San Francisco Insight: The Refuge of Sangha
An Interview with Eugene Cash

By Sarah Anderson

On most Sunday evenings for the past 20 years, Eugene Cash has taught the dharma to the sangha he established in 1992, San Francisco Insight Meditation Community (SFI). I sat down with Eugene to find out more about the inspiration behind SFI, the early days of our sangha, how we’ve grown and his vision for the future.

Sarah Anderson: How did SFI come into being?

Eugene Cash: In 1992 Jack Kornfield asked me to teach and, as part of that, to start a sitting group. I did some talks at [Spirit Rock teacher] Howie Cohn’s Tuesday night group in a basement on Dolores Street, and I started asking around if anyone knew of a space. Then a sangha member offered her home here in the city. There were about 8 to 12 people at the outset, and 25 to 30 by the end. We met there for about four years before we outgrew her living room. Someone in the group had connections from Marin to San Francisco.

Inside This Issue • Meet Our Sangha

A history and overview of the SFI sangha, for newcomers and veteran faithfuls alike.

Essays, poems and art by sangha members.

Upcoming sangha events and classes.
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Sangha News is an all-volunteer newsletter

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at the Unitarian Universalist Church (UU), and Margot Campbell-Gross, who was the minister then, was very inviting of groups like ours, so we started meeting in the chapel in 1996. The UU has been very good to us all these years.

The group started because there was such a strong focus on retreat practice. After sitting retreats, there was nothing to support people practicing in their daily lives. There was a split: retreat was where you went to get awakened, and then you would go home and make enough money to go back on retreat again. Local sitting groups were established to help people integrate and metabolize the experience on retreats.

SA: How would you characterize the early SFI group?

EC: It was young and adventurous. There were mostly people who had done long retreats and were turned on by what they discovered. At that time, meditation was not a mainstream activity so people came curious and interested, like they’d discovered something new, and so it felt fresh and exciting.

SA: As the group grew, what was the process like to start looking for a bigger space?

EC: It happened organically. It’s all grown sort of Mickey Rooney-and-Judy Garland style. You know those old movies where they’d say, “Let’s find a barn and put on a play”—that’s really how everything happened. I asked people, do you think I should do this? Or, how was the talk? There wasn’t much forethought. I was the entire Steering Committee!

SA: After SFI moved to the UU in 1996, the number of attending members grew to 100 in about 10 years, and it’s doubled in half that time.

EC: That’s what I mean when I say that way back when, meditation was an alternative culture. Now mindfulness has become much more mainstream and it’s getting more and more mainstream, which is great. It’s in hospitals, prisons, business, education—it’s having a big impact on society. It’s exciting.

One of the reasons we want to find a new space is that we want to participate in that growth. In addition to fulfilling our mission, which is to support the awakening of people in their day-to-day lives, we want to help spread mindfulness into the culture more fully.
SA: What shifts did you notice about the SFI experience after it moved to the UU? How would you characterize the experience in terms of development?

EC: First, the group got more community oriented, and people got more involved as they felt like they found a home. A lot of the community orientation arose out of our relationship with [Buddhist hermitage] Dharmagiri in South Africa, led by our friends Kittisaro and Thanissara. I met them when I was in teacher training and really connected with them and when they came through town, I would invite them to come teach. Then [sangha member] Gayle Markow asked if we could become a “sister sangha” with Dharmagiri. We did, and this had a big impact on the group. So the deepening of involvement with SFI was not initiated by me; it came from people in the group—Gayle and others—who wanted more community. Initially I just wanted to sit and get enlightened! That’s what I thought we were up to. Little by little, it became clear that building sangha was really important, and it was the community that educated me about this.

Also, as the group has grown, it’s been a challenge for me to stay connected with people. That’s been an exciting development edge for me because I feel like I’ve learned ways to do that. I’ve become much more interactive with the group than I was in the first 10 years. I spend much more time taking questions and comments rather than just coming in and giving a dharma talk. I still do that with some regularity, since it is part of what people expect, but I’m much more interested in what’s going on for people and responding to them. To me, this makes the group feel much more alive. Not only does it help keep me connected with the group, it also helps connect people to each other. That’s a big change for me. It calls on skills I developed as an improvisational musician earlier in my career. I like that.

