Gay Buddhist Fellowship

FALL 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.

A Bridge Over Troubled Water

By Laura Burges

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.*

Welcome everyone, and welcome to those of you at home. Wonderful to have you with us. I'm always so happy to be here. This just feels to me like a Buddhist oasis in the middle of the city and it's a pleasure to be with you people in particular. But can we just talk about the elephant in the room for a moment? You probably heard of this Chinese curse. Well, I looked into it and actually it's probably from England, and the curse is: May you live in interesting times. The times we're living in are way, way too interesting. It can be really overwhelming, a source of destabilization and dismay, confusion. We never know what's going to happen next, but especially now, we don't know what's going to happen next. *(Editor's note: Biden was withdrawing from the race as Laura was speaking!)*

It feels to me like our country's walking back from some of our greatest progressive accomplishments. I want to share with you a quote from Howard Zinn, who of course, wrote *The People's History of the United States*. This quote has given me quite a bit of comfort and stability at such a destabilizing time. Howard Zinn says, "To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage and kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places, and there are so many, where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. If we do act in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live in defiance of all that is bad around us is in itself a marvelous victory." That's Howard Zinn. I like to talk about whatever I happen to be going through, and I really feel right now that practice is a bridge over troubled water. Of course, we wonder what we can do about these horrible problems and the insanity and hatred that abound, but we can practice and we can be a light in that darkness.

I'd like to share some teachings with you that have been a great help to me from the Buddhist writer, Stephen Batchelor, an English scholar. I'm a practitioner but not a scholar, so I'm very grateful to those people who are. In his book, *Buddhism Without Beliefs*, he tells us that the Buddha stood up from his seat under the Bodhi Tree and he returned to the group of wandering mendicants that he'd been a part of. This was after his great awakening when he saw the morning star. He began a life of teaching,

and his first talk was about the four noble truths. This is the insight that he had upon awakening.

The Buddha stated these truths very succinctly, but over the millennia, according to Batchelor, his awakening is often characterized as a mystical experience, a moment of transcendent realization that is way out of the ballpark for most of us. Batchelor sees these truths as the interwoven complex of truths suggested by Buddha's experience. The reason I want to talk about this particular interpretation of the four noble truths is it's a challenge for us *to act* in these troubled times.

These four noble truths have kind of hardened into four propositions of fact to be believed: life is suffering, the cause of suffering is desire, there's an end to suffering and the end to suffering is found in the noble eightfold path. I am not sure why Batchelor uses the word *anguish* rather than suffering. I've heard different translations of *duḥkha*, the Sanskrit word, but it's a very evocative word really, anguish. Instead of those truths carved in stone, Batchelor states that the Buddha suggested that we understand anguish. This is an action, to understand anguish, to let go of its origins, to realize its cessation and to cultivate the path.

"The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live in defiance of all that is bad around us is in itself a marvelous victory."

This is a much more dynamic and active interpretation of those truths. Batchelor says that in failing to make this distinction, forgetting that Buddha offered us four ennobling truths to be *acted on* rather than a list of things to believe in, we miss the mark. This is what really attracted me to Buddhism in the first place, when I heard Buddhist practice is an *experiment*, it's a laboratory, and the Buddha always encouraged people to try these things out for yourself and see how they work in your own life. He didn't say you must believe in this. Batchelor is suggesting that dharma practice involves actively engaging in these truths and penetrating them through our own experience and then by taking action.

Batchelor says that the Buddha was not a mystic. He didn't feel that he had laid claim to an esoteric truth that wasn't available to the rest of us, that could only be revealed to the privileged. I like this phrase of Batchelor's, "Buddha had awakened from the sleep of existential confusion." When I was in high school, I came across the existentialists and I read Jean-Paul Sartre's book, *Nausea*. This enabled me, when people asked me how I was doing, to say, "Just a touch of existential nausea, I'll be okay."

