



# Gay Buddhist Fellowship

FALL 2022 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.

## ***Belonging***

By Frank Ostaseski

*Frank Ostaseski is an internationally respected Buddhist teacher, visionary co-founder of the Zen Hospice Project, and founder of the Metta Institute. He has lectured at Harvard Medical School, the Mayo Clinic, leading corporations like Google and Apple Inc., and teaches at major spiritual centers around the globe. His groundbreaking work has been featured on the Bill Moyers PBS series On Our Own Terms, highlighted on The Oprah Winfrey Show, and honored by H. H. the Dalai Lama. He is the author of The Five Invitations: Discovering What Death Can Teach Us About Living Fully.*

Oh, boy. Very happy to be with you. I have a long history with this Sangha actually. I don't know, maybe 25 years ago before you were meeting in the current space, the group used to gather in the main room of the Zen Hospice Project. Some of you may remember, and we made the main room available to support the development of the Sangha. We've enjoyed a very long friendship.

Today, I want to speak a little bit about belonging, and we'll see what we can discover together. Conventionally, when we speak about belonging, we speak about it as a sense of being recognized, or a part of a family or a group or a movement or a nation. Maybe sometimes this includes shared values or beliefs, or common interests. You remember Abe Maslow, the American psychologist who created this theory of the hierarchy of needs, and it was usually portrayed as a pyramid, and the base of the pyramid was our basic survival needs, and the more complex and evolved needs were placed at the peak of the pyramid. And the need for love and belonging was at the very center of the pyramid, essential really to manifesting our full capacity as humans. But beyond all these theories of psychological needs, I think in each of us, in each of our hearts, we long to belong. We know that psychosocial belonging helps us to manage stress and our behavior issues. And usually, we feel when we have the support of others, when we feel we're not so alone, we're generally more resilient. A sense of belonging helps us to more effectively face the difficulties of our life, but belonging is necessary for survival. I mean without a sense of belonging, we would've perished as a species a long time ago. And that's why I think when we feel like we're on the margins, or we feel like we've been exiled from a greater community, it can feel really devastating for us, almost like we won't survive.

I was with my three grandchildren this past week, and I was reminded how infants, all of us as infants need to belong in order to survive. My son and his wife recently adopted two new children. And I was meeting them for the first time, and my granddaughter, Nico, who I've known since her birth, came running up to me yelling, "Grandpa, Grandpa!" And when the other two saw this, they immediately fell in line yelling, "Grandpa, Grandpa!" even though it was my first time meeting them. I think as children, we're encoded with this need to attach, in a healthy way, to a caregiver. And we know probably from our own experience that those of us who didn't have healthy attachment, and that's most people actually, in our young lives, we often suffer from low self-esteem or negative worldview, or maybe we don't have a lot of basic trust. And we might walk around with the perception of rejection that everybody else has been included except me. That's been the story of my life. Our longing to belong, even when we make unskillful attempts at it, when we compare ourselves to others, or when we're in competition with others, I think actually these are often attempts to make contact with what we feel has been lost, or maybe what we never got to have.

But I think belonging is not just about togetherness, it's not just about getting our psychosocial needs met. I think belonging is freedom. Belonging is intrinsic to our most essential, most fundamental nature. Who we actually are *is* indivisible. It can't be broken into parts, and manifests in a myriad of ways, thousands of ways as all kinds of possibilities and qualities, but these facets are not separate from the whole. Like the analogy goes, no more than the waves are separate from the

## I think belonging is freedom.

think this is one of the core wounds in our culture. This leads to isolation and domination, and not the good kind. Domination of others and of our planet leads to war that we're witnessing right now. And feeding this fire of separation, it leads to so much unnecessary suffering. The other day, I read something that really broke my heart. I read that nearly one third of young people say that they have no trusted adults in their life, one third. And it's probably higher in communities of people who are living on the margins. The world's never been more connected. I mean look at us, connected via Zoom and yet, people are lonelier than ever. I was in London a while back and there's a Minister of Loneliness in England, who's working to address this epidemic experience of loneliness. And in the parks in London now, there are benches that have signs on them. And some of them say "Chat" benches. If you want to just be quiet, you of course can go to a bench and sit on the bench by yourself. But if you want to connect with people, you go and sit at one of these "chat" benches. And maybe it's a total stranger, but you can visit with them. And it's a way to just address this rampant loneliness that's there.