The other thing that’s deepened my teaching is the deepening of my own practice. For many years I did at least a month of retreat sitting, and I’m planning to sit again for a month next February. As my own practice deepens, it impacts how I teach. I still prepare some, but I can also give talks without preparing, just by being present and responding to what’s in the room. I’ve been leading this group for 20 years, and at this point it feels like home to me, too.

SA: How would you characterize the latest phase of SFI’s growth, from 2006 to now?

EC: Rock and roll. The bigger the group, the more energy there is. It’s also gotten more diverse—not quite as diverse as we would like it to be, but in terms of age, sexual orientation, race, and culture, it’s starting to represent the full spectrum of community in San Francisco.

We also have more teachers who can offer more programs. I used to do all the evening groups, beginning classes, daylongs and sandwich retreats.

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SFI’s Journey to Nonprofit Status
By Beth Hamlet

Everything changes, nothing remains without change. —Buddha

Our Evolution
SFI was born nearly 20 years ago in a sangha member’s living room with a group small enough to keep the cushions in a single circle. Today, SFI is bursting out of our current home with 150–200 participants each week. We are a flourishing sangha with twice-weekly public sits, quarterly workshops, a dozen Kalyanya Mita groups and even our own Facebook page.

Our informal structure led by the Steering Committee served us well for many years, but it limited our options for growth and change. Several years ago, Eugene Cash began speaking publicly about his dream to have a space of our own that could be the focal point for a thriving Buddhist community. The administrative burdens and legal obligations of having our own center, as well as the Steering Committee’s desire to safeguard the sangha so that we could remain nimble through change and thrive beyond our current members, were catalysts in the formation of a nonprofit organization.

In December 2010, after nearly two years of planning, SFI incorporated as its own 501(c)(3).

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Praise the bridge that carried you over. —George Colman

Organization and Vision
All nonprofits are governed by a Board of Directors, a group of volunteers that is legally responsible for ensuring that the organization stays true to its mission, safeguards its assets, remains compliant with legal obligations and operates in the public interest. For SFI, many of the members of our Steering Committee became part of the first Board and view service as part of practice.

The Steering Committee developed bylaws that govern SFI. Our bylaws require that the Board meet once a month and hold one open meeting each year for all interested sangha members. Our Directors are nominated to the Board based on the individual’s skills and resources and their commitment to dharma practice. Nominees are voted onto the Board for an initial one-year term after which a formal vote is taken to initiate the next two-year term. There is a maximum of 3, two-year terms following the first year. Term limits are typical for nonprofit boards so as to avoid burnout, allow for diversity and to ensure leadership remains connected with the changing needs of the community.

SFI Mission Statement
The mission of SFI is to encourage the awakening of wisdom and compassion in all aspects of life, through the practice of mindfulness, the study of the Buddha’s teachings, and the cultivation of a supportive community of practitioners where all can take refuge in the three jewels of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.
The benefits of being a nonprofit with structured bylaws include an improvement in the ability to operate cohesively and with minimal friction. There is also a greater capacity to share decision-making power and respond to the needs of the sangha. SFI can also better organize and produce classes, daylong workshops and retreats.

The Board is currently focused on a strategic plan that includes renting our own long-term community space. In addition to Eugene Cash and Pamela Weiss, the other SFI teachers, Anushka Fernandopulle, Will Kabat-Zinn and Martina Schneider will have a place to teach on a consistent basis. Many sangha members have gone through Spirit Rock’s Community Dharma Leaders Program and are qualified to lead sitting groups; the Board envisions bringing these resources to the center to further the dharma in the larger community.

Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared. —Buddha

Meet the Board

Deep bows to all volunteers for SFI and especially members of the Steering Committee/Board who worked with ardent effort to develop the bylaws and file the required paperwork for SFI to become a nonprofit organization. Their work has produced a vehicle for which the dharma may continue to unfold and flourish in the Bay Area and beyond. Below is some background and personal insights from the Board members who were interviewed for this article.