The first two truths, anguish and its origin, describe our dilemma. The second two, cessation and the path, point to the resolution of this dilemma. Buddha awoke to a set of interrelated truths rooted in the experience of here and now, and he experienced them as *ennobling*. I think this is really key, and I don't think we focus on this enough. The four noble truths are ennobling because they allow us to understand and work with, and in some ways transcend, suffering and— what I feel like as a person in recovery—to make use of our suffering, to connect with other beings, to recognize our deep interconnection with one another.

They are ennobling not as propositions to believe in because someone we admire says so, but as challenges to *act*. Buddha described himself as a healer rather than a savior. I've been studying cults and it's so fascinating the things that cults have in common, and one of them is a charismatic leader that claims to own the truth, and that if you don't follow this truth, you're going to burn in hell or whatever. That Buddhism gives us our own agency, to me is so important.

The four noble truths can be seen as a diagnosis, a prognosis, and a treatment. Batchelor compares this to the story of *Alice in Wonderland,* and I find this quite charming. The bottle of anguish has the label, "Understand Me." Understand anguish in our own lives, watch what's happening when suffering arrives, watch how we get stuck? What do we cling to? What unskillful acts and ways of being do we cling to out of habit that cause suffering to ourselves and others?

This is an invitation to look deeply into the causes of our suffering and to Buddha's enlightenment about the truth of sickness, old age and death, to penetrate the truth of impermanence in our own experience, and to stop trying to distract ourselves in countless ways from the truth of our fleeting lives. Batchelor put it this way, "If we ignore a powerful wave, it can crush us, but if we turn and face it and dive right into it, it's only water." I really love that analogy. The second noble truth has the label, "Let Go." When we practice with our afflictive emotions, with our anger, our envy, our hatreds, our addictions, we come to see that they're impermanent, transient, conditional.

This is what really attracted me to Buddhism in the first place, when I heard Buddhist practice is an *experiment*, it's a laboratory, and the Buddha always encouraged people to try these things out for yourself and see how they work in your own life.

The first truth, to understand anguish, is not separate from the second truth, because in understanding the nature of suffering or anguish, we can more easily let go of it. The nature of anguish is this sticky quality. I've said to you before that in studying the brain, I've heard this phrase over and over again and I've shared it with you before, that our brain is Velcro for negative experiences and like Teflon for positive experiences. You might say

that that is a recipe for suffering, to cling to those unfortunate things that happened to us, to wallow in our guilt and shame. This is not only experiencing anguish but increasing and deepening it in our neural pathways.

Letting go of craving isn't rejecting it but allowing it to be what it is—a temporary state of mind that will pass away that Batchelor calls, "The sudden gap in the rush of self-centered compulsion and fear." I love that. The sudden gap in the rush of self-centered compulsion and fear allows us to see with unambiguous immediacy and clarity the transient, unreliable, and contingent nature of reality. In revealing life in all its vulnerability, it becomes the doorway to compassion. Why? Well, because we're all in this together. None of us is separate from this truth or immune to it. In the cessation of suffering, we recognize that conditions arise and pass away moment by moment.

In Buddhism, we call this emptiness, the infinitely creative dimension of life, and Batchelor says that this dynamic whispers its own label, "Realize Me." We do have the capacity to realize this clearing in the center of our life, but we tend to glimpse it and then it fades away. We have these moments of clarity, these moments of great understanding. We feel almost sometimes in our heart a wave of compassion before we've even noticed it in our mind. It wells up in our heart.

I saw a woman on the sidewalk this week and I thought, "Oh, someone will come and help her." I thought, "Wait a minute, that's supposed to be me." I pulled over and I went to her and I thought she was dead and I shook her, she felt so stiff. At this moment, another woman walked up and we conferred, and as I shook the woman on the sidewalk, she kind of roused herself. The other woman and I were looking at each other, what should we do? I suggested she call an ambulance, but somehow this woman reached in her purse, which was lying there on the sidewalk and showed us this voucher she had for a cab to a methadone clinic. Well, I've been in recovery since 1985 and when I see someone like that, I say, "That's me. That's me lying on the sidewalk. That's any one of us lying on the sidewalk."

