



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2012 NEWSLETTER

Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence: Spirit Incarnate

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.

Facilitator: So today we have the honor of hearing from the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. Since their first appearance in San Francisco on Easter Sunday, 1979, the Sisters have devoted themselves to community service, ministry to those on the edges, and promoting human rights, respect for diversity, and spiritual enlightenment. As the original holy card spelled out the group's mission, SPI is an order of gay male nuns devoted to the promulgation of universal joy and the expiation of stigmatic guilt. Joining us today are Sister Loganberry Frost, on the very end, Sister Baba Ganoush—

Sister Baba: Ganesh!

Facilitator: Baba Ganesh. The word play got me. And then our very own Sister Mary Media, and Sister Rose, uh, maybe you can--

Sister Rose: Sister Rose of the Bloody Stains of the Sacred Robes of Jesus. But you can call me Boom Boom. Actually that was my slave name. Since I've become a Muslim, I'm Boom Boom XXX.

Sister Mary Media: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for inviting us. I feel a little bit like parts of myself are in collision here. I hope it doesn't go nuclear. And I was thinking, since, from my perspective, the Sisters sprang out of the faerie tradition, that we could begin with a chant of the seven goddesses to invoke the spirit of female energy into our group today. Could we all stand? I thought about making everybody do the hokey-pokey, but we'll pass on that. Let's chant the names of the seven goddesses six or seven times, perhaps, just to welcome that energy into this room today. I believe it started with Charlie Murphy—he originated it, and it's been adopted by the faerie movement. And the Sisters use it many times in their appearances.

All: Isis, Asarte, Diana, Hecate, Demeter, Kali, Inanna. (Repeated six times)

Sister Mary Media: Thank you. The Sisters always see ourselves as an inclusive group, so it's very unusual for us to be the center of attention. We've always stood for inclusivity. So if, at any point, you have questions or suggestions, please feel free to participate. Think of it more as a circle than as a traditional dharma talk.

We were asked to discuss the Sisters' connection to spirituality, and one of the things I'd like to start off by making a point about is that many people think that the role of the Sisters is to mock nuns and the Catholic religion. Speaking for myself, that is not our role. I see the Sisters, really, as nuns. In the gay community, we serve the function that nuns traditionally serve in the Catholic order: we educate people; we nurture people; we place ourselves in service to the community; and we feed people in many ways. So it's not that we are trying to mock people of faith. In fact, if we're mocking anything, it's the hierarchy of the church, which can be misogynistic at times, and which has devalued the role of women within the hierarchy.

Boom Boom: If I may interject, Sister--

Sister Mary Media: Please!

Boom Boom: We're trying to bring levity and joy where it's been squashed, and what we do comes out of the ancient tradition of the shamanic, transgendered, wise person in old tribal cultures, and we've lost this with industrialization, even though we see it all the way through the medieval period, even in Western Europe, and much more recently in Africa, the Americas, Asia, in pre-industrial cultures. So what we do as transgendered shaman is bring this into modern semiotics using nun drag, and in many ways this is honoring the good work of the nuns that we've loved and sometimes to kick it to some of those awful nuns that we hated. But to bring that element of humanity—that nuns are not just these black-blob stereotypes, but they're women that some of us honored, loved, or hated. We bring humor. One of my great memories is, many years ago when I used to dress more youthfully, in my naughty "nunderwear"—with fishnets, a black corset, and chains and whips—some guy came up to me and said, "I've always wanted to beat a nun." And I just handed him my whip and said, "Okay." And a couple of years later, this same guy came up to me and said that whipping me enabled him to resolve his religious conflicts and go back to church. So in many strange ways and many unexpected ways we help people; we live up to our mission: promulgating universal joy, expiating stigmatic guilt, helping people get over the hang-ups and fears that have been shoved down their throats about spirituality, ritual, the church, mosque, synagogue, whatever, so that they can find their own spirituality and greet God not in fear, but with a laugh.