Kitty Costello began sitting with SFI in January of 2000. The welcoming, no-strings-attached teaching and community at SFI made it easy to take refuge here. After decades of Buddhist martial arts and Western somatic training, Kitty found Vipassana practice to be a great relief, allowing “what is” rather than striving for “improvement.” She has served on the Steering Committee/Board for seven years, as Treasurer, then Secretary. Her background includes an M.A. in Social Clinical Psychology and 15 years as staff counselor at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health. She currently teaches mindfulness and chi gung to city workers, chronic pain patients and others. She has appreciated the deepening of community at SFI, evident in places like the caring committee, and has felt the support of sangha profoundly in her own life. One recent example came this summer while Kitty was on the East Coast, caring for her aging mother. Kitty started to meditate one Sunday night and realized that it was 7 p.m. in California and SFI was just settling into our meditation. She gratefully felt the support of sangha from 3000 miles away!

Paul Irving has been involved with a meditation/contemplative practice for over 35 years and came to SFI in 2002. He was struck by the simplicity and every-day, mundane reality of the Theravada practice.
Now there are a lot of different people teaching at SFI: Pamela Weiss, Will Kabat-Zinn, Anushka Fernandopulle and Martina Schneider. We have more people coming up through the Community Dharma Leader’s program who will offer classes; like Paul Irving, Rebecca Katz and Stefano Massei, who recently started a 12-step sitting group. When we have a new space, our hope is to be able to house all of these programs, as well as new ones, like family, teen and service programs.

As we move, the idea is not necessarily to get bigger in terms of people, but to start to roll out new programs.

SA: How was SFI organized before getting nonprofit status late in 2010?
EC: We’d basically been a hippie, anarchist group before getting 501(c)(3) status about eight months ago. We’d had a bank account and a Steering Committee for many years but we weren’t a legal entity. The Steering Committee that met once a month is now the Board, and we’re developing the organizational skills needed to grow.

SA: As we look for a new space, are there echoes of the experience 15 years ago when SFI first moved to the UU?
EC: There are definitely some feelings that we’ll be leaving a home we’ve been in for a long time. There’s also an effort to be more thoughtful and intentional about the whole process. We know that wherever we move, it will be problematic for some people. So we have considered a number of different options. At the moment, a potential space at Fort Mason is one of the best. They are interested in the fact that we’re a nonprofit serving the San Francisco community in many different ways. As we move, the idea is not necessarily to get bigger in terms of people, but to start to roll out new programs. We would also like to invite some of the other teachers in the city to join us: Howie Cohn, Urban Dharma, the Sisters at the [Saranaloka] Vihara and others. Our vision is to create a vibrant, aesthetically beautiful Buddhist center in San Francisco to serve many different people.

SA: Is there anything else you want to mention about SFI, the direction it’s going, where it has been?
EC: Over the last 10 years I’ve been teaching in Europe for about two months each year. I’m going to stop doing that so that I’m here more and can dedicate more time to help SFI grow. At this phase in my life I want to be more involved in SFI.

In addition to teaching I see my main role as holding a clear vision for SFI going forward. I can offer SFI vision, energy and inspiration. My vision is that we have a thriving center that goes beyond me. I hope we create a place that helps people transform practice into realization. I want to create a vibrant, supportive, loving and caring community that can change and help liberate the world.

As we move, the idea is not necessarily to get bigger in terms of people, but to start to roll out new programs.

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as taught by Eugene Cash. For the past few years, Paul’s focus has been on how to use skillful means to stay awake in the ordinariness of life. His professional knowledge has been a tremendous asset to our fledgling organization as Paul has nearly two decades of nonprofit management experience helping groups create the infrastructure to successfully file as a nonprofit. Paul explained, “Being on the Steering Committee and then the Board has been an enormous inspiration, as has watching my fellow sangha members struggle over issues and come to a resolution that is much better than any one of us could have crafted alone. Knowing that now there is a path for SFI to move into the future is a thing of great comfort and hope, a sense of seeing the dharma unfold so clearly.”

After many decades of various Buddhist studies, Jennifer Scaff-King began sitting with SFI at an intro class taught by Eugene Cash at the Presidio Chapel in 1997. Jennifer laughed as she remembered not speaking to anyone for at least two years: “At that time, there wasn’t much group interaction…most people just wanted to come, sit and leave. There was a culture of silence.” Jennifer credits former Board member Gayle Markow with starting SFI’s first community outreach programs and the beginning of Jennifer’s service to the sangha. By volunteering for the 2004 gala fundraiser to benefit Dharmagiri, our sister sangha in South Africa, Jennifer gained an experiential understanding of the joy and lasting friendships that service practice affords. Since then she has participated in many volunteer opportunities, and has coordinated the travel altar project, the purchase of chairs and cushion storage boxes. Jennifer is the longest standing Steering Committee/Board member next to Eugene.

