



# gay Buddhist Fellowship

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2013 NEWSLETTER

## Fear of Death

BY 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 is the co-author of *Journey of Awakening: A Meditator's Guidebook* and has taught meditation for the past 35 years.**

I'm glad to be here today. The work that I have been doing is supporting people who are working with a life-threatening illness and bringing spiritual support to that process. And I've been doing that now for thirty-five plus years. The longer I've done it the more it has become clear to me that the work isn't really about helping people die, but it is about healing, that everyone is interested in healing.

Fear of death is equal to—exactly equal to—lack of enlightenment. The place where you and I are identified with the place where we are separate, that is the place where we will die and that is the place we aren't enlightened. So we can look around this room, and we can see the ways we're different—older, younger (mostly older in this room), bigger, smaller, more hair, less hair—and in that dimension we will die. Is there a way we can look around the room and see that which will not die, that which is the deathless? In fact, spiritual practice is fundamentally about letting go of our identification, our attachment, our grasping to that which changes, to that which dies, to the content of each moment's experience, and rather beginning to identify with our true nature, that which does not die.

In terms of Buddhist practice, whether you or I are practicing Vipassana, or Zen, or Tibetan practice or any other flavor of Buddhism or even other spiritual practice, the practice itself is a process of learning this dis-identification. There is the danger, though, of becoming attached to our practice. I've been meditating since the late 1960's—with Suzuki Roshi, first of all, over at the San Francisco Zen Center. He said, "The most important thing is to find out what is the most important thing." Now, I did Vipassana for a long time. I spent well over a decade watching my wandering mind, and I assure you my mind could wander with the best of them. I have a PhD in mathematics from Stanford, so that may give you some idea of what happened to my mind. And I was really almost like a Nazi meditator. I was going to meditate longer than anybody, try harder than anybody, and meditate until my knees fell off. And yet, I was kind of stuck in a way of working with my practice, in which whenever I had a distractive thought I would pull it immediately back to "Okay, here's my breath." Or just watch the thought and come back to the breath. And I would go to many long retreats: my mind would get very calm, I would get in these expanded states of consciousness, and within two days back of being in my regular life outside

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.

of retreat world, I was 99.99% as neurotic as the day I had begun the retreat. There was not a lot of integrating of all this Buddhist wisdom, of these wonderful teachers, these deep retreat experiences into the way I would deal with a traffic jam, or a relationship difficulty, or whatever other crisis it might happen to be in my life, major or minor. I began to see—partly through this process and partly by beginning to work with people with life-threatening illnesses (in the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, a lot of cancer patients along the way)—that really these distractive thoughts were trying to tell me something. They weren't just distracted thoughts. They were repressed emotions, repressed grief, that had been pushed deep, deep down into my belly, and as I would calm my mind these things would start bubbling up. Now the traditional Buddhist way of looking at things says, "There's a distractive thought." And yet, in the West, almost everyone here who begins to meditate begins from the standpoint of being neurotic, ungrounded, un-centered, and maybe not that close to their mommy and daddy, whereas Buddhist practices were developed 1,500 to 3,000 years ago by and for Asian people who were grounded, centered, un-neurotic and loved their mommy and daddy. And it's assumed that when you begin the practice that you like yourself. That is just a fundamental assumption of the practice. In fact, his Holiness the Dalai Lama said on his third visit to the United States, "Now I'm beginning to understand: You Americans don't like yourselves."

So imagine—or remember—the process of beginning spiritual practice from the standpoint of not liking yourself, of having this un-neurotic ego structure, and you're beginning the process of dis-identifying from this ego structure and identifying with the nature of mind. I think it's not too big a stretch to see that rather quickly there will be roadblocks and difficulties that begin to appear because most of us don't have a regular teacher who's kicking us in the butt and saying, "You're getting stuck here; you're getting stuck there; you're trying too hard; you're not trying hard enough." We have to be making those decisions ourselves, and part of who's making those decisions—if not a major part of who's making those decisions—is the part of us that doesn't like ourselves. So is it possible, then, as we're meditating, to have this increasingly refined awareness, as we're looking at the thoughts and emotions and body sensations that arise, to at

