



# Gay Buddhist Fellowship

SUMMER 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.

## Generosity as a Means to Joy

By Ian Challis

*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 7<sup>th</sup> 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.*

I wanted to bring Jim Gross's energy in at the beginning of this talk, because he was one of the people who started the Sangha here in Palm Springs where I live. He was one of our early teachers. He died in 2019. Jim was a gentle giant of a gay man, and he had a beautiful openness even though life was often difficult for him, and he had some big health challenges. He brought so much joy everywhere he went. He loved the Dharma, and he loved service.

In our early days of creating Sangha there were lots of different opinions and ideas about how things should be and board meetings that would go for four hours. Jim brought so much patience and equanimity to these difficult meetings and worked hard and generously. He spent the last years of his life bringing mindfulness practices to people impacted by the justice system and people experiencing homelessness.

I miss Jim, and I wish Jim could be with us here today. In some ways, he is, because we're remembering him. Jim embodied generosity, which is actually what I want to talk about today: generosity as a means to joy in a wounded world. It's one of the beautiful qualities called the *Paramis*, a sort of map of the heart. Sometimes we talk about the energies that bring about oppression or the energies that bring about freedom and liberation.

There are many names for the energies that come from and through the heart that's responding to life from that unconditioned, uncolonized, unlimited place that is our birthright—from a place of freedom, from a place of freeing. There's a beautiful list in the teachings that some of you may know of—the ten *Paramis* or beautiful qualities—and I'd like to spend a few moments introducing them and then focus on generosity.

You might be more familiar with *Paramitas* if your training or background is more in the Mahayana tradition. I keep a little card with the list of the ten *Paramis* on my desk. I have it there to remind me of them, and I love to look for them. I call it *Paramis*-spotting. Can I see truthfulness? Can I see energy? Can I see wisdom in others? Or maybe I want to call in one of these beautiful qualities and let it support me during a difficult time.

The first of the *Paramis* is **Generosity**, which I'm going to spend some time with today. The second is **Virtue**, which is kind of an old-fashioned sounding word, that is really at the foundation of our practice because it is about holding our ethics and our integrity in the

world, keeping our values and actions in alignment, and about how we relate to ourselves, to others, and communities, with harmlessness and kindness and care. **Renunciation** is the third, and is all about letting go, which we love to talk about in Buddhist circles. Letting go of the belief that happiness lies in accumulating, getting, owning, having and figuring out where real lasting happiness lies. **Wisdom**: the deep knowing that's beyond words, what's known when we are able to look with clear eyes and an open heart. **Energy**: the quality of bringing our full self to whatever's truly important or of benefit; that energy that allows us to show up for life, for each other, and for ourselves. **Patience**: the quiet determination, the letting go of the need to control, a sense of allowing, making space for unhurriedness. **Truthfulness** is letting go of intentional or habitual delusion that's very easy to fall into in this culture. **Resolve** is the power of believing our aspirations. We don't have to take a Bodhisattva vow to have resolve, but we do have to know our values, remember them, and allow them

***Chaga* precedes *Dana*. *Chaga* is the intention, that inner sense of generosity, that impulse toward being generous. Then *Dana* is the outward expression.**

to guide our actions. **Lovingkindness**, which isn't just the words or the cultivation practice, but so importantly the actions that come from that practice. A text that I love says, "I cannot provide for the welfare and happiness of others merely by wishing for it. Let me put forth effort to accomplish it." Then, lastly, **Equanimity**, this quality of the heart that holds everything at once: the joys and the sorrows of life, the impermanence. This is sureness that anchors the boat when the winds are howling. We find the deepest knowing and presence within us.

So just a quick overview of the *Paramis*. These are the qualities that it's said lead to Buddhahood and that the historical Buddha and all the past and future Buddhas must practice to fruition, to fullness. These are ten qualities that we, too, are invited to explore and practice, cultivate for our benefit and for the well-being of others.

One of my teachers at Spirit Rock, Gina Sharp, calls practice with the *Paramis*, "A radical shift in identity," which I like very much. We're shifting away from our limited self towards something bigger, something essential and free and giving and liberating. You might call it your Buddha nature, your higher self or whatever resonates for you. But really, it's the heart that we access when we begin to disentangle ourselves from greed, aversion and confusion.