Bill Scheinman has been a practicing Buddhist since 1994 and has taught courses in mindfulness for stress reduction at businesses and organizations since 2006. He is the co-founder of Stress Reduction at Work and the author of the mindfulness guide, Moment by Moment. Bill taught stress reduction to men in the San Francisco County jails for nine years (2001–2010) and is a graduate of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction teacher training practicum, the Dedicated Practitioners’ Program at Spirit Rock Meditation Center as well as the Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement (BASE) Program. Bill came to SFI in 2004 after attending a retreat at Spirit Rock. Bill explained, “I felt met in a way I never had before, like I was being treated as a spiritual adult. Also, the precise instructions in Vipassana were a revelation to me and my practice deepened very rapidly from there.” In addition to his Board duties, Bill manages SFI’s website, online class registration and occasionally leads the new student orientation and teaches at the Wednesday night sit. Bill records, edits and posts the dharma talks online and supervises SFI’s Facebook page.

What is Vipassana Meditation?

At SFI we practice a style of meditation known as Vipassana, or insight meditation, which has been practiced in Asia for over 2,500 years. Often translated as “mindfulness,” Vipassana implies seeing deeply or clearly, penetrating and illuminating reality. Cultivating awareness of breath, body, and the processes of heart and mind, Vipassana offers insight into the nature of reality and a way to radically transform our understanding of and engagement with our lives.
Sangha is the whole of the practice. So the Buddha is reported to have said when asked about Sangha’s importance.

I am new to Vipassana. About a year ago I came to practice as a result of suffering from cravings in relationship. In therapy I’d asked for something, anything to help me. I did not care what drugs I had to take. At the time I was gulping down Benadryl in the forlorn hope of being able to sleep.

My therapist told me about Vipassana and I first came to San Francisco Insight one Sunday in the summer of 2010, seething with demons.

I still remember my first sit. Forty minutes, thoughts arising. I used a trick someone had shown me in a self-help workshop: I imagined writing my thoughts on a piece of paper and then throwing it away. I kept doing this over and over and over and over. Eugene encouraged us to bring ourselves back to the breath. I could not believe I sat on a hard, uncomfortable chair for 40 minutes! I felt as if I’d been to another planet.

I don’t know how or why, but it helped a little, so I kept coming back. Soon I found I could sleep without Benadryl. I signed up for a meditation class. I found myself coming every week, first on Sunday nights, and then as winter came on, to the Wednesday night sit with Pamela.

One time, I found myself fighting traffic, trying to make it to sangha, noticing my expectations with mounting fury. When I finally made it to the sit I was late; I was frustrated, tired and frazzled. I hung around outside the door wondering what to do. Wait for the break? Stumble in and disturb everybody? Where would I sit? Finally, I remembered I could stand, so I snuck in and stood at the back.
I remember the incredible feeling as I entered, a wave of peace washing over me. I was helpless, floating in the ocean of energy emanating from the sangha. Maybe it was an artifact of my mental state; perhaps it was a real demonstration of the power of sangha—but the fundamental unity of all beings expressed itself in the room at that moment. It was not a question of whether or not I was open to it; it overwhelmed me. For a few moments I felt real peace.

Why I Keep Coming Back
Reflections on Community and SF Insight
By Kimberly Renee Knowles

When I moved to San Francisco a few years ago I was in the process of getting a divorce. Reading Buddhist books like *When Things Fall Apart*, by Pema Chodron and *It’s Easier Than You Think* had been helpful in my healing. But I considered myself a “closet Buddhist,” experimenting with the teachings on my own; the idea of actually sitting to meditate in a group seemed intimidating.

I had negative memories about the pressure I’d felt in church communities growing up—about being “properly devoted” and showing up for services each Sunday. I envisioned being part of a Buddhist community might feel the same way, and I didn’t want anything to do with it.