"If we ignore a powerful wave, it can crush us, but if we turn and face it and dive right into it, it's only water."

When we think of the goddess Avalokiteshvara with her 100 eyes and 100 hands, we are those eyes and hands. We are those who were called to help. I've prayed for that woman many times since I saw her. That's practice in action, right? It's not just driving by and hoping for the best. Without practice and cultivation, our glimpse of the truth is very fleeting, and we're back in the habit of craving and resentment and unsatisfactoriness again; we're back on this treadmill of fear and denial. Opening the bottle of practice, the bottle labeled "Cultivate Me" is what we were doing together for 30 minutes, sitting upright in the midst of a crazy world together to encourage and inspire one another. Of course, this path to be cultivated is outlined in the noble eightfold path where Buddha went on to outline an ethical way of life, right livelihood, right understanding, right path, right cognition, similar to the work that those of us in recovery do when we work the 12 steps. We step on a path of ethical behavior in the world. The noble eightfold path includes right view, right intention, right speech, et cetera, and I'm sure these eight aspects have been covered here before over these years and I'm sure will be covered again.

The four noble truths can be seen as a diagnosis, a prognosis, and a treatment.

I really appreciate this interpretation of the noble eightfold path and then the four noble truths, that they aren't a dusty set of beliefs concocted by a saint who's so far beyond all of us under a tree 2,500 years ago, but a dynamic way of life that's offered to us as a kind of prescription for our own anguish and the anguish we see around us, and an invitation to practice actively in our own lives. Awakening then is no longer seen as something to attain in the distant future when we're good enough because it's not a thing, but a *process* and this process is the path itself. Understanding our own anguish and the anguish of the world, which is so apparent now, and matures into letting go of it. Letting go culminates in realization. Realization leads to cultivation of the path. Letting go doesn't mean we don't care anymore. It means we're letting go of that over which we have no control and turning towards the things we do have some agency over. These are not separate activities but describe the process of awakening itself. In 12 step work, and I think some of you are involved in that, we recognize that our obsessive craving and our habitual indulgence in it causes great suffering to ourselves and other people. I'm using Batchelor's template right now, so we *recognize* that and then we have this glimmer of hope that there's something that we can do about it.

We align ourselves with the wisdom of those who've gone before us, and then we take up a course of action, what we call the steps, in fellowship with others, and that leads us to this path of healing. I saw a wonderful documentary about Kurt Vonnegut, and you may have seen it on Netflix. It was just incredible. He was asked what he thought was the greatest contribution that America had made to the world and Vonnegut said, "Well, as a lover of jazz, I want to say jazz, but actually I have to say it's Alcoholics Anonymous." That warmed my heart. I've been to these international conferences where 90 flags are on stage of the countries where the big book of Alcoholics Anonymous has arrived and been translated. These are Muslims, Jews, Christians, agnostics, atheists, Buddhists.

Batchelor says that some scholars and practitioners will say that you cannot say you're a Buddhist unless you believe in reincarnation. Buddha believed in reincarnation

in the context of the times that he lived in and the Hindu beliefs that he'd been raised with. In fact, he could talk about his many previous lifetimes, and really these stories of his previous lifetimes when he was born as a monkey or as a crane or as a lion or as a wise old woman, these were his parables or teaching stories for his adult followers. I chose ten of those stories to rewrite and reimagine in my book, *Buddhist Stories for Kids* (available in the lobby!). Actually, they're fun for anybody to read. I had so much fun writing that book and it's beautifully illustrated by Sonali Zohra, a Bangladeshi artist. She really brought those stories to life.

