

Bear Valley Center for Spiritual Enrichment

A Religious Science Community

"Open at the Top"

February 2021 Newsletter

Sunday Services, 10:30 a.m.

578 Bonanza Trail, Big Bear Lake

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501C3 tax ID #95-3685187

*Our purpose is to inspire and nurture spiritual growth by accepting a loving, all inclusive community through teaching, healing, and serving, for the highest good of all.
We are the Mind of God knowing, the Heart of God loving, and the Hands of God serving.*

Newsletter staff: Editor, Ellen Kesler – Layout Manager, Julie Grandi
Newsies – Mac & Hamish Kesler & Baby Face

February Topics and Speakers

February 7th **Rev. Jean Sweet**
"Love is All You Need"

February 17th **Rev. Alison Benjamin**
"Love's Promise"

February 21st **Michael Benjamin, RScP**
"Love it Up!"

February 28th **Rev. Dr. Sydney Steen**
"Living and Loving as
the Beloved"

*"We never live so intensely
as when we love strongly. We never
realize ourselves so vividly as when
we are in the full glow of love for
others."*

Walter Rauschenbusch

February Calendar

February 3rd 10:00 a.m.
Guided Meditation w Michael Benjamin
Live on Zoom

February 7th 10:00 - 10:20 a.m.
Guided Meditation
10:30 a.m. Service begins
(Live on Zoom)

February 10th 10:00 a.m.
Guided Meditation w Michael Benjamin
Live on Zoom

February 14th VALENTINE'S DAY

February 14th 10:00 - 10:20 a.m.
Guided Meditation
10:30 a.m. Service begins
(Live on Zoom)

12:00 pm
Board of Trustees meeting
Via Zoom

February 15th – PRESIDENTS' DAY

February Calendar (continued)

February 17th 10:00 a.m.

***Guided Meditation w Michael Benjamin
Live on Zoom***

***“In La Kesh” Sacred Circle
Michael Benjamin’
(Leader via Zoom)***

February 21st 10:00 - 10:20 a.m.

Guided Meditation

***10:30 a.m. Service begins
(Live on Zoom)***

***February 22nd “Delightful Deliberate Creators”
Sacred Circle, Nancy Walker, Leader
(Live on Zoom)***

February 24th 10:00 a.m.

***Guided Meditation w Michael Benjamin
(Live on Zoom)***

***February 27th Deep Meditation with Liz Harris
(tentative)***

***9:30 – 11:30 am
(Live on Zoom)***

February 28th 10:00 – 10:20 Guided Meditation

***10:30 Service begins
(Live on Zoom)***

ATTENDANCE...

***Have you been attending online? You can go to:
Bear Valley Center for Spiritual Enrichment
on Facebook or get the Zoom connections on
Facebook for our website and join “in person”***

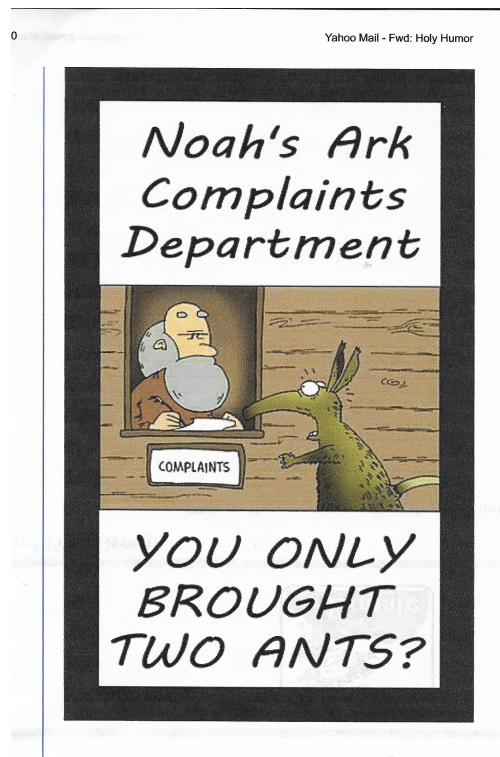
***You can see all the recorded services by either going
to our website or our BVCSE YouTube channel.***

Birthdays!