But, because the idea intrigued me still, I put the Sunday night meeting into my calendar—and every week a little alarm on my phone would pop up at 7 p.m. on Sunday saying, “SF Insight—Unitarian Universalist Church.” I’d click ignore, and resolve that one of these days, despite my reservations, I would check it out.

About a year ago I finally decided to give SF Insight a try. I came to the New Students’ Orientation and got some instruction on how to meditate. I sat with the sangha—and found the experience surprisingly enjoyable. Still,

I wasn’t quite ready for a “Buddhist sermon thing” or for networking with other Sangha members at the break—so I left and went home.

Months later, I came back to give SF Insight another try. This time, Eugene Cash was talking about the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. I stayed for the break and the talk—and I met wonderful people who were welcoming and eager to encourage me on my path—right where I was at the present moment. The group meditation felt like coming home—and the teachings stayed with me for the whole week. I found myself continually noting whether things were “pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral”—and I couldn’t wait to return the next week to tell everyone what I’d discovered!

I started coming consistently, six weeks in a row, but then suddenly I found it hard to make it every Sunday night. Around this time, Eugene talked about a period in his life when he was desperately trying to hang onto his practice, just like I was. He spoke of going to see his Zen teacher, worried that he might “lose his practice.” Much to his surprise, his teacher exclaimed, “Lose it!”

(continued on page 12)
**chemo incantation**

*For my Metta Kalyana Mitta: Sally, Geoff, Sara, Moon, Shirley, Cate, Flora and Gary.*

- Please cleanse my cells from cancer
- Let me use your harshness to end my harshness
- Please make me strong and unafraid
- Let me use you to free myself of unease and release any beliefs that disturb my natural mind
- Pure, kind, sweet mind, mind that knows life, this perfect life
- Please help rid me of unkind acts and experience your challenging way as sacred medicine
- Let me use you to mend and re-enter my body whole, connected, alive to possibility
- Please emancipate my human heartedness in every dissolving moment
- May all beings be well, may we all heal one another

—Colleen Lookingbill

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**Green Then Blue**

Who is slicing these green beans, myself or not-self?
Or perhaps a better question, who contemplates each slender pod, brimming with green life?
Slightly overcome by kitchen heat and all that beanlike radiance, I step outside for a quick breath of cool morning air.
Proud fat jay lands on the pathway, cocks his crested head and blinks, asking, which self has ever seen a more luminous brilliant blue?

—Colleen Lookingbill

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**Buddhist Lineage of SFI**

*After his death, the Buddha’s teachings spread from India throughout Asia. Three main schools of Buddhism thrive in Asia today: the Theravada flourishes in Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka; the Mahayana characterizes traditions within China, Korea and Japan; and the Vajrayana exists mainly in Tibet and Bhutan. As part of the larger Spirit Rock Meditation Center community in the West, SFI draws primarily from the practices and teachings of the Theravada lineage, specifically of the Thai Forest Tradition, but is also influenced by the other Buddhist traditions.*
The point was: trying to hang on to your practice can be a form of grasping—and leads to suffering. I tend to have a grasping and perfectionistic personality, so this permission—this encouragement—to let my practice go and let life unfold was very freeing for me. It was exactly the message I needed to hear.

More months went by and my attendance slowed to a complete halt—life and relationship got in the way—but instead of feeling an overwhelming sense of guilt, a gentle desire to return arose on its own. I realized how much I missed the sangha—missed the teachings, the community, the wonderful people I’d met. The influence of my old church experience lingered though, and I worried—what would people say if I came back? Would I hear comments about my lack of dedication?

With Eugene’s talk about letting my practice go in mind, I ventured back and sat slunk down in the back, hoping no one would notice me. But one of my sangha friends did notice me and gave me a big hug during the break—receiving me warmly and openly, with not a hint of judgment—as if I’d been there just the week before, as if nothing had changed at all.

The experience of coming back with no guilt and no judgment sealed the deal for me—and is what keeps me coming back now, week after week—whenever I can make it.

