



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

SPRING 2024 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.

Anicca (Impermanence)

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. Good to be here again. It's been a while.

I want to mention briefly the instructions that I usually begin meditations with. They're short, basically to relax and be aware, even while you're listening. This is a really important piece of what I think is the least understood part of the teachings of the *Satipatthāna Sutta*, which is on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

The First Foundation of Mindfulness is mindfulness of the body. So, be aware of your body right now while you're listening, because you're hearing through your body. And the way it's written is that mindfulness of body includes several exercises, like mindfulness of breath, mindfulness of body posture, etc. For mindfulness of the breath, observe how you are breathing. For mindfulness of posture, I notice that most of us are sitting right now; be aware of that. I don't see anybody lying down-- maybe on Zoom somebody's lying down; if so, be aware of that. And then you go to the four physical elements of the body: earth, air, fire, water, which the body is made up of. And then go to being mindful in all the body's activities: sitting, walking, standing, lying down, eating, shitting, pissing...and speaking and listening. That's a Mindfulness of the Body practice.

So, I want to encourage you to just feel your body. It's very simple, but it's the most 24/7 mindfulness practice I know. Try it and see what happens. Be aware of your body when you're talking to the people at Safeway or when you're with your partner or your friends or at a party. My favorite place is in New York, when you're on the subway, when you're talking to people you don't even know. You can just be aware of your body while you're speaking and listening.

Okay, no more meditation instructions.

What I'd like to talk about a little is **anicca**. "Impermanence" is how it's translated in Buddhism. *Anicca* is key to our reality. It's the simplest teaching, and it's the most difficult one to get: that everything is impermanent. Reality? Impermanent. This moment? Impermanent. Our bodies? Impermanent. Our minds? Impermanent. Our Centers are impermanent. The earth is impermanent. Everything we know, all conditioned experience is impermanent.

I teach retreats at Spirit Rock pretty regularly. I taught two this fall. The first one was about *maranasati*. *Maranasati* is "mindfulness of death," which is also in the

First Foundation of Mindfulness: contemplating the transience of the body. After they do all the other Mindfulness activities, then they go to the End of the Body: to the fact that the body doesn't live forever. "And you want to be mindful of that!" the Buddha said. In his time, he would send the monks and nuns to the charnel ground to watch decomposing bodies and see the body change. Because the poor people didn't get their bodies burned; they were just left out, so they would just decompose. You could contemplate the decomposition of the body--which is normal. Of course, you don't have to go to the charnel ground to do this; you could just watch how anything that dies will keep changing. It will decompose. So, contemplating the decomposition of the body is one of the practices one does in Mindfulness of the Body. I teach this, generally, once a year at Spirit Rock, and it's

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very powerful. I show images of decomposing bodies. But also, we do a lot of investigation of our relationship to the fact that we're all going to die. Let me check...Is there anybody here not going to die? I just want to check, because most people say, "Of course I'm going to die," but inside we all think we're really going to live forever. It's really hard to contemplate the truth of *this* [pointing to his body]. I'm pointing at myself, but I'm pointing at you, as well. It's impermanent. It's just doing this: arising, passing away, arising, passing away. Just like this moment, just like this talk...they are arising and they're going to pass away. Dharma means truth and what we want to do is come into harmony with the Dharma, with that which is true.

Teaching *maranasati*, in some sense, is all about birth and death, and the fact that everything is impermanent. One of the traditional ways to teach it is to go on a silent meditation retreat where all you're doing is paying attention to what's happening in this moment, and then this moment, and then this moment. And one of the things you can see is that it's all appearing and disappearing. Arising, passing. A moment is born and then it dies. And it's not even a big deal, really, because this is reality.

Does anybody remember yesterday? It's gone, right? Wasn't that "real"? Whatever it was--maybe you had fun, maybe you didn't have fun, maybe it was interesting, maybe it was boring. But whatever it was, it just did this: it arose and passed away. And it's not a mistake. It's not that there's something wrong with that. In fact, here's the key to what we do when we teach *maranasati*: we just normalize death. Because it's the most normal thing in the world, since everything that's born dies. Everything. Sometimes I downplay it so much that people get pissed at me when I say it's so normal that everything that's born is dying. I can say it about us. I can say it about dogs, cats, alligators, whales.

I was just reading about whales today. Whales are pretty wild. They're big...and they have [almost] no predators! That's rare in the animal world. And what they've discovered, which they didn't know before, is that they can start to decipher their language! They're equating it with human language and how human language works. Whales are smart. So, this is another example of impermanence, how what we know is always changing. There's more to what we've learned and we're learning more.

