



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2009 NEWSLETTER

The Gay Buddhist Fellowship supports Buddhist practice in the Gay men's community. It is a forum that brings together the diverse Buddhist traditions to address the spiritual concerns of Gay men in the San Francisco Bay Area, the United States, and the world. GBF's mission includes cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.

The Courage to Live

BY LARRY YANG

Larry Yang is a Spirit Rock community dharma leader and leads meditation retreats tailored for men, people of color and LGBTIQ communities. In addition to working with people in recovery from addiction, he is also facilitator of the East Bay Meditation Center. He co-leads a meditation group for the LGBT community in San Francisco and is a psychotherapist and a consultant in cultural competencies. He gave the following talk at GBF on February 15, 2009.

Thank you for having me back. It's always really a pleasure to be in this space. It's held so much of our community for fifteen, maybe even twenty years. I don't even know the exact date that it started. I have always appreciated this space for our community and our practice.

I changed the topic of my talk at the last minute. Howard and I were going back and forth around what I was going to talk about, and I gave him a different title last week. The title that I have right now is "The Courage to Live" because for my own practice I've been really exploring this practice of forgiveness in the larger context and also as part of the practice of renunciation, which is letting go.

I think that sometimes I know that I shy away from this practice of forgiveness because there is often fear that comes up about doing something that is unpleasant or challenges me. They often say that the opposite of loving-kindness, that far enemy, can be fear. So as we bring this aspect of gentleness towards where we feel most challenged, that's actually one of the antidotes of the experience.

I want to talk about the language of forgiveness because for me it's actually quite subtle. We often apologize for something if we've made a mistake or crossed a boundary with someone. I actually feel that the words "I apologize" are slightly different than "I ask you for forgiveness." Even though conceptually it might mean the same thing, there's a different valence to the experience because it actually begins to involve the other person. For me, as I started to explore it, it became this component of this relational aspect of how we begin to feel. It's not just I have the power to apologize to you. It's that I'm actually asking for something that I don't actually have control over—whether you actually give me that forgiveness or not.

Suzuki Roshi says, "I don't pay attention to whether you are actually following the precepts or not. I just look at how you are with each other." And this is where forgiveness invites us in terms of how are we with each other in this life that inevitably has the ten thousand joys and the ten thousand sorrows.

When we talk about forgiveness sometimes, we can also be talking about redemption or pardoning or excusing, and really forgiveness is not about those aspects. It's not about absolving or excusing. Sometimes they say "forgive and forget." It's not about forgetting. All of those ideas are basically around the act that harmed, about the event that occurred, and forgiveness, especially when I say that I ask you for forgiveness, is really

inviting us into the relational aspect between you and that other person, as opposed to the act itself.

So forgiving is about my intention towards the person that harmed me, not necessarily the act itself. The act actually needs some restoration, may need some reparation, may need some kind of restorative process, but in that process can I not forget

Christmastime, and we sent Steven's ex-wife a Christmas gift. We never actually heard anything about the gift itself. We never got a thank you. There's that Shambhala instruction, "Don't expect applause." Well, we didn't get any, and that was okay! Because it wasn't a gift to Barbara so much as it was a gift to us to begin to shift our own relationship in this dynamic. It didn't solve a lot of

Forgiving ourselves is often really difficult, because we're our own harshest critics. Not only does the judgment arise, but we can even judge the judgment. So even when we're focused on the breath, and the mind goes off, which it inevitably does, what happens? Can we simply bring the awareness back to the sensations of the breath or the body? Or is there even a subtle thought of "Oh! This is not what I should be doing. I wish that my mind was more concentrated" or "I'm such a bad meditator. Everybody else is doing it better than me." So even if that judgment arises, can we direct the kindness to the judgment itself so that we're not actually feeding the judgment by judging it? That's just a template for our everyday experience because how often do we actually get angry at the anger, either at someone else or ourselves, or feed the depression by getting even more depressed? As opposed to just meeting that experience even though it's an unpleasant one with this aspect of awareness, which is really the kindness and the allowing that the practice is inviting us to.

that I am also dealing with another human being? Dr. Martin Luther King said, "Forgiveness does not mean ignoring what has been done or putting a false label on evil acts. It means rather that the evil act no longer remains a barrier to the relationship."

So one of the things that the Buddha suggested, especially when we're in a contracted state, or he actually says when we're angry at someone, is to give them a gift. And it's not a requirement that you feel good about giving the gift, but the gift itself is the invitation to see what will change that relationship. Does it change that relationship?