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Tiny Things in Small Packages

Featured art by Bridget May

Artist Statement: My work is influenced by the intricacies of cellular structures. I start with imagery from microscope slides of plant or animal tissues and create patterns using intuitive layers of color. I am curious about the way colors interact, be it through their hue, value or saturation; the magic of simultaneous contrast is continuously intriguing. My inspiration was initially found in photos and drawings in laboratory guides and old zoological textbooks, but during a plant anatomy course I spent hours in awe examining botanical slides.

When viewing reality at a tiny scale, unseen, mesmerizing patterns of life become visible and the latent becomes possible. Or to borrow a lovely notion from Mr. Geisel (aka Dr. Seuss), there is the potential for an entire universe in every drop of water, every speck of dust. Painting for me is a kind of meditation. I become engrossed in the process of mixing the color and applying the paint: without thought or want, I lose my self.

All works in this issue are 12 x 12”, Acrylic on wood.

Contact bridgetmay@gmail.com for more information.
Take It Easy, Take The Bus

By Adam Hunter

You’ve seen the tour buses in San Francisco. Perhaps at Fisherman’s Wharf, or in the Presidio at the Golden Gate. I see them sometimes, and I wonder: what do the people on them see of my city? Do they see? They look, take a picture, but do they see what’s right in front of them? Why are they in such a hurry to rush to the next thing?

I recently joined SF Insight. To me, the sangha represents many things. An awakening, certainly. A retreat, solace, comfort, enlightenment. Friends, fellowship. Experiences that deepen my connection to life. These words mean things to me, but as the sangha teaches, they mean something different to each of us. But I do think we can all agree on what a bus is.

I grew up in Buffalo, NY. It’s cold there; not cold like “the wind is blowing through my windbreaker”—cold like “the wind is blowing through my soul, and I may never be warm again.” That kind of cold hardens people, drives them into themselves. The snow in Buffalo also makes you eager to find a way to get to work without operating a motor vehicle, and Buffalo has both a subway and an excellent bus system. The city’s motto when I was growing up was “Take It Easy, Take The Bus.”

I always thought I tried hard in life. My struggle for accomplishment was my badge of honor. I never shirked a difficult task. My Northeast background drove me to get a Master’s degree, then another one, then to travel around the world, to work hard, make money, buy things, and achieve. “This,” I thought, “is hard, and because it’s hard it’s good.”

What I didn’t realize was that, in fact, I was taking it easy. I was taking the bus. Like the tourists, I was rushing past it all. It’s so easy to rush past it all. I’ve been on the tour bus of life, driving from place to place, checking off boxes in a mad dash to get to every destination. The harder I worked, the more I achieved, the faster I drove the bus.

But the more I struggled, the less I truly experienced. I could never out race the wonders in front of me any more than the tourists could understand San Francisco by visiting it faster. Things—wonderful things—flashed in front of my unseeing eyes. People I loved, wondrous places I visited, all gone in a blink.

Sangha, to me, is the way off the bus. It’s the backpacker’s life, a harder life in some ways, but a life lived more completely.

There is nothing wrong with buses. They’re a tool. Now I walk to work from time to time, but some days I do just want to get there, to get started on my job and I take the bus. But I wonder, sometimes, what I miss on the bus. As I work to make money to go on vacation to stand in places where other people are rushing past me to get to their work, I wonder. So, I still ride, but I put my nose against the glass of the window, and feel the vibration, and I look around me, and try to truly see.
Teacher Bios

Pamela Weiss
Pamela has been practicing Buddhism since 1987, including several years of Zen monastic training. She recently graduated from teacher training with Jack Kornfield and is also a student of the Diamond Approach. Pamela is an executive coach who offers mindfulness classes and leadership development programs inside organizations. Her passion is in bringing the richness and depth of Buddhist teachings to the world of work and relationships, as well as articulating a feminine expression of the dharma.

Eugene Cash
Eugene 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.
**Anushka Fernandopulle**
Anushka has trained in the Theravada Buddhist tradition for over 20 years in the U.S. and Asia. Other influences have been mystics from various cultures and traditions, creative arts, nature, service work, progressive social change movements and modern urban life. Anushka teaches retreats at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, Insight Meditation Society, and around the country. She has an MBA and works as an organizational development consultant and executive/life coach.

www.anushkaf.org

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**Will Kabat-Zinn**
Will has practiced Vipassana meditation intensively in the U.S. and in Burma and teaches regularly at Spirit Rock Meditation Center and The California Institute for Integral Studies. Will has taught meditation and awareness practices to incarcerated youth since 2001. He is in teacher training with Jack Kornfield and also works as a Marriage and Family Therapist intern in private practice.

