

2013-04-10 The Dharma of IMC

Wed, 9/2 3:01PM • 1:30:12

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, imc, teachings, offer, retreats, teachers, dharma, practice, community, buddhism, buddhist, retreat center, tradition, called, burma, lineages, vision, mindfulness, years, grow

SPEAKERS

Andrea Fella, Gil Fronsdal

Welcome, good evening.

This this evening is about IMC. We're going to talk about IMC a little about its history about what happens here about the philosophy behind what happens here and how that influences what, what what goes on here. And so for some of you, I recognize many of you so I know that many of you will probably actually know a lot of this. This information this, what we're going to be talking about here, but there are some of you I don't recognize and if there are any of you who are new here, in particular, I welcome you. It's nice. This evening will be this could serve as a great orientation for IMC and we don't do this very often. I asked Gil the other day when the last time this happened was and he said he thought it was sick. years ago, that we did this. So it's it's been a while since we kind of reviewed explored what's happening here at IMC and in the intervening six years, there's been actually quite a bit of change and so, but the philosophy, the philosophy and the history kind of remain the same. So we'd like to start with a little bit of history. And since this is a Buddhist community, we could say that the history begins 2500 years ago with the Buddha. And I'll give like a 30 foot 35,000 foot overview of the history of our lineages are the threads essentially of the Dharma that have come to us that we're practicing here. Actually, it may be more like a Moon's eye view. It's going to be a very, very high level view. So, when the Buddha lived 2500 years ago in India and after he died, the he had a number of disciples a number of followers and they kind of spread through Asia and in that spread of the Buddhist teachings and practices through Asia, as Buddhism met different cultures, different lineages, different teachings became emphasized. And there are a number of different of those lineages and the main lineage that we carry here is the Theravada Theravadan lineage, which in the term Theravada basically means, teaching of the elders.

And the, the Buddhist scholars many of the Buddhist scholars feel that this particular thread of Have the Buddhist teachings of the ones that exist today of the particular threads of the Buddhist teachings that exist today. This is the one that's closest to what the historical Buddha might have taught, probably taught. So, the teachings are grounded in the, the texts the oldest Buddhist texts called the Pali Canon. And, and we both of us have had have had training in some of the central Theravada traditions in Asia. the key threads that were that are coming to us, essentially the lineages are carried through the teachings and so the lineages in IMC are coming because Gil and I have practiced in various lineages for the Main Theravada lineages come through Burma and Thailand. They come through in Burma Mahasi Sayadaw. One of the great meditation masters of the last century he lived in in the 50s. And one of the amazing things about Mahasi Sayadaw is that he, he he didn't see a distinction in terms of the monastic and the lay practitioners. Well, I think you probably saw a distinction but he didn't. He didn't prevent the lay practitioners in Burma from having access to any of the teachings and he created retreat centers may have been one of the early retreat centers created in Burma. Through Mahasi

