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PMB 456

2215-R MARKET STREET

GBF NEWSLETTER

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



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

A Proposal for GBF

BY DAVID HOLMES

The Steering Committee has been considering the following proposal for strengthening the organization of the GBF. Comments and suggestions are welcome. Please send them to GBF Sangha, 2215-R Market Street, PMB 456, San Francisco, California 94114. Or email your feedback to GBF@outyonder.com.

The Gay Buddhist Fellowship has endured for more than a decade as a treasured sangha and place of refuge for hundreds of gay men. This has been possible thanks to the efforts and generosity of a great many volunteers and supporters.

There has always been a feeling that the loose, informal structure of GBF has provided both advantages and disadvantages. We have experienced lean times, when it has been a challenging struggle just to keep the fellowship alive. At other times there is great joy and camaraderie when the group's enthusiasm is strong, when all jobs are being done, and things are running smoothly.

This proposal is given in the spirit of honoring those aspects of our organization that are working, while formalizing a few new practices that may help us proceed more pre-

dictably through the cycles of waxing and waning energies.

One of the chief concerns of people who are contemplating taking on a volunteer position with GBF is that there are no "terms of office." It is unclear how long one is expected to continue at a given post. As a result, many of us are reluctant to volunteer or feel obligated to stay on longer than we may have intended.

This proposal is meant to address these issues while maintaining the "lowerarchy" of democratic governance and volunteerism that are the hallmarks of this fellowship.

Governance

The GBF sangha has entrusted the day-to-day business and management of funds to the Steering Committee, a group of volunteers who meet monthly to coordinate and →

plan GBF's activities. Participation in the Steering Committee ebbs and flows over time. There is always a group who are identified members of the Steering Committee, but there has never been a formal process by which members are appointed or approved by the sangha. Anyone who comes to a Steering Committee meeting is therefore considered, at least for that evening, a "member" of the Steering Com-

paper obligations, who lend their names to the legal forms for the purpose of allowing charitable donations to GBF to be tax-deductible.

But it is there, where our cozy sangha interfaces with the state and federal bureaucracy that things could maybe, possibly, someday, get a bit dicey (witness the ongoing battles between KPFA and Pacifica's Board of Directors).

One of the purposes of the present

spring and fall equinoxes, when attendance and enthusiasm are generally at their peak) the sangha would meet for a celebration of commitment, practice, and fellowship. The meeting would serve three interrelated functions:

Refuge

An opportunity would be provided for taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha with the celebration of a short, collectively

One of the purposes of the present proposal is to help clarify the roles of the sangha, the steering committee and the board of directors in order to avoid the pitfalls of either extreme—not too loose, not too tight—and to help GBF governance remain democratic, where all will be encouraged to participate.

mittee. This has proven to be a bit too loose a structure.

On the other hand, a structure that may seem to some to be too rigid, unsuited to GBF, waits in the wings. As part of the process of receiving state and federal status as a not-for-profit religious organization, GBF has had for the past three years—at least on paper—a Board of Directors. By state and federal law this board is granted certain legal powers, including control of our funds, and entails a ready-built hierarchical structure—with a Chief Executive Officer, other officers, and a self-perpetuating board. However, GBF's Board has always been quite benign—composed of a few members of the Steering Committee who have been willing to fulfill these

proposal is to help clarify the roles of the sangha, the steering committee and the board of directors in order to avoid the pitfalls of either extreme—not too loose, not too tight—and to help GBF governance remain democratic, where all will be encouraged to participate.

Let me stress that there is currently absolutely no controversy or problems within GBF's Steering Committee or Board—but governance issues have come up in the past and may come up again somewhere down the line. Perhaps a little clarification now will ward off a future entanglement—unless our karma ripens thus!

A Semiannual General Council

Twice a year (perhaps, for ease of planning, on the Sunday nearest the

planned ceremony including, if desired, the chanting of sutra. This could also be an occasion to take the precepts or to renew Bodhisattva vows, according to one's own tradition, or simply to participate by being present.

Governance

During the second portion of the morning, a brief report from the various volunteers and committees would be given and the treasurer's report would be made available. Issues requiring the input of the general sangha would be brought up for brief discussion. Volunteers for all the various tasks would be recognized. New volunteers would be introduced and approved by the sangha present. Volunteers would begin a six-month term and would

agree to announce prior to the next general council their intent to step down or to continue on. In the unlikely event of there being two volunteers vying for the same post, a vote would be taken by secret ballot.