The hundreds of legends and stories that grew up around the Buddha's past lives as a collection are called Jataka tales. They recount many lives of the Buddha-to-be, the Bodhisattva, and how he developed these *Paramis*, these beautiful qualities. He experienced different bodies, genders, and kinds of beings. He was a monkey who patiently saved the life of an ungrateful person. He was a stag who outwitted a king and got him to stop killing animals. He was a prince who gave away everything he owned. He was a swan, he was a merchant, he was a fish, he was a tree spirit, all kinds of things. One of the

purposes of these tales is to show that it was only over the course of many, many lifetimes that the Buddha-to-be completely realized these qualities and brought them to fullness.

There's something as a practitioner that I find really beautiful in this, as it reminds me that liberation, that freedom from suffering, is a really gradual practice. If it took the Buddha eons of time, as it is said, and countless lifetimes, it may take me a while too. It may take us a little time. And so, we can relax into the knowledge that this is an ongoing practice. There's not an expectation or timeline. Certainly, we can bring our energy and resolve to the practice.

But again, going back to the words of Gina Sharp, she says, "This is not an endeavor of time and space, but outside of it." It's really interesting to lift our practice out of time and space. The practices are how we are in the world and how we develop them in daily life in relation to others, to people, to animals, to the earth, to ourselves. We don't always know how a single positive action will reverberate. We don't always know how our actions will connect to other actions and the intersecting effects of your actions, my actions, their actions—this sort of karma that we create together.

We can be sure that every positive action extends beyond our current view, beyond what we're able to see right here, right now. This morning, I want to stay close to this first *Parami* of giving or Generosity. The Pali word is *Dana*. The fact that we are here today is *Dana*. It's generosity. We're showing up for each other. We're showing up to support each other's practice. We're showing up to support a community. There's giving in that. This is the quality of the heart that we call generosity, expressed in action.

In the Pali language, the language of the Buddha's teachings, there are two words that are associated with generosity, *Chaga* and *Dana*. *Chaga* precedes *Dana*. *Chaga* is the intention, that inner sense of generosity, that impulse toward being generous. Then *Dana* is the outward expression. Our intentions are really powerful, and our actions are even more powerful. Let me put forth effort.

**This work outside of time involves inclining the mind and heart again and again to what we call skillful, beautiful, liberating qualities.**

The Buddha was big on generosity, so I want to stay here for a few minutes. In one of the *Suttas*, he says, "If beings knew as I know the results of giving and sharing, they would not eat without having given. Even if it were their last bite, their last mouthful, they would not eat without having shared if there were someone to receive their gift. Even if it were their last bite." This particular form of practice was so essential to the Buddha's teaching.

So even before he taught the Four Noble Truths or the Eightfold Path, he talked about *Dana*. He talked about giving, along with meditation and our ethics, or *Sila*. It's called a pillar of the Dharma, essential to our practice. Why would

this be? Why would the Buddha teach *Dana* or generous giving before anything else? In most traditional cultures, the practice of giving is a core value.

My friend and co-teacher, Lorene Jabola, who grew up in Filipino culture, shared with me the fundamental importance that giving holds in her culture of origin and how it's taught from childhood as an essential way of being. It's an expression of care, of connection. It's a means of knitting community. Perhaps when the Buddha entered into a new community, this was an accessible place for him to connect to new students.

His foundational practice already may have been something virtuous that people were already practicing culturally—a launching pad and a natural, familiar place to

begin. We can't simultaneously let go and cling. When we open our hand and give of ourselves or what's ours, we're letting go of self, we're letting go of separation. In the act of heartfelt giving, there's a loosening of the grip on being a separate being concerned with me and mine and myself above everything else.

There's a sense of release into community, into connection, into well-being together, moving into or toward the *we* of life. This is a really helpful mindset for practicing the way of freedom, the way of letting go, and beginning to thin that sense of self and separation. That quality of generosity—the willingness to open and connect to others and the world—prepares the ground to cultivate the seeds of practice.