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times widen our focus of awareness just as if we had a telescope on which we're changing the focus and see what is the bigger picture? What is the energetic, bodily state that is driving the distracted thoughts again and again and again? What is that trying to tell us? Rumi, the Persian poet, said, "Grief is the garden of compassion." The garden is the place where something grows. Here's the garden where compassion grows. And it grows out of grief. All of us are grieving, whether you had someone die close to you, and I'm sure everyone on this room has, but whether or not you have, we've all lost a lot. We're all grieving. Everyone is grieving. My ten year old son is grieving. Everyone has lost part of their dream; everyone has lost part of their identity, as well as all of the relationships and loved ones we

may have lost. So as the mind begins to quiet down, unresolved grief begins to arise. And it's asking to be met, to be embraced, to be transmuted into compassion.

When I was quite young I had two very severe electrical shocks. I almost got electrocuted twice as a very young child by following my curiosity, my bliss, by putting hairpins in electrical outlets, forks into toasters. Both times, doing these things, I thought, "Isn't this great? These two things go right in those two things. Isn't this fantastic?" Then all of a sudden I was almost dead. So I learned at a very early age that the world isn't a safe place, that I'd better be careful, even if I follow my curiosity, something really terrible might happen. So I developed a personality structure that is trying to find some safety in this unsafe world. Planning ahead, the mind is looking at what it can do to not get the next big shock. What can I do not to get killed? What can I do to protect myself? And as I have grown and matured both in life and in practice, I've been able to become aware of that process. But still, that is what my personality is constructed around. And each of you has constructed a perfect personality to deal with your deepest fear—your fear of dying. All fear is fear of death. The New York Times conducted a survey asking, "What are you most afraid of?" Number one was speaking in public. Number three was dying. Now, that's kind of humorous on the face of it, but the place in me that might be afraid of speaking in public, or the place in you that might be afraid of being embarrassed, is the place that's going to die.

When we're sitting and a thought begins to arise and says, "Believe me; pay attention to me; here's something you've got to really pay attention to now; it's more important than resting in spaciousness," in that moment, there is the possibility of learning compassion. It's difficult to learn compassion in some critical moment when your car is spinning out of control, and the person you love most in the world is sitting next to you screaming in terror, or when you've just collapsed on the street and some strange emergency medical personnel are ripping your shirt off and pounding on your chest. But in that simple moment where you see you're caught, in that moment, is there any violence in bringing yourself back to being present? In that moment, is there kindness, is there mercy, is there compassion in coming back to this place of wholeness, to this place of presence?

Even though we're talking about working with suffering and fear of death, underlying Buddhism is an incredibly optimistic and positive fundamental assumption: we are whole, our nature is compassion—untainted, pure—and we don't have to learn or create something new. We don't have to learn how to die well; we don't have to learn how to live well. We just have to surrender into that which we are. In the initial and intermediate stages of practice, we're learning to work with the mind and these voices that are telling us, "You should be doing this; you shouldn't be doing that; pay attention to me; believe me." But all of that working with the mind and not getting quite so attached to the personality structure is really only preparation for the surrender into that which you are.

Many people who have been meditating for a while begin to let go of the belief that they can become totally free. They think of meditation as something we do on Sunday morning, maybe a few minutes each day. It can help us create a more efficient personality structure so that we can be a little bit happier, a little bit more relaxed, make a bit more money, get better partners or relationships in our lives. But do we really believe that in the next sitting period, or even during this lecture, that in this mo-

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ment we can be free? And in fact we are free already. The most important thing is finding out what is the most important thing. So in each moment can there be a ruthless, fierce going toward that soft underbelly of what is freedom, grabbing onto it? Grabbing onto it with compassion, with lightness and—even though I’m using these words like fierce and ruthless—finding a very tender place in ourselves again and again and again.