As some of you know, my husband Steven was married for 28 years, and he had a very messy divorce before I met him. There are still tensions in the that relationship. They have two grown children that they've raised and that are in our lives, and his relationship with his ex-spouse was hard and painful and there was a lot of resentment I think on both parts. We knew that it would only get more difficult because both children were going to get married, and we would have to have family gatherings together. We were not looking forward to any of that. One time when we were on vacation before these weddings occurred, we turned to each other and it was almost simultaneous because we were wondering, "How are we going to deal with these family gatherings with this tension?" And we were on vacation, and we said, "You know, I think we need to buy them a gift." And so it was right about

the issues, but it made it easier for us to walk through them.

Ajahn Jumnian is one of the Thai teachers who comes to Spirit Rock; he's going to be here this year. He teaches daylongs as well as the residential retreats. If you have a chance to be with him, he's really a gem of these teachings that just sort of flow from these meditation masters because they've been living them for fifty or sixty years. He tells a story of a time in the 90s when a lot of the Christian denominations were trying to do missionary work in Thailand. One of the ways that they would try to convert 96% of the Thai population to Christianity was to defame the existing Buddhist monks, to basically spread things like improper relationships with women or money, just basically slander. I don't know if some of you have traveled in Southeast Asia, but one of the outlets of the news media is a small Volkswagen Beetle with loudspeakers that go in four different directions, and someone broadcasts the news going through the streets. So in the town of Krabi, which is where Ajahn Jumnian has his monastery, there was this Volkswagen Beetle that would go around the streets slandering him, saying that he was doing all these things which he wasn't doing, and trying to discredit him. Eventually everybody in the community goes to the temple for some reason, whether it's the Buddha's birthday, or whether it's to honor the parents passing or for birth or funeral. The man who was driving and announcing that stuff in the Volkswagen

Beetle showed up at the temple one day. He made his prostrations to the Ajahn and admitted that he was the one that was doing this and said, “I was the one that did this, and it was because I was not able to find any other work to support my child, who was in the hospital. And I have four other children.” He described the difficulties of his life and that there was no other means of him getting a livelihood. Ajahn Jumnian, without skipping a beat, said, “You do what you need to in order to support your family. You continue to do what you need to even if it’s doing what you are doing right now. That’s fine with me.” There was this automatic forgiveness for any harm that had been caused. And eventually the man ordained, because in the Thai tradition you can ordain at any point in your life for any amount of time. So this man eventually ordained with him. It reminds me of that story of Angulimala, who was the man that in the Buddha’s time killed 999 people, and the Buddha basically said, “Stop!” and he said, “What are you talking about?” It’s basically stopping harming, and Angulimala eventually ordained with the Buddha and became fully awake.

Whenever we’re in relationship with someone, the invitation of forgiveness arises, and I know that some of you are in relationship with families, with partners. There is no relationship that doesn’t have this invitation.

Yesterday was Valentine’s Day, so I was spending time with Steven, and even in that dedicated time of being together, there was stuff that came up that I just noticed around “Should I go there, or should I let this go?” And there is no relationship in which we are never hurt. So this ability to look at forgiveness in our lives can actually create ease.

This also goes to the extreme of the relationship that we don’t even really think about. This is a story that I found surprising. It’s about Hillary Clinton actually, and until I read this article in *The Atlantic*, I didn’t realize that there were actually prayer groups in Congress. You would never think it, but there are! In these prayer groups, usually it’s consistent with my stereotype that most of the participants are relatively conservative Republican people like Brownback, and some of these people actually weren’t re-elected, but this was in 2001. And the article says,

In 2001, just after the new class of senators was sworn in, another name was added to the list [of this prayer group]: Hillary Rodham Clinton.

One spring Wednesday, a few months into the term, Senator Sam Brownback’s turn came to lead the group, and he rose intending to talk about a recent cancer scare. But as he stood before his colleagues Brownback spotted Clinton, and was overcome with the impulse to change the subject of his testimony. “I came here today prepared to share about this experience in my life that has caused great suffering, the result of which has deepened my faith,” Brownback said, according to someone who watched the scene unfold. “But I’m overcome now with only one thought.” He confessed to having hated Clinton and having said derogatory things about her. ... Then he turned to her and asked, “Mrs. Clinton, will you forgive me?” Clinton replied that she would, and that she appreciated the apology.

[One of the members of the prayer group said,] “It was an extraordinary moment.” ...