My experience of separation is that it amplifies the feelings of vulnerability and fear and grasping and aversion. This feeling separate is an existential trance we're in that forgets the wholeness of our Being. I mean, we're not separate from others, not from our nature, not from the essential truth of reality, not from the beauty and horror of our humanity. We never were, and we never will be.

**And we believe that we need to be separate in order to be individual.  
And I think this is one of the core wounds in our culture.**

ocean, or when I think about this, I think of us being one body, actually. And if you cut your left hand, your right hand reaches out and cares for it immediately, it doesn't pause, it doesn't ask what your political affiliation is, or do you have good health insurance, or what's your belief system? It just cares for it. It's the most natural thing, right? I think belonging is in the nature of our nature, and all of our experiences in life, including what we're having right now, are I think invitations to belonging.

Yet most of us if you're like me, at least at times, live in a delusion of our separateness. And to me, this is particularly prevalent in the West. And we believe that we need to be separate in order to be individual. And I

And at the same time, I want to express my respect for how hard it is and how difficult it is to be human. My question always in practice is how do I move toward the light of absolute truth, and still accept and honor my very human nature? How do I face the popularism and the climate capacity of our time, and the religious divisions and the racism, and the political polarization and, I don't know, the patriarchy of the gender oppression? All of these and more. We could come up with more. We could add to that list. How do I recognize that there are certainly actions and groups of actors to which I don't feel I want to belong, but I think we belong even to this. And that brings with it a responsibility to address the suffering of our world with wisdom and compassion and integrity.

Years ago, I helped to lead a retreat at Auschwitz Birkenau, 150 people sitting on the tracks of Birkenau from all over the world. It was horrific and also extraordinary. And later, I remember reading an interview with his Holiness the Dalai Lama, and he said something extraordinary. He said he was at Auschwitz and said, "I'm so glad I wasn't born to be a guard." He said, "I think I would've done horrible things." And what he was pointing to was if he'd been born into a certain set of conditions and raised with a certain value system, and born at a particular time, if he'd walk the path of those guards, he would be one. And it was very humbling to me that he said that. His dear friend, the wonderful, joyful Archbishop Desmond Tutu, introduced the world to that beautiful Zulu phrase, *Ubuntu*, *Ubuntu* which usually is translated broadly anyway as 'we are because we belong.' And it's belonging, not just to other beings, or the humans or four legged creatures even, we belong to the rocks and the plants, and the boundless sky and the great oceans, and also to all the misery in our own planet. We belong to all of it.

In our Buddhist practice, we know from our study that interconnectedness, let's call it, is a central tenant underlying everything in practice. Every person, place, thing is entirely dependent on other persons, places, and things and the necessary conditions that allow us to exist. And this isn't just some abstract spiritual idea. An apple seed can't bear fruit, right? It needs the right conditions. It needs moisture and sunshine, and nutrients and rain drops. And only in that way can it grow and bear fruit. Nothing, nothing can be sustained in-

## **We're not separate, but we're also not the same.**

dependently. And I think every time we connect with those rays of sunshine and those drops of rain, it reminds us of that cycle of our belonging. Everything depends on everything else. I mean, look at us, sitting here together. I mean we're only able to exist because of others. The clothes we're wearing, right? They came from somewhere else and an existence that we're sharing right now. It's only there because of these conditions that we live in. Someone grows crops and harvests them and brings the crops to market. And maybe someone else makes our meals for us. And it's repeated again and again. I teach a lot at the Upaya Zen Center in Santa Fe. And before every meal, we make a chant that goes something like "Earth, water,

fire, air, and space combined to make this food. Numberless beings gave their lives and labors that we may eat. May we be nourished that we may nourish life," and we do that before every meal.