In Buddhism, before practice begins, often there are four traditional contemplations which are called the mind-turning truths. The first one is that you will die, but you don’t know when. I’ve recently been diagnosed with cancer. It’s not immediately life-threatening, but it caught my attention. The second truth is that life is precious; this moment is precious; this is the only moment in which you and I can awaken. Not tomorrow, not yesterday, but now. The third mind-turning truth is that there is karma. If we act, think, or speak with grasping, there is one effect. If we act, think, or speak with generosity, with compassion, with openness, there is another effect. And the fourth mind-turning truth is that there is suffering if we act with grasping. So if we gather these four truths together as one would gather a bouquet of beautiful flowers and let them penetrate deeply into the core of who we are, what does it say then about how we will live this next moment? If you really, in the core of your being, know that you will die but don’t know when—now, I’ve been saying this sentence, I’ve been giving this little pep talk, for some time, and I kind of took it as, “I really don’t know, but I’m probably going to get done with this talk.” But what if it means I don’t know that I’m going to complete this sentence? How would that then change the way that I’m with you here, right now? How would it change the immediacy, the love, the tenderness that we would be bringing to the way that we’re looking and listening and speaking, the way we’re approaching our own experience?

So in the historical trajectory of Buddhism, first there was Hinayana/Theravada/Vipassana Buddhism: taking refuge in the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha, invoking that which is true, trusting that we can just be present. And then Buddhism historically developed into Mahayana Buddhism, which brings in the idea of compassion—“with passion”—meeting suffering with an open heart. Steven Levine puts it poetically: “Keeping your heart open in hell.” So it isn’t just paying attention to things, but

it’s then meeting each experience with compassion, with mercy, with tenderness. And as I implied before, compassion is learned in the simple moments which arise again and again and again, where we see that we’re believing our minds. We’re caught in the content of experience. And as compassion deepens, something very interesting happens. Initially, compassion is spelled with a small “c”: I am feeling compassion for you. I’m feeling compassion for the hundreds of thousands of children who are

starving to death even as we speak here in this moment. But as compassion deepens, it begins to be revealed that it is our true nature, that we are compassion with a capital “C.” Grief is the garden of compassion. We are compassion. When we get out of the way, when who we think we are gets out of the way, there is a selflessness, a lack of grasping to the notion of a separate self, and what remains is compassion—spacious heart-mind. Not me doing compassion. But that’s who I am, that’s who we are together. And as Buddhism developed even further into Vajaryana Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, the notion of empowerment is brought into central focus, so that when one becomes selfless enough that one is not busy doing things and “doing” compassion but has a selfless, spacious heart, then that which we invoke in the beginning of practice, our own Buddha nature—Buddha, dharma, sangha, Christ, the mother, Shiva, whomever you love, your own true nature—that, then, through the selflessness begins to appear through you. Your actions are the actions of the Christ; your mind is the mind of the Buddha; your body is the Buddha—but only after this selflessness arises. And then, finally, not only do we begin to experience that we are that, but we then dissolve into freedom, into presence. Not only am I that, but everything we see, everything we experience, is of that one taste. We begin, then, finally, to change our identification from that which we are aware of to awareness itself. Wei Wu Wei said that what you are looking for is what is looking. It’s possible to get stuck in practice as I mentioned in the beginning. You can watch your breath until your knees fall off. And certainly it’s possible to go into your breath so deeply that eventually this developmental process that I’m talking about will happen by itself. But it’s also possible to go through these developmental stages, and we don’t really have time to talk about it here today, but they can be hooked up with childhood developmental stages that Piaget and other developmental psychologists talk about—somatic psychology. It’s possible then to finally see that who we are is living presence; that we aren’t caught in the content of experience. Content still arises: I’m talking; you’re listening; we’re all sitting here; some people are moving; some people are thinking this and that. All of that is still going on. We’re aware of that; we have compassion for that. But is that who you are? Because that will die. And to the extent that that’s what you’re identified with, death will be the ultimate catastrophe. In a way, each moment is

preparation for our dying. And all mystical spiritual traditions say that this process of dying is the most opportune time in an extended lifetime in which to realize your own nature because as we're going through this spiritual dying process that takes place around the physical dying process, we let go, temporarily, of our identification with body and personality and see that what we are is that light, that presence. Right now, you and I, we, are enlightened. There is nothing to be found. There is nothing that will appear in that process of dying that is not here already. But we're living in this physical plane reality where there is just this perfect amount of friction, of grasping. We get lost in that, and yet there is the possibility of working with this grasping, letting

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go of this grasping, and identifying with awareness itself. Now, as one does spiritual practice, one has spiritual experiences: expanded consciousness, open-hearted, blissful experiences possibly. And it's very easy to make the mistake that freedom has to do with creating some wonderful state that is going to continue on forever, rather than these wonderful states that come and go. And yet freedom is really just ordinary, garden-variety moment-to-moment awareness realized as your true being: nothing special to create, no tricks that one has to learn to die well, but at the same time the profound courage and humility to surrender into that which we each truly are. Let me ask, before I plunge on, are there comments or questions?