This repentance fostered an unlikely relationship that

has yielded political bounty. Clinton and Brownback went on to cosponsor one measure protecting refugees fleeing sexual abuse, and another to study the effects on children of violent video games and television shows. [Brownback said,] “That morning helped make our working relationship. ... It brought me close to someone I did not ever imagine I would become close to.”

So the traditional practice of forgiveness is actually giving it in three directions, and in my own practice I’ve actually added a fourth. The traditional directions are forgiving oneself for the harm that we have caused for ourselves; asking for forgiveness from others for those we have caused harm to; and then the third direction is forgiving others for the harm that has been done to us. The fourth that I’ve incorporated into my practice is forgiving the suffering that arises in this life, that there are sorrows and experiences of dukka that are out of our control and out of anyone’s particular origin. And can I have ease with that as well?

So I just wanted to talk about those four different directions a little bit. This aspect of forgiving self is often really difficult, because we’re our own harshest critics. Not only does the judgment arise, but we can even judge the judgment. So even when we’re focused on the breath, and the mind goes off, which it inevitably does, what happens? Can we simply bring the awareness back to the sensations of the breath or the body? Or is there even a subtle thought of “Oh! This is not what I should be doing. I wish that my mind was more concentrated” or “I’m such a bad meditator. Everybody else is doing it better than me.” So even if that judgment arises, can we direct the kindness to the judgment itself so that we’re not actually feeding the judgment by judging it? That’s just a template for our everyday experience because how often do we actually get angry at the anger, either at someone else or ourselves, or feed the depression by getting even more depressed? As opposed to just meeting that experience even though it’s an unpleasant one with this aspect of awareness, which is really the kindness and the allowing that the practice is inviting us to.

When I was one of these temporarily ordained monks in Thailand—many of you know the five precepts that we sort of invoke on daylong retreats or residential retreats. Well, if you’re living in a monastic container with robes, you hold 227 precepts. And it’s not like you study them and then you ordain. You ordain and then you keep them, which is literally impossible. There’s just no way that you can know all of them or remember all of them. So I was breaking precepts every single day, which is a huge learning place. I remember one particular one. I didn’t realize that as a monk you’re not supposed to drink standing up, because the whole vinaya or the monastic code is a formalization of grace—living with grace, living with ease. Everything that is even the details of the vinaya is creating that grace, at least that’s my understanding of the intention. So when you’re having a glass and you’re standing, you have nowhere to put it. If you’re sitting down, there’s a grace to when you’re supposed to eat, when you’re supposed to drink. So anyway I didn’t really realize those minor precepts. I was getting corrected everyday: “You need to do this; you need to do that.” No judgment by anyone—except me. Then I began to have this experiential visceral feeling of “Oh. Okay. This is what it’s like not to be judged. No one else is doing it except me.” And then there was beginning this relaxation into this place of allowing the mistakes to happen and just learning

from them, because we actually don't learn from anything we already know, right? We learn from that unknown place, that place where we actually make mistakes.

Part of what helps in forgiving ourselves is recognizing our own merit, recognizing how good we really are. The Buddha said this life that we have been born into is so precious, this life as a human being. He didn't say being born into a heterosexual life is so precious. He didn't say being born into a life as a man is so precious. He didn't say being born into a life that doesn't have anger is so precious. He said being born into this whole life as a human being is precious. There is a validation of our inherent goodness.

The reason it's so precious to be born into this human life is that only on this life plane do we have the capacity to awaken. That is what makes this life so precious. In the hell realms, there's just too much suffering. In the heaven realms you are seduced by all of the comforts and ease. It is only in this life with the 10,000 joys that each of us go through—none of us are exempt, even though we would like the sorrows to be over there—but it's actually both the joys and the sorrows that allow us to gain the clarity to awaken.

So the second direction of forgiveness is asking for forgiveness from others for harm that we may have caused. It's really acknowledging these sorrows, these imperfections of our lives, not turning away from them. It's really a mindfulness practice, because there is nothing that is not capable of our awareness. One of the reasons we start with ourselves first is that when we are able to forgive ourselves, it's easier for us to ask for forgiveness from others. And it's this vulnerability—this vulnerability of letting go of the perfection that we would like to be, and living in this messiness, which is what organic life is. And again there's sometimes this fear of vulnerability. One of the things that Sylvia Boorstein says that I love about vulnerability in this world is, "Well, what if everyone in the world were too vulnerable? What would the world be like if we were all too vulnerable?" I love the invitation into that possibility.

