us many times a minute throughout the day. Many times a minute. Many, many, many times an hour. Our senses—eyes, ears, nose, taste—come into contact with objects; they’re pleasant or they’re unpleasant—sometimes they’re neutral—they’re pleasant or unpleasant or neutral, and then we go down the chain of dependent origination, where we end up loving or hating, having to have or divorcing. That’s dukkha. When the Buddha said, “Our lives are dukkha,” he meant that our lives are many experiences—a minute, an hour—of wanting, of not wanting. So by practicing and meditating, and getting more experienced and learning this path, what we learn to do is notice that process, become more aware of it as our senses come into contact with things—and things include thoughts and emotions. Our senses come in contact with thoughts and emotions. And we learn what our mind does, and we learn what our preferences are, and as we do that we discover that if we’re paying attention, if we’re mindful of what happens in our heads when this thing appears, we can actually short circuit the process. We can stop at pleasant, or we can stop at “I like.” I can say, “I like Snickers bars, that’s a pleasant thing. I like Snickers bars, but I don’t have to have it,” and save ourselves a lot of suffering. Likewise, if you don’t like Snickers bars, “That’s a Snickers bar; I don’t like it.” Doesn’t matter to me. I don’t care if he’s holding it up—life goes on.

That’s how we release from attachment. And it takes some practice, and meditation really helps a lot. The practice of meditation helps us notice how we react to things and be with our experience. So we pass our days jumping from one desire to another, and that in Sanskrit is called samsara, the wheel of suffering, this passing our days jumping from one desire to another, grabbing for this and pushing away that.

So the Third Noble Truth is the good news—there’s freedom from this, freedom from clinging. And I just described how you do that. You practice noticing how your mind works, what you cling to, what you like, what you don’t like, how you feel about that, and just being with it. Not pushing it away, because that’s desire that’s clinging. Just allowing it to be and noticing that it’s temporary and it’s going to pass. We can free ourselves from suffering by changing our response to suffering. Suffering is something we cause in our own lives. So the practice is noticing whether there’s clinging in this moment and noticing what happens when we bring our attention to it. Simple as that: noticing whether we’re clinging and noticing what happens when we bring our attention to it. You might find it simply dissolves when you notice you’re clinging to something. Do you ever notice that when you’re just kind of obsessed with something, and you wear yourself out, you know, your mind is spinning, and you just get tired of thinking about it, and you finally just intuitively let go? That’s letting go of clinging. So that’s suffering and that’s freedom from suffering.

And the Fourth Noble Truth is the path that the Buddha set out. The path is simply a blueprint. It’s a list of eight things, eight practices, that we do, in no particular order. You can focus on one or another. You can focus on all of them at once. You can do them as a cycle. It’s a blueprint for how we go about freeing ourselves from suffering. Once again, I could spend a whole hour, a whole dharma talk on each one of the factors of the path. A lot can be said about them, so let me summarize. In the first place, there’s this list of eight things. You kind of divide them up into three categories, three general broad categories. The Pali word for one of them is sila, which is ethics, and that includes speech, action and livelihood. What we do, how we behave, what we speak about in the world. Our outward behavior and appearance has a lot to do with our happiness. Now, the Buddha tended to stress the Golden Rule, as Jesus did—“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” But the Buddha talked about sila not so much in terms of doing good things for other people because that’s the right thing to do. The Buddha said, “Do it for yourself.” One of the primary reasons that we practice sila, that we practice ethics, is because that short circuits remorse in our lives, and remorse causes a great deal of suffering. So by practicing Right Behavior, Right Speech, Right Livelihood, and being bright and true with the world, kind and compassionate with other people, you have nothing to be

So the First Noble Truth is really about simply being in the moment. Whatever’s going on—whether it’s pleasant, whether it’s painful—just be in the moment. And you’ll realize, as we realized this morning when we were meditating, that whatever is going on is temporary. Bad mood, just let it be a bad mood. It will pass. Good mood, unfortunately that’s going to pass, too.
remorseful about, and that's happiness. Happiness simply arises. That's a cause of happiness.

The second group of teachings in the Eightfold Path is called saṁadhi, which is often defined as concentration, but it's meditation and mindfulness. A better way of putting it is a calm harmonious mind. The Buddha said in order to work along this path, in addition to ethics, it's important to meditate. And the meditation is the tool that we use to gain calm harmonious mind. There might be other ways of doing it, but that's what worked best for him, and most people in the last 3500 years that have practiced the path have found that it works for them. So meditation practice is important. It's not everything, but it is important.

By practicing Right Behavior, Right Speech, Right Livelihood, and being bright and true with the world, kind and compassionate with other people, you have nothing to be remorseful about, and that's happiness.