## **My question always in practice is how do I move toward the light of absolute truth, and still accept and honor my very human nature?**

To get this deep sense of belonging involves living with the paradox of the two truths: The absolute truth of our connection with everything, that we're not separate, but also the relative truth that each of us comes into this world in different conditions, and have different histories.

And those differences shape our identities. We're not separate, but we're also not the same. And I think our freedom depends on remembering that, and one way that we experience and skillfully practice this is in community.

Community plays a central role in Buddhist practice, right? And we speak of the three treasures, the three jewels: Buddha, the capacity in each of us to awaken, Dharma, the teachings or the path or the truth, the way, and Sangha, the community of practitioners. I think of these as a three-legged stool. And if we only practice the first two, well it's a pretty wobbly stool. Sangha is important. Taking refuge to me at least isn't a bypass or removing ourselves from life. And it's not a running away from the harsh realities. It's a way we come closer to ourselves and each other, and it's not easy. I mean humans have always formed ourselves into groups, right? - the tribes and cultures and organizations, most of us have belonged to some of them at least. And Sangha is also about relationships, but it's not about replacing our dysfunctional families with a new version. Sangha is more like a mirror to me. It's more like a growing experience through which we see

each other in fresh ways. And each person in the Sangha, each of us sitting here, we have a function.

And to me, the real function is to be completely ourselves. I think of Sangha as a way that we remember ourselves home. And this relationship with Sangha, it is less about determination, about some kind of outcome or how we should behave, or any of that. It's more about discovery, a journey of continuous discovery, requiring courage and flexibility, and where we learn to open and take risks, and maybe forgive constantly. It's not extra.

But at the same time, we have to be realistic about Sangha and aware of the times and conditions we live in. My friend Norman Fisher has a wonderful way of talking about it. He says that there's a great coherence

to Buddhist practice. It has its own logic and wisdom, and it's been developed over 2600 years, and it fits together beautifully, nice, neatly, tidy. But on the other hand, people are not so coherent. When we give ourselves permission to look honestly at our lives and at each other, we find a lot of contradictions. I was with my daughter the other night and she said, "You know Papa, when we were young, you didn't impose Buddhist practice on us, but I remember some things." And I said, "Well, what do you remember?" She said, "Oh, I remember you telling me that this gesture, holding my hand open, was a gesture of both giving and receiving, same gesture." "Yeah." Except that she said, "I remember you saying that when your fingers start to curl back in either greed or in some kind of anger, it forms a fist. And that's where much of the violence and the unnecessary suffering in our world comes from." It surprised me that she remembered that.

This belonging also for me at least entails belonging to self. That means at one level of course, we care for and nurture our body, heart and mind, but to belong to myself is more than that. To me, it's a call to action. It's a willingness to stand up on my own behalf and to advocate for myself, maybe for my best self. And that involves a certain radical self-acceptance and embracing of all that we are. And that requires that we get to know ourselves really well, so we can see what we can include. And I think this occurs most often, or most easily, let's say, when we trust our wise heart to be a reliable guide. I mean our minds will help us discern and discriminate and sort, but our heart almost always is the way we discover what's true. To belong to ourselves, we need to stop as we did this morning, and be still and open, and allow to all that we are, no part left out. And by doing that, by recognizing or actualizing how we belong to ourselves, we are able to feel our connection with others.

So, the return to belonging is to reclaim this connection and to act on our own behalf. And I think this requires some measure of love, self-love. Because what we want to connect with again is that indivisible aspect of our nature. We want to move toward what feels real in us. And that wholesome wanting to me is already expressing love and appreciation for our basic nature. And that's essential in our spiritual practice. Without that love, I think our practice is being done for all the wrong reasons.