Again, I just want to link it back to the awareness practice, because the Satipatthana Sutta, which is basically the invitations of awareness, has this passage contemplating the fact that the nobles ones (meaning us, those who are on this path toward freedom) abide contemplating internally, they abide contemplating externally, and they abide contemplating both internally and externally. What it's saying, at least to me, is that this meditation practice, this awareness practice, is not just about focusing on my internal sensations and noticing what's arising in my own experience, from my own personal awakening. It's also noticing how the actions that I do in the world impact people around me, impact the world around me. It's both noticing the intention and the impact, and when that impact is harmful, to really bring the awareness to it—again not to judge it, but to learn from it. So this is the way that we learn and get that feedback mechanism to actually awaken, to become more and more awakened.

It's easier, I think, the more frequently we do it. In the beginning it may feel very intimidating to ask someone for forgiveness. At the end of my ordination, I went to Cambodia to do a pilgrimage to Angkor Wat, which is in Cambodia. It's impossible to see those ruins without a driver and a guide, which over there is not that expensive, but it's very helpful. So I hired a driver for two days. The thing that I will remember most about the driver

is at the end of each day he said to me, "And if I have done anything to offend you, may I ask for your forgiveness?" Just as an automatic. It was part of what he did with everyone that he was employed with. So there was an ease of this asking for forgiveness that was part of the cultural conditioning, part of his personal conditioning. As we begin to recondition our hearts and our minds, it actually becomes easier.

In the beginning of looking at forgiveness practice, I thought that one of these directions was more difficult than the others, but actually they're all difficult. The third direction is forgiving others for the harm that has been caused. Just noticing first of all where forgiveness is not possible, where is it just challenging—and again not to judge what is arising, but simply to notice it, be kind and gentle to that experience. Otherwise, you're actually feeding that contraction. You know the hardness of the situation is beginning to harden you as well. But if you simply meet that experience with kindness, you begin to dissolve the hardness.

There's that famous story, which some of you may have heard about the two prisoners of war that got released at the end of the war. They meet twenty years later and one of the ex-POWs asks the other one, "Have you forgiven your captors?" And the guy says, "Are you kidding? After what they did to us? No way!" And so the first guy says, "So they have you in prison still, haven't they?"

I just did a session of forgiveness in a class that I'm teaching at East Bay Meditation Center, and I had people write out some stories about their own experiences of forgiveness. And one person brought a story about how twenty years ago she was bypassed at a job and the reason that she was bypassed was because she was to train the person that she wanted the job for. In other words, she wanted a certain position, but they refused to give it to her because they wanted her to train that person. And she held this resentment and grudge for when the new person came. Over six years, she eventually worked her way into the position, but never actually let go of the grudge. She said maybe ten years after that the resentment had become softer, but she still couldn't be civil to the person that actually did this to her. And at the end of sixteen years, she left the company, and when she wrote this, it was twenty years after the fact. And as she was writing, she began to realize that the person that was the object of her resentment probably hadn't given this any thought after the first three months. And she had probably spent about two thousand hours of time on this subject. And how imprisoned she felt. So the forgiving of others is actually not so much a gift that you're giving them; it's a gift that you actually give to yourself.

So I just want to talk about this organicity to forgiveness because sometimes we can get so task focused around "just tell me how to do it and I'll do it," or "I just want to get there." And it's really about noticing how there's an ebb and a flow to it, that there's a life of its own, and it's really again simply like the meditation instructions. You get out of the way of your life and see how your life wants to get lived, as opposed to what your mind would like you to live. So you may think that it would be great to forgive this event or person, and yet the process of forgiveness has its own unfolding, and it's like the petals of a blossom. You can't unfold it prematurely. You have to let it relax. And with each blossom actually there are times of the day in which it will close. Forgiveness is not any different.

I was talking about Steven and his ex-wife. There were some openings that our relationship experienced around the gift, around preparing for these family events, the weddings. At the wedding itself, the photographers completely ignored us. There was a contraction. And so there is this opening and just to notice it. And sometimes there's a closing, because the timing is just still not there. And to be allowing of that as well, as opposed to wanting it to be something different, because in that wanting to be something different, there's an attachment, and that is the cause of suffering.