And the goal of meditation is a calm harmonious mind, which leads to insight.

The Pali word for the third group on the Eightfold Path is prāna, and that's wisdom. It's not so much the wisdom you gain by reading books or listening to dharma talks or studying. The wisdom is a discernment that you gain from meditating and from insight. The practice of insight, the practice of meditation, leads to wisdom.

So what are the actual Eightfold Path points? The first is Wise View, and Wise View can be as simply defined as understanding and accepting the Four Noble Truths. If you buy the Four Noble Truths, you have Wise View. Wise Intention is the next point, and we could talk about that for hours, but intention is all important in Buddhism. Intention is actually more important than action. You can do the right thing for the wrong reason, and the Buddha taught that all of our action, all of our speech, comes from intention. Wise Speech is the next point, and it's a really hard thing to practice. Wise Speech is a big part of my practice. I'm still working on it. But if you're thinking about what to say, a simplified formula is: Is it true? Is it useful? Is it timely? Sometimes if you have something to say to somebody, it might be true, but it might not be useful, or it might not be timely. It might not be the right time to say it. So if speech doesn't meet these three criteria—true, useful and timely—the Buddha said just don't do it. Don't say it. Wise Action is the next point. Wise Action is karma. The actual translation of the word karma is action. Karma is what you do. So Wise Action arises from Wise Intention. If you have the right intention, you're going to do the right action. One place to start, if you're thinking about practicing Wise Action more intentionally, is the Five Precepts. Avoiding killing, avoiding stealing, avoiding lying, avoiding sexual misconduct, and avoiding the use of intoxicants that can cloud your mindfulness, cloud your judgment. Wise Livelihood is the next point, and that basically teaches us that you do what you do with your life, how you work, your profession perhaps or just your preoccupations, has a lot to do with your role on the path. The path practicing dharma isn't just meditating. It isn't just showing up at GBF on Sunday mornings, but what you do with every day of your week, every hour of your day. Wise Effort—we're getting into the concentration and meditation parts, which are precepts on the path, first being Wise Effort. Wise Effort is directing your attention so that you do not get caught up in various mind states. Getting caught up in various mind states is clinging. We talked about clinging. Seeing that Snickers bars and your mind goes off in all your associations with a Snickers bar. That's clinging. Wise Effort is saying, "It's just a Snickers bar. Let's move on." Wise Mindfulness is paying attention. It's something that we do in meditation; it's something we practice in meditation. And it's something that very easily spills over into everyday life; the more we meditate, the more we practice, the more natural it becomes in our daily life—at work, in our relationships, in our walking around town. It includes investigation of experience, not only paying attention to what's going on, but what the truth of this, what's it really all about. And it includes compassion. It's really important when we're sitting in meditation and we have monkey mind, and stuff's going on, and we have thoughts of remorse or grief or we're worrying about something that's happening later. It's really important to have compassion around that because we can't find peace by judging ourselves or by criticizing our experience either in meditation or everyday life. It doesn't produce skillful effects. So if we apply compassion to our practice, no matter what comes up, even if it's something we're not comfortable with or we don't like about ourselves, we can be compassionate about it. And finally Wise Concentration is simply the ability to collect and unify the mind. I can't stress more the value of Wise Concentration to my daily life and how my practice has supported me in this, and I was noticing it this morning while we were sitting, or after we were sitting. I really had kind of a lovely sitting this morning. I don't know about you, but my mind was calm and relaxed and I wasn't thinking about this talk. So I don't know about you, but I used to get a lot more nervous about sitting up in front of a group and talking. The first few dharma talks that I ever gave, I was a wreck. I didn't sleep well the night before, and if there was a sitting before the talk, I'd sit there going over my talk in the sitting. Well, I didn't do that today. I just kind of meditated. Let my mind find a calm relaxed place. Didn't think about the talk. That's a result of my practice. I can only do that because I've practiced as much as I have. So think about the value of knowing you're going to be sitting in front of a group of people giving a talk and not having to worry about it. That for me today is the benefit of my practice, and I'm so grateful for it.

That's the Four Noble Truths, and I did it in forty-five minutes. I'm really proud of myself. The Buddha taught for forty years, thirty-five or forty years, and we have great volumes full of suttas, full of his talks. But everything he talked about somehow fits within the Four Noble Truths. There are stories of strangers coming up to the Buddha and saying, "What do you teach?" One of his most common responses was, "I teach suffering and the end of suffering." That's all. He didn't like big metaphysical concepts. If people asked him about the existence of God or life after death or this metaphysical stuff, he just didn't answer. If it didn't refer to suffering or the release from suffering, he didn't think it was relevant to his teaching. So everything fits into the Four Noble Truths, and it's a lot simpler than you might have thought it was.