**And by doing that, by recognizing or actualizing how we belong to ourselves, we are able to feel our connection with others.**

Belonging just is, you can't undo it. We belong simply because we exist. And even if we feel terribly lonely at times, which I have been feeling so much lately. I recently broke up with my partner after 20 years, and I feel very lonely. And even if everything I'm saying feels contradictory, which it does to me sometimes, we still belong. And this belonging isn't dependent on our success, or the way we want to be, or the shape of our bodies, or having a particular belief. We belong even when we feel we don't belong.

What's your relationship to belonging? Where and to who do you think you belong? And what's your sense of belonging to yourself? And I always want to know what the obstacles are, what gets in the way of belonging. What accommodations have you made in order to belong? What'd you have to give up to belong? I want to explore these things with you, and just draw on the collective wisdom of the group. And we'll just see where and to who do you belong? What's that feel like, and what gets in the way? What's the obstacle to belonging? Let's just be honest with each other, and see what we can discover together. Let's just inquire in a way that helps us see the truth. Okay?

I want to make sure we look at the shadow side of belonging, right? I mean it's not all warm and fuzzy and unicorns and rainbows. Lots of times in order to fit in—we've all done this in our life, right?—in order to fit, in order not to be exiled, we make compromises, we accommodate. And I don't mean in a positive way. I mean accommodating like when we give up a piece of our soul to please another, because we think we need something from them. So, let's also explore the shadow side, and what we give up in order to belong, or how we've been exiled from belonging.

Paul: Frank, I want to thank you very much for your talk. It just really got me. When I was growing up, I didn't know I was gay. And it wasn't until 27 when I realized it, and I had no idea why I felt separated. I did blame a lot of it on everybody else, but a lot of it was, "What's wrong with me? I don't feel plugged in." And I realize it's really important to reach out, and it's very hard for me because for 50 years of my life, it wasn't hard at all. I had lots of contacts at work and they would evolve from that. The gay clubs were a good way to meet people too, and it made me think that the excess of sex that I felt I was having for a long time was a real serious attempt to feel connected to a group and to individuals. I felt like a very bad person for being so excessive some of the time, but other times, it felt like I was finding myself. I had a 12-step meeting

the other day, and it was people my age. And the subject got onto caretaking, and a lot of them said they were caretaking for their mothers and fathers and how difficult it was when they were in dementia, and the burden of being a caretaker. And one guy said, "But we've had a lot of practice because we went through the AIDS crisis." And that really got me. I'm glad to be reminded that there is a way out of the isolation.

Frank Ostaseski: Yeah. I mean the reality is the isolation is a kind of misunderstanding, right? It's not really recognizing what's true. It's a kind of ignorance. What you were saying back in the day, when there was this explosion of sexuality and some of that was just the pure fun of it, and the ability to just be as you said who I am, but also there's something about belonging that's in that, right? What did it feel like, just very briefly, what did it feel like to be in exile?

Paul: It felt a little bit scary. I was a Martian on planet earth.

Frank Ostaseski: Yeah, right. Then we make all these efforts, some skillful, some not so skillful, to reconnect with something that part of us knows is fundamentally true, but we've been living slightly outside of it. That's why exile feels like we might actually die. We won't be able to survive. Yeah. And what you're saying about the AIDS pandemic, I mean I talked to someone yesterday and they said, "We've never had a pandemic like this before, a million people dying." And I said, "What, are you crazy? 700,000 people died over 30 or 40 years from HIV/AIDS." And I continue to believe it was one of the greatest spiritual movements of our time, and I'm not trying to white-wash it, but the kind of growth that happened and the kind of caregiving you were just describing a moment ago was phenomenal. I mean probably AA, which you mentioned, and that caregiving during the worst of AIDS would be the two biggest spiritual developments of the 20th century to me. Yes, we know what war is and yes, there have been other epidemics. And we have not only survived them, but we have grown with them. Yeah. And as they say, those who forget their history are bound to repeat it. I mean, you think about the political ignorance and the denial that drove the AIDS epidemic, and it's happening again. It's horrible for me that we've forgotten that. Yeah. Thank you for bringing those two things forward, and I'm glad that you're getting a sense, a little taste of this belonging, even as we're speaking. Thank you, Paul.