Really, one of the wild things about us as humans is that knowledge doesn't cease to grow. There's more to discover about everything. The world is so wild: we know a lot and there's so much more to learn. And the Dharma is one of the doorways to keep learning, to keep waking up, to keep understanding the truth. "Understanding" is one of the metaphors for awakening in Buddhism that's often downplayed or not heard because everybody thinks awakening is some wild thing found by sitting on the top of a mountain in Tibet. Well, it is, but it's also right here at the Gay Buddhist Fellowship. It's right here. It's right here in San Francisco. It's right where we are; awakening right where we are. Understanding that is one of the ways we can understand what it means to awaken. We awaken to the Dharma, to the truth of the way things are.

The day after the *maranasati* retreat, I taught a second retreat about, "Only This Moment." That's all we were doing on the whole retreat, asking, "Can you just be here now and be aware?" Of course, it's the same for us sitting here. You just want to be here and be aware. You're aware of me and you're aware of yourself also. You're aware of what you're thinking or feeling or how your body is, or the room, the space in the room and the *whatness* that's here. It's all here. The whole Dharma is right here. I say this every time I teach.

My friend, Joseph Goldstein, one of my first teachers, said his teacher Munindrajī would always say, "Joseph, the whole Dharma is sitting here." The whole Dharma is sitting right here. Even on Zoom, the whole Dharma is sitting right there. This is it. It's just the wildest thing about life, that it's all right here.

So, I'm going to go on about *Anicca*. *Anicca*, "Impermanence," is also translated as, "Change." It's interesting that in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, they now have *anicca* as a word. That's a change. That's different. When I started in the Dharma, it wasn't in American dictionaries. That's great. And wow, they even say, under the etymology of *anicca* that it's from the Pali, which is from the Sanskrit, *anitya*, and that the Sanskrit means "not eternal." *Nitya* is "eternal," *A-*, means "not." And that's all *anitya* means. It's "not eternal." It's so simple and helpful when we relax with that: that nothing is eternal. No conditioned things are eternal. In Buddhism, the word is "Impermanence."

Another really nice word is *evanescence*. “Evanescence” means “to disappear like a vapor.” It’s just a beautiful word. *Evanescence*. So that’s one of the understandings of *anicca*: everything disappears like a vapor. Like, “Where’s yesterday?” “Where’s last year?” I can’t even remember. Where’s Ronald Reagan? Where’s Franklin Delano Roosevelt? Where’s Gandhi? Where’s...

Jeff: “Waldo.”

“Waldo?” “Where’s Waldo?” I don’t even know *Waldo*. See, that’s how un-static reality is, that I don’t know *Waldo*. I kind of know the name, and I think there’s a movie or something. Anyhow, impermanence--or evanescence--means change, transience, that things are ephemeral, un-static, transitory.

[M]ost people say, “Of course I’m going to die,” but inside we all think we’re really going to live forever. It’s really hard to contemplate the truth of this [pointing to his body]. I’m pointing at myself, but I’m pointing at you, as well. It’s impermanent. It’s just doing this: arising, passing away, arising, passing away.

Another way to talk about it is that it’s about the *momentariness of all of reality*. And this is one of the doorways to awakening. Just this simple-simple-ordinary-normal-every-moment truth is a really strong doorway to awakening. And awakening is often translated as “the unconditioned,” because what’s impermanent is all conditioned things.

Some other words for awakening are “the unborn” or “the deathless,” which is, really, a beautiful, poetic pointing at something that is not a thing, which we call **Awakening**. It’s a freedom. It’s wild! I say “wild” because there are no words, because the words actually don’t work. In the classical experience of Theravada *Awakening*, “cessation” is the word that’s used, meaning the cessation of consciousness. Consciousness ceases. This can happen. It’s not the only way awakening happens, but it’s a very classical Theravada Buddhist form of awakening. You have this experience, but you don’t know you’re having the experience when it’s happening, because consciousness has ceased. It’s wild.

What happens is, something comes back and knows that you weren’t there. And you don’t know what happened, but you know *something* happened. I know many people to whom this has happened. Generally, this happens on long retreats, and it is why terms like “the unconditioned” or “the unborn” or “the deathless” seem to make sense, because it’s so not a thing, what happens. And the impact is what’s important, not the thing itself, not the non-thing itself. That’s a better way to say it.

