



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

WINTER 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.

The Eight Worldly Winds

By 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.

Good to see everybody. Good to see a few familiar faces and some new ones. “Hi” to folks in the room and elsewhere. I’m elsewhere. I’m up in western Sonoma County. This is the ancestral lands of the Southern Pomo people. And it’s been maybe a year since I’ve been with this group, so it’s lovely to be back. I’m glad that there’s some gathering back in physical space together.

I know that that was missed, and just my blessings to those of you in the space. I miss the Mission and I miss being able to come into physical space with folks. So, blessings to you, and blessings to everyone gathering from everywhere. I’ve been gently requested, encouraged, asked if I might speak on a Buddhist teaching known as *The Eight Worldly Winds*. And it’s a beautiful teaching. It’s a beautiful list to keep in mind. It’s a little bit stern but encouraging in terms of how we make our way through a complicated world.

This teaching, also known as *Eight Worldly Conditions*, goes back to the earliest teachings of the Buddha in the Pāli Canon. That’s the collection of discourses or texts preserved by the Theravada School of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, and throughout Southeast Asia. It’s my primary lineage. And the teaching in a certain way is very pragmatic. So, the Buddha says to his practitioners at one point, “There are these eight conditions or winds metaphorically that blow through the world, that move the world. And these eight are gain and loss, pleasure and pain, praise and blame, and fame and disrepute.” So, they’re four sets of two that you can tell are opposites.

I take gain and loss very plainly to be talking about material gain and loss. You get a little bit wealthy; you get a little bit unwealthy. Material comforts come and go in this life and are fundamentally unreliable. At one point, many, many years ago in San Francisco, I was making my living as an itinerant piano teacher, and I had a student who lived up in North Beach. I would bike around town. I lived in the Mission—21st and Alabama— for those of you who are in town there. And so, I’d biked up to my student’s house and this student was a banker with the investment company Bear Stearns—some of you might remember that name from back in the day.

And he was my student at the very moment of the great crash. I had seen the news, of course, and I saw that this company, Bear Stearns, had essentially imploded overnight. And so, I sent my student a message to check in: “I know there’s some drama in your world. Do you want

me to come for your piano lesson?” And he wrote back a very glum, “Yeah, you might as well.”

I went over and I saw him and said, “Hey, man, how are you?” He was a dude who rode a big Harley, but a softie, because those two things are not incompatible. And I said, “Hey, man, how’s it going?” He responded, “Well, I lost two and a half million dollars in one hour last night.” I restrained all my class war rhetoric. I said, “I’m so sorry, dude.” What I didn’t say was, “How much do you have left?” But gain and loss, like all things, can fluctuate quite widely. We all know this; it is in a certain way obvious, but it’s worth really taking in.

And of course, we can take gain and loss also to mean subtler things, particularly like in relationships: new friends, new connections, new lovers, new community, even deep connections like family—the things that we might gain in this life that are subtle and profound. And love is a beautiful thing to be gained and can be lost. The loss of relationship, the loss of connection is also very much a part of the world of being in relationships. So, gain and loss.

I’m going to speak just briefly about pleasure and pain here. In a certain way it’s the core of the whole thing. As beings with bodies, pleasurable sense experiences come and go. Again, obvious, but if we really got it, this is the hinge to the entire unraveling of attachment and opening of the door to liberation, so it’s worth taking in that this might be a deeper teaching than it initially seems. But certainly, sometimes pleasurable sensory experiences are available. The body is comfortable. The body is not in pain. There are beautiful sensual experiences in this bodily life. Sometimes we have a meal and the food is tremendous—so good.

And you know that experience of, “Oh, my God, this is so good.” Or you get into a situation and it’s like some glorious moment in nature where things are so beautiful or a glorious moment with people, where somebody is so beautiful that you

One of the extraordinary things about being in this human condition is that sensual pleasure is possible.

more social. One of the things I love about this list is that there’s really an acknowledgement that the world of relationship is profoundly important to us as tribal beings, human beings, pack beings.

Next there is praise and blame. Other people say things that are positive about you; things that are negative. There’s no way to escape this, right? There’s no perfect performance of yourself in social space that will forever evade blame and forever attract praise.

It’s impossible. Some people like what you are doing, and some people do not like what you are doing.