Paul: Thanks so much, Frank

Mike: I'm just simply reflecting that there's a conundrum on the issue between individualism and belonging. Because as much as we in the West privilege our

individualism, I guess I always have something of a problem understanding that in relation to Buddhism. I'm still very much a novice Buddhist. But the other side of that coin I think is belonging too much, feeling that one's entire identity is subsumed into an ideology, or a community. We see evidence of this in fundamentalism across all religions, across ideology, Trumpism, what's happening to our country in those regards. I was just thinking it's a narrow walk, I mean hopefully to be able to integrate both aspects of these dimensions.

**“Earth, water, fire, air, and space combined to make this food. Numberless beings gave their lives and labor that we may eat. May we be nourished that we may nourish life.”**

Frank Ostaseski: Yeah, wonderful. Thank you for bringing that forward. I mean true, like I say, belonging has a shadow side, and we have to be mindful of it. We have to see how we get identified with, for example, a belief system as you suggested, or our views or our notion of who we are. Absolutely, it's got a shadow side, and we need to find our way through that. To me, this misunderstanding about belonging, this sense of individualism which has us believing we have to be apart from, separate from, this is the great silent wound of our times I think. Thank you for bringing that forward. Again, the paradox of two truths, the ultimate absolute truth that we're not separate, and the relative truth that we are each beautifully unique individuals, and we hold all the time those two together. As Jung said, when we hold the paradox of opposites, oftentimes a third understanding emerges that we might not have recognized before.



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GBF has resumed in-person meetings at 37 Bartlett Street. Our Sunday meetings will be both in-person and on Zoom. Visit our website at [www.gaybuddhist.org](http://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.

Information: (415) 861-4910

## How to Reach Us

[www.gaybuddhist.org](http://www.gaybuddhist.org)

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To contact Gay Buddhist Fellowship with general questions, suggestions for speakers, address changes, or to subscribe or unsubscribe to the newsletter: [gaybuddhistfellowship@gmail.com](mailto:gaybuddhistfellowship@gmail.com)

If you would like to join the GBF Google Group email list, please go to <http://gaybuddhist.org/v3-wp/email-list/> for instructions.

Find us on Facebook [@gaybuddhistfellowship](https://www.facebook.com/gaybuddhistfellowship)

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

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## September 4 - Open Discussion (Labor Day Weekend)

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## September 10 - Retreat with Rene Rivera

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### September 11 - David Richo

David Richo, Ph.D., is a psychotherapist, writer, and workshop leader. He shares his time between Santa Barbara and San Francisco, California. Dave combines psychological and spiritual perspectives in his work. His latest book is *Ready: How to Know When to Go and When to Stay*. (Shambhala, 2022). The website for books, talks, and events is [davericho.com](http://davericho.com).

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### September 18 - Kevin Griffin

Kevin Griffin is a Buddhist teacher and author known for his innovative work connecting dharma and recovery, especially through his 2004 book *One Breath at a Time: Buddhism and the Twelve Steps*. He has been a Buddhist practitioner for over thirty-five years and a teacher for two decades. He reaches a broad range of audiences in dharma centers, wellness centers, and secular mindfulness settings. His latest book is *Buddhism & the Twelve Steps Daily Reflections*. To learn more and to see his teaching schedule, go to [www.kevingriffin.net](http://www.kevingriffin.net).

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### September 25 - Laura Burges

Ryuko Laura Burges, a lay entrusted dharma teacher in the Soto-Zen tradition, teaches classes and 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.

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### October 2 - Sean Feit Oakes

Sean Feit Oakes, Ph.D., (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.