Also at this meeting the volunteers who wish to serve on the Steering Committee would be introduced and approved by the sangha. Any objections would necessitate a secret ballot vote by the sangha present that day. Those volunteering to have their names entered as members of the Board of Directors for purposes of retaining GBF's not-for-profit status would be approved in the same manner.

Fellowship

The meeting would conclude with a potluck luncheon in the hall: an opportunity to meet and share a meal with newcomers and old friends and to build the spirit of sangha.

Volunteer Positions

GBF has a network of volunteers who have taken responsibility for various jobs, but it is only by oral tradition passed on from one generation to the next that the scope of any particular job is clearly defined. The final piece of this proposal is to list all the tasks that need to be done to keep GBF functioning and to combine them appropriately into specific volunteer positions.

Although these miraculous functions have been going on now for years, it has generally been a mystery to most of us just who is doing what at any particular moment in time. The allocation of tasks to specific volunteer positions is a future project requiring some anthropological field work and consultation with the experts.

Some of the volunteer positions



PHOTO: RICHARD ROTH

can be done independently. Volunteers whose activities are interrelated need to meet or contact one another at regular intervals during their term. Contact information needs to be widely disseminated among the current roster of volunteers.

Additionally, a few new positions are proposed for the purpose of maintaining the long-term health of the sangha.

New Positions

Volunteer Coordinator: This person would have the responsibility of maintaining a phone, address and email roster of current volunteers, substitutes and alternates and would keep in periodic contact by e-mail or phone with committee representatives. He would also help plan and organize the next general council meeting.

Newcomer/Outreach Coordinator: This person would develop ways of making newcomers welcome, getting the word out to local groups and publications of what we have to offer, and finding members of the sangha who would be willing to mentor a newcomer. Perhaps this person could help produce an updated brochure for GBF.

Practice Committee: A loose affiliation of current volunteers, including dharma teachers, facilitators, speaker coordinator, newsletter editor, retreat organizers and other interested parties, this "committee" would help keep GBF responsive to the practice needs of the sangha. They could help develop topics for Sunday small-group discussions, possible readings, handouts, workshops, etc.

A Final Note

This may all seem a tempest in a teapot (or looking for trouble — does a sleeping dog have Buddha nature?), and considering our present size, configuration, and bank balance, the sangha is currently in no danger of a "hostile takeover". But with any luck, GBF may be around for decades (or centuries?) to come, and it is for those generations of gay Buddhists yet un-born (oh, brother) that we are taking care of these governance issues here and now, at (or near) the beginning. ■

IN A NUTSHELL

This proposal comprises the following elements:

1. Instituting a semi-annual general sangha meeting for the purposes of:
 - A. Recognizing and approving all volunteers for their term (Six months or one year).
 - B. Sangha approval of steering committee and board, by vote if required.
 - C. Getting input from sangha on current issues of debate.
 - D. A brief Refuge Ceremony.
 - E. Fellowship potluck.
2. The Steering Committee remains the decision-making body of GBF, but it will begin meeting once every two months instead of monthly.
3. The board of directors remains a figurehead group simply for maintaining our non-profit status.
4. New positions (or, if no takers, jobs to be added to Steering Committee functions):
 - A. Volunteer coordinator. Keeps in contact with roster of volunteers and alternates. Plans semiannual sangha meeting.
 - B. Newcomer/Outreach. Develops ways to help newcomers and inform the community of our presence. Recruits mentors for newcomers.
 - C. Practice committee. Ad hoc group to help focus GBF's practice: workshops, retreats, etc.

Further Suggestions

BY LEE ROBBINS

In general, I support David's proposal but would like to suggest several modifications or additions as follows:

In general:

All volunteer roles should also confer membership on the Steering Committee. GBF participants should also be permitted to volunteer for Steering Committee membership alone. Any decisions needed between Sangha and Steering Committee meetings should be made by e-mail (or telephone for those lacking e-mail) by the Steering Committee membership. The Steering Committee should also, at any time,

accept resignations from the various roles including Steering Committee membership, and appoint new volunteers to the Steering Committee itself, and fill any vacant volunteer positions. Such appointments should be confirmed or rejected at the first following Sangha meeting.

(a) I think it is better for people to volunteer for one year terms; it is a customary term and reduces the minor chaos each time functions have a different person doing them.