The idea that life continues somehow after death is central to many religions. As I read about cults, if you don't follow this path, you're going to suffer terribly is a tenant in most of these cults. I'm not saying Christianity is a cult, although in some of the sects that's certainly an aspect of it. Evangelical Christians apparently feel that the belief that you will burn in hell for eternity unless you follow that way of life is the only way to keep people in line. A wonderful priest, an African American evangelical preacher who grew up in the faith and became quite a preacher himself, when he saw children starving in Africa and he knew that they were going to go to hell according to evangelical beliefs, he thought, "how could that be? If God consigned those babies or anybody who hasn't heard the gospel to hell, what kind of God is that? He's worse than Hitler." Well, he was expelled from his church, but he started a church that was very open to LGBTQ, to people of all stripes, all colors, all denominations with a much more open heart and a much more accepting and loving, and I say more Christian, approach. I love that story.

The idea of reincarnation is tied up with the notion of karma—that if we have ethical behavior in this life, we will be rewarded somehow in future lifetimes. But Batchelor has the very refreshing alternative approach of cultivating a healthy agnosticism. If ideas arise in the teachings that are helpful to us, of course, we can embrace them and practice with them, but we can have a dynamic relationship with the teachings. In terms of reincarnation, for example, it's okay to firmly state that we just don't know.

When we practice with our afflictive emotions, with our anger, our envy, our hatreds, our addictions, we come to see that they're impermanent, transient, conditional.

When we think of the goddess Avalokiteshvara with her 100 eyes and 100 hands, we are those eyes and hands. We are those who were called to help.

I know I've shared with you the story of two of my third graders talking in the hallway and Thalia said to Tessa, "Would you rather be buried or cremated?" Tessa said, "I don't know, surprise me." I think we can have the same attitude about what happens when we die. "I don't know, surprise me." We really can't know. You may disagree with this, but I'm with Batchelor on this one. "In Buddhism, we can just not know." It's okay to not know. "Only don't know" is a Zen phrase. I've seen it on t-shirts. So many of the troubles in the world are caused by people who are absolutely sure they're right.

Suzuki Roshi died before I came to Zen Center and I never got to meet him, but his students told me that he would not discuss reincarnation. What he said was, "It's this very life and this very moment that we should be living wholeheartedly without thought of the results." He would just say that to his students when they asked him about it. My teacher, Linda Cutts, officiated at my Dad's memorial service. She said that Suzuki Roshi's conception of reincarnation was expressed by him when he was standing at the foot of Vernal Falls in Yosemite. He said to the student he was with, "At the top of the falls, the water flows along as a body, and then it goes over the falls and breaks up into individual drops, and at the bottom of the falls it rejoins the river." This was his conception of our life. We're like those drops. Actually, we're all part of the water, so we have this illusion that we're separate. I really love that, that our life springs forth from a mystery, that we have these fleeting lives and then we return to the mystery. In a Buddhist funeral, we say that the person has entered the great mystery.

Rather than taking on the teachings and having them harden into beliefs, kind of a didactic pitfall of just, "I have to believe this, if I'm a Buddhist," we can practice with an open mind and heart. It is said that the Buddha's last words were, "You must be a lamp unto yourself." Alternatively, I've heard that they might've been, "This pork should have been cooked a little bit." We don't really know for sure. Our Zen ancestor Dogen was a poet and said, "Take the backward step that turns the light and shines it inward." It's the inside job.

In other words, each of us must find our own way. Luckily, we have the great fortune to be able to do this within a sangha of those who are also engaged in this ongoing experience and experiment. Our spiritual friends are there for us no matter what. I love your mission statement here at the Gay Buddhist Fellowship. "As practicing Buddhists, we cherish the unique potential of each individual, and each individual's unique mission in the world that only they can accomplish. We believe that each person has the ability to contribute positive value to society in their own unique way."