February 6th Marv Cira

February 9th Sandy Morrell-Lucia

February 19th Fran Fish



Board Article *Mindy Mathewson*

I thought I would share an article I came across for this month's article. I think it's a thought-provoking read that brings us back into balance, and helps us cope with all that's going on in our world today.

Finding Balance In Turbulent Times by Charlotte Adler

“So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.” – T.S. Eliot

We live in strange times. Not exactly a newflash.

The reality of suffering (or ‘Dukkha’ in Pali) is the very first of the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha's Dharma teachings. Both externally in our world, in our lives, for those we love, and within our own hearts. These are of course matched with great joy and beauty, or as the Buddha put it, “The ocean of tears, and almost unbearable beauty” that makes up our human realm.

But what to do? How to live in balance, peace, and joy? Thankfully, in the next three Noble Truths, he offers an explanation for Dukkha, and then in The Noble Eightfold Path, a solution. But, I'll save all that for another time...

One of my favorite stories is that of the great Theravadan meditation teacher (and my personal hero) the Venerable Ajahn Chah, walking through the forest with a group of novice monks. Spotting a large boulder to his right, he asks them “Do you see that boulder?”, “Yes” they reply. “Is it heavy?” he asks them. “Yes,” they reply. Turning to them with a sweet smile he answers, “Not if you don't pick it up!”

Ok, so we all get the concept; don't pick up the rock, but finding a way to respond rather than to react, not to feed into our own insecurities, picking up heavy resentments and fueling discord, and to find a path through confusion, fear and attachment is easier said than done, and requires compassionate and skillful practice. Living in peace and joy is not for the faint-hearted, and in the Sixth Noble Truth, the Buddha helps us to see that a little effort goes a long way.

The Meaning of Right Effort – A Simpler Way?

So, what is Right Effort? There are many teachings about Right Effort (Sammappadhāna in Pali & the sixth part of The Noble Eightfold Path) but in essence, it is simply the effort to be mindful, to be present with loving awareness, learning how to generate or cultivate what is skillful, caring for the world around us, and living more in the now: the effort to abandon old habits and fears of suffering, and the effort to sustain new, positive patterns.

This from Alan Watts, “The art of living in neither careless drifting on the one hand, nor fearful clinging to the past or anticipation of the future. It consists of being sensitive to each moment and regarding it as utterly new and unique, and having the mind and the heart open and wholly receptive.”

Our daily life is by its very nature made up of our activities and habits. By practicing Right Effort, gradually we become more mindful, conscious, and caring about how we drive our car for instance, or how we relate to people we encounter, how we choose and prepare our food, and how we eat our meals. All this leading us to a clearer and calmer state of being. More compassionate to ourselves and therefore to others.

The Buddha often spoke specifically about four states of mind; the four ‘Brahma Viharas’ as divine or god-like dwellings, or four “Sublime States”; kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. He considered these to be the great healers of tension and conflict, builders of harmony and cooperation, and serving as potent antidotes to the poisons of hatred, cruelty, envy and partiality - so widespread in our human realm. The fourth Brahma Vihara is what is known in Buddhist practice as “Equanimity” (or ‘Upekkhā’ in Pali translation). A wonderful quality of calm spaciousness and balance of heart, offering room for one of my personal favorites, the “Sacred Pause”.

“The Sacred Pause” – It’s Spiritual Weight in Gold

The Austrian neurologist, psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, Victor Frankl, says of the need for this spaciousness, “In between stimulus and response there is a space and in that space, lies our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” So basically, when triggered, before firing off that angry text, cutting comment, or bitter look, by pausing, accepting, and simply recognizing what’s going on, comes the space to stop, to regroup and breathe. Yes, it is hard; yes, it hurts, but hurt will pass; pain can be soothed, and no gain will ever be achieved long-term through anger and reactivity.