After attaining full liberation, a being like the Buddha starts their work for the benefit of all beings, to guide them toward liberation. Every act of generosity, whether large or small, is important because it's a loosening of that tendency to grasp and hold onto that separation we feel so often between self and others, self and world. And instead, it's a yes, a big yes, to Together, a plugging-in to our common humanness. It's like getting unstuck, releasing, circulating.

**We assume our attitudes reflect reality. We assume they are fixed and unchangeable. This is the water we swim in. The Buddha taught a technology for seeing deeply and freeing ourselves; waking up to old conditioning, and it starts with generosity: *Chaga*, expressed in the action of giving, *Dana*.**

That brings up the question, how do you teach *Dana*? How do you teach the expression of generosity? You can't really teach an action. Someone can model an action, or they can talk about it, but it's only when you do it yourself that you really learn, that it becomes yours. Just like our insight is deepened by our own moments of practice. People can tell us about their moments of practice, but it's only when we experience it ourselves that we understand it.

The more that we do an action, especially an action of the heart, the more it's integrated into our way of being. So, then we can approach *Dana* as a place of training, experimentation and learning. How does it work in your experience? How does it show up in the conditions of your life? How does giving feel for you? Where is it easy, maybe even automatic? And where is it kind of sticky? Are there ways of giving that come very naturally to you?

Sometimes I think we're unconscious of these places. Maybe you're just really generous with your time. Maybe you're generous with the resources that you have available to you.

**When we do this according to the teachings, before giving, the heart-mind of the giver is happy, while giving the mind of the giver is made peaceful, and having given the mind of the giver is uplifted.**

Maybe you're willing to listen or just show up for people. Maybe you're generous with giving time to your communities, organizing and supporting. Maybe there's just a natural helpfulness within you—seeing a need and filling it. Maybe it's almost second nature. Maybe you're generous with a smile and a kind word.

The Buddha's path is gradual. Remember, according to the legends, it took the Buddha many lifetimes to perfect these beautiful qualities. This work outside of time involves inclining the mind and heart again and again to what we call skillful, beautiful, liberating qualities. Just as *Metta* or lovingkindness is a sort of practice for meeting the conditions of life by relating with kindness and care to those that we encounter, so is our practice of giving.

Bit by bit, we're replacing old conditioning, personal and cultural, that separates us from others with our innate nobility and beauty. "We all have an attitude," says Zoketsu Norman Fischer, "Our own way of approaching life." Attitude literally means stance. The way you hold your body, your posture, the way you strive forth into your life. We come by our attitudes honestly. We get them from our parents, communities and cultures; also from our experiences, traumas and triumphs.

We assume our attitudes reflect reality. We assume they are fixed and unchangeable. This is the water we swim in. The Buddha taught a technology for seeing deeply and freeing ourselves; waking up to old conditioning, and it starts with generosity: *Chaga*, expressed in the action of giving, *Dana*.

Just a few places I want to share from my own personal experience with giving, which I think about a lot. One is to never crush a generous impulse. Stated more positively, giving wings to *Chaga*. That's the way it showed up for me originally. If I notice the intention in my mind to give, to offer up what I have to benefit another or a group, there is a brightness in that.

Then I often notice the clouds roll in. You've already given. Maybe it might not be appreciated, let someone else do it, and so on. Then I notice the light of that generous impulse grows weaker and the flame flickers a little bit. And then I wake up to that and I ask, "What's going on here? Oh, generous impulse, that's nice. That's a beautiful thing. How can I support that intention all the way to action, *Chaga*, that impulse, to *Dana*, generosity in action?"

I pause to look at it. What are my motivations, and would this gift be of true benefit to the receiver? How can I be of benefit in this moment? In that pause and reorientation, the flame grows stronger again. Another rule or training that I undertake is to let go of zero-sum thinking. I'm not sure who said it, but "Give as though there's nothing to lose," because there's only gain in giving. Both the giver and the receiver benefit from the act of giving. And letting go of calculations, "They gave me this so I should give them that."

I can remember going on residential meditation retreats early back when I started my practice and engaging in these mental calculations. Okay, it's a ten-day retreat. There are two teachers, so that's twenty workdays. Then there's travel time and there's prep time. So, let's see if they got paid X dollars per hour, that would be this total and then divide that up by the number of people sitting the retreat. That's not exactly what I would call heartfelt giving. That was the market economy conditioning put into action.