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**Martina Schneider**
Martina has been a student of the Dharma since 1996. She has studied and practiced Vipassana meditation in the U.S., India and in Burma, where she was ordained as a nun. Martina also completed teacher training with Jack Kornfield. She combines her practice with social engagement and has worked extensively with homeless and underrepresented populations, counseled incarcerated people and volunteered with the Zen Hospice Project. Martina combines mindfulness practices and psychotherapy in her work as a Marriage and Family Therapist intern. www.martinaschneider.com
We would like to extend our gratitude to all of the sangha members who volunteer, as SFI could not exist without their generosity and dedication. Not all of our current volunteers are pictured here, but these are some of our key players. Thanks to all who help create our thriving SFI community!

Counter clockwise from top to bottom on page 16: Jennifer Scaff-King (Board secretary); Mahin Heidary-Charles (caring committee co-chair); Allison Shore (volunteer coordinator, Sunday set-up, Board member); Jill Morrison (Sunday set-up, newsletter design); John Morrison (Sunday set-up); Marty Mordkoff (Sunday set-up); Neil Gendel (Wednesday set-up).

Clockwise from left to right on page 17: Cj Gross (greeter, volunteer recruitment and training); Gayle Markow (new member orientation, sister-sangha activities and fundraising, kalyanna mita group facilitator); Kitty Costello (Sunday Chi Gung instructor, Board member); Sarah Anderson (newsletter editor); Carol Charney (Sunday greeter and headcounter); Nirit Zach (Sunday potluck organizer); Andrew Hillman (Sunday headcounter); Ledevina de Lara (Sunday and Wednesday set-up, volunteer recruitment and training); Geoff McNally (caring committee co-chair, communications coordinator); Fred Holub (bookkeeper, Yahoo Group moderator).

Wish List of Volunteers to Help Create New SFI Home

• Licensed Architect
• Licensed Contractor
• Experienced Carpenters
• Construction Material (dry wall, insulation, etc.)
• Sound Engineer/Technician
• Web Designer

For details, visit www.sfinsight.org
Volunteers
Announcements

New Kalyana Mitta Group Calls Sangha Poets to “Write Action”
Sangha poets (and “would-be” poets) are invited to join a new Kalyana Mitta (Spiritual Friends) group that will gather to write, meditate and deepen the spirit of creativity and community within SFI. Gayle Markow will facilitate the group and hopes it will “enliven our practice as poets and infuse our poetry practice with the fruits of meditation as well as the support of fellow sangha members.”

The first meeting will be Thursday, September 29, from 6–8:30 p.m.

To communicate your interest or ask questions, please contact Gayle at gaylemarkow@gmail.com or 415-585-9029. Space is limited.

Second Annual Khuphuka Project Poetry Benefit Happens on Friday, October 14 from 7–9 p.m.
All proceeds go to the Khuphuka Project, an HIV and AIDS community outreach project of our Sister Sangha in South Africa, Dharmagiri. Sangha poets and special guest poet, Thanissara, will be featured.

518 Valencia Street (between 16th and 17th)
Cost: $10–20 (no one will be turned away for lack of funds)

For more information, contact Gayle Markow at gaylemarkow@gmail.com. For more information about Dharmagiri and Khuphuka, please visit www.sfinsight.org

Eugene’s Absences and Guest Teachers
10/2  Spring Washam, East Bay Meditation Center
10/9  Frank Ostaseski, Zen Hospice Project and Metta Institute
10/16 Jacques Verduin, Insight Prison Project and Insight Out
10/23 Donald Rothberg, Spirit Rock Teacher

Pam’s Absences and Guest Teachers
10/26 Trip Weil, DPP graduate and current CDL participant
11/30 Stefano Massei, CDL graduate and teaches meditation in prisons
12/21 TBA
12/28 TBA

To Eugene in light of your recent accident:
May you bear your suffering with grace and ease.