**GBF: I was wondering if you could speak about the undying portion, the Buddhist concept of reincarnation?**

**Borglum:** The Buddha said that one of the four things that can unhinge the mind is trying to understand reincarnation. The other three are trying to understand karma, trying to understand how it all began, and trying to understand how it will all end. One time someone came to the Buddha and said, "Oh venerable one, does reincarnation exist?" And he said, "Well, if it did exist how would you live your life?" And he said, "Well, because I would want a good rebirth, I would meditate a lot, I would study the scriptures, and I would be an all-around nice guy." And then the Buddha said, "Well if reincarnation didn't exist, how would you live your life?" And he said, "Well, because this would be my only chance, I would meditate a lot, study the scriptures, and be an all-around nice guy." And the Buddha said, "Just so." It doesn't really make any difference. So your question is a fascinating and interesting question. But does the answer to it—if reincarnation existed—help you or I live this next moment any more fully? What I'm saying is that that which does not die is a thread that passes through each moment of experience, so that right now as we watch our experience, there is the change in content—pleasant sensation in the body, unpleasant sensation; happy mind, sad mind; pleasant emotion, unpleasant emotion. Those things will continue to change—impermanence, dying. What is it that does not change from moment to moment to moment? Is it possible that you can change your awareness from looking at that which is

changing all the time, turning it back on itself—at the notion of self—and having awareness watch awareness? In that lies freedom.

**GBF: How do you do that?**

**Borglum:** As long as the mind is not stable enough, as long as the heart is not tender enough, it's very difficult to do that. So that in the beginning of practice we spend a lot of time dealing with our neurotic structures, our fear of vulnerability, our hopes, fears, and desires. And after watching a million breaths, after saying a million mantras, depending on how stubborn you are (I'm very stubborn), after a lot of this practice, where we see that we keep changing and sometimes we're

happy and sometimes we're sad, we begin not to take the content so personally. It still arises. I've had a series of crises in my life. I won't bother to recount them. For a while, I felt like Job himself. And this cancer diagnosis upset me for about two hours, and I figured, "Okay, that's that; let's deal with that; on to the next moment." So, how do you do that? There's the sudden path and the gradual path. The sudden path is (snaps fingers) you do it. Right now, let go of your notions of who you are and what you want to be and turn awareness back on itself—let go of grasping with this notion of a separate self. The gradual path is that there is a slow refining away. In fact, when we go back to these three "yanas" of Buddhism—Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrajana, and beyond that there's what's called Chagchen, or Mahāmudrā, nondual practice, Ramana Maharshi, Adyashanti, Eckart Tolle, that kind of practice. Let's say a passion arises—a passion of anger for example. From the Hinayana perspective, from the standpoint of Vipassana, when a negative passion arises, you replace it with something positive. From the standpoint of Mahayana practice, when a passion arises, you do something slightly more sophisticated: you have compassion for it; you transform it through compassion. From the Vajrayana perspective, a passion arises and you instantaneously transmute it through the empowerment of the deity who would do that. So, for instance, anger can be transmuted into cutting through wisdom, the energy of Mañjuśrī. And we don't have to be a Tibetan Buddhist to do that; we're just saying that there is this changing relationship with passions. But eventually, when we get to non-duality, beyond practice, anger is just anger. Anger is just as much the enlightened state as non-anger. A passion is just a passion. These other three ways of dealing with the passion imply or assume that we need to replace, transform, or transmute—we need to fix it. And we need to keep fixing it until we realize we don't need to fix anything. There is nobody that needs to be fixed. There is nothing separating you from your inherent, intrinsic, untainted purity, other than your false assumptions.

