



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

WINTER 2021 NEWSLETTER

The gay Buddhist Fellowship supports Buddhist practice and the spiritual concerns of the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies in the San Francisco Bay Area, the United States and throughout the world. GBF's mission includes offering the wisdom and compassion of diverse Buddhist traditions, and cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.

Dukkha and Grace

By Eugene Cash

Eugene Cash is the founding teacher of the San Francisco Insight Meditation Community of San Francisco. He teaches at Spirit Rock Meditation Center and leads intensive meditation retreats internationally. His teaching is influenced by both Burmese and Thai streams of the Theravada tradition as well as Zen and Tibetan Buddhist practice. He is also a teacher of the Diamond Approach, a school of spiritual investigation and self-realization developed by A. H. Almaas.

Hi, everybody. Nice to be back with you. What I'd like to talk about is inspired by a talk that somebody asked me to give from SF Insight where I teach. I was asked to give a talk that was both personal and about the world and living in the world, personal about the dharma and about *dukkha*, about difficulty. *Dukkha* is mostly translated as suffering or dis-ease or unsatisfactoriness of life. It's just part of all life. And, of course, you can always let me know if you've never had any *dukkha* or anything like that, but most of us have had a taste of it. Depending on your age, usually the longer we live the more tastes we get to have.

But what I was asked to teach about was how to relate to the *dukkha* of life and how to do it gracefully. The movement of the dharma is a change in perspective and the change is characterized by what Joko Beck, who was a Zen teacher, called ABC, which is an acronym for A Bigger Container. Practice is about a bigger container, about the manifestation or the creation of a bigger container to understand reality, to understand the truth, to understand this moment, and to understand our experience day by day and week by week and year by year, and our experience together in the world.

Graceful, of course, comes from the word grace, which means dignified or discerning or cultivated. I always look up the words that are key that I'm going to use, and grace has a sense of fluidity or suppleness or naturalness and there's also a kind of precision or agility to it, often related to the arts. People are talked about as being graceful dancers or graceful musicians, and there's a kind of inherent grace in the arts when we're there, when we're fully in it, doing it. The dancers, when they're doing it, aren't thinking about a million things. They're right in the experience itself, and I find the arts and meditation practice very similar, because when we're meditating, we want to be right here, right now, right in this experience. Whether we're formally meditating or whether we're doing contemplative practice 24/7, even now.

So, of course I want to encourage you to practice while you're listening to me, just as I want to practice while I'm speaking and while we're interacting, because it's all happening now. Reality is right here and it's only right here, right now. You all know that the past is gone, and the future is just in our imagination. All that's happening is here. Our whole life is here right in this moment.

So, even to be aware of it, to feel it, to feel the aliveness that is both speaking and that you're listening from, the aliveness where your listening comes from is part of what encourages grace to arise. I was surprised when I looked up the word. It had a few words that I didn't

expect in the definition which included elegance, refinement, good will, and of course one of the definitions was that it's the blessing of the Holy Spirit in the Christian tradition.

I thought that's all beautiful because part of the grace of the dharma is the grace of actually being here, relaxing with what's true, relaxing with this moment, even when there's *dukkha*. Even when there's difficulty, even when it's unsatisfactory. Thich Nhat Hanh, the great Vietnamese monk said, "Handling our suffering is an art." If we know how to suffer, we suffer much less. We're no longer afraid of being overwhelmed by the suffering, and it's a beautiful understanding of the grace of the dharma at a certain point. It's not that we don't suffer. It's not that there's no *dukkha* anymore. That I can guarantee you, that piece.

But the fact is we can allow it. We can be with it. We can wake up not just to it but through it we can wake up. And, of course, we can respond skillfully to *dukkha*, to the way things are, to difficulty.

The movement of the dharma is a change in perspective and the change is characterized by what Joko Beck, who was a Zen teacher, called ABC, which is an acronym for A Bigger Container.