Suzuki Roshi was the founder of San Francisco Zen Center, which is one of the great practice places in the world, I believe, and, actually, one of the first Buddhist places I meditated in when I was a “kid,” meaning a

young man. And I would go there to the 5:30 sitting in the morning--you could just go in and sit, and you didn’t have to relate to anybody, and then you could leave. That was perfect for me at that time. What Suzuki Roshi said was that when he discovered that no moment could be repeated, he was awakened. *When he discovered no moment could be repeated, he was awakened*. He was free. So, *anicca*: impermanence, change, evanescence, sometimes “fluidity.” Because it’s like how you can’t stop a stream. It’s always moving. If you pour water, it just keeps going, keeps changing. Thānissaro Bhikkhu, who has done a lot of great translations of the Pali Canon, and who was one of my teachers for a while, used the word “inconstant” to understand what *anicca* meant. It’s seeing that all things--our bodies, our hearts, our minds--are in a continuous change of condition. Nothing is static, right? It’s all arising and changing or passing.

So, please reflect for yourself, however old you are: can you remember childhood? Remember being a teenager or a young adult? Or, for some of you, when you were middle-aged? Or, for some of you, old? And for some of you, really old!? It all just keeps doing itself. It’s natural. It’s not a mistake: *anicca*, “change.” We can contemplate it and see that the body changes; all our thoughts, all our feelings, they come into being and they dissolve. They change. Even if they stay the same for a while, they’re all impermanent.

There’s a beautiful chant that I love in Buddhism, and we’re going to play it. It’s called the *Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta*. Feel free to sing along if you want. The words are:

*Aniccā vata saṅkhārā,
Uppāda vāya dhamminō,
Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti,
Tesaṃ vūpa samō sukhō.*

And the translation is:

All conditioned things are impermanent.
Their nature is to rise and pass away.
To live in harmony with this truth
brings the highest happiness.

So, let’s play this for a minute or two and just steep in it for a second. Steep in this truth. You don’t have to sing it or anything.

Chant plays.

So, that’s a very traditional chant you might do for 5, 10, 15, 20, 30 minutes and just steep in what it’s saying just to get it in our bones, in our cells: this truth that’s hard for us to really experientially know is true. We may

I teach retreats at Spirit Rock pretty regularly. One [I taught this Fall] was about maranasati... “mindfulness of death”...which is also in the First Foundation of Mindfulness: contemplating the transience of the body. After they do all the other Mindfulness activities, then they go to the End of the Body. “And you want to be mindful of that!” the Buddha said.

know it cognitively, but it’s really hard for us, for many good reasons.

It can be said that it’s part of the difficulty of life that things are impermanent. One of the things that I’m talking about these days is the war between Israel and Hamas. I was upset about the war when it started, and I’m still upset about it. So, I decided to do a little historical research and see, well, what is going on? I discovered that Israel was founded in 1948, and they’ve had between 16 and 19 wars, depending on who’s counting, since that country got created. As part of the aftermath of World War II, Israel got created in Palestine. But the fact that there’ve been wars in that area preceding this interested me. There’ve been wars in that area, what we call Palestine/Israel, for the last 5,100 years. That’s a long time to be fighting over that land! Judaism’s approximately 4,000 years old, so predating even the Jewish people being in that area, the Canaanites and the Philistines fought wars over that land.

And I bring this in because part of understanding the truth and dharma practice is to be able to see the big picture of reality, because we see how things change and how they stay the same. Not perfectly the same, because they have their variance, but, like, for 5,100 years, human beings have been fighting over this part of the world! Of course, if I want to go even further, I’m sure people have been fighting over parts of the world forever. It’s part of our animal nature that humans are not quite evolved enough to stop fighting.

So, we turn to look at the *dukkha* in this situation. *Dukkha* is the Pali word, a simple translation for which is, “suffering.” The *dukkha* [in this situation] is based on ignorance and the kind of greed and hatred and delusion that exists in human beings that we need to be liberated from. Sometimes the freedom that I talked about, the awakening I talked about, is characterized as freedom from greed, aversion, delusion (or “greed, hatred and delusion”). That’s freedom in the Buddha’s understanding. When you’re freed of greed or anger or delusion, you’re free! See what happens if you have no greed, no wanting, no aversion, and no ignorance for one week. See what happens if we’re not bound to that historical pattern that we have as human beings.

Of course, the war between Israel and Hamas has a lot of other causes and conditions in this moment from what’s been happening since Israel was created. I’m sure you all know a lot about it, and you all have your own opinions about it. But the truth is that the pain and the suffering and the feeling that we often have of being helpless is based on the fact that we feel we can’t do anything. And that is not true. Maybe we can’t stop the war by me saying, “Stop the war!”--which I would

do in a moment. But we don’t know what impact any action has on the fabric of reality. *And every moment matters because it’s impermanent. Every moment means something because this is the only moment we can act. So if we do something, whether it’s with protest or money or sending metta, it means something.* And don’t underestimate the power of *metta*. Haven’t you seen that T-shirt that has on it, “Heavy *Metta*”? (Laughter.)