And even if you hide yourself away in a bubble, in the most protected circumstances possible, there will be praise and blame, because we are relational beings, and everyone is different and wants different things. You can’t please everyone, neither can you displease everyone, which is a relief, I hope. There will always be some praise, even if you are tremendously blamed; there will always be some blame, even if you are tremendously praised.

And then the last pair, fame and disrepute, feels to me a little bit like an amplification of praise and blame. The famous person is often famous because they’ve had lots of gain and not very much loss, so they may be super wealthy. And you get famous just for being wealthy, I don’t know why, but there you go. People are interested in the very wealthy. Or you do something that gets a lot of praise. You’re famous for some reason, good or bad. So, there’s fame.

And if you’ve spent any time following the lifestyles of the rich and famous, you know that disrepute comes fast and furious with fame. It’s basically impossible to be well known and famous without somebody, even a lot of people, being cruel and critical. And people can be cruel and critical in horrendous ways. So, praise and blame, fame and disrepute. I like the old term disrepute. Sometimes it’s translated as disgrace, which is nice, but disrepute has a certain punch to it.

The Buddha says, “You’re grasping at something that is fundamentally unreliable.”

just have to say, “You’re so beautiful,” or, “This situation is so beautiful.” And of course, the deep sensual experiences that are gorgeous coming through all our senses. It’s part of human life. Praise be. One of the extraordinary things about being in this human condition is that sensual pleasure is possible. And it happens, sometimes even for folks in the direst circumstances—pleasures happen.

And then of course its opposite. Completely undeniable—painful things happen. Physical pain, deep pain in the emotional and heart realm. The world is painful, and there’s oppression and injustice and suffering and torture, and all the terrible, terrible things that are just real. And so, pain is real. Pleasure and pain are totally real. They come and go.

You might already get the sense with this list of where it’s headed: toward non-attachment, toward equanimity, toward letting go. But let’s not get there too quickly. The next two are

So, you’ve got these eight worldly winds or eight worldly conditions, and it seems obvious that the first thing to do is to accept that these are true. What this means partly is that we must confront the subtle addiction to the four positive ones in any way we can find them in ourselves. Even if you tell yourself, “Yes, I know that this is totally true, I get it.” It still may well be that some part of you is saying, “Yeah, but I’m just going to make as much gain, pleasure, praise, and fame happen as I can. And okay, maybe I’ll get some of the other things, but if I work hard, bootstrapping myself up, whatever privileges I’ve got, I’m going try to get more gain, more pleasure, more praise, more fame in whatever way.”

It’s worth practicing feeling into any way that we are still deluded about this within ourselves, because it’s easy to give these things lip service, like, “Yes, they come and go.” But to really look at your bank account and say, “All of this could dissolve in moments.” Or to look at your circle of friends and

acknowledge, “All of these people will die.” Or “All of these people could become grumpy with me. I could disappoint this group and suddenly become persona non grata. I hope not.” And that’s partly what ethics and wise relationship and right speech and caring for our material things and for our relationships is about. But to really feel into, “Oh, there’s still addiction in my psyche.” And so, addiction is a way of saying that I’m grasping at one half of this dyad of pleasure and pain and resisting the other, even though I know that it’s true.

And it’s so natural to do so. I kind of can’t help it. Our bodies are built to be pleasure-liking and pain-fearing. Not that it’s wrong to do so, but it’s not free. And the Buddha is proposing this thing that’s radical in relation to us being these pleasure-seeking animals; that we almost hack our metabolism and our neurology and our emotional system to say, “I know that it’s the most natural thing in the world to want pleasure and recoil from pain. Everyone from the paramecia up to us and the dolphins and beyond does this,” but that’s why we’re miserable. That’s why there’s distress in the system. The Buddha says, “You’re grasping at something that is fundamentally unreliable.”

The place the text goes with this is directly to impermanence and unreliability. Because these things always fluctuate, therefore, grasping at them is going to be both fruitless and painful. So, if you really want to be free, stop. That’s the whole picture. If you can figure out how to stop, that’s liberation. The Buddha says, “You’re done, you’re free.” Profound happiness and contentment arise from there. So that’s hard. Let’s talk about it a little more then.

I’ll keep going with the addiction model because it’s familiar to some of us; it’s familiar broadly in the culture. And we have a sense that there’s this thing that the heart/mind/body—all one thing—does that is partly physical: there’s this craving in the body. It’s partly emotional: there are strong feelings that get wrapped up in the thing I’m craving. And it’s partly mental: there’s a kind of story that I need this in order to be well. All that wraps up together to give rise to a state of being where there’s a kind of fixation on something.