Then the question is, if this moment conditions the next, how have I just conditioned the next moment with that sort of calculation? What happens instead when I approach the opportunity not transactionally, but as people do in many other cultures—as an expression of our connection, as the sure heart's release, our shared good and well-being moving from the me to the we? One of the key supports of the development of generosity is seeing, celebrating and appreciating it.

In the Buddha's culture, giving was celebrated. It was savored. The teachings offer us some guidelines for the practice of generosity. There's a short list. The first is giving with kindness and goodwill; giving with a generous heart in such a way that the receiver is respected and lifted up and not devalued in any way; giving not out of obligation so that the motivation is more allied with the heart qualities of *Metta*, compassion and joy.

## One of the key supports of the development of generosity is seeing, celebrating and appreciating it.

When my mind was working out the numbers and the dollars per hour, that was out of a sense of obligation. The giving from the heart is quite different. Giving with one's own hand, meaning not at a remove. And if possible, actually hand-to-hand so that the whole body is involved in the blessing of generosity. Giving what's useful. In other words, something that is of value. Giving what will benefit the recipient. Being thoughtful in what we give; giving what we truly believe will be for the well-being and benefit of the receiver.

And more than what's given, whether the gift is big or small, whatever the gift is, it's the intention and manner of giving that makes the gift valuable. In other words, it's what's in our hearts and mind and the connection that is truly important. There's another *Sutta* where the Buddha illustrated this with a simile. He was talking to a follower: "I tell you, Vacha, even if a person throws the rinsings of a bowl or a cup into a village pool or pond thinking, may whatever animals live here feed on this, that would be a source of merit to say nothing of what is given to human beings."

## What are my motivations, and would this gift be of true benefit to the receiver? How can I be of benefit in this moment?

But nowhere in that list from the Buddha does he say, "Give all that you have, give until it hurts," because it's ultimately not about sacrifice, but about connection and loosening the compulsion to grasp, to cling, to hold on tight to what ultimately can't bring lasting happiness. I love the image that I think I learned from Larry Yang that you can't simultaneously open the hand to give and hang on tight.

It can be an interesting and helpful contemplation to notice the places where you are practicing generosity already. It may come so naturally to you that you don't notice it. "Well, of course I always listen to people. Well, of course I always give generously. Well, of course I do. Doesn't everybody?" So, it's a good practice to notice and celebrate mindfulness of generosity, mindfulness of our own generous places.

This is why part of beautiful giving can be giving with one's own hand. We place a lot of store in anonymous giving in our culture, and that can be a beautiful way of giving. But giving directly is also important, with our own hand, not hiding it from ourselves or others, but connecting person to person, creating that connection, maintaining that connection, sustaining one another.

When we do this according to the teachings, before giving, the heart-mind of the giver is happy, while giving the mind of the giver is made peaceful, and having given the mind of the giver is uplifted. We bring presence and mindfulness to the whole process from *Chaga*, that intention, all the way through *Dana*, the act of giving, really feeling what generosity is like.

How is the heart-mind when you are forming that intention toward generosity? How is it to actually make or feel that connection as you share? How does it feel when you've shared from the heart?

Do you ever regret it? I'm someone who is pretty adept at collecting regrets along the path of life. But when I reflect, I notice I don't seem to be able to find any places where I regret having been generous.

When I've shared what I have with another, I do feel the uplift in the heart that the Buddha spoke about, even when I remember it years later. Even if it wasn't received terribly gratefully or even recognized, I'm still glad that my heart was open enough to make the act. We can recollect the generosity

of others. We can even start with life, how the universe and the earth is so precious and yet freely shared.

We can reflect on the gift of the Dharma, the teachings, the Buddha and the Monastics and the Sanghas that have kept teachings alive and available for 2,600 years through the practice of *Dana*, through this intentional giving. The Dharma is only alive now for us because of giving. That's the economy of the Buddhist path: Dharma freely shared.

## I love the image that I think I learned from Larry Yang that you can't simultaneously open the hand to give and hang on tight.