Flannery O'Connor was a novelist. She said, "Give me the courage to stand the pain to get to the grace." And of course, Oscar Wilde said it most beautifully, because he had his own art of speaking about life. Oscar said, "Where there is sorrow, there is holy ground." And it's really the understanding in Buddhism, *dukkha* and the cause of *dukkha* leads to the end of *dukkha*, which leads to freedom. And that's really a shorthand of the four noble truths. There's *dukkha*, there's the cause of *dukkha*, there's the understanding of *dukkha*, and then there's the path that leads to freedom, and you're all on that path. You're all here, and it's a good place to be—a really good place to be, meaning here in this moment.

And this sangha. How long has GBF been going? Can anybody yell it out? 35 years, yeah. I mean, beautiful. 35 years of sangha right here, and it's a living sangha. Of course, I'm sure some people have passed or left the sangha and some people have died, because that's normal. That happened, and there are new people coming. So, it's an alive sangha that is part of the holy ground because we get to be real here about suffering, about *dukkha*.

So, I'd like to read a little bit about grace from a book called *The Grace in Dying*. Because some of you may die someday, like all of us. You get that. I make little jokes sometimes and I hope they don't offend anybody, but it's true. We're all going to die. Kathleen Dowling Singh, who died in 2017, she wrote a book called *The Grace in Dying*, and she was a hospice worker and psychotherapist.

She said—and she's talking about working with people who are dying—"I realized that what I had been witnessing in the process of dying was grace all around, shimmering and penetrating. I began, with newly opened eyes, to observe the subtlety of this grace and to observe the qualities of grace in those nearing death. I became aware that all of the observed qualities of the Nearing Death Experience point to the fact that there is a

profound psychoalchemy occurring here, a passage to a deeper being."

And she goes on. She says, "There appears to be a universal, sequential progression into deeper, subtler, and more enveloping dimensions of awareness." Deeper, subtler, and more enveloping dimensions of awareness that she sees as a progression that we go into. "Dimensions of awareness, of identity, and of being as we begin to die. A movement from the periphery—from the outside—to the center," she says.

And she wrote, "I realized that the transformation I was observing in people who were nearing death was the same psychoalchemy—in a greatly accelerated mode—that I had noticed in myself through two and a half decades of practicing contemplative disciplines." And she ends this part. She says, "I have come to believe that the time of dying effects a transformation from perceived tragedy to experienced grace. Dying offers the possibility of entering the radiance, the vastness, of our essential nature. The Nearing Death Experience implies a natural and conscious remerging with the Ground of Being from which we have all once unconsciously emerged."

I'm going to repeat that last part. "Dying offers the possibility of entering the radiance, the vastness of our essential nature," and I'm commenting, of what's sitting here, of what's right here already. Right where you are, right sitting in your body, heart and mind. And she says, "The Nearing Death Experience implies a natural and conscious remerging with the Ground of Being from which we have all once unconsciously emerged."

So, it's the movement towards the center or the source of where consciousness comes from, and everybody here is conscious, which means there's consciousness here. And consciousness is sometimes in spiritual traditions referred to as the soul or one's Buddha nature or true nature, or that essence of what we are.

Grace is such a beautiful understanding, and I spent many years working for Zen Hospice, and I know what she's talking about. I've seen the grace in dying, and I've also seen the grace in being alive. They both have grace, they both have beauty, they both have good. And we can keep realizing the essence of who and what we are as we live our lives, as we practice, because it's right here. It's not somewhere else. It's not on some mountaintop far away. It's right in San Francisco or wherever you are, wherever you may be. I don't know where people come from for this group these days, but on Zoom sometimes it's people in Europe or sometimes on the East Coast or the country that's north of the United States called Canada, or south called Mexico, or any of those.