And then you can approach the deeper layer of how we deal with a world where things are impermanent and unreliable by letting go—working on softening the grip in relation to changing conditions.

A wide range of extremely rich people were surveyed at one point, and they would say what their net worth was at that moment, and they would be asked, “How much would your net worth need to be for you to be really content to know that you had enough?” When they ran the numbers on everyone that answered the question, almost across the board, everyone basically said somewhere between 10 and 20% more than I have. And these were the very wealthy. They were essentially saying, “Okay, I know I’m worth \$5 million. I think if I just got to five and a half million, that would be enough.” “Really? Really?”

Man, Are you sure?” Because that was true, way up millions and millions, “Just a little more,” all the way down to, “Okay, I’m pretty comfortable, but just a little more would be more comfortable.”

This is really baked into our being. It doesn’t have anything to do with the number—this is an addictive psychology. And before I go further in that direction, just to say, this is not a thesis about psychology and wealth that tracks down into poverty. Because once you get down to a certain level of survival function, it’s not an addictive personality that’s saying, “I need 10% more.” There’s paying your rent and buying food and having healthcare, and that’s basic.

Once you get there, the psychology and the Buddha’s teaching on this, changes. So that means that for a lot of us in a place like the Bay Area, the psychology around gain and loss is a little bit—how do you say?—*fucked*. Is that technical? Apologies, I’m not supposed to curse as a teacher, in some circles, but I think this one is okay, I trust you guys. When the survival line is so high, like it’s so expensive to live here, it’s hard to know whether I’m craving more gain and comfort and ease, or whether I just haven’t hit a living wage yet, even though I’m relatively comfortable compared to the rest of the world. You want to keep that in mind. This doesn’t mean that somehow you should give up trying to survive in a difficult place.

The reflection here is that all these things are impermanent, they’re unreliable, you can’t pin them down. So how do you work with that as a psychology? What do we actually do? The core teaching points to letting go. Okay, so you practice being less fixated, less addicted to gain pleasure, praise, and fame, and more tolerant of loss, pain, blame and disrepute. We’re working toward a kind of equanimity, but that’s really hard. It’s one thing to say, “Okay, I’m trying to work on that.” And then someone comes in with real blame. They say, “You did this thing and it wasn’t so straight up.” And I don’t know how you feel about that, but that really stings. I don’t like that at all.

And whatever equanimity comes about in practice, mostly what happens in that moment is that I really don’t like it or I get sick. I’m actually a little bit sick right now, for the first time in a couple years. My kid brought a cold home from school. And I’m like, “Wow, I’ve been in a bubble for a couple of years.” But do I like it? I do not like it. Equanimity is hard to come by. It’s a long practice. It’s a long practice to mature into being the kind of person who can say, “Yeah, this is painful, but I can relax a little bit into this. It’s okay.”

It’s difficult to jump from the addictive mind into non-attachment, as if you can just let go of the guardrails and say, “I’m cool with falling.” Not so easy. What you need, and this is where I think addiction psychology really comes in, is to substitute something for the addictive object. What do you substi-

tute for the object of these various cravings? In a world where there's gain and loss, what do you do to be able to hold onto something? In a world where there's pleasure and pain, praise and blame, what do you hold onto? Because all this stuff is so impermanent, you might say, "Everything's impermanent." It's true.

What's a decent refuge? I'm using the word refuge on purpose because this is the main thing that the Buddha will suggest as a steppingstone to deep letting go. If you can go all the way to deep letting go, that's excellent. But most of us need some support along the way, and that support is the triple gem, in a very traditional sense. Do you have some sense that being free, or liberation is possible? That's the first gem: *Buddha*. The realization is, "Oh, it's actually possible to be happy even in a world where there's all this fluctuating stuff."

The second gem is the *Dhamma*—the teachings. Does it make sense to you that there's a path, that there are things you can practice where you can deal with this? If you accept that there's anything to be done and that these teachings might help, that's the *Dhamma*, that's the *Dharma*. And then the third is community, *Sangha*. There are people that are working on this that can support you.

All these things are still impermanent. History tells us, and the Buddha understands this, that there are times in history where there's no Buddha, and that there's no *dhamma* being taught, and there is no community of wise people to help you along. And it would be much harder to deal with the heart/mind in a moment like that, when wisdom teachings aren't available and wise community isn't available and teachers aren't available.