Sister Loganberry Frost: We came from so many different perspectives in the beginning. It was as if all these meteors had come crashing to earth and joined together and created this huge burst of light. Many of us, at the beginning, were transcendental meditation teachers, maybe a third of us. I remember, fondly, having group meditations before we would go out and do a gig. It was so lovely. And I still teach transcendental meditation. I've had a formal practice since 1970. And I'd like to think of some of the sisters who aren't with us today. Reverend Mother, the Abbess, was a very great transcendental meditation teacher. Many of you know that in July, in India, they celebrate the full moon of the guru, Guru Purnima, and Reverend Mother was quite ill and dropped the body as the full moon was rising over the bay on Guru Purnima. And one of the other sisters in South Africa saw him in the sky laughing and thought, "Well, he really must have dropped the body." I just want to honor Reverend Mother this morning.

Sister Mary Media: We call them nuns of the above.

Sister Boom Boom: Not to be confused with my ballot designation when I ran for office. I was the Nun of the Above. The original. And I'm still alive to talk about it!

Sister Baba Ganesh: I am a fairly new nun in the order. I joined the house in 2009, and for me it was the perfect blend of art, activism, and spirituality. I really loved it and thought that it made sense that it originated out of San Francisco, a place that attracts people from the near future. And so with that, I thought it was befitting and actually lovely to find myself called to such a long—now 33-year—queer tradition, which has a lot to be proud of. And that's because of the artists and prophets

and activists, and all kinds of folks that make up the Sisters, because since 1979, this thing has been happening and has now spread worldwide from Uruguay to Berlin, to a recent call from Manila, to London, to Orlando. Nunconsciousness is here, and it's been here since before the Sisters. And so in some ways, one can think of us as the queer community's Shriners. Or not. We're nuns; we have our funny ways, but we manage to do a lot of good, and are still managing to ruin it for everyone.

Sister Mary Media: That's one of the Sisters' slogans: "Ruining it for everyone." And the sisters do try to turn that energy. For example, Boom Boom reminded me yesterday about our event, the Red Party, that we held. Dianne Feinstein was the mayor of the city and was asked what she thought about the Sisters. And she said, "When I see them, I see red." So what did we do? We held a red party—

Sister Boom Boom:—On May 1st, at the Russian Center, and in those days the Russian Center was a center for Czarist White Russians—

Sister Mary Media:—who were apoplectic when they saw what we had done to the center, decking it out in communist colors. And they wanted us to take it down, but we wouldn't, so we ended up on the front page of the papers on Monday. So, for me, the Sisters is about taking that energy and turning it around and empowering yourself. Like Sister Ardhanarishvara, who was in one of the very rare disputes among sisters in the order with Sister Coco Chanel 2001. Sister Chanel wrote a letter to the order calling Sister Ardhanarishvara a "vicious power hungry bitch," so he took that as his sister name from then on. Now he's Sister Vish, as we call him. So it is taking that power, with which people try to disempower us, either as gay people or economically disempowered people or in any way, and empowering ourselves with it, turning that energy around and empowering ourselves. Because I do think we come from a long line of men who operated at the intersection of the goddess religion, the earth religion, and Christianity.

Sister Boom Boom: It's not just the goddess religions, but I think most religions have a tradition—certainly we find it in Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism—of finding wealth in poverty, of finding strength in meekness, of turning those conditions to our advantage, and finding tremendous power and depth in what other people see as deprivation.

Sister Baba Ganesh: I think a lot of our spirituality or the work that we do in that area has to do with our appearance. From a strictly visual-cultural perspective, you think about what a nun means, and what a nun meant given the convention in 1979. In the early 80's, there were a lot of queers and gay men—including some of you—moving here from all over the country, and they encountered a nun once again. And what does it mean that this time the nun is yours, and will play with you—literally, play with you—and work with you, and raise money, and do all kinds of things and organize politically? And over time that changed. When AIDS came along, the Sisters played a huge role in that. You mentioned Sister Chanel 2001. I believe this is the same sister who designed the rainbow flag, right? And Sister Bobby Campbell? Do you remember Bobby Campbell?

The other sisters: Sister Florence Nightmare.

Sister Boom Boom: Bobby Campbell—Sister Florence Nightmare RN—was the original AIDS activist in San Francisco. He had been a nurse and active in politics, and when certain diseases started popping up around 1980, he had a health column in a newspaper called *The Sentinel*—a gay weekly like the *B.A.R.*—and he also was like the first open activist person with AIDS, a leader of people with AIDS, and a real pioneer in many ways of the struggle against HIV, and he really brought the Sisters into that struggle. And we published a “Play Fair” pamphlet and hosted the first fundraisers for the KS Foundation, which would become the AIDS Foundation. We had any number of activities promoting safe sex.