What is grace? Such a beautiful contemplation. What is grace? Of course, one of the ways grace is described is in a poem by Daniel Ladinsky. He says, "What is grace?" I asked God. And God said, "All that happens." Then God added, when I looked perplexed, "Could not lovers say that every moment in their beloved's arms was grace?" Existence is my arms."

So, you hear the perspective change to the ABCs of practice, a bigger container, a bigger view, a bigger understanding of reality, of the truth of what's here. So, grace happens on its own. We don't do grace. I hope you all get that. We don't do it. We don't make grace happen. We practice. We be ourselves. We stay right here, and then grace reveals itself in our experience, in our aliveness, in just the simple magic of being alive sometimes. In a walk in the park, there can be grace.

I have the good fortune of living right next to Golden Gate Park, and I love walking in the park. Really, it's just grace every time, and that's no joke. It doesn't mean I'm always happy or I'm always in a good mood or I'm in some Buddha realm somewhere. No, I'm here. But still, the trees and the plants and the people and the goodness of the people who take care of the park is so beautiful.

I took a walk this morning, which I normally do—sit, breakfast, and then a walk. It's just amazing how many people are out in the park early in the morning having fun and being humans and being beautiful. They're just playing and lying around. A little later I took a bike ride, and I was riding around. The beauty of nature and the beauty of humans, you all know we are nature, also. We always like to go out into nature. We forget that we are nature itself. We are what is born and dies.

Of course, when I'm out in "nature," the trees and the plants and the beautiful flowers, the white building, the house of flowers, and of course all of that is born and dies, too. All of it. It's all natural, the birth and death, and the grace and magic of life arising and passing away.

So, grace happens on its own. We don't do grace.

One of my favorite Buddhist teachers these days is Sayadaw U Tejaniya. He said, "The past is gone and the future is yet to come. Both are concepts. They are not real. Right now in this moment, everything, anything may come and anything may go, even death." And then he says, with an exclamation mark, he says, "No problem! No problem!" Because it's just a moment. It's not an idea. Usually, we have a lot of ideas about things like that.

So, when I was investigating and reflecting on grace, I came upon the Sanskrit word *adhiṣṭhāna*, which means blessings or spiritual power, especially in the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions. A spiritual power that comes on its own. We don't do it. It's a blessing that comes, grace.

I found another interesting word that I like, apophenia, which means the perception of connections or meaning in unrelated or random phenomena. I'm going to say it again. The perception of connections or meaning in unrelated or random phenomena. It's really about the magic of life and what happens, because we think we are all...or I should probably just speak for myself, sometimes I think I'm in control of things, and then I see how little I'm in control of everything. That life is doing itself and the connections, really this is an understanding of karma. It's so complex that we can never understand karma. But all the causes and connections for something to arise sometimes are so unrelated and random and we can perceive it anyway. We see the connections or the meaning of something

even though why it happened is not clear. It's all random phenomena of reality doing itself, of which we are one of the manifestations of reality.

In reference to working with difficulty and grace, the great Tibetan teacher Pema Chödrön said it this way. She said, "When things fall apart and we're on the verge of we know not what, the test for each of us is to stay on the brink and not concretize. The spiritual journey is not about heaven and finally

All that's happening is here. Our whole life is here right in this moment.

getting there to a place that's really swell." She says, "To stay with the shakiness, to stay with a broken heart, with a rumbling stomach, with a feeling of hopelessness and wanting to get revenge, that is the path of true awakening." I mean, this is killer Buddhism in Eugene language. I'm going to repeat that last part, "Stay with the feeling of hopelessness and wanting to get revenge. That is the path of true awakening. Sticking with that uncertainty, getting the knack of relaxing in the midst of chaos, learning not to panic, that is the spiritual path," from Pema Chödrön. And I agree, Pema. That's good teaching, good dharma, because we're not in control.