I think that's such an interesting contemplation. Could the Buddha Dharma have survived and spread around the world through time and all these cultures and political and social change and upheaval for thousands of years if it had not been considered truly priceless and therefore, shared with love and given freely? What other forms endure that are not based on voluntary and heartfelt support?

What government will still be here in 2,600 years? What corporations will still be around? What social media will still exist? I think that the Dharma will be here. That's the miracle of generosity and the effectiveness of the gift economy. There's a beautiful book that I'm sure many of you know, *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, who's an indigenous poet and writer and professor of botany. She writes, "The market economy story has spread like wildfire with uneven results for human well-being and devastation for the natural world. But it is just a story we have told ourselves and we are free to tell another, to reclaim the old one. One of these stories sustains the living systems on which we depend. One of these stories opens the way to living in gratitude and amazement at the richness and generosity of the world. One of these stories asks us to bestow our own gifts in kind to celebrate our kinship with the world. We can choose. If all the world is a commodity, how poor we grow. When all the world is a gift in motion, how wealthy we become."

The traditional teachings mention four gifts we can give. We can give material support, we can give protection, we can give the Dharma as teachings, and, very beautifully, we can give the gift of non-fear, harmlessness, the gift that we give when we say no one needs to fear us. We take that stance; we commit to harming none and being of benefit as we're able.

There's a Buddhist scholar, Taitetsu Unno, who wrote "The actions of a generous heart are incalculable in value." I was reflecting on this topic and thought about who in my early life I experienced as generous. Where did I see generosity? I thought of a few people who seemed giving, but I found my mind kept resting on a woman named Garcia Moura. She was a friend of a neighbor who lived down the street from where I grew up, and she was house sitting for these neighbors. She

was somebody that I only knew for a few days and who came into my life at a time when I was experiencing a fair amount of neglect and loneliness.

Mrs. Moura was from Egypt. And somehow being a free-range kid in the neighborhood like we were in those days, she and I got to talking. She was outside sitting on the patio. For the few days that she was there, she invited me to come over every afternoon and sit on the patio with her and shared mint tea with me. She would spend part of each afternoon talking with eight or nine-year-old me about anything and everything it seemed. There was nothing at all that she needed from me, although she seemed very happy to hear my thoughts and stories, just like I was really enjoying hearing hers.

My memory, the felt sense that I have even right now, is of her unhurried attention and presence given freely and with great kindness and care, and how I felt seen and valued in a generous, loving way. So much so that 53 years later, I can still feel that. I can still feel that generosity and want to share that with you. That's the karma of a single act of giving.

I want to invite us to just sit for a moment and let the words settle. Let's just take a few moments.

## The Dharma is only alive now for us because of giving. That's the economy of the Buddhist path: Dharma freely shared.

Reflecting on your own personal relationship to giving, to *Chaga*, the intention, and *Dana*, the action of giving, how does it show up in your experience in the conditions of your life? Where is it easy for you to be generous? Bringing to mind a recent moment of giving something or even a word, something large or small, what was in your heart before you gave? What was the intention? Can you remember how it felt in the moment of giving, making the connection, the *Dana*, the action? What happens now in the present when you remember that action?

All right. Going forth into this world so in need of light, may I bring all the kindness and wisdom I embody to reach each being and each situation that I encounter. May the power of our practice today strengthen our resolve to be agents of peace and justice in this world. Going forth together into this world so in need of light, may we together bring all the kindness and wisdom we embody. May the power of our practice today strengthen our resolve to be agents of peace and justice in this world.

Thank you, everyone.

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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 \$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

## 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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**June 2**

**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.

Find her at <https://pamelaweiss.com>

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**June 9**

**Melvin Escobar** is a core teacher at the East Bay Meditation Center, a licensed psychotherapist, and a certified yoga instructor. Melvin has walked the path of service for much of his life, drawing on his experiences as a queer man of color born and raised in Los Angeles. Having encountered the priceless wisdom embodied in Buddhism and Yoga, he continues daily to learn the revolutionary potential of body-centered contemplative practices for personal and social healing. You can read his latest article in Lion's Roar Magazine, *Loving-Kindness: May All Beings Be Happy*, and visit his website [www.melvinescobar.com](http://www.melvinescobar.com) for more information.