Sister Mary Media: At the Cauldron and other places.

Sister Boom Boom: Yeah, some of them very practically promoting safe sex.

Sister Mary Media: But the thing was that we undermined the model at the time that was used to distribute STD information to people by embracing the idea that people were going to have sex, which at the time was kind of revolutionary because the information always had a moral castigation to it as it was handed out: “You shouldn’t be doing this.” Whereas our take on it was, “Play fair.” People are going to continue to have sex, but take care of each other, respect your brother, treat the people you’re playing with with some compassion and consideration. What we tried to do was to change the model and have it come from the needs of the community, not from the needs of the existing power structure.

Sister Baba Ganesh: It was the earliest. Having been in public health, I know that it set the model for public health, for what would later become the first safer sex pamphlets. I think for me personally, I came into the house in 2009 as the curator for the 30th anniversary exhibition, so I came in completely in love with the history of the Sisters and got to see the archives and work with our then archivist, Sister Mary Juanita Higher Power, to go through what was then thirty years of queer tradition. What was amazing was all of the outcomes, all of the drama, all of the comedy, and the style in which it happened. I just couldn’t help but love it.

In terms of sister spirituality, I keep thinking of three key moments. They all have to do with silent processions. So the first and most recent was December 11, 2011, when I produced Project Nunway 3. This was the third installment of a fashion fundraiser I produced with a pair of sisters, local designers and artists based on a theme. And this year’s theme was “2012.” And the idea was to work with recycled materials, to work on the ethic of sustainability. But also, in terms of what being a sister is about, being able to take whatever—the random here and there—and create the look of ministry. So in this year’s walk, we interpreted 2012, and as sisters walked down the runway, some costumes were taken from the Bible, and Revelation. There was the angel, with this 15-foot wingspan. And there was a sister who came down in habit, and she was completely covered in ash, and it was called Pompeii and Circumstance. And then another sister looked like she was in *Dune*, a kind of crazy space nun from the deep past or the deep future. And I thought to myself, “My God, there is ministry through this, this visual glimpse and interpretation of the future, there is ministry in the collaborations and creativity that happen, and how li-

bidinous of us, to be this fertile.” I kept feeling like it was so much fun and the crowds were pulsing, and it was a complete mess on stage, and there were fights backstage, and lots of hugging. It was alive; it was absolutely alive, and I think that is the power of art. Despite our want to be righteous activists, I think our comedy in and of itself takes care of the work.

The one before that, another walk, was a procession that we conducted, and it was a project that was pulled together with another group, Honey Sound System. It was basically a silent walk through the Castro. We created a silent, meditative walk—that’s available to everyone and available on the Sisters’ website—where you can take a meditative walk through the Castro with a map that shows you key spots in the Sisters’ history, and consequently gay history. So I collaborated with Honey Sound System and other artists, and on June, 20, 2009, about 75 people—about half sisters and half community—all dressed in white, got in a single file line, put our headphones on and walked quietly and slowly through this guided meditation through a mile and a half of the Castro. It was the most amazing pride parade I could ever imagine. And it was so San Francisco, so San Francisco. Again, that moment where the art and the DIY mysticism come together.

And I would say lastly, when I first got my calling to be in the Sisters, there was a procession that these three beautiful sisters were in at the 30th anniversary exhibition opening night. All the sisters got in line according to tenure, and down they went—I don’t know if you’ve ever been to the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, but there’s this grand staircase, and below were the community and all the supporters of the Sisters, as well as sisters from around the world. So there was this procession of thirty years of sisters, one by one. It was amazing, absolutely amazing, and it was queer, and it was all ours.

Sister Mary Media: Yeah, that sense of community is, for me, the central connection to spirituality. For me the Sisters is a sangha; it’s the sangha of the sisterhood itself. We used to live together in convents—we’re a little more diverse now—but we have this connection, we have this history. It’s always very special to be with each other. Coming together today is the first time we’ve done something together probably since the 30th.

So that night at the 30th I got evidence of the way that the community feels a connection to the Sisters too, an emotional connection to the Sisters. There was a dance after we did the procession, and I was dancing with someone, and he stopped and took me aside and said, “You know, we lost Hank this year.” And it was like this opening up. The way people open up to the Sisters—I think people just want to be heard and there aren’t a lot of opportunities for people to be heard outside their own circles. And I think that the more we can broaden the circle and broaden the sense of community, it’s amazing how people will respond to that, and the kinds of lessons you can learn from them, actually.