**GBF: Where does self-hatred come from and why does it exist in our culture and not in others?**

**Borglum:** It isn't really clear to me that this culture is at a disadvantage in relationship to other cultures. Certainly, the materialistic aspect of post-modern Western society has been exported to almost every corner of the globe. And at the same time, you can go, I'm sure, within a half a mile of where we're seated here today, to a bookstore—in fact, just thirty yards from here are books that have the wisdom of the ages in paperback form. So there are great advantages to being incarnated in the West. Many people in Asia 20, 30, 40 years ago when I was going over there and other people were going over there did not have the luxury of being able to think about meditation and practice. They were trying to survive. So there were a few monastic people who had the luxury of doing that, but most people were living their lives. The Buddha said a very interesting thing. He said that in the 500 years after he died that many people would get enlightened by following his teachings, the dharma. And in the 500 years after that, many people but fewer, and in 500 years after that, fewer still, until after ten of these 500 year periods—after 5,000 years—the concepts of Buddha, dharma and sangha would be gone from the planet. And the next Buddha—the Maitrea Buddha—would appear. However, there would be a 100-year period right in the middle of these 5,000 years (and the 100 year period began in the 1950's) in which the dharma would become widely available. Before 1950, there were a few people practicing in Kyoto, in the Sinai desert, in the Himalayas, the Amazon jungle, but very few people were thinking about the stuff we're talking about here today. And it's very easy to extrapolate that in forty years from now, people are going to be so busy dealing with the Chinese dictatorship, or the hole in the ozone layer—that everyone's frying up or trying to find water, who know what it will be—that very few people will have the luxury of being able to practice the dharma. They'll be concerned with survival.

Clearly, we grew up in a materialistic society. My parents came of age during the great depression, which affected them, which affected me, which affects my child. I had the great good fortune to be a teacher at Naropa University the first

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summer that it began. Trungpa Rinpoche founded this school, and he called a meeting of the faculty before we began teaching and he said, "This is a great thing—the first Buddhist university in America. We are not doing this for ourselves. We're not doing this for our children. We're doing this for our children's children." And that really touched my heart. Even though we live in this society where a lot of people are coming out of this notion of lack of self-love, the pain of that has driven many people to the dharma. Here we are in this room.

**GBF:** You've talked about the grasping mind. What is the non-grasping mind?

**Borglum:** There are many times during the day when we're existing in non-grasping mind, when we are free. And it's so

simple and so available that we don't notice it. You're walking down the street, and you're just walking down the street. You're not thinking about "Where am I going?" or "Where am I coming from?" or "What's for lunch?" You're just walking down the street. When you're meditating, you're sitting there watching your breath or just being seated on your seat, and you'll notice that there's a thought. And then there's a space between thoughts. In that space between thoughts, there's non-grasping mind. We just have to get more used to, or more clear in seeing that place, identifying with that place and beginning to feel the intrinsic suffering that arises in the grasping itself. When there is grasping, the heart closes a bit. There is a tightness. There is a sense of disconnection. The compassionate heart has certain qualities: spaciousness, connectedness, and warmth. When there's grasping, there's not spaciousness, connectedness and warmth. You can do the practice of just, "What does my heart feel like?" Is there spaciousness, connectedness, and warmth, or not? So, if you are a "skilled" meditator—whatever that means—maybe you're on a retreat and your mind's getting calmer—you might notice the following: you're sitting there in non-grasping mind, everything feels fantastic—spaciousness, connectedness, warmth—and then a thought arises. Lack of spaciousness. And then another thought and maybe a whole stream of thoughts. And you're identifying with those thoughts and then you notice that. And with the clear awareness, the grasping dissolves. And then there's that spaciousness again, and it feels so great. And that goes on for a while, and then there's grasping. After I did this for some decades I started saying, "Well, why don't I just rest in that non-grasping? What is it that's going on here?" And what I began to see was that right before the thought arose, there was the fear of death. Not in some overblown "I'm Afraid I'm Going To Die" way, but there is fear of that spaciousness. Descartes said, "I think therefore I am." Well, he was wrong, and he was right. He was wrong absolutely, but he was right in terms of ego structure, that there is all that spaciousness, and the ego structure, the grasping mind, says, "Wait a minute. This is scary. There's too much space here.