And the reason that I have come to around this ebb and flow and why it's so complicated is because it's really not one thing we're doing. The Buddhist Abidharma is the treatise on and explanation of Buddhist psychology, and they delineate fifty-two different mind states that are possible for this mind, of which fourteen are unwholesome, unskillful: things like greed, hatred, delusion, anger—you get the picture. There are some neutral states and then there are twenty-five beautiful states of mind: loving-kindness, compassion, equanimity, calm. Out of these twenty-five, twenty-three are required for forgiveness. This is why it's so complicated. The more that you're able to ripen these characteristics of the mind, the easier forgiveness will flow. As I said, some of them are loving-kindness, mindfulness, nonattachment, hesitation to do harm, fear to do harm, equanimity, flexibility, integrity, compassion, faith, insight.

Greta Crosby says (this is more of a western take on it): "For-

lives when we have to let everything go, when we start making the transition from this world. And often Buddhist practice is described as a practice of dying well. And how do we do that? How do we have this grace in letting go, in being able to forgive that experience of the first noble truth that there is suffering in this world? Of course, if we were to design this world, we would not design it this way with the racism, or sexism, or homophobia, or transphobia. We wouldn't create a world like this. And yet this is the world that we live in. And in the middle of that, is there still openness of our hearts and minds?

Morrie Schwartz, who died of Lou Gehrig's disease—he was an educator, but he was also this great Jewish humorist—says, "Forgive yourself before you die and then forgive others. Dying is only one thing to be sad over. Living unhappily is something else."

Sometimes when we're caught in that first noble truth of suffering—when we're caught in the middle of some harm that we've experienced—that suffering will ask, "Why me? Why is this happening to me? Why is life unfair to me?" The aspect of forgiveness invites the question, "Who else? Who else can actually live this life of ten thousand joys and ten thousand sorrows?"

When I was a teenager, when I was growing up—I was born in Philadelphia in the mid 50s—my parents could not find housing in Philadelphia because they would not rent or sell property to Asian families at the time. So we had to move outside of the city. So there was a lot of racism, and I said to

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giveness is one word, but not one act alone. Forgiveness is the process we live through in order to restore a relationship. Forgiveness is the process of coming back together again with another or with oneself after a separation based on wrongdoing or grievous shortcoming. . . . Forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgiving is anchoring a wrong in its own time and letting it recede into the past as we live and move into the future."

Jack Kornfield at Spirit Rock says that "forgiveness is letting go of all hope of a better past." So that we can actually live, because when we hang onto anything, when we are attached to anything, there is suffering.

And so the last aspect of forgiveness that I want to go to is this aspect of letting go because it's a preparation for the big let go. Right? Where we have to let go of everything. So even though sometimes these relationships or these hurts feel like a huge thing in our life, it's actually smaller than that point we get to in our

myself when I was in my mid-teens, "If it's this difficult to be a person of color, I am never going to be gay!" And you can just feel that closet door close and get bolted several times. It took several decades to reopen that for me. Things changed, and life began to unfold, and I started getting out of the way of this life that I thought I should be living. And regardless of that adversity or that suffering that I just described around this oppression, I really don't think that I would be here today doing the things that I'm doing without having gone through all of that, all of those sorrows, all of that joy. Our stories are different, but each of us has navigated that experience, the ten thousand joys and the ten thousand sorrows. Each of us out of adversity has created a beautiful life. Just recognize the goodness and the merit of your own experience.

That beauty in the middle of adversity has another name. And that name is freedom. ■

GBF

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GBF Thanksgiving Gathering

Once again, Kei Matsuda and his partner, Chuck, have graciously opened up their home to GBF to celebrate Thanksgiving. Their address is 7341 Pebble Beach Dr., El Cerrito, and their phone number is (510) 237-5091. Kei has requested that all GBFers who plan to attend call him first to help coordinate dishes. Festivities will begin at 4:00 pm.

Introducing Dharma Companions

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship no longer has a prison project. In its place, the volunteers who ran the BPF Prison Correspondence Committee have formed a group called the Dharma Companions.

Dharma Companions offers free Buddhist materials to all inmates, prison study groups, and prison libraries: Buddhist books, pamphlets, used magazines, including old issues of *Turning Wheel*, and some tapes. Our all volunteer staff will be happy to answer questions inmates might have about Buddhism or their personal practice. As so many inmates are practicing Buddhism without a teacher, we offer help in whatever way we can provide. We will try to answer your questions about Buddhism, and we can look up information that you need on Buddhist practices on the Internet. Please note that this is not a pen pal program; this is a Buddhist information service. Our volunteers are all lay Buddhists, not ordained priests, so we will be sharing what we know with you, not teaching you.

Please contact us at:

Dharma Companions
P.O. Box 762
Cotati, CA 94931-0762

For inmates who wish to subscribe to *Turning Wheel*, both free or paid, please write to:

TW Inside Subscriptions
Buddhist Peace Fellowship
P.O. Box 3470
Berkeley, CA 94703

Please note that this address is for subscriptions only.