I'm sure you've all noticed we've had a very strange last year and a half. Anybody get that? Our whole world changed. Boom! Suddenly, everything was different. I want to acknowledge that yesterday was 9/11, which was an important day for many people in the United States of America—it changed our lives. And that day everything changed. Our whole reality changed on that day, and the whole reality of the world changed on that day because we're such a powerful country and we had a big reaction. We didn't stay relaxed with the difficulty that happened. We didn't know how to work with it to see the causes and conditions that brought it forward. What we did was we had a very militaristic reaction and we attacked, and that's when a little later the war in Afghanistan happened, that we just ended, because of what happened that one day. We were in a 20-year war because of what happened that one day. Even after we killed Osama bin Laden, who was the instigator of that day, that didn't end the war, even.

So, you see how if we're not willing to be with the *dukkha*, more *dukkha* happens. If we're willing to be with the *dukkha*, we can learn to wake up and deal with it, respond to it, be skillful with it, and hopefully become free of it.

This is from the African shaman Bayo Akomolafe, who said, "Falling might very well be flying without the tyranny of coordinates." Learning how to let go of our reactivity often feels like falling, like we can't find our ground. We're so used to our reactivity. We're so used to just responding from our fear or our anger or our grief, instead of being with it and letting it wake us up more fully. Then, the possible, the positive can happen.

There's something that's now called post-traumatic growth. You all know about post-traumatic stress, but post-traumatic growth is about people that thrive in the aftermath of adversity. Remember how Thich Nhat Hanh said that working with suffering is an art practice? There's a famous artist which many of you know, Frida Kahlo, who is talked about in this book called *Wired to Create*. They said one of her most famous self-portraits depicts her in a hospital bed naked and bleeding, actually in Henry Ford Hospital in 1932, and I know Henry Ford Hospi-

tal because it's in Detroit and I grew up in Detroit. It's apparently a powerful artistic rendering of her second miscarriage, and she wrote in her diaries that the painting carries with it the message of pain. She's known for her channeling of her experience of multiple miscarriages, childhood polio, and a number of other misfortunes into her iconic self-portraits— real understanding of suffering and the real understanding of suffering that motivated her.

I found another interesting word that I like, apophenia, which means the perception of connections or meaning in unrelated or random phenomena.

Then this term, post-traumatic growth, is part of what we're talking about now. She grew from her trauma, from her heartache, from her difficulty, from her suffering. The people who write about post-traumatic growth, they say, "Up to 70% of trauma survivors report some positive psychological growth, researchers found. Growth after trauma can take a number of different forms, including a greater appreciation for life, the identification of new possibilities for one's life, more satisfying interpersonal relationships, a richer spiritual life, and a connection to something greater than oneself." They also say, "Experiences of trauma commonly lead to increased empathy and altruism and a motivation to act for the benefit of others."

I'll end with a beautiful poem by Rashani Réa, who said, "There is a brokenness out of which comes the unbroken. A shatteredness out of which comes the unshatterable. There is a sorrow beyond all grief which leads to joy, and a fragility out of whose depths emerges strength. There is a space too vast for words through which we pass with each loss, out of whose darkness we are sanctioned into being. There is a cry deeper than all sound whose serrated edges cut the heart as we break open to the place inside which is unbreakable and whole while learning to sing."

So, those are a few thoughts about *dukkha* and grace, practice, the dharma, our own essential nature, and what's right here. So, I always love to hear your thoughts or your questions or your comments or your reactions, or if something didn't make sense. We have some time for comments, questions. Don't be shy because we don't have a lot of time.

Clint: Hi, Eugene. It's great to see you again. You talked about how seemingly random events have some kind of connection with each other, and the increased recognition of things greater than ourselves. I wondered if you can talk about synchronicity, which seems to embody that. In my life I've had some amazing coincidences that couldn't be coincidences because they're so improbable. Whenever that has happened, I feel like something is in touch with me that I'm not aware of, but I'm not quite sure what it is. But I just feel like I'm in a connection that I wasn't in before, and I wondered if you could talk a little bit about synchronicity and what that implies.