Questions from the audience:

GBF: Thirty years plus, I’m just curious about your take on the changes in the parish of the Castro and the Mission. There’s been such an acceleration of hipsters and wealth, and that’s our base. Some of us came here for community, and it seems to be slipping away. The stores on Castro Street aren’t stores I want to go to. What’s your take on where the parish

is at, and is there any hope? What's your read on it? Or is it lost in time? Is it slipping away?

Sister Boom Boom: I think there is a Camelot quality to it, that we were tremendously fortunate to be in a magical time and place. And I have such mixed feelings about it because we were so incredibly privileged—those of us who were here in the 70's, to participate in all that—not just the Sisters, but a lot of the building of a community which, not just this last year, but since the early 80's, has gotten more and more commercialized, more wealthy, upper-middle-class, excluding the people who helped to build it. I'm sort of shocked to see the kind of legislation that's proposed by the supervisor holding the seat that was originally carved out for Harvey Milk. You know, there's no real sense of political continuity there; it's just identity politics. And I think the Sisters have always been about, on the one hand, celebrating but also transcending our identities; we are an order of gay male nuns, but we've expanded to include female nuns and nuns who aren't gay, and transsexual nuns, and rich nuns, poor nuns, nuns of all different colors and spiritual backgrounds. I really don't feel a part of the Castro. I haven't for a long time. I find my community, my connection, and my spirituality elsewhere. Certainly there's a lot of history there. I take people there on historical tours, but what it is now is like a shopping mall built over a grave yard. I have very difficult feelings about that.

Sister Mary Media: I'm optimistic. I try to be an optimist. I think that something will arise that responds to the times. Let's face it: The Castro, when the Sisters started, was Clone City. I mean, we're the perfect clone response! You know, something that comes out of its period. I think the Sisters did lead an Occupy the Castro demonstration a few times since the Occupy movement has started. But I do feel that whatever response to the criticisms of the way the Castro has transformed itself needs to come from the people who are of that community and of that time. I'm changing my name to Sister Mary Mesozoic. I don't feel of that community so much anymore.

Sister Baba Ganesh: I feel the way the Castro presents itself now is a reflection of the larger culture, which has moved in that direction. I think people have a very difficult time relating to each other outside of either economic terms, or digital electronic terms. It's a shiny new toy that we have, and I wonder where the substance in it is sometimes.

Sister Boom Boom: Before the Castro became the main gay neighborhood here, it was Polk Gulch where the action was, where the fabulous Halloween parties were, where the best gay bars were—Polk Gulch and South of Market. I share Sister's optimism that there will be a reaction, that there will be something new, that there will be a response—there always is—but I don't necessarily expect that it will be in or out of the Castro. It could be some other part of the city, and now that electronics have dislocated people, and we connect across geography rather than in geography, it may happen at that level. So, you know, the community is there, but it's not necessarily in the Castro.

GBF: And I think it's also important to look at it from the perspective of the youngest generation. I mean, look around here—we're not the young generation—

GBF: Speak for yourself!

GBF: For someone who's coming from the Midwest, it's a revelation to see something like the Castro. It's a revelation for them, and I think it's important for us to see that excitement, too, for those young people.

Sister Loganberry Frost: If you think about the spiritual center, it still is the Castro—in terms of the spirit we're talking about today. From Sh'har Z'hav to Hartford Street Zen Center, all the different real churches and temples and organizations are still there, and people go there because somehow we have that connection that is here—and probably lots of other places—and it's stronger than it was in the 70's. So there's something new that we've put in there that isn't being taken away.

Sister Boom Boom: But it's not new anymore

Sister Loganberry Frost: True.

Sister Boom Boom: And when Mary Media talks about how we were a response to the clone look, this was basically a look of young men who were looking for something new, who were building something new, and this happens even with the Sisters: what was new and revolutionary once has now gotten very establishmentarianism and locked into patterns, and we know from the cycle of life that that only lasts so long until something entirely new and different comes along to shatter the conventions.

GBF: I was wondering if you could talk about the ritualistic practices of the Sisters?