Sayadaw. He wanted there to be the possibility for lay people to come and meditate and practice and get the same teachings that the monastics get. And we, I think, in the lay Western tradition owe a great debt of gratitude to Mahasi Sayadaw for opening the teachings to lay people. So, both Gil and I have practiced in this tradition through Mahasi Sayadaw all through teaching, having been exposed to teachers in Burma. Did you actually practice with Mahasi Sayadaw? No. Okay, so, practicing with some of Mahasi Sayadaw's students, U Pandita, Sayadaw Lakkhana, U Kundala. So there are many great meditation masters who trained with Mahasi Sayadaw and many of the Dharma teachers in the western arm in the western insight, tradition, studied with these these teachers in Burma. And this is essentially how the western insight tradition came to us. Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzberg all went to Thailand to Burma to India and met the teachings through various teachers, who often had this connection back to Mahasi. And then there's another thread of the Theravada tradition that came through Jack Kornfield, which isn't from Thailand, the Thai forest tradition through Ajahn Chah, another great meditation master of the last century. And his his framing of the teaching was much more integrated practice. He emphasized meditation, but he also emphasized the Dharma in whatever we do. And so these lineages have come together here. And also the Zen tradition through Gil Gill as our our founding teacher here, studied in both the Theravada tradition in Burma and in the Zen tradition, both in Japan and here in California. So we are kind of a blending of several lineages here, but the kind of foundation the lineages the tera, vaada lineage coming through many Many of our teachers I mean, we both studied in in Burma. And we also both studied with a number of the Western teachers who studied in Burma. So Jack Kornfield, Joseph Goldstein. And they carry that lineage as well. So the Dharma that this Theravadan lineage really came to the west through Jack Kornfield Joseph Goldstein, Sarah and Sharon Salzberg in the founding of meditation centers in Massachusetts IMS and California at Spirit Rock. And it's out of that ground. They that was 35 years ago, I think around 35 years ago that Jack, Sharon and Joseph came back from being so inspired by what they'd learned in the teachings in Asia and decided to create retreat centers here. And this is the founding of something new actually, they They brought a they brought a perspective of lay teaching. So they had studied with monastics and brought the teachings to a lay community, primarily a lay community and that this center has really grown up out of that tradition. We're a lay a lay practice community, with lay teachers. And this is relatively unusual in the history of Buddhism for lay teachers to be creating, founding their own meditation centers, not not not so connected to monasteries, we have the connection, of course with the monastic tradition, but we're not actually associated with a monastery. And that's what's unusual. Here in the West. This is a new form a new form of Buddhism arising in the West through this less tradition. There is a precedent for this though I just came across this the other day, looking in the in the suttas that I found in a footnote somewhere and one of the texts that there were seven teachers at the time of the Buddha each who had a retinue seven lay teachers at the time of the Buddha each who had a retinue of 500 students were 500 basically is codeword for a lot. It doesn't it doesn't necessarily mean there were 500 students but a lot of students. So there were lay teachers at the time of the Buddha and I found that an interesting reflection. So, do you want to talk a little about your your background.

So, Andrea Fella and I are the primary teachers here at IMC. And so part of the what IMC is is partly been shaped by how we've practice in our experience in the Dharma. And so for me, I started practicing when I was meditation when I was about 20. And God really took me a while to get serious about it. I think probably 22. And then I started practicing every day. And my introduction to it was, in a serious way was to the Zen tradition. And I was a very happy Zen student, primarily because the Zen Meditation was so meaningful for me. And because the Zen Meditation was immediate thing for I wanted to kind of go deeper. And the way to go deeper was to go to a Zen center. And so I kept wanting to go deeper. And so from being living in San Francisco, I went to the monastery and the monastery here in Carmel Valley, I went to Japan and practice in the monasteries there. And as I kept going deeper into Zen eventually it was ordained as a Zen priest. And then as I continued to kind of so but at

some point I was introduced to this Vipassana practice in first in Thailand and then Burma. And that was very meaningful for me to do this particular practice is probably the most meaningful meditation practice that I've done. And, and I didn't kind of reject the Zen practice it wasn't like I you know, apostate or something. Um, but it's, there's no no conflict between them. But I was very happy with the with the Vipassana teaching, I came back to this country and continue to do a bit with came back a little bit to this country and continue with Zen did we pass into this practice more back and forth some eventually went to graduate school in Buddhist studies. And then was invited to become a teacher both in the vipassana tradition and in the Zen teacher tradition. And so that training so now, you know, qualified to teach in both. And then in 1990, when I came to do a doctoral program here at Stanford, I was invited to lead the small sitting group that was meeting in Palo Alto, slowly over these last 23 years, grew to the center here.