Eugene Cash: Sounds great. I like what you're saying. It just means that it's a little bit like the word I used, apophenia, which is the perception of connections or

meaning in unrelated or random phenomena. It's synchronous. It fits, even though we might not understand why or how, and that's how I'm understanding what you're pointing at in your own direct experience, which is, of course, where the whole dharma is: in your experience. So, that's how I'm hearing it, a little like apophenia. So, you could use that word too, if you want two words today.

Clint: When apophenia happens, what do you think happens? What do you think brought that together, where sometimes we have these experiences?

Eugene Cash: I don't know. I think it's good fortune. I think it's grace. I think it's blessings in that way.

Clint: I'm always tempted to buy a lottery ticket right after one of those experiences.

Eugene Cash: Well, buy a few for all of us, if you're going to win. But who knows why anybody wins, right?

Clint: Right.

Eugene Cash: That's just totally luck. Good luck.

Jason: You referenced Frida Kahlo, and one of my favorite quotes from her is, "I hope the exit is joyful, and I hope never to return." I think there is a beauty in that reflection on her life.

Eugene Cash: Yes, she sounds very Theravadan in her Buddhism. May she have gotten what she wants! Thank you, Jason.

Marcelo: So, I see that running away from suffering can lead to more suffering or is likely to, and that the only way to transform it is to look at the suffering. So, let's say you're suffering in a relationship, for example, or maybe less dramatically, in a job, or something as simple as sitting and being uncomfortable. Then *dukkha* arises. So, when is time to turn toward it? How do you realize, okay, I'm just being flaky and just want to avoid the suffering and don't want to practice, and when is it really enough? You know what I mean?

Eugene Cash: Right, yeah. It's a great question you're asking, but you're the only one who can answer because there's not anybody else who has your experience. I can't live in your body, heart, and mind and say, "Oh, it's enough, Marcelo. Get out of here." Or, "Sit up straighter," or whatever the *dukkha* is that you're working with. So, you're really pointing at something to look at very clearly in your own practice: what does it mean to be impeccable in sitting practice and in relationship?

That impeccability brings in all the qualities of dharma that are needed, meaning being able to discern and be truthful and honest and center oneself in one's body, heart, and mind, use one's intelligence. So, it's an on-going question that's a living question that you're asking.

For myself, I sit every morning as soon as I get up, or I stretch a little and then I sit. And it's like, how long to sit? I used to sit 45 minutes every day. Well, I don't sit 45 minutes anymore. I'm older now. I'm happy if I sit 30 minutes. And often I set a clock and a bell rings and I'm done. But sometimes I don't set a clock and I don't know how long I sit, and that's okay, too. Sometimes I'm sitting for two minutes, and I feel like getting up and I'm like, "No, Eugene. You sit there." It's not with a harshness, actually, but it's just that there's a part of me saying, "I want to sit here," and then there's a part of me saying, "I don't want to sit here."

So, who do I want running the show? I want the one who's most skillful and the one who wants to sit is a little more skillful than the one who just wants to do whatever the hell he wants all the time.

Learning how to let go of our reactivity often feels like falling, like we can't find our ground.

And then it's the same in relationship or other circumstances. I've been married for a long time, almost 30 years. But that doesn't mean it's easy. It's still people. People are great and people are a pain in the butt. So, it's like at some point how to be honest and real and truthful and here with my partner at the same time. And that's a living practice.

So, those are a few thoughts. How does that sound?

Marcelo: It sounds like a challenge, but it also sounds like being true to yourself and all that's really happening and paying attention to whether I'm trying to talk myself into something.

Eugene Cash: Yeah, and you know when you're trying to talk yourself into something, you *know*. And keep looking. What's true? I'm pointing to myself but really, I'm pointing at you. Keep looking right here because that's where the answer is.

Marcelo: Thank you.

Jeff: I want to touch on apophenia again.

Eugene Cash: That's great.