Even though these triple gems are impermanent and fundamentally unreliable, in this moment, we have them. They exist on the earth, in history, in our community. The Gay Buddhist Fellowship provides a circle of support. Fellowship means *sangha*—this is one of the triple gems. The Buddhist part of Gay Buddhist Fellowship means the Buddha. And you can have lots of different relationships to this being of the Buddha or the teachings of the *dhamma*.

But what it proposes is that it can be a refuge that you can hold onto amid the changing storms of all these worldly conditions. You have to hold onto something. It's the guide rope. It's the golden thread that Theseus is hanging onto to guide him out of the labyrinth. Otherwise, you're just lost in the maze of the mind. And at the middle of it is a bullheaded monster who will tear you to shreds. Let's say that's attachment.

So, you need something to hold onto and the first thing is refuge. And, again, interpret that however you like. But a very simple way would be here you are coming together to study and practice. This group and groups like this can be such a powerful support when you're trying to deal with the changing winds in the same way that in the recovery model, very classically, just coming to meetings is in a certain way the primary intervention. Just keep coming, so that you have something to hold onto. One more day, go to another meeting, meet with people, say your name, say what you're struggling with, hear

what people are struggling with, and it helps. You come on Sunday morning, say your name, get together. It helps.

So, the first layer is what do you hold onto? And then you can approach the deeper layer of how we deal with a world where things are impermanent and unreliable by letting go—working on softening the grip in relation to changing conditions. When we think about letting go, like the teaching on the winds itself, in a certain way, there's a layer that's obvious. Pleasure and pain come and go. Gain and loss, come and go. What it actually looks like to let go is more complicated.

And if we take this first one, gain and loss, again, as an example, when the Buddha taught this, he taught it in the context of having created a monastic *sangha*, a community, two communities really of men and women. And bowing here always to

the spectrum of gender. There are nonbinary folks who in a binary system like that, would have to choose where to go. And that's true currently in the monastic system, where there are pathways for folks who are anywhere on the wide spectrum of gender to turn for monastic practice. They're still suffering an oppression within the binary system there, as there is throughout patriarchy and heteronormativity.

But the Buddha creates this community founded on radical simplicity. You give up using money, you give up sexuality, which in that time almost entirely meant family.

You're really stepping out of the norms of the family bond and the commercial bond. And you live in this protected, intentional community, where all your basic needs—and again this comes down to what's a real intervention for poverty—are taken care of. And the basic needs are four in the Buddhist monastic system: food, shelter, medicine, and clothing.

And moving into a community like this is said to be a strong and powerful support for non-attachment. One of the ways to be relieved of anxiety around gain and loss is to not have gain and loss radically determine your survival. It's natural to be anxious about loss of income in a place like San Francisco, which is so tremendously expensive. You should be anxious about losing all your money when the market crashes or whatever it is. Or losing a job in a place like San Francisco can be very, very stressful.

And so please don't take the teaching as, "Oh, we should just be unattached"—some sort of fantasy that, "Well, that would be nice to be unattached, but actually I have all these responsibilities." The Buddha understands from the get-go that it's actually very difficult to practice non-attachment with deep material responsibilities. And some of you will have relational responsibilities. You can't practice non-attachment to praise and blame when the person who's praising you or blaming you is your intimate partner with whom you have some kind of family structure and you're interwoven. And it matters what that person thinks of you, and it matters how you tend to your relationship.

It's the thing we call spiritual bypass. If your partner asks, "Why do you keep saying mean things to me?" And you answer, "Maybe you should get over praise and blame, babe." Don't do that. That would be rude, and it would be appropriate

Really bring in the quality of generosity and that transforms all the winds—the pursuit of the positive side of all the winds—into a much more wholesome and relationally much more pleasurable activity.

for them to give you a smack and say, “Yeah, I’ll show you praise and blame, buddy.” Non-attachment is the result of wisdom. It’s not a thing that you can just bring in as a kind of get out of jail free card, and be like, “Oh, suddenly I don’t care about how much money is in the bank, or what people think of me.” Of course, you care. It’s appropriate to care. And so non-attachment in the context of lay life, first of all, is always in the context of our whole system, and all the things for which we have to be responsible.

Our task is to become equanimous and less addicted in relation to the winds, to understand that they fluctuate all the time, and they are out of our control.