I know the power of *metta* personally because I almost died at one point, had a near-death experience. People did a lot of *metta* for me. I know that the *metta* had an impact on me living. I didn’t know it while it was happening, because I was way more gone than that. But I know it in my soul, in my consciousness that that *metta* was incredibly powerful. And I was not a *metta* guy. But living sold me on *metta*. The love may be more powerful than anything we know in terms of what freedom is about.

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I’m going to read you a letter--just the last thing--from a practitioner friend of mine in Israel who’s the founder of the Israel Insight Society, teaching mindfulness meditation. Stephen Fulder is his name. He said,

I write this from Israel where I live. We are in the midst of unprecedented pain and suffering, of unimaginable violence. There is a climate of fear and anger and loss, which, for some, is overwhelming. At the same time, our spiritual community and many groups and kind-hearted folks are extremely active around the clock in online events or physical meetings bringing relief, humanitarian aid, care, and the capacity to

One of the things that I'm talking about these days is the war between Israel and Hamas. ... Here's what I discovered. There've been wars in that area... for the last 5,100 years... Judaism's approximately 4,000 years old, so predating even the Jewish people being in that area, the Canaanites and the Philistines fought wars over that land... It's part of our animal nature that humans are not quite evolved enough to stop fighting... The dukkha [in this situation] is based on ignorance and the kind of greed and hatred and delusion that exists in human beings that we need to be liberated from.

listen and offer ways to find the strength and stability to go through this terribly dark period. At the same time, many of us, including myself, cannot condone the suffering inflicted on the Palestinians in Gaza in response, as if that would be an answer. It will not be. An eye for an eye will leave the whole world blind. The evidence is clear. Every few years, there's been an outbreak of violence. Gaza has been pounded. The seeds are sown for the *next* round. These days, it is by far the worst. It still expresses the utter failure of both sides to explore other options. When the voices of both sides say, "There are no other options," it expresses only the paths that were *not* taken. It is sleepwalking into suffering. It shows aggressive and reactive responses based on trauma rather than wise actions that create conditions for change.

Stephen Fulder [the founder of the Israel Insight Society]... says... "What can you and others do?... Connect with the compassion in your hearts and know that compassion is unlimited. It does not have one address. Radiate compassion for all sides and for ourselves."

And he talks about how, for years now, they've been doing peace walks with Palestinians in the West Bank:

Even when dominant voices said peace was impossible and only violence and suppression worked, we found that our tools of deep listening, sharing our pain, daily life experiences and being in each other's shoes created a lasting bond and showed us that peace was possible. The truth of our shared vulnerability...

That's the key line of everything he says...

...The truth of our shared vulnerability that we all have as human beings, that we all share as human beings...that truth of our

shared vulnerability creates an opportunity for transformation. We did a large number of quiet peace walks throughout the region, Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Arabs, demonstrating what peacefulness was like at times when it was forgotten. Did it make a difference? Yes. Like a candle that brings a small light, yet one that makes a real difference in a totally dark room.

And then he says,

What can you and others do? Kindness is the opposite of hate and violence. Connect with the compassion in your hearts and know that compassion is unlimited. It does not have one address. Radiate compassion for all sides and for ourselves.

Beautiful, beautiful letter from Stephen.

I will say one more thing, more personal, that happened recently. My partner's mother died, and we had the good fortune to be able to be at her bedside while she was dying. She'd been out of it for quite a while. She was at a facility that cared for her, and we knew she was going. And then we got a call saying, "It seems like it's close." So, we went over, and she waited until we got there. We were there for about twenty-five minutes, one on each side of her, holding her hand. And "Poof!" just like that, she just went. And it was peaceful. It was very, very peaceful, which was not how the last few years of this woman's life had been. The last few years for her had been very difficult. She was really mentally ill, and it was hard to tell what was going on. She could sometimes be there, but could barely relate, with a lot of agitation. But something let go. That can happen when we die. She let go, and we knew it. It was like, "Poof." And she was not agitated. I've done hospice work and I've been around a lot of people dying; they can all be different. But she just let go!

And that's the key to understanding impermanence, that there's nothing we can actually hold onto in all of reality. *There's nothing we can hold onto.* It's all impermanent. So, I'm going to stop there.