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## October 9 - Open Discussion

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### October 16 - John Martin

John Martin teaches Vipassana (Insight), Metta (Loving Kindness) and LGBTQIA+ meditation retreats. He leads an ongoing weekly Monday evening meditation group in San Francisco. He serves as Co-Chair of the Guiding Teachers Council for Spirit Rock. John is also currently serving as Interim Executive Director for Spirit Rock. His practice has been supported by twelve years as a hospice volunteer, including five years at Shanti Project during the AIDS crisis, and seven years with the Zen Hospice projects.

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### October 23 - Anjali Sawhney

Anjali Sawhney (she/her/hers) is a Certified Integral Life Coach from New Ventures West in San Francisco, 2006, and a trained international Leadership Embodiment Teacher (somatic coaching based on Aikido & Mindfulness) with founder Wendy Palmer, 2011. Anjali has coached and led somatics and mindfulness workshops in the movement, nonprofit, corporate, and educational sectors including at the East Bay Meditation Center (where she is also part of the Leadership Sangha Board) as well as the Richmond Community Foundation, California Endowment, Dream Corps, and UCSF. She is also on the facilitation teaching team at Strozzi Institute (Generative Somatics lineage) & Beloved Communities. Anjali also serves directly with untapped BIPOC & LGBTQI+ students,

those unhoused, and those in recovery by providing coaching, counseling, and series workshops. Anjali was born in Asia, raised in Los Angeles, and has lived on the east coast of the United States as well as in South and East Asia. She is passionate about rallying untapped folk through coaching, community, and spirituality as well as street protests for equity and systemic change. Anjali is in awe of nature and live music, and on rare occasions is allowed to groove with her teenagers, Aanika and Jai.

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### October 30 - Bob Stahl

Bob Stahl, Ph.D., has founded eight Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programs in medical centers in the SF Bay Area and is currently offering programs at El Camino Hospital in Mt. View, California. He serves as an Assistant Professor of the Practice in the Department of Behavioral and Social Sciences in the School of Public Health at Brown University Mindfulness Center and formerly at the Oasis Institute for Mindfulness-Based Professional Education and Training at the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Bob teaches MBSR Teacher Trainings and Insight Mindfulness Meditation retreats worldwide and is the former guiding teacher at Insight Santa Cruz and a visiting teacher at Spirit Rock and Insight Meditation Society. He is coauthor of five books: *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook (1st & 2nd editions)*, *Living With Your Heart Wide Open*, *Calming the Rush of Panic*, *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook for Anxiety*, and *MBSR Everyday*.

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### November 6 - Jokai

Jokai relocated to California from the UK in 2000 to study with Tenshin Fletcher Roshi at Yokoji Zen Mountain Center. After completing formal study, encompassing over a decade of residential training and service, he received Dharma Transmission (full authorization to teach) in the White Plum Lineage of Zen Buddhism in 2014, and Inka (final seal of approval) in 2022. Jokai Roshi emphasizes the direct experience of awakening using contemporary language and time-honored methods.

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### November 13 - Alistair Shanks

Alistair Shanks is the Volunteer Program Manager at Zen Caregiving Project where he has worked since 2004, first as a hospice volunteer and training facilitator, and in his current position since 2016. He completed his clinical residency, (CPE), at UCSF and currently serves as a chaplain at both the Parnassus and Mission Bay campuses. He has a Master's degree from the Institute of Buddhist Studies at the Graduate Theological Union and has presented at the Association of Professional Chaplains conference and Harvard Divinity School. Alistair has been a dedicated practitioner and teacher of the Daoist Internal Martial Arts of Tai Chi, Qigong, and Ba Gua for 27 years, something that has given him a deep appreciation for the wisdom and power of somatic practices to regulate and heal both body and mind. Past volunteer work includes leading mindfulness meditation sessions in the San Francisco County Jail and serving as a volunteer chaplain at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital. He has played and toured internationally with several Bay Area bands for the past four decades.

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### November 20 - 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.

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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