Jeff: Two days ago, my first college professor and spiritual mentor died, and it was semi-quick but not unexpected. A mutual friend and student was able to be there and text me and communicate with me blow-by-blow, and even sent a couple of pictures before and after. I got a voicemail when I had just gotten up to the park to go for a walk with a friend that said, "If you get this in the next couple of minutes, give me a call."

So, I was in a bad cell reception area, but I got out of the car because I knew I had to stand up and really

show up for this. He answered, our friend answered and said, "Go ahead, he can hear you, Jeff." And I said, "Charles, I'm so grateful I got to see you last Spring and express how much you've meant to me over the years, and that we know each other's hearts, and that I feel complete with you." And I heard him say, "Me too, Jeff." I've never felt that complete.

Eugene Cash: That's beautiful, Jeff. Thank you for sharing him with all of us. I hear the love that's here for him. Sometimes it's that simple and great to be able to have some words with someone before they die, before their body dies. You can keep communicating with them. Who knows what'll happen, really? And I mean that quite sincerely.

Jeff: Yeah, I felt so vulnerable, saying that. I knew there was a room full of people. It had to be said.

Eugene Cash: Thank you.

Greg: Hi, Eugene. Thanks for your talk. I go through periods of depression every year, too, and my question is sort of related to Marcelo's, I think. I have the issue of automatically pushing away negative feelings and negative thoughts or getting into them and sort of getting swamped by them. And what has worked for me has been to acknowledge them and say, "I let you go." That feels to me like not really being with the *dukkha*, but it seems like sort of a middle way.

Eugene Cash: No, no. That's really good, what you're saying. For some people with certain kinds of *dukkha*, you want to do that. You want to be aware of the *dukkha*. You don't just want to go into it because the one thing in meditation practice you don't want to do is get too imbalanced. You only want to get imbalanced if you can be okay upside down. And if you're okay, then you're balanced even when you're imbalanced. But if you're not good with the imbalance, don't do it. You want to stay. You want to bring enough balance, and partly one gets balance by moving away from something that is imbalancing. So, I'm glad you're saying this and putting it into the room, because the dharma is not a one button suits everybody, really.

Greg: Right, okay, thank you very much.

Eugene Cash: Great, and that's good because we're right on time. Thank you!

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All in-person Programs at GBF on Bartlett Street will be postponed indefinitely and are being offered online using Zoom Meetings. Visit our website at www.gaybuddhist.org for the Zoom link and password.

Sunday Sittings

10:30 am to 12:00 pm

Every Sunday at 10:30 am we meditate together for 30 minutes, followed by a talk or discussion till 12:00 pm. Everyone is then welcome to stay and socialize until 12:30 pm.

Wednesday Night Live

7:30 pm to 9:00 pm

Similar to the Sunday format, without a formal dharma talk, we host a wide range of discussions which can include creative spiritual inspirations, pitfalls on the path, and applications of practice in everyday life. You are welcome to attend the Meditation (7:30 pm to 8:00 pm) only, and/or the Discussion (8:00 pm to 9:00 pm).

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.

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<http://gaybuddhist.org/v3-wp/email-list/> for instructions.

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The Gay Buddhist Fellowship is a charitable organization pursuant to Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3) and California Revenue and Taxation Code #23701d.

Sunday Speakers

December 5 - Heather Sundberg

Heather Sundberg began teaching meditation in 1999. She has completed the four-year Spirit Rock's Insight Meditation Society Teacher Training. Beginning her own meditation practice in her late teens, for 20+ years, Heather has studied with senior teachers in the Insight Meditation and Tibetan traditions, and has sat 1-3 months of retreat a year for the last 15+ years. She is a teacher for Mountain Stream Meditation Center in the Sierra Foothills, and also teaches classes, daylongs, and retreats nationally, especially at Spirit Rock Meditation Center. For more info, visit <http://www.heathersundberg.com>.