The Buddhist teacher and psychologist Tara Brach puts this beautifully in her book, Radical Acceptance:

“Often the moment when we most need to pause is exactly when it feels most intolerable to do so. Pausing in a fit of anger, or when overwhelmed by sorrow or filled with desire, may be the last thing we want to do. Pausing can feel like falling helplessly through space – We have no idea of what will happen. We fear we might be engulfed by the rawness of our rage or grief or desire. Yet, without opening to the actual experience of the moment, acceptance is not possible.”

Through meditation, this sense of balance and equanimity will develop naturally, but it can also be cultivated, allowing us the possibility of finding some semblance of peace in our hearts amidst turmoil or fear, if we can recognize, and continue to recognize that life is not in our control, and that we are a tiny part of a great and beautiful dance.

Having been many years in recovery I have recited, possibly a thousand times, the well-known Serenity Prayer: “May I have the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” Wisdom recognizes that although we may deeply love others and offer them assistance, in the end, we must all be there and learn for ourselves. Our spiritual journeys are our own, and only we can be the source of our own liberation. The practice of equanimity helps to provide this balance, combining a wise and understanding mind with a compassionate heart.

Joy & Beauty in the Present Moment

A few years ago, the great Zen master Suzuki Roshi invited a few great up and coming Zen masters to help teach him on some important panel in Houston, Texas. One of these was a man called “Katagiri”, who didn’t speak English very well. When asked to teach Dharma, he became a little embarrassed. Roshi encouraged him, saying, “Hey, you don’t need to speak great English to teach the Dharma. Look I’ll show you.” So, the bell was rung and Suzuki Roshi stood up in front of this huge audience and said these simple words; “Today is today, today is not yesterday. Today is not tomorrow. Today is today,” and then he bowed, got down, and smiling, said to Katagiri, “Ok, six words, right? There’s a Dharma teaching for you.”

In meditation, we learn to breathe, to quiet the mind; opening our hearts to the beauty of things as they really are, coming to rest in the present moment, alive where we are. This is really the game, the essence of spiritual practice, and it is in this moment that we can discover balance, timelessness - how not to be lost in the past or the future. Recognizing that the past is simply memory, and the future is fantasy, we discover that it is only in the reality of the present that we can truly love, awaken, and find peace, understanding, and connection with ourselves and the world around us.

“Our eyes are filled with dust. There is no need to seek a Pure Land somewhere else. We only need lift our heads and see the moon and the stars.”

-Thich Nhat Hanh, 1964

Mindy Mathewson, Treasurer, Board of Trustees

SPEAKERS & TOPICS for FEBRUARY 2021

FEBRUARY 7 – Rev. Jean Sweet -

“Love is All You Need!”

John Lennon had this exactly right. First performed in 1967, Lennon knew the power of slogans to unite people. And he also knew that these words could not be misinterpreted. This is a spiritually-accurate statement. Love is God in action. Love is a verb. For God to complete Itself in our physical world, we must share, care, give, and serve.

FEBRUARY 17 - Rev. Ali Benjamin-

“Love’s Promise”

Love is a unifying thread holding humanity together and comes bearing abundant gifts. Rev. Ali will explore ways to follow this thread to the source and receive love's promise.

FEBRUARY 21 - Michael Benjamin, RScP

“Love It Up!”

Practitioner Michael Benjamin will inspire us as he speaks on the creative process in action, and our energetic relationship to it. “Energy flows where our attention goes”-this is a fact. Let's activate the love connection together.

FEBRUARY 28 - Rev. Dr. Sydney Steen

“Living and Loving as the Beloved Community”

Bear Valley Center for Spiritual Enrichment is part of a global movement committed to unity, shared compassion, spiritual unfoldment, and respect for all life.