We ask your help in two ways. One: please write your name, address, and ID number clearly on the envelope or in your letter. We often get packages returned because we misread your name or address. Two: please help us spread the word in whatever way possible about our change of name and address. Many resource lists continue to have our name listed as "The Buddhist Peace Fellowship Prison Project." We would appreciate your help in getting the new information out as widely as possible.

How to Reach Us

www.gaybuddhist.org

For general questions about GBF write to:

inquiry@gaybuddhist.org

To contact Program Committee with suggestions for speakers and comments:

www.gaybuddhist.org/programs

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Address changes or to subscribe or unsubscribe to the newsletter:

mailinglist@gaybuddhist.org

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 Sitzings

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 3 1/2 blocks. **PARKING:** on street (meters free on Sundays) or in adjacent New Mission Bartlett Garage. The Center is handicapped accessible.

Sunday Speakers

October 4 Temple Smith

Tempel Smith has been practicing Insight and Metta meditation since 1989, including a year as a fully ordained monk in Burma. He is the founder of BASE (Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement) House, a collective of socially engaged dharma practitioners. In 2003, while directing young adult programs for the Buddhist Peace Fellowship in Oakland, Calif., Tempel launched the West Coast teen retreat program that has become MAYA (Mindful Awareness for Young Adults). He is in the teacher-training program at the Spirit Rock Meditation Center in California and Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts. The title of his talk is "The Four Foundations of Mindfulness."

October 11 Dave Richo

David Richo, Ph.D., M.F.T., is a psychotherapist, teacher, workshop leader, and writer who works in Santa Barbara and San Francisco, California. He combines Jungian, transpersonal, and mythic perspectives in his work.

October 18 Joe Rodriguez

Joe Rodriguez will lead a group discussion of "Growing Older as a Gay Man on The Buddhist Path: A Few Observations." Joe is a corporate strategist and Soto Zen student who practices learning and opening through everyday life.

October 25 Open Discussion

November 1 Emilio Gonzalez

Emilio has been practicing Qigong and Tai Chi Chuan since 1973. A student of Grand Master Kai Ying Tung, he has taught Tai Chi Chuan at 50 Oak Street in San Francisco for over twenty years. In the 1990s he established a special Qigong for Health class for people with HIV and other chronic illness. In

1996 he produced a best-selling Qigong video which was broadcast nationwide on PBS. Today, he teaches twice-weekly classes in Occidental, where he lives. He has been meditating daily since 1970, and has taught Qigong for residential retreats at Spirit Rock and Cloud Mountain retreat centers, and the Gay Men's Mediation Retreats for the past 12 years. He will be teaching Qigong for the LGBT community at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, November 9-15, 2009. At GBF, he will be teaching a short Tai Chi/Qigong form that's easy to learn and can be practiced daily to enhance your sitting meditation.

November 8 Arinna Weisman

Arinna Weisman has studied insight meditation since 1979 and has been teaching since 1989. Her root teacher is Ruth Denison, who was empowered by the great teacher U Bha Khin. She is the founding teacher of Insight Meditation Center of the Pioneer Valley/Dhamma Dena and is co-author of the book *A Beginner's Guide to Insight Meditation*. Her passion is building multicultural sanghas. The title of her talk is "Forgiving Ourselves; Opening Our Hearts."

November 15 Garth Gilchrist

Garth Gilchrist has spent his life drawing people close to nature through wilderness adventures, teaching deep nature awareness and sharing his remarkable gift of storytelling—about wild places and the wild landscape of the heart and soul—helping thousands of people draw on their connection with the Great Life that flows through everything. Expect an adventure into your own inner landscapes and story, and a glimpse of life that may surprise and move you.

November 22 Robert Hopcke

Robert H. Hopcke is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice in Berkeley, California. Along with his numerous articles and reviews published throughout the world, he is the author of the national best-seller, *There Are No Accidents: Synchronicity and the Stories of Our Lives*, which has been translated into over two dozen languages. Currently Adjunct Faculty at the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology, in Palo Alto, California, where he teaches in the areas of Jungian psychology and human sexuality, Rob is also an active practicing Roman Catholic and parishioner at Most Holy Redeemer, dedicated to finding—and living out—that elusive intersection of sexuality, spirituality and psychological awareness.

November 29 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, and live believing in the equality of all that lives.

—GBF dedication of merit