Let's think about something, however stupid it might happen to be. Let's think about something." So you think, think, think, and as you're thinking, as you're grasping, as you're identifying with those thoughts, there is suffering. And you notice the suffering, and say "Ah," and you let go again. And it's just becoming more and more comfortable with that spaciousness. The Tibetans say that when you die there will be a light as bright as a thousand suns. That light is your true nature. As you die, you'll become enlightened.

So far today we've talked mostly about working with suffering. There is a parallel spiritual track of working with your light, your joy, your love. Learning to bear the unbearable beauty of yourself. Not being embarrassed by who you truly are. ■

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# 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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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](http://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

### February 3 Jana Drakka

“Gengetsu Junsei” received Dharma Transmission in the Soto Zen Buddhist Lineage from Zenkei Blanche Hartman, the first woman in this lineage. Jana’s nonprofit organization, Jana Drakka’s Community Services, provides a wide range of services including support groups, workshops, classes and talks. Jana’s community work is based in Harm Reduction Principles—a way to meet everyone with complete acceptance—and allows for a client-centered modality. Among her many activities, Jana leads a meditation group at Glide Memorial Church on Monday evenings, facilitates an ongoing peer support group for case managers at Tenderloin Housing Clinic, where she runs a mindfulness group and a grief/stress support group and gives one-on-one counseling to staff and clients.

### February 10 Mark Hoffheimer

Mark Hoffheimer has been a member of Gay Buddhist Fellowship for eight years. Professionally, he is an urban planner and urban designer facilitating community building, shared understanding and shared vision. He has also been involved with the Billys, a heart-centered community of men committed to fostering community, intimacy and personal exploration. Mark has a particular interest in Right Speech, the practice of speaking in ways that enhance understanding, promote harmony and reduce harm to others.

Mark will facilitate a discussion on Right Speech at GBF, beginning with a brief introduction to the topic followed by discussion in break out groups.

### February 17 Jennifer Berezan

Jennifer Berezan is a unique blend of singer/songwriter, teacher, and activist. Over the course of eight albums, she has devel-

oped and explored recurring themes with a rare wisdom. Her lifelong involvement in environmental, women’s, and other justice movements, as well as an interest in Buddhism and earth-based spirituality, is at the heart of her writing. She teaches at the California Institute of Integral Studies in the department of Philosophy and Religion. Her on-going class (since 1997) is entitled “the Healing Ecstasy of Sound” and explores music as a spiritual practice from a wide range of cross-cultural, traditional and contemporary perspectives.

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### February 24 Open Discussion

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### March 3 Sheppard Kominors

Sheppard Kominors has been writing poetry since he attended Kenyon College, more than 60 years ago. He has taught poetry writing, along with literature and drama, since his first appointment at Washington College, in Chestertown, Maryland, in 1956. He has also written 5 novels, half a dozen plays, and has developed an important book on journal writing called *Write for Life: Healing Body, and Spirit Through Journal Writing*. Sheppard has written two books on recovery for gay men: *Accepting Ourselves* (Harper) and *Accepting Others* (Hazleton). He will talk about writing as a spiritual path.

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### March 10 Justin Hecht

In his dharma talk, Justin Hecht will discuss how Buddhism is complemented by the analytic psychology of C.G. Jung (1875-1961), the great Swiss psychologist. As a Buddhist practitioner and a certified Jungian analyst, Justin has explored both the dharma and Jung’s work and has both professional and personal experience of the interactions of these two powerful belief systems. He will present several useful concepts, illustrated by stories and examples, and be available for discussion at the conclusion of his presentation.

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### March 17 Open Discussion

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### March 24 Larry Robinson

Larry Robinson has been practicing meditation since 1969. He is a student of both Zen (Diamond Sangha lineage with John Tarrant) and Vipassana (through Spirit Rock). He is a retired psychotherapist whose work focused on ecopsychology. Larry has served on the Sebastopol City Council since 1998, including two terms as mayor. His passion is the restoration of the oral tradition of poetry.

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### March 31 David Lewis

David Lewis has been a member of the sangha for three or four years now. He has studied the dharma for thirty-five years, first in the Vajrayana tradition and more recently in the Vipassana-Theravada tradition. He is currently enrolled in the Spirit Rock Meditation Center’s Dedicated Practitioner’s Program.

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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