Then a little bit about my history, I came, I came to the Dharma. More recently, I, I think I was 30,37, 38 when I met the Dharma, and I dove in really fast really quickly. I was in the Peace Corps when I met the Dharma and a friend had sent me a book and I just began practicing on my own primarily in daily life. And so my first primary practice was actually daily. I've practice without any teachers. So I kind of found my way on my own. And then when I got back from the Peace Corps I had actually started sitting but I got back from the Peace Corps and I was introduced to Gil and began sitting retreats and I kind of dove in headfirst. And I think I did 50 days of residential retreat that first year I came back from the Peace Corps, and then started going on three month retreats and that I was drawn to go to hear my teachers teachers, so I went to Burma for a few months, been to Burma several times now, studying with U Pandita, U Janaka, and U Tejaniya, another lineage that's coming in here to this center. And in about 2004, Gil started training me to be a teacher. And it was one of my trips having come back from Burma, I came back from Burma and I had been managing managing retreats. Spirit rock and started managing retreats in Burma at a retreat center in Saigon hills in northern Burma. And Gil invited me to start teaching. So that began my teacher training and then began also was invited into the spirit rock teacher training program. I don't really remember I think it was about 2002 when I gave my first Dharma talk here or something like that, so it's about 11 years ago that I gave my first Dharma talk.

What else?

Oh, so yes, the other last piece I'll just say about myself now is that I'm not only teaching here at IMC, but I'm now on the Spirit Rock teachers Council. And so I'm I'm involved in quite a number of programs up there in particular. The I'm the guiding teacher for the next dedicated practitioners program and I'm participating in the teacher training. program that's going on now. So, my, my life has become completely teaching oriented in the last 44 years or so I had to let go of my, my computer work to become a full time teacher. Now Gil's going to talk a little bit about the history of IMC.

So as I said, I came into this group in 1990. And it was a pre existing group is started in 1986, in Menlo Park, and by 1998, it moved to the Presbyterian Church in Palo Alto, and a small group, remember, think 1215 people met in a small room. And I'd come You know, by primary influence in kind of growing up in Buddhism was some of the ethics or some of the ethics and the ether Some of the attitudes or understandings of being a practitioner that I learned from Zen center, through zen, and, but also kind of, in the whole Buddhist tradition, certain kind of attitude that you don't teach, unless someone asks you to teach, you don't really want to be a teacher is exactly, it was kind of what I learned. And so the ritual of that is you don't teach until someone rituals you have to do this, but you don't teach until someone asks you three times. So I was asked to take to help to take over this group because the facilitator for it gotten sick. And, and so for the first couple of years, year and a half, I considered myself a guest. And I've been at, you know, guest teacher, I've been asked to teach there and I wasn't gonna do anything

unless they asked me to do something. So I showed up every Monday. And also from my Zen training, I learned that it was really valuable to be rooted in one place that somehow in a teacher or practitioners keeps showing up over and over again, that it creates a stability and supports people in their practice because so easy to kind of wander off and really be grounded. So I kind of made it a commitment to just keep showing up every Monday and teaching as much as I could. And, and for the first probably nine months, there was no financial support for this because that wasn't I didn't think about that. They didn't think about that. But after about nine months, there was they had collected a basket for to pay rent to the Presbyterian Church. And I think that was \$75 surplus after nine months. And so they had a boat discussion what to do with this money. And so then I was given it. And that was the beginning of financial support for this. And then, but after about probably a year and a half, two years, I realized it was kind of a fiction that I was the guest teacher there and that I should only Things that I got invited, because I was there long enough and steady enough that the invitation to be a teacher for the group was kind of implicit that I was supposed to take a leadership role. And the leadership role I found very interesting and eye opening for me, took me a while to learn this. But one is to get because I was the most senior practitioner the most experience to have some sense of what was possible for people in their practice, and, and then helped create the opportunities people to step into that possibility of growth. So the simplest thing was after a year and a half or something, the idea that these people have been meditating regularly enough for some time, it'd be really, they have the potential now of going further by having a one day sitting or one day retreat. So I suggested we have a one day retreat. And then we did a weekend retreat and we started doing different things and various classes, classes and meta classes and loving kindness, practice classes, in the precepts and so on. At some point, it became clear that part of my role was to be a little bit of a visionary, to have a vision of what was possible. So people could grow into it as both as individual and as a community.