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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 \$1,100 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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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

March 3

Ryuko Laura Burges, a lay entrusted dharma teacher in the Soto Zen tradition, teaches classes, lectures, and leads retreats in Northern California. She received monastic training at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center. 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 Publications offers her Buddhist children's books, *Buddhist Stories for Kids* and *Zen for Kids*. Her most recent book from Shambhala is *The Zen Way of Recovery: An Illuminated Path Out of the Darkness of Addiction*. Laura lives in San Francisco.

March 10

Steven Tierney (Kai Po Koshin) is a Dharma-transmitted teacher in the lineage of Suzuki Roshi. Steven practices with: Meditation in Recovery, Great Spirit Sanghai SFLGBTQA Sangha, Gay Buddhist Fellowship and the Hartford Street Zen Center. Steven believes that we can find wisdom, compassion, and awakening wherever good people come together for practice, healing, service, and joy. Dr. Tierney is a psychotherapist in private practice and Professor Emeritus in Counseling Psychology at CIIS.

March 17

Ian Challis is a student and teacher in the Insight Tradition of Buddhism. He is a teacher, founding member, and past guiding teacher of Insight Community of the Desert in Palm Springs. Ayya Khema, Leigh Brasington, Narayan Liebenson, Larry Yang, and Arinna Weisman are key teachers who have inspired and illuminated his practice. Serving Queer community is his passion. 2023 marks his co-teaching of the 7th annual Queer retreat at Dhamma Dena Retreat Center with Leslie Booker. Ian teaches regular drop-in classes as well as retreats. He is a qualified teacher of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, a graduate of Spirit Rock's Community Dharma Leader teacher training, and was formally invited by Arinna Weisman to teach in the lineage of U Ba Khin and Ruth Denison.

March 24

David Lewis has been following the dharma path for 50 years and has a degree in comparative religious studies. He teaches at several Buddhist sanghas around the Bay Area and offers a weekly meditation group for seniors (currently on Zoom) at OpenHouse, a nonprofit serving LGBTQI+ seniors. He's always happy to return to the Gay Buddhist Fellowship, where he gave his first dharma talk in 2008.

March 31

Open Discussion*

April 7

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.

April 14

Kevin Griffin is a Buddhist teacher and author of nine books 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 since the 1980s and a teacher for three decades. He reaches a broad range of audiences in dharma centers, wellness centers, and secular mindfulness settings. His latest book is *Living Kind-*

ness: Metta Practice for the Whole of Our Lives, published in 2022. To learn more and to see his teaching schedule, visit www.kevingriffin.net

April 21

Open Discussion*

April 28

Syra Smith is an artist, facilitator, and mindfulness educator interested in deep ecology and manifesting a culture where we can turn toward fearless abundance and generosity. A lifelong meditator and San Francisco Bay Area native, Syra began her meditation practice as a teen in 1988 and has been practicing in the Theravada Buddhist tradition since 2009. She graduated from the East Bay Meditation Center's Commit to Dharma program in 2011 and became a Spirit Rock Community Dharma Leader in 2017. Syra teaches insight meditation and mindfulness throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond and proudly serves as Core Teacher with the San Francisco LGBT Sangha. She co-leads the Midday Dharma Collective at San Francisco Insight and is a resident teacher with the women's community of Assaya Sangha. For more visit: www.projectroot.org/syra-smith-meditation

May 5

Tetsugen Tom Baker is a Soto Zen priest in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki-Roshi. He was ordained by Shinki Mark Lancaster at Dragon's Leap Temple in 2017. He practices in the "Marketplace Priest" tradition. Long active in the Meditation in Recovery group, he was a founder of the off-shoot monthly Zen Men in 2015. Tom works in the Geriatrics Division at UCSF and specializes in Palliative Care and end-of-life issues. He married his husband Gary Dexter in November 2021.

May 12

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. Learn more at www.livingdying.org

May 19

René Rivera is a meditation teacher, restorative justice facilitator, and leader, working and learning in all the spaces in-between race, gender, and other perceived binaries, as a queer, mixed-race, trans man. René teaches heart-centered, trauma-informed meditation, at the East Bay Meditation Center and other meditation centers. He has co-led the first residential meditation retreats for transgender, nonbinary, and gender-expansive people. René is a restorative justice facilitator for the Ahimsa Collective, working to heal sexual and gender-based violence.

May 26

Open Discussion*

***Open Discussion** - Each month, GBF schedules an Open Discussion of dharma related topics, which sangha members discuss in small groups. This enables participants to connect more as a sangha.

***TBD** - Check for updates on the GBF website at www.gaybuddhist.org/calendar

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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