(b) I think somebody needs to be elected as General Coordinator.

One of his responsibilities would be to poll the Steering Committee regarding any urgent issues which arise during the two month gaps between Steering Committee/Sangha meeting dates. Or this could be a responsibility of the Volunteer Coordinator.

(c) An alternative to (b) would be to vest this authority in the Board of Directors which already has officers. In my view, it doesn't make much difference one way or the other, but on the whole I would prefer to retain the customary authority in the Steering Committee.■

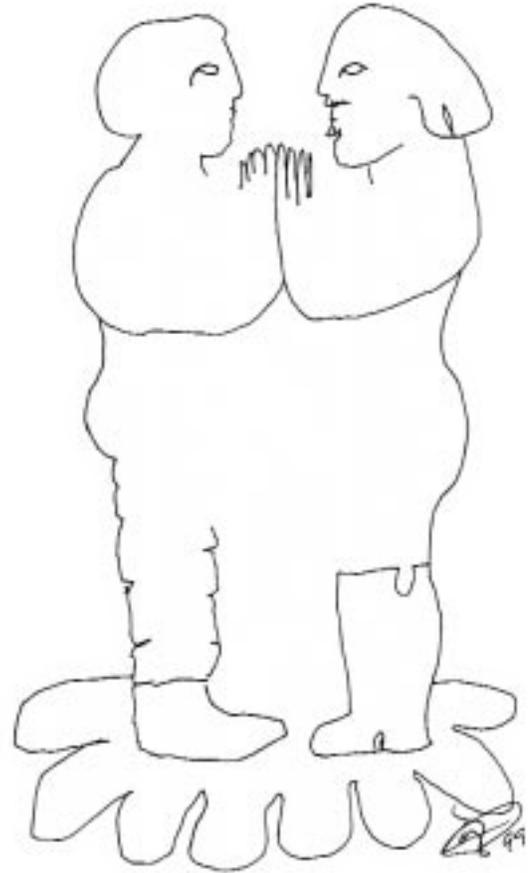
Paul Dalwigk

BY HOWARD KING

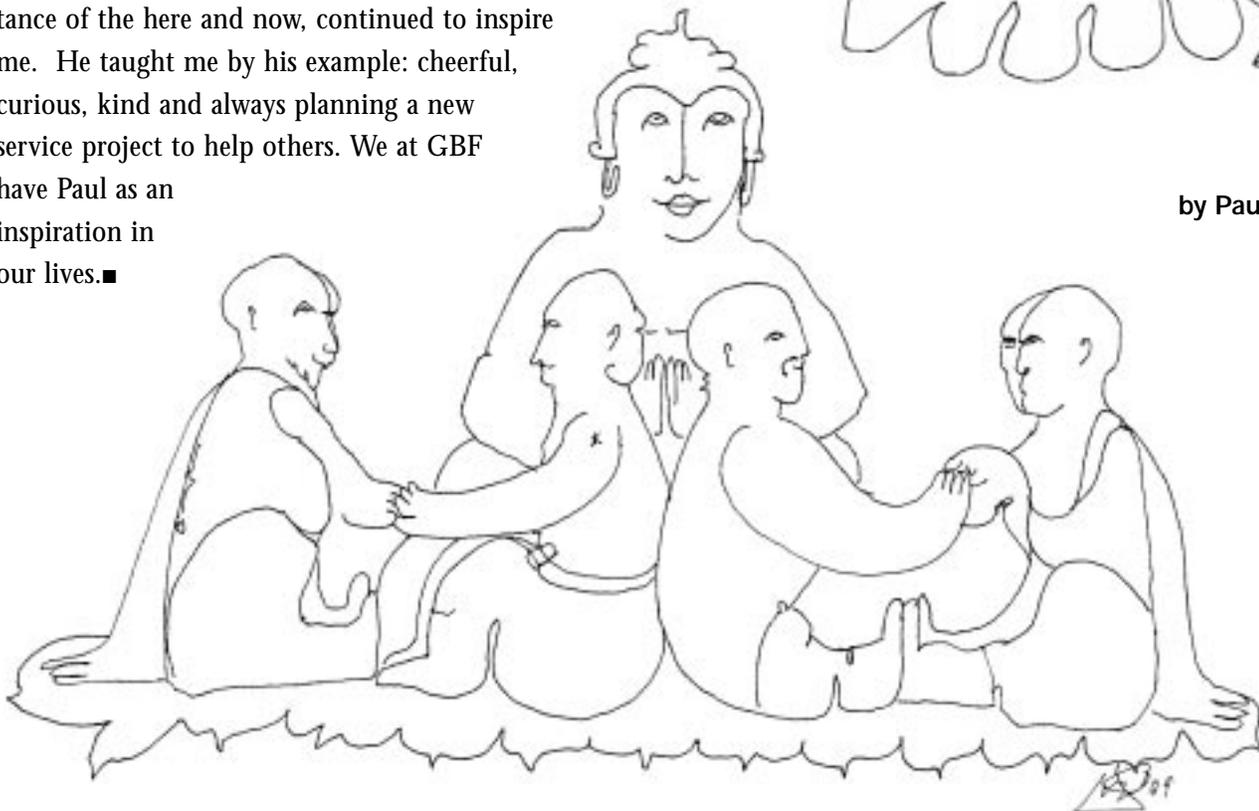
Paul Dalwigk left his body on January 17, 2002, in Palm Springs, where he and his long time partner, Richard Dalwigk, had recently moved.