So at some point, it became clear that the Monday nights were to be moved to a new place, the Friends Meeting House, we got really packed Monday, and people started talking about we should find a bigger place. So we can grow even more. And I was reluctant to grow bigger that way, because we were about 200 hundred and 10 people would come Monday nights. And that felt enough to me, I didn't I didn't like the idea of having to speak to a bigger group. Party, I was worried about the dynamics that would happen if I was sitting in a room full of you know, 200 people, I didn't think it would be good for my head. And I thought was better to be a little bit smaller. And so instead of doing bigger Monday, we instead we started the second group on Thursdays. And then at some point we started a third group on Sunday mornings and part two lavalley then around 1996, I started having a clear sense that having a spiritual home for ourselves would be really useful for this community. There's a way in which, you know, one thing if you show up and other people's place you renting a room from Monday night, you have to set it up and you have to leave it and you can't use it whenever you want. And you don't have the associations to it, like it's your place to go and just be at your in your own home, like you're right. And so, I could see that this community of people would grow and develop in important ways as a community as individuals, if we had our own center. And, and so, then we went through the process of incorporating Steve Gassner was part of that process. And, and 1997 we were incorporated as a church in preparation for the possibility of having our own place. At this time we were using and in any given month, we were probably using five different facilities around the peninsula. We were using Friends Meeting House twice a week. We're using Portola Valley once a week, we were using either St. Mark's church in Palo Alto for one day sittings once a month. And we were and someone was letting me use a space in someone's home and the park from my office. And then we rented a couple times a year we rented the Jikoji Zen center up on skyline. So we were kind of moving around all the time and doing all this stuff and having the office in Menlo Park was good because before that, I would good time of the year I'd meet with people one on one in parks in Palo Alto. And in the wintertime, I'd meet with them at a kind of restaurant coffee shop called Cafe Verona, and people would sitting there you know having

interview with me or like you know, crying because you know talking about some deep deep issue in their life and it was a little bit awkward to be you know, they have this this this you know your account slinger, you know, so that heads office in Menlo Park for a while was very nice. And so then we started looking for a place and through a good support from our community. And through, we've we found this place here and could afford to buy it. And it was very important for us because that all dāna, all donation things is very important for us. It was very important to be very careful about the financing of this so that we never want to be in any kind of financial pressure. Because we don't want to make decision based on what we have to do make more money. So we were only going to buy a church replace like this, if we could have enough money in reserve to have a buffer. And so we were able to do that. So I think I don't know how long the buffer was, but it was like three or four years that we could pay our basic expenses without having to worry. Yeah, so we had a mortgage but then with a mortgage we paid off in like three years really fast. Now we've paid off in Three years. And 2001 we moved in here 2002. By 2005, at least latest we were finished. So we own this building outright. And now, and it's been true that having this place here as a lot of us to grow, and beautiful ways, and we've actually kind of slowly you know, we start adding programs this net, let's try this. Let's try that and, and so slowly things have grown over these 11 years that we've been here and also a growing community of seasoned experienced practitioners, some of them now a good cadre of them and now begin to teach her as well. So it's been very satisfying to have this grow and develop.

We are and so then, early on in that process, maybe around 2004 2005, we started having a vision about having a place to hold retreats of our own. We were offering many retreats many means anywhere from three, essentially to seven a year we offered. But the places we had to rent were both expensive. And also they weren't available as freely as we would like to have them. And we would like to be able to offer more retreats and having more in our style. And so we had this vision about having our own retreat center. And then in 2006, someone came forward with a very large gift to us. It's a little bit unexpected. That would make it possible for us to begin pursuing this dream of having a retreat center. And we spent five years looking for property and raising more money. And then in, I guess, two, three years ago, two and a half years ago, we found this property and outside of Santa Cruz, that we bought and renovated and back in November, we started our insight retreat center. So IMC has grown quite a bit because not only do we have this building here in this community here now we have this separate problem. In Santa Cruz that IMC is the caretaker for. So that's kind of the growth and development kind of quickly for us here.