"WE BELIEVE in the unity of all life, and that the highest God and the innermost God is one God. We believe that God is personal to all who feel this indwelling presence. We also believe that this is a Universe of Wholeness, Allness, and Oneness. Spirit is a transcendent, perfect Wholeness and in its infinite Inclusivity, harmoniously embraces all seeming opposites. How do we “square” our personal, philosophical, and political differences? Right now, our world seems extremely divided. But what if we each chose to become stewards of a Universal, Beloved Community? Knowing and living from our innate Divinity, changes us, and it also heals the world. Spirit “harmoniously embraces” us. Let’s all learn to embrace each other in that same, loving and peace-filled way, as stewards of the Beloved Community.

Rev. Dr. Sydney Steen will be our guest speaker and will also offer inspiring music in support of this powerful message about what it means to *be* the Beloved Community.

Rev. Jean Sweet





Rev. Dr. Sydney Steen

Inspirational Article

Going Down the Rabbit Hole

We usually take for granted our physical selves. We know we have a body of some size and shape that responds to input (food, air, sights/sounds, etc.) and output (bodily functions, exhalation, responses to our environment, etc.) We also know there is a direct pipeline from our thoughts to our actions. We don't act on every thought the same way we buy every house we think we want, but we recognize our thought processes. Our Science of Mind philosophy gives us tools to create things in our lives from focused, intentional thoughts.

Last December, this entire bit of "reality" broke apart for me. After a shoulder surgery, I took pain meds less than what was prescribed on the label. Three days after surgery, I woke up speaking "word salad". Instead of "Good morning" to my partner, I said something like "Pumpkin together". My long-term memory was affected. I couldn't remember the password into my cell phone. I couldn't remember my last name, or Sue's last name. She phoned 911, gave me an aspirin for possible stroke and I went to the ER.

How did I feel? I have always prided myself on being able to think – to string a couple of thoughts together and send them on their way out into the world to be accepted as a contribution to this universal soup of thoughts. I felt frustrated, at first, that I couldn't tell the ER nurse my name. When I was transferred to the desert, I thought, "Good grief! How do I tell the nurse at the Palm Springs hospital what my name is?" I could only hope that Sue would be able to find where I went and to tell them who I was. It never occurred to me to try to write my name.

My memory and my speech came back over the course of a couple of days. I had numerous tests to figure out the cause of this weird happening (never did figure it out). At some point, I surrendered to

the process and understood that I was still me even if I couldn't say so. Centering, I *knew* that I belonged to this Universe, this Spirit, and it gave me a sense of peace; that all was well. I focused outward and spent enriching time with the hospital staff and my "roomie" at the hospital. I found patience to heal whatever had happened.

Today, I look into myself and can't see any differences in my memory or my ability to do simple tasks. What I have learned is a new appreciation for how I take for granted these simple things. I especially appreciate, as Michael Benjamin says, "I am not my body. I am not even my mind." I am a unique part of Spirit.

Namastè,

Sherry Noone

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

Update on the Huffmans –Larry is in recovery at home and can walk with a walker assisting. KC is holding off getting a knee replaced due to Covid and has a lumbar issue which is also on hold due to the Covid.

Dr. Cal Pramann is now home and recovering nicely. Long road ahead to get things going again!

Katherine Ruth is having challenges with her eyes and teeth. She needs surgery on her eye (not cataract; macular), but they've diverted all the surgeons to work the Covid situation.

THE FUNNY PAGES

Q: Where can single men over the age of 70 find women who are interested in them?

A. Try a bookstore under "Fiction".

Q: What can a man do while his wife is going through menopause?

A. Keep busy. If you're handy with tools, you can finish the basement. When you're finished, you'll have a place to live.

Q: How can you avoid that terrible curse of elderly wrinkles?

A. Take off your glasses.

Q: Why should older people use valet parking?

A. Valets don't forget where they parked the car.

Q: Is it common for seniors to have problems with short term memory storage?

A. Storing memory is not a problem. Retrieving it is the problem.

Q: What is the most common remark made by seniors they enter antique stores?

A. "Gosh, I remember these!"

Q: How can a wife increase the heart rate of her senior husband?

A. Tell him she's pregnant.

7/6/2020

Yahoo Mail - Fwd: Holy Humor