December 12 - Pam Weiss

Pamela Weiss has practiced Zen and the Theravada traditions of Buddhism for over 30 years. She is trained in both the Zen and Theravada traditions, including several years of Zen monastic training and teacher training with Jack Kornfield at Spirit Rock. Pamela leads a Wednesday evening sitting group at SF Insight, and teaches classes, workshops, and retreats internationally. She is also an executive coach and the founder of Appropriate Response, a company dedicated to bringing the principles and practices of Buddhism into the workplace.

December 19 - Dave Richo

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

December 26 - Open Discussion (Holiday Weekend)

January 2 - Open Discussion (Holiday Weekend)

January 9 - Laura Burges

Ryuko Laura Burges, a lay entrusted dharma teacher in the Soto Zen tradition, teaches classes, lectures, and leads retreats in Northern California. A teacher of children for 35 years, she now mentors aspiring teachers. Laura co-founded the Sangha in Recovery Program at the San Francisco Zen Center and is the abiding teacher at Lenox House Meditation Group in Oakland. Shambhala Publishers will be offering two of her Buddhist children's books next year, a collection of Jataka Tales reimagined for today's readers, and a book about Zen Buddhism for kids. Laura is currently working on a book about Zen Buddhism for adults.

January 16 - Sean Feit Oakes

Sean Feit Oakes, PhD (he/him, queer, Puerto Rican-English ancestry on unceded Pomo land in Northern California), teaches Buddhism and somatic practice focusing on the integration of meditation, trauma resolution, and social justice. He received teaching authorization from Jack Kornfield, and wrote his dissertation on

extraordinary states in Buddhist meditation and experimental dance. He teaches with Spirit Rock Meditation Center, East Bay Meditation Center, Insight Timer, and elsewhere.

January 23 - Linda Galijan

Linda Galijan was ordained as a Zen priest by Sojun Mel Weitsman in 2004 and received Dharma Transmission from him in 2012. She has been a professional musician and licensed clinical psychologist, and has practiced Buddhism and yoga for over 30 years. Linda has been President of San Francisco Zen Center, Tassajara Director, and co-chair of the SFZC Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Committee. She is currently the Tanto (Head of Practice) at Tassajara.

January 30 - Trip Weil

Trip Weil has been practicing in the Theravada tradition since 2004. He is a graduate of Spirit Rock's Community Dharma Leader and Dedicated Practitioner programs. Trip serves on the board of San Francisco Insight, where he also leads sitting groups and teaches meditation classes. He is a psychotherapist in private practice in San Francisco and a former attorney.

February 6 - Ann Gleig

Ann Gleig is an Associate Professor of Religion and Cultural Studies at the University of Central Florida. She is the author of *American Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Modernity* (Yale University Press, 2019). She is currently working on a collaborative book with Amy Langenberg on sexual misconduct and abuse in contemporary Buddhism, which is under advance contract with Yale University Press.

February 13 - Bill Weber

Bill Weber is a senior Vipassana practitioner and a graduate from Spirit Rock's Community Dharma Leaders program. He has twenty-five years of extensive retreat practice and currently practices at home with his husband or sits with a small group of gay men. He is also a documentary filmmaker and video editor, whose latest projects are "To Be Takei" and "The Untold Tales of Armistead Maupin."

February 20 - Open Discussion

February 27 - Eve Decker

Eve Decker has been practicing Insight Meditation since 1991, and has taught groups, daylongs, and short retreats since 2006, particularly at Spirit Rock, the East Bay Meditation Center, and elsewhere in the Bay Area. She is a graduate of UC Berkeley and of Spirit Rock's Path of Engagement and Community Dharma Leader training programs, and has been trained in the Hakomi approach to body-based psychotherapy. Eve is also a singer/songwriter who has combined the power of music and dharma practice. Her most recent CDs are "In: Chants of Mindfulness & Compassion," and "Awakening Joy - The Music."

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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