Batchelor also talks about various aspects of Buddhism and the way in which they've been interpreted and misinterpreted in the West. For one thing, and this is interesting, the term *Buddhism* was coined in the West in the 1800s. Before that time, it was called *dharma practice*, a more appropriate term according to Batchelor, where we actively practice with the teachings rather than freezing them. This great truth of impermanence is always with

us, the ebb and flow of life. A friend of mine said recently she couldn't think of a single thing that she liked about the convicted felon who's running for president on the Republican ticket. I thought about that, I said, "There's one thing I really love about him—he's mortal."

At the elementary school where I taught for many years, our fantastic music department would teach the kids the inspiring and motivating and deeply meaningful songs of the civil rights movement. I'm going on a little bit long, but I want to read you something. After the election on November 8th, 2016, we gathered in the music room at the San Francisco School as Doug Goodkin, a legendary music teacher, led the students in a song about a gray goose, and we joined in on the chorus. It's an African American song about a goose that—despite others' repeated efforts to destroy her—survives and flies deep into the sky, a long string of goslings behind her. I wondered why Doug had chosen this song for this occasion, but when we finished, he said that each of us has a gray goose within us that can take flight and free us.

"No one can touch it, no one can take it away from us. There's a place inside each of us that is sacred and inviolable. No matter what happens in the world, no matter how dark the times, the bright wings of freedom are within each of us." This is your mission statement, right? Doug said to the children, "You may not understand it completely now, but someday you will know that today is an important day in our country's history. A day when many of the values that this school stands for are in danger: democracy, social justice, personal responsibility, the beauty and power of diversity. Later when you do understand, I want you to look back and remember that on this day at our school, we gathered and we sang."

I would like to conclude with the song, if you'll indulge me. This is one of those beautiful African American songs of freedom and connection. We'll do it as call and response. I have no idea what this is going to sound like, but I assume we can enjoy it. If you care to join me, you can repeat what I sing.

MUSIC: *Let your little light shine, shine, shine.*
Let your little light shine, shine, shine.
Let your little light shine, shine, shine.
Let the light shine, shine, shine.

There might be someone down in the valley
trying to get home, trying to get home.
There might be someone down in the valley
trying to get home, trying to get home.

It may be two, it may be three, it may be
you, it may be me.
It may be two, it may be three, it may be
you, it may be me.

There might be someone down in the valley
trying to get home, trying to get home.

Thank you so much. We're all just trying to get home.

GBF: I've been reading *Buddhism Without Beliefs* and find it fascinating. The part that I don't quite get is where does the meditation fit into that view, and is meditation somehow about transcending experience or is it just a kind of contemplation?

Laura: Oh, that's a wonderful question. What I find about Buddhist scholars is they don't often talk much about meditation. Some of them do, but they kind of gloss over that sometimes. But for me, the practice of meditation is deeply embedded in these four noble truths. That is the cultivation part. The bottle that says "Cultivate Me" happens when we're sitting still. The point is that when we sit still and follow our breath, especially if we do it with other people, then we stand up and we do something.

The meditation itself is our experiment, is our grounding. We look like we're sitting still, but it's an action, and it's a noble action.

When I had my very intensive monastic training at Tassajara, we sat many, many periods of meditation every *day*, we studied Buddhism, we chanted together. Sometimes we sat for seven days in a row, which is called *sesshin,* with breaks for meals and sleep and walking meditation. That is the cultivation because that's how we get to know ourselves so very deeply. I don't think meditation is extra or inconsequential at all, it's sort of the groundwork that Buddha's teachings were based on. Right? I mean, he came to these realizations by sitting still. He sat down under that tree, and he said, "I will not move from this place until I achieve enlightenment."

The meditation itself is our experiment, is our grounding. We look like we're sitting still, but it's an action, and it's a noble action**.** In that guided meditation this morning, I said, "I'm ready to act with courage and integrity." When we take our seat in the middle of a crazy world and sit up straight and follow our breath and get to know ourselves in a way that helps us work with our unskillful ways of being in the world, then when we get up and walk out into the world, we're a more compassionate, honest, helpful, kind person. It's all about that to me. It's not abstract.