This is partly just a practice puzzle for you. It’s clear from the teachings that letting go in relation to these things that are constantly fluctuating is going to relieve anxiety on the system. And, at the same time, that anxiety is not ungrounded for the most part. Sometimes it is. I’m tripping out on something my person said, and the right thing to do is to go to them and disclose, “Hey, babe, I’m tripping out because of this thing you said.” And if they know me well, they might respond, “You’re tripping out.” Then I can respond, “Oh great, thank you. I just needed to be reassured that way.” Then they might add, “I said that because I was upset, or because you did this.” Then you’re in a relationship process. It’s okay.

For lay people, largely how the Buddha talks about wealth and pleasure and relationship is in relation to the core virtue or practice of generosity. So, for lay people, it’s actually very appropriate to pursue wealth, to become really wealthy, because the wealthy are able to support many other people including monastics, but also including people in their community. And the purpose of wealth, in the Buddhist system, is to give it away. I might understand, “Oh, I was raised middle class, I have some white privilege, even though it was a little complicated there, but I’ve got some of that. And I’m making a decent income.” What all that means is that I do have some significant amount of pleasure that I enjoy in this world, and some bits of praise and fame.

What to do with all that privilege? This really tracks into the conversation about privilege broadly: the thing you can do with privilege is that you can help people. If you’re wealthy, you can help a lot of people. If you’re ethical and wise enough to be getting a lot of praise and fame for good reasons, you can help people. You can direct your resources toward care and well-being. And so, generosity I think goes along with refuge. Refuge is for yourself. I hold on to the teachings of the *dharmma* as an anchor in the storm. The Buddha would literally say this, “This is an island in the storm.” And then for others I can practice generosity; I turn the personal grasping at the positive side of all these winds—gain, pleasure, praise, fame—into a kind of wholesome cultivation of those for the well-being of others.

And, of course, I’m going to notice my addictive patterns. I’m going to say, “Oh, I just really want the thing that tastes good

or that feels good.” And it’s okay. You can bow to craving, that only gets uprooted in the very last moments of liberation.

I’m going to finish with a little story of someone who was in the Buddha’s family. I was teaching about this in a Sutta Study class that I’m doing at Spirit Rock right now, so this story was on my mind. The Buddha goes back to teach his family. His clan builds a new community hall, and they invited him to come and give the first talk. And one of the people there is one of his cousins. A couple of his cousins have become monks already but his one hasn’t. His name is Mahanama.

Mahanama is a really dedicated student and lover of the dharma and has practiced intensively enough to have achieved some freedom. He’s a stream-enterer, but he refuses to become a monk yet because he’s still attached to sensual pleasures. So, he’s sort of our patron saint, saying, “Okay, I would be a renunciate, but actually I really like sensual pleasures.” It’s like, “Well, it’s just true. I do.”

And in a very personal way it’s why I’m not still a monk. I became a monk for a short while, twenty some years ago. I had to leave being a monk because my mom was dying. I took care of my dad for a little while after that happened. Then I almost went back, except that on the brink of going back, literally—I had let go of my house in The Mission, everything was packed up. I was waiting for the hot season in Burma to cool down a little bit, and I was going to go back for the rains. And then I met my person, which raised the question, “Which is it going to be, a life of a renunciate? A household life?” Household life won out; sensual pleasures won out. To be honest, I told myself, “Oh, sexiness—I haven’t had enough.” So, I dove back in.

Mahanama is like this—he can’t give up sensual pleasures. And he says to the Buddha, “Why is it that I’m not content yet?” And the Buddha says, “You’re still attached to sensual pleasures.” And so that’s just real. It’s just real. We’re in that spot. And whichever of these you’re attached to, let’s say you’re still pursuing fame, God bless you, may you find what you want. But the key for lay people is to do it not just for ourselves, but also for others. Really bring in the quality of generosity and that transforms all the winds—the pursuit of the positive side of all the winds—into a much more wholesome and relationally much more pleasurable activity.

So, there’s nothing wrong with wealth. There’s something wrong with wealth ill spent and ill gotten. Our task is to become equanimous and less addicted in relation to the winds, to understand that they fluctuate all the time, and they are out of our control.

And that we have the refuge of the *dhamma* and the teachings and the community of wise beings to help us; that ultimately non-attachment is what will open the field to profound happiness. In the meantime, part of the work of dealing with the winds as lay people is to uplift generosity and really be in a wiser and more gracious relationship to the fluctuation of the winds in which we find ourselves.