Can you hear me? Yeah. Okay.

Gil mentioned, the idea that that teachings being offered freely is important to us and that he just said that in brief and I know he's gonna he's going to talk about that a little bit more. But that has been a really foundational principle here at IMC, to offer the teachings completely freely. It is a little bit unusual in, in our lineage in our tradition here, this Western inside tradition to to offer everything completely freely.

And it impacts it impacts not only just the, the flavor of how teachings are offered here, but, but the that it also connects to the way that we want to make our teachings available as widely as possible, as accessible as possible. And so, while we are a Buddhist lineage, and in fact this notion of offering things freely comes directly from the Buddha. So, we can really appreciate that aspect that that was his his way of approaching the teachings. But here, while our teachings do come through the Buddhist lineage, we are more focused on the practices. Then we are on Buddhism per se the we do teach Buddhist teachings but it's more. It's more it's it feels to me more integrated in what's practical for our daily lives. How do we, how do we use these teachings for what we are dealing with day to day. And so,

you know, it's not it's not necessary to be a Buddhist, to value, the teachings of mindfulness, of loving kindness, of generosity and of ethical conduct. Those really kind of being the foundational teachings that we, we connect to here, these four mindfulness, loving kindness, generosity and ethical conduct. And these really underscore the values that we, we hold. And these are universal values. They're not just Buddhist values. So it's it's not Not necessary to be a Buddhist to come here. You don't have to sign up to be a Buddhist to come here. There are there are opportunities for that in a way. I mean, we, we do offer a few things a year that are kind of more ritual based. But it's not at all necessary. And I don't see it as important for anybody to sign up to be a Buddhist to value the teachings I mean, the teachings of mindfulness in particular, the teaching of mindfulness has really integrated through our culture. There's the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, which came through Jon Kabat Zinn having practiced at the insight meditation society with Joseph and Jack and share and that has been an infiltration of mindfulness into our society that mindfulness based cognitive therapy, mindfulness and education so many different ways that mindfulness is coming into our society, that we can actually appreciate that Buddhism has offered us this gift. But there's a lot of a lot of people who are gaining the value of these teachings without ever really knowing it comes from Buddhism. So it's not really necessary to, to sign up to be a Buddhist in order to gain benefit from the teachings here. The neuron kind of two sides in a way to the mindfulness practice. There's the kind of basic teaching of mindfulness which encourages us to be present in the moment. Looking at what's happening here, and now, and this is a beautiful It's a beautiful training. It's a beautiful Way to learn about our ourselves in our minds and our psychology. And then there's others another side of our practice the practice that we explore here that's kind of attuned to a goal, to the possibility of freedom of awakening. This I would say is kind of there's the two sides of the practice mindfulness practice, we offer the present moment practice or what might be we might call the psychological side of the benefit of the practice, and then the possibility of attaining or reaching a deep freedom, a deep peace that we could call the liberative aspect of the teaching, that the practices we offer here. To me the liberty of aspect of the teachings, the possibility for Complete full. freedom from suffering is an important part of my own practice. And I do in the teacher seat, I feel I hold that. But it's not what I'm always talking about. A lot of what I talk about in the teacher seat has to do with how do you work with anger in your daily life? You know what, how can you be in a conversation with someone and maintain a sense of connection and rootedness in yourself? So that there's the practice of mindfulness in the moment. Being a key part of our teaching. So these two Gil talks about this in a way as being the present moment practice of the mindfulness in the present moment. And mindfulness is part of a future oriented the aiming towards a goal in the future. They may sound like they're contradictory or in conflict, somehow a teaching for just entering the present moment and a teaching towards a goal. But they really come together in the present moment in that we only can move towards a goal by following the path in the present moment. So, our exploration here at IMC we try to offer a range of programs of teachings of opportunities that cover the range of people that come to IMC. Some people come to IMC just hoping for a little bit of support in their daily lives. How do I talk to my partner? How do I get through a day at work without being so distraught and some people come to IMC and after some time actually find they're so inspired they want to go off to a monastery in Burma and become an a nun. ordained or to go off to become a monastic and really turn their life over to the Dharma. And so there's a wide range of people and we want to be able to offer things that support whoever walks in the door. And I really feel like we do cover that range. There's, I'd like to just talk about some of the things that we offer.