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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

How to Reach Us

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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.
Find us on Facebook ***@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

September 1
Open Discussion
Each month GBF schedules an Open Discussion of dharma related topics which sangha members discuss in small groups. This enables participants to deepen connections as a sangha (spiritual community), while reflecting upon meaningful topics.

September 8
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.

September 15
Rev. Daigan Gaither (he/him) began Buddhist practice in 1995 in the Vipassana (Insight) tradition, then began studying 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. He lives in San Francisco, CA and identifies as a disabled, queer, white, cis male. Learn more at www.queerdharma.net

September 22
Open Discussion

September 29
All Sangha Volunteer Appreciation Day
A look under the hood of the GBF, how things work and the men who keep it all together. COVID put huge strains on our group, and this is a time to recognize and thank the men who held up the roof beams, and made GBF stronger in the process. You'll be surprised at how much goes on behind the scenes, and gain appreciation for GBF as an organization and sangha. We also need to get more help from the sangha. Come and maybe find a Volunteer role you can contribute to. Specific details about openings, their duties, and time commitments for each will be given. Guys on Zoom especially can find ways to volunteer. For more information send an email to gaybuddhistfellowship@gmail.com.

October 6
JD Doyle serves as a core teacher at the East Bay Meditation Center (EBMC) and has served as a board member and was the cofounder of the LGBTQI meditation group. JD is in the Spirit Rock Meditation Center teacher-training program and was in the Dedicated Practitioner Program (DPP2) and the Community Dharma Leader Program (CDL4). JD has practiced Buddhism since 1995 in the U.S., Thailand, and Burma.

For over twenty-five years, they worked as a public school teacher focusing on issues of equity and access. JD holds a bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies from Cornell University and a master's degree in Language and Literacy and Sociocultural Studies from the University of New Mexico. JD identifies as gender nonconforming. They are committed to celebrating the diversity of our human sangha, addressing the impact of racism on our communities, expanding concepts of gender, and living in ways that honor the sacredness of the Earth.

October 13
David Richo, Ph.D., is a psychotherapist, writer, and workshop leader. He shares his time between Santa Barbara and San Francisco, California. Dave combines psychological and spiritual perspectives in his work. His latest book is *Ready: How to Know When to Go and When to Stay.* (Shambhala, 2022). The website for books, talks, and events is www.davericho.com.

October 20
Open Discussion

October 27
David Moreno, RYT 500, YACEP, SFT, has taught at international yoga conferences, festivals, universities, and teacher trainings worldwide. He continues his study in Tantra, Ayurveda, meditation and Qi Gong. He is known for his depth, keen sense of humor and timing, making his teaching both playful and informative. His yoga commentaries have been published in *Yoga Journal, Yoga International, LA Yoga Magazine,* and *Common Ground*. His dance criticism and performing arts journalism are featured in *Culture Vulture*. David is also an ordained minister. www.moryoga.com

November 3
Jennifer Berezan is a unique blend of singer/songwriter, producer, and activist. Over the course of ten albums, she has developed and explored recurring themes with a rare wisdom. Her lifelong involvement in environmental, women's, and other justice movements as well as an interest in Buddhism and earth-based spirituality are at the heart of her writing. Find her at https://jenniferberezan.com

November 10
Danadasa Chan - Part 1 of 3 in a Series: Topic TBA
Dhammachari Danadasa has been practicing with the San Francisco Buddhist Center (SFBC) community since 1993 and was ordained in 2011. His current area of exploration is the cultivation of metta (universal loving kindness) as a response to all the hatred, discrimination and bigotry in the world out there. Through personal anecdotes and experiential exercises Danadasa will explore our relationship to ourselves and others, with a particular emphasis on our deeply ingrained tendency to see others as different from us.

November 17
Danadasa Chan - Part 2 of 3

November 24
Danadasa Chan - Part 3 of 3

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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