All right, thanks for listening. Such warmth.

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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 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

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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

If you would like to join the GBF Google Group email list, please go to

<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 4 - Dale Borglum

Dale Borglum founded and directed the Hanuman Foundation Dying Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the first residential facility in the United States to support conscious dying. Working with Ram Dass and Stephen Levine, Dale helped found the conscious dying movement in the West. He has been the Executive Director of the Living/Dying Project in Santa Fe and since 1986 in the San Francisco Bay Area. He is the co-author with Ram Dass, Daniel Goleman, and Dwarka Bonner of *Journey of Awakening: A Meditator's Guidebook*, Bantam Books and has taught meditation since 1974. Dale lectures and gives workshops on the topics of meditation, healing, spiritual support for those with life-threatening illness, and on caregiving as spiritual practice. He has taught with Ram Dass, Stephen Levine, Joan Halifax, Robert Thurman, Joanna Macy, Jack Kornfield, Annie Lamott, Jai Uttal and many others. He has a doctorate degree from Stanford University

December 11 - Prasadachitta

Prasadachitta was ordained into the Triratna Buddhist Order in 2011 and he became the Chair of the San Francisco Buddhist Center in April 2022. He was born on a "back to the land" commune in rural Northern California and that background has inspired his engagement with others in building the SFBC's rural meditation center called Dharmadhara. He also helped to establish a community of sangha members who support the retreats there. He supports himself as a documentary filmmaker and photographer but his real life's work is training others who want to practice Buddhism within the Triratna Buddhist Community.

December 18 - Jetsun Zerdan Kelsang Phunrab

Jetsun Zerdan Kelsang Phunrab is an American Kadampa Buddhist monk. Zerdan has been ordained for 17 years, and a practicing Buddhist for more than 22 years. He was ordained in Ulverston, England by a Gelugpa monk, Geshe Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche. He began his ordained life by helping to create a Buddhist temple by teaching meditation and Buddhadharma in the Dallas - Fort Worth metroplex. Zerdan now lives a humble life in Eugene, Oregon, keeping his vows, maintaining a vegan and minimalist lifestyle, and sharing a warm, gentle heart and joyful attitude.

December 25 - Open Discussion (Christmas)

January 1 - Open Discussion (New Years Day)

January 8 - 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.

January 15 - 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.

January 22 - Daigan Gaither

Rev. Daigan Gaither (he/him) began Buddhist practice in 1995 in the Vipassana (Insight) tradition, and then began to study Zen in 2003. He received Lay Ordination in 2006 where he was given the name Daigan or "Great Vow," and received Priest Ordination in July 2011. Daigan speaks internationally on a variety of topics particularly around gender, sexuality, social justice, and their intersections with the Dharma. He also sits or has sat on a number of boards and committees that serve community needs and further social justice causes. Daigan has a BA in Philosophy and Religion from San Francisco State University, and an MA in Buddhist Studies (with a chaplaincy certificate and a certificate in Soto Zen Buddhism) from the Graduate Theological Union and the Institute of Buddhist Studies. You can find out more via his website queerdharma.net. He lives in San Francisco, CA and identifies as a disabled, queer, white, cis male.

January 29 - Trip Weil

Trip Weil has been practicing in the Theravadan 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 5 - Francisco Morillo Gable

Francisco has been devoted to Dharma since 2003. Thanks to this, he made an unexpected recovery from an accident that had rendered him disabled. He studies and teaches early Buddhism with the scholar and monk Bikkhu Analayo. He is in teacher training at the Insight Meditation Center with Andrea Fella and Gil Fronsda. His primary interests are teaching underserved groups and bringing the Dharma to the greater Spanish-speaking world.

February 12 - Sean Feit Oakes

Sean Feit Oakes, PhD (he/him, queer, Puerto Rican & English ancestry, living on unceded Pomo land in NorCal), 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 at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, East Bay Meditation Center, Insight Timer, and locally. SeanFeitOakes.com

February 19 - Open Discussion

February 26 - Pam Weiss

Pamela Weiss is a dual-lineage Buddhist teacher in Soto Zen and Theravada, and the author of *A Bigger Sky: Awakening a Fierce Feminine Buddhism*. She sits on the Spirit Rock Teacher Council, and teaches through San Francisco Insight, San Francisco Zen Center and Brooklyn Zen Center. Pamela lives in San Francisco with her husband and little dog, Grover.

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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