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**June 16**

**John Martin** teaches Vipassana (Insight), Metta (Lovingkindness) 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. 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 project.

Find his upcoming events at:

<https://calendar.spiritrock.org/event-speaker/john-martin/>

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**June 23**

**Liên Shutt** (she/they) is a priest lineage holder in the Shunryu Suzuki tradition. Born to a Buddhist family in Vietnam, she received her meditation training in the Insight and Soto Zen traditions in the U.S., Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam. She was a founding member of the Buddhists of Color in 1998 and currently is the guiding teacher of Access to Zen, an inclusive, anti-oppression sangha and non-profit in the SF Bay Area. She lives on Ohlone land, currently called San Francisco, with her partner, exploring waterways and forests as often as they can. Visit

<https://accesstozen.org/> for ways to connect and practice together.

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**June 30**

**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 the co-author 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*.

Find him at <https://www.mindfulnessprograms.com/>

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**July 7**

**Open Discussion** - Independence Day Weekend

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**July 14**

**Walt Opie** was introduced to insight meditation in 1993 at Spirit Rock and attended his first residential retreat there in 2005. He is a graduate of both the Spirit Rock Community Dharma Leaders' (CDL4) program and the Sati Center Buddhist Chaplaincy program. Walt is a participant in the current Insight Meditation Society (IMS) Teacher Training program. He leads a monthly sitting group for people in recovery in Berkeley and serves as a volunteer Buddhist facilitator at Solano State Prison in Vacaville. In addition, he is Executive Director of the Buddhist Pathways Prison Project (BP3).

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**July 21**

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

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**July 28**

**Dorothy Hunt** serves as spiritual director of Moon Mountain Sangha and was the founder of the San Francisco Center for Meditation and Psychotherapy. She is the author of *Only This!*, *Leaves from Moon Mountain*, and *Ending the Search: From Spiritual Ambition to the Heart of Awareness*, as well as articles published on nondual wisdom and psychotherapy. She teaches at the request and in the spiritual lineage of Adyashanti, who invited her to share the dharma in 2004. Dorothy has a long and deep connection to the teachings of Ramana Maharshi and the nondual teachings of Zen, Advaita, and the Christian mystics. She invites a deep welcoming of the human expressions of the mystery. A licensed psychotherapist since 1967, Dorothy has now retired from her private practice. She is a mother and a grandmother. For more information, please visit: [dorothyhunt.org](http://dorothyhunt.org) or Dorothy Hunt - Moon Mountain Sangha on YouTube.

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**August 4**

**Open Discussion**

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**August 11**

**Michaël Patrick Bovenes** is a metaphysician, published author, spiritual healer, and the founder of Soul-utions, a revolutionary personal empowerment teaching. His online courses and live events have helped thousands of people find greater inner strength and personal peace. Since 1991, he has helped people transform their stress into strength and their struggle into greater freedom, confidence, and positive change. Soul-utions is not a religion, it's a conscious relationship with your Soul. Soul-utions focuses upon activating your inner power to create the changes you desire by aligning with your true purpose, inner wisdom, and empowered destiny. Find him at [www.soul-utions.com](http://www.soul-utions.com)

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**August 18**

**Donald Rothberg, Ph.D.**, is a member of the Teachers Council at Spirit Rock Center, a guiding teacher for the Marin Sangha in San Rafael, California, and a regular teacher at the East Bay Meditation Center in Oakland, Southern Dharma Retreat Center, InsightLA, and New York Insight. He teaches retreats and groups on concentration and insight meditation practice, lovingkindness practice, transforming the judgmental mind, mindful communication, working skillfully with conflict, and socially engaged Buddhism. He has practiced insight meditation since 1976, and has also received training in Tibetan Dzogchen, body-based psychotherapy, and trauma work. He has helped guide many six-month to two-year training programs in socially engaged spirituality, both Buddhist-based and interfaith, and is the author of *The Engaged Spiritual Life: A Buddhist Approach to Transforming Ourselves and the World*, and the co-editor of *Ken Wilber in Dialogue*.

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**August 25**

**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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**September 1**

**Open Discussion** - Labor Day Weekend

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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