So thank you for your patience this morning. That was discursive, and that was Cliff Notes for the Four Noble Truths.
GBF Thanksgiving Potluck

Come celebrate Thanksgiving Day with the Gay Buddhist Fellowship. This will be a time for GBF members and friends to come together and celebrate Sangha over an abundant meal. Kei Matsuda and his husband, Chuck, have once again offered up their home in the East Bay for annual festivities. The gathering will start on Thanksgiving Day at 4:00 p.m. A flyer will be available in November at our Sunday meetings with directions to Kei’s place in El Cerrito and information on dishes to bring. You can also email Kei at GBFTThanksgiving@hotmail.com to RSVP and to obtain additional information.

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GBF Newsletter  Send submissions to:
editor@gaybuddhist.org

GBF Yahoo Discussion Group
There is now a GBF discussion group for the general membership (and others) on Yahoo. Join the discussion at:
www.groups.yahoo.com/group/gaybuddhistfellowship
Calendar

Sunday Sittings
10:30 am to 12 noon
Every Sunday at 10:30am we meditate together for 30 minutes, followed by a talk or discussion till 12 noon. Everyone is then welcome to stay and socialize over refreshments till approximately 12:30, after which those who are interested usually go somewhere local for lunch. Our sittings are held at the San Francisco Buddhist Center, 37 Bartlett Street (Look for the red door near 21st St between Mission and Valencia Streets) MUNI: 14 Mission or 49 Van Ness-Mission, alight at 21st St, walk 1/2 block. BART: 24th and Mission, walk 31/2 blocks PARKING: on street (meters free on Sundays) or in adjacent New Mission Bartlett Garage. The Center is handicapped accessible.

Sunday Speakers

October 6  Kevin Griffin
Kevin Griffin is the author of One Breath at a Time: Buddhism and the Twelve Steps (Rodale Press 2004) and A Burning Desire: Dharma God and the Path of Recovery. A longtime Buddhist practitioner and 12-Step participant, he is a leader in the mindful recovery movement and one of the founders of the Buddhist Recovery Network.

October 13  Sheppard Kominars
Dr. Sheppard B. Kominars has written two previous books on recovery (Harper, 1989, and Hazelden, 1996) and is himself a cancer survivor who has worked over the past twenty-five years in counseling and consulting. His workshops at UCSF, Stanford Complementary Care Center, Kaiser Permanente, Center Center of the Desert, and other senior residences and centers have inspired participants. He began teaching writing in 1956 at Washington College and has a long career in higher education and consulting in health and education. He was born in Philadelphia, PA, and went to Central High School. He has lived in many cities and countries, but since 1986, San Francisco has been his home. He is a graduate of Kenyon College, Columbia University, and Boston University. For the past ten years, he has helped design libraries for clients through his antiquarian bookstore, Good Sheppard Fine Bindings. You can visit his website at www.goodsheppardbooks.com.

October 20  Open Discussion

October 27  Susan Moon
Susan Moon is a writer, editor, and teacher. She is the author of The Life and Letters of Tofu Roshi, a humor book about an imaginary Zen master, and editor of Not Turning Away: The Practice of Engaged Buddhism. Her short stories and personal essays have been published widely. She is the mother of two grown sons, and the abuela of Paloma. Sue has been a Zen student since 1976, practicing in the lineage of Suzuki Roshi at Berkeley Zen Center, Tassajara Zen Mountain Monastery, Green Gulch Farm, and now with Zoketsu Norman Fischer’s Everyday Zen sangha. She has received “lay entrustment,” a lay version of dharma transmission, from Norman.

November 3  Dave Richo
Dave Richo, Ph.D, MFT, is a psychologist, teacher, and writer in Santa Barbara and San Francisco who emphasizes Jungian, transpersonal, and spiritual perspectives in his work. He is the author of How to Be an Adult in Relationships. For more information, visit www.davericho.com.

November 10  Bill Weber
Bill Weber is a senior Vipassana practitioner and a graduate from Spirit Rock’s Community Dharma Leaders program. He teaches beginning meditation classes and daylongs. He has studied for the past ten years with Eugene Cash, among others, and has fifteen years of extensive retreat practice. He is also a documentary filmmaker and video editor.

November 17  Tom Moon
Tom Moon has been a practitioner of Vipassana meditation for fifteen years, and his spiritual home is Spirit Rock Meditation Center. He is a psychologist in San Francisco, working primarily with gay men. His chief commitment is in exploring the interface between Buddhist practice and psychotherapy.

November 24  Open Discussion