With metta, the San Francisco Insight Sangha
Classes and Retreats

Saturday Daylong Retreat (open to all)
Saturday, October 1 from 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m.
Teachers: Marlena deCarion and Trip Weil
This daylong is included with the Beginning Meditation Class, and is also open to all. It will include periods of sitting and walking, plus a dharma talk.
For details, visit www.sfinsight.org

Brahma Vihara Class
Four Thursday Evenings from 7–9 p.m.
October 27–November 17
Teacher: Anushka Fernandopulle
An important part of Wise Effort is cultivating wholesome states of mind, which we will be doing in this class through the Buddhist framework of the Brahma Viharas or “Divine Abodes” (kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity). Each week we will learn meditation practices to cultivate one of these states and do reflection at home to develop these states in our daily life. The practices are also great ways to develop concentration and focus of mind. Open to all levels of experience.
For details, visit www.sfinsight.org

Thanksgiving Insight Meditation Retreat
November 18–27, 2011
Teachers: Will Kabat-Zinn, Anushka Fernandopulle, Andrea Fella, Patrick Coffey and Teja Bell
Spirit Rock Meditation Center
For details, visit www.spiritrock.org

Being Dharma
November 29–December 4, 2011
Teachers: Pamela Weiss, Eugene Cash, Kittisaro and Thanissara
Spirit Rock Meditation Center
For details, visit www.spiritrock.org

New Year’s Insight Meditation Retreat (LOTTERY)
Teachers: Eugene Cash, Gil Fronsdal, John Travis, Sharda Rogell and Janice Clarfield
Spirit Rock Meditation Center
For details, visit www.spiritrock.org

Embodying the Heart of Wisdom: New Year’s Retreat
Teachers: Pamela Weiss, Yanai Potelnik, Moshin Kelley and Pascal Auclair
Insight Meditation Society, Barre, Massachusetts
For details, visit www.dharma.org

All SFI classes are located in the First Unitarian Universalist Church (UU), on the corner of Franklin and Geary (1187 Franklin) in San Francisco, unless otherwise noted.
For details, visit www.sfinsight.org
San Francisco Insight (SFI) is dedicated to offering the teachings of the Buddha as they develop in the West. Our specific orientation is toward intensive householder (lay) practice. We offer weekly group meditations and dharma talks (lectures), plus classes, meditation retreats, and other events as a community of spirit devoted to the embodiment of awakening in our lives.

Our Weekly Meetings
Our sangha meets Sundays and Wednesdays from 7–9 p.m. at the First Unitarian Universalist Church, 1187 Franklin (at Geary). Each meeting begins with a meditation, followed by a dharma talk and discussion. To allow us to pay rent to the UU Church, compensate the teacher, and cover other expenses, we ask attendees for a donation; whatever you can give is greatly appreciated. If writing a check, make it out to SFI.

Beginning Orientation
Second Sunday of the month, 6 p.m.
A brief introduction to Vipassana meditation and our sangha, led by a senior student.

Vegetarian Potluck
First Sunday of the month, 5:30 p.m.
Socialize informally with your dharma friends. Homemade and store-bought dishes welcome.

Chi Gung
All Sundays except first, 6:15–6:45 p.m.
Pre-sit gentle movement practice to enliven and settle energy flow. No experience required.

Dana Practice
Dana means “generosity.” The Buddha’s teachings are considered priceless but traditionally are given freely in a spirit of generosity. Offering dana (a donation) gives students an opportunity to express their gratitude for the teachings and to cultivate the joy of giving. Most SFI retreats and classes are taught by dana.

Kalyana Mitta Groups
Kalyana mitta means “spiritual friends.” These small groups (typically 6 to 12 people) meet regularly to study and share experiences in support of each other’s practice. Meetings usually include a short meditation and discussion. For more info, contact Ed Ritger at kminfo@sfinsight.org.

Other Ways To Get Involved
Sangha members often engage in outside activities and service projects. Past activities have included homeless outreach; fundraising projects for an AIDS-related community outreach program founded by Buddhist friends in South Africa; the compilation and sale of sangha cookbooks to raise money; picnics in Golden Gate Park; and bike rides.

To learn more, visit www.sfinsight.org or our Yahoo Group (groups.yahoo.com/group/SFInsight).

Got a dharma story, poem or work of art?
To contribute to Sangha News, email sfisanghanews@gmail.com.