Sister Baba Ganesh: We have our vows. Maybe I'll talk a little bit about the process. It's based a lot on the Catholic process. There is a minimum year initiation that goes through different stages where one is expected to do certain things and is evaluated accordingly. You come in first as an aspirant, then a postulant, novice, and then you become a fully professed member—or a Black Veil. There are certain codes that delineate what one wears or doesn't wear when we're out at events. A fully professed member is known as a black veil simply because that nun can wear a black veil or any other color, as opposed to a white veil, which is the penultimate step, where you can only wear white on your head. At its core, it already sets people through ritual, and these grown women and men and everyone in between are electing to go through a ritualized process that is looked upon and decided by a group of people, and then you're brought in through a tradition.

Sister Mary Media: Whereas in our day, you just had to be a pushy queen. Basically, that's how one got into the order. But it is interesting to watch a religious institution evolve. The Sisters, on the one hand, is not a religious institution, and on the other hand, it is. But we meditate together. I consider that a ritualistic practice.

GBF: First, I want to thank you for being here and bringing this information because I've been one of the people you referred to who thought of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence as simply poking fun at Catholics and being useful in that way, but I had no idea about the other things, and I find it inspiring. Optimistically looking forward, it strikes me that the current political season has almost unparalleled opportunities for political satire. Do you have any plans?

Sister Mary Media: Well, she's the one who ran for office, so do you have any political aspirations?

Sister Boom Boom: Oh, God, no. I think a good citizen should run for office once in their lifetime, and anybody who does it more than that is absolutely crazy. As for political satire, of course, as nuns, the most obvious target would be Rick Santorum, and what could we do to him that Dan Savage hasn't already?

Sister Mary Media: Or that he hasn't done to himself?

Sister Boom Boom: Yeah, he's so auto-satirical already in so many horrible ways. Tom Leherer said that reality outstripped satire when Henry Kissinger got the Nobel Peace Prize

Sister Baba Ganesh: I want to remark on the different generations of nuns because we're so diverse, but also there's this marked difference between different generations, and I'm of the later generation. It's kind of tied to what this gentleman was asking, in terms of what we're doing with political street theater. Not much, actually. We're doing some work with Occupy, but in terms of response to any awareness around issues of religious tolerance, none of that is happening right now. The house is bigger than it's ever been before, with a trademark and all this fancy machinery around it, because after 33 years you end up becoming an institution. There's no way around it, right?

Sister Mary Media: There are eighty-five orders around the world, right?

Sister Baba Ganesh: From my perspective, we're at a point where we're figuring out, "What are we doing? Who are we? What is our relevance to the community? And what's happening?" Because in many ways we've become a trademark and a 5013(c), because we've become a grants-giving, philanthropic organization, which is really important. I wish that we were dealing with those issues of creativity and satire, but we've gotten into the business of making money, money that our communities need. These small grants that we can give to small organizations that don't have the capacity to hire a grant-writer, but actually mean something, have become our purpose. But I think to that end, we're experiencing the same kinds of difficulty, perhaps more, as any grant-giving organization. And so with that, we're asking these questions. So, if it isn't the money, if that isn't what our might is, I think we're at a really important time where we're asking questions about what's happening in the world right now. And how do we ruin it for everyone in 2012?

Sister Mary Media: I hope the Sisters never lose their connection to the margins. I really feel that the Sisters have always gravitated to marginalized communities and tended to the needs of people who are being neglected. And that's an important spiritual pursuit in and of itself. So I hope that's something the Sisters never lose in the process of chasing connections with more influence, or things like that—but finding ways to raise money on the margins and fund artists who don't fit into the dominant culture or social service organizations or people who are doing harm reduction. Sister May Joy Be With You was telling me yesterday, he gets criticized because he goes into shooting galleries and helps people with his own program of harm reduction. So I hope the value of what he does is not

forgotten and that the Sisters continue to keep their focus on that end of the spectrum.

GBF: Do you have any idea of how many people have been through your order over the years?

Sister Baba Ganesh: Sister Helen did a recent survey. I think there were over 300 names just in San Francisco, in terms of people who have come and gone, who are far away. Some have moved on, started new houses. Some have passed on. Yeah, it's a long tradition.

Sister Mary Media: There are eighty-five houses around the world.