The sadness at losing a friend hit me directly in my heart when Richard called to tell me Paul had died. He had been hospitalized again like so many times in the past. Since early childhood, he had been in and out of hospitals with Crohn's disease; he hadn't been expected to live long into adulthood and here he was again beating the odds, I had hoped. During the beginning of his last hospital stay he was unsure of returning to Richard and their new life in their new home. But each subsequent call found him better, and as I wished him a recovery back to his everyday life, he would tell me that though he had his preference, he was ready for whatever was going to happen.

Our phone conversations during this last hospitalization, as they had been since we became friends while serving together on the GBF Steering Committee, were about the Buddhadharm and our practice. Paul's curiosity, and his acceptance of the here and now, continued to inspire me. He taught me by his example: cheerful, curious, kind and always planning a new service project to help others. We at GBF have Paul as an inspiration in our lives. ■



Drawings
by Paul Dalwigk



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

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415/673-0283

GBF Needs Volunteers

We always want and need interested participants, so please, JOIN IN! 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!

Volunteer Hosts

GBF needs you to contribute your services to the Sangha as a Host for Sunday morning sittings. Sign up to help provide a hospitable setting for our members to come together.

Call Justin Hecht for information: 415/673-0283.

GBF Homeless Project

If you are able to volunteer your time to the Hamilton Family Center on the *second* Saturday of any month, please contact Clint Seiter at 415/386-3088. GBF volunteers prepare a dinner, funded by GBF, for homeless families.

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.

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. 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.

Calendar

San Francisco / Bay Area Events

Sunday Sittings

10:30 am to 12 noon

Every Sunday followed by a talk or discussion, at the San Francisco Buddhist Center, 37 Bartlett Street (near 21st St between Mission and Valencia).

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 (75¢ first hour, then \$1 per hour, \$5 max). The Center is handicapped accessible.

February GBF Speakers

February 3 **Jim Wilson**

February 10 **Open discussion**

February 17 **Open discussion**

February 24 **Diana Elrod**

Diana Elrod will speak about the Nichiren tradition.

March GBF Speakers

March 3 **Jim Wilson**

March 10 **Open discussion**

March 17 **Open discussion**

March 24 **Donald Rothberg**

Donald Rothberg has practiced Insight Meditation since 1976 and has written and taught widely on socially engaged Buddhism and transpersonal studies. He is on the faculty of the Saybrook Graduate School, where he has developed a program in Socially Engaged Spirituality. He has been an organizer, educator, and board member for the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF), particularly working as a mentor for its Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement (BASE), since its inception in 1995. He is also a meditation teacher, working with two small groups in the East Bay, and is helping to develop a new dharma center in the East Bay.

March 31 **Eugene Cash**

Eugene Cash has practiced meditation since 1981. He leads weekly sitting groups in San Francisco and meditation retreats nationwide. His teaching is influenced by many streams of the Vipassana tradition as well as the Zen school of Buddhism. He is also a teacher in training in the Rishwan School with A.H. Almaas. As a psychotherapist he has worked extensively with those who are ill, the dying, and the bereaved.

Steering Committee Meeting

The next Steering Committee Meeting will be March 3, 2002, following the Sunday sitting, at the San Francisco Buddhist Center.

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