There's a, you know, a range from beginning programs to we hope at some point teacher training, not just yet but but there's there's just there's a wide range of programs and retreats that we offer here. So I'm just going to tell you some of what we what happens here. It's kind of mind blowing, to think of going from the Monday night sitting, and then to the few sitting groups we had a week in the variety of places to what has happened. What is it unfolded from having a center. What I'm going to describe here has unfolded because we have this place. And I think that's a beautiful reflection just how much this home

has allowed the Dharma to, to flourish, how much has come about. So our regular weekly offerings include a Sunday morning sitting, a Monday evening sitting. A Thursday, a Tuesday morning sitting and a Tuesday evening sitting along with a Tuesday night Spanish Dharma offering and a Wednesday morning, half day retreat, sitting in walking kind of little silent half day retreat, and then yoga we offer Monday evening and Thursday morning. That's just our regular weekly offerings. And then, two three times a year we offer introductory classes which are available for For all but they're one of the main ways in I think for people to begin to understand the practice that we do here. If you just come to the Monday night sitting, it might take you a while to begin to understand what the practices are how to engage in the meditation. So the introductory classes actually teach the practice of meditation. Then we offer one day retreats, which is kind of an extension in a way of the introductory classes.

We have daily life practice program, which I I tend to be the one who's primarily teaching the daily life practice program twice a year I offer a non residential daily life practice retreat and for people who have attended that non residential daily life practice retreat, there's the opportunity then to join an ongoing daily life practice group, which offers a few other opportunities for exploring daily life practice. There's a Dharma practice program, which is a monthly meeting usually from September through June or so, which explores it's a day long meeting that happens once a month, which explores themes in depth This year, we're doing the Eightfold Path. And the addition this that happened this year with these Dharma practice days is that you could have many people signed up for the about 30 people signed up to participate in a mentoring program, where they would have the opportunity to meet with mentors, once a month to to explore the theme of the month in more depth. So there's a number of the senior practitioners here who are serving as mentors in that program. Their neighborhood groups that we've coordinated those, I think we have that periodically going on. We just started another round of neighborhood groups recently, but I know some neighborhood groups, and these meet in people's homes. Some neighborhood groups have been going on for years. They start with one of these kind of organiz, organized, organized, organized things that we do here. And then they just keep going. We have Family Programs. This is one of the great areas of the flower and of the Dharma. Here we have the Dharma sprouts, which are the kindergarten through third graders, the Dharma rocks, which are the third through fifth graders, the Dharma tweens, which are the sixth through eighth graders and the Dharma teens, which are the high schoolers. And then we also have a mindful parenting program. We in the family program, there are also occasional NFL once a year I think, for the last few years, we've been doing In a Family Retreat, which has grown somewhat from the spirit rock Family Retreat, and the families here in this community said, Could we have one of those. And so a couple of years ago, Gil, had the first one of those and that's continuing. The next one will be this this month at Jikoji.

Their support groups for people with chronic illness, life threatening illness, and Buddhism and the 12 step. There are social gatherings through Dharma friends. All of these programs have happened. Usually, because someone said, What didn't? Couldn't could we do this? Could we have this happen? Could could we have a family program? And initially, I think they would come to Gil and say, Would you do a family program? And he quickly realized, I think that He couldn't do everything. And so part of the way this has all flowered is that when people have come with ideas, Gil has very wisely said, Would you like