Sister Boom Boom: And there are and have been other orders. When we started our order, we started hearing from other orders, different groups of gay men who had pursued the same drag spirituality: there are The Sisters of Perpetual Motion in Atlanta, The Sisters of Pain and Suffering in North Carolina, in Los Angeles there are The Sisters of the Perpetual Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Sister Mary Media: You used to be in an order before you joined the Sisters?

Sister Boom Boom: Before I was in the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, I was with a couple of overlapping orders. I had joined the Sisters of the Holy Face of Jesus as Revealed to Saint Tuna. And Sister Hamburger Deluxe left our order, and we just sort of floundered around until Rondo Do Marie came to us from East Lansing, Michigan—Surf City convent—so we regrouped as The Sisters Do Marie, and Mother General Wilberforce became Sister Armory, and Sister Donna Ann Marie, Sister Do Marie and while I was at that order I was Sister Lobotomarie.

Sister Mary Media: So, it's endless. It's endless. The names and the puns.

Sister Boom Boom: We are just the largest, most conspicuous manifestation of nunconsciousness, like a giant zit on the face of the cosmos, but the truth is that nunconsciousness is universal. It is of all places and all times.



From left to right, Sister Loganberry Frost, Sister Rose of the Bloody Stains of the Sacred Robes of Jesus (a.k.a. Sister Boom Boom XXX), and Sister Mary Media.

GBF

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December 25, 1960-April 19, 2012, in San Diego, CA

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February 6, 1953-May 12, 2012, in Berkeley, CA

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.

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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 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

August 5 **Bill Scheinman**

Bill Scheinman has been practicing meditation since 1994 and has been teaching it since 2001. He is the author of the book *Moment By Moment: Using Mindfulness to Reduce Stress and Cultivate Freedom in Daily Life*. A graduate of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction teacher training practicum, he teaches 8-week MBSR classes in San Francisco and Berkeley, as well as workplace courses and daylongs on mindfulness and stress reduction. He is a graduate of the Dedicated Practitioner's Program at Spirit Rock Meditation Center and is a member of the board of the San Francisco Insight Meditation Community.

August 12 **Dale Borglum**

Dale Borglum is the founder and executive director of the Living/Dying Project. He is a pioneer in the conscious dying movement and has worked directly with thousands of people with life-threatening illness and their families for over 30 years. In 1981, Dale founded the first residential facility for people who wished to die consciously in the United States, The Dying Center. He has a BS from UC Berkeley and a PhD from Stanford University. He is the co-author of *Journey of Awakening: A Meditator's Guidebook* and has taught meditation for the past 35 years.

August 19 **Open Discussion**

August 26 **All Sangha Day**

September 2 **Open Discussion**

September 9 **Suvanna Cullen**

Ordained in 2001 into the Western Buddhist Order, Suvarnaprabha (or Suvanna for short) is director of the San Francisco Buddhist Center and a writer. She teaches classes and retreats at the SFBC, workplace wellness and mindfulness based stress reduction at local businesses, and occasional meditation classes at the San Francisco county jail. Her humorous advice column, "Ask Auntie Suvanna," was featured in *Dharma Life*, a British Buddhist magazine. Other writings have appeared in *What Book?! Buddha Poems from Beat to Hip-hop* (1998) and *Challenging Times: Stories of Buddhist Practice When Things Get Tough* (2007). Her topic will be the preciousness of life.

September 16 **Alistair Shanks**

Alistair Shanks has studied Tai Chi, Qigong, Taoist Meditation, Taoist Breathing and Ba Gua with his teacher Lineage Master Bruce Frantzis since 1994. He currently teaches Tai Chi at the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine on Potrero Hill and teaches classes, workshops and private lessons around the Bay Area. He has been a volunteer with Zen Hospice Project (ZHP) since 2004 and for the last four years has assisted in training new volunteers as a facilitator. He also is an adjunct faculty member of the ZHP Education Center, conducting trainings and presentations on the Zen Hospice approach to end of life care.

September 23 **Open Discussion**

September 30 **Dave Richo**

Dave Richo, PhD, MFT, is a psychotherapist, 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.

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By the power and truth of this practice, may all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness, may all be free from sorrow and the causes of sorrow, may all never be separated from the sacred happiness which is without sorrow, and may all live in equanimity, without too much attachment or too much aversion, believing in the equality of all that lives.

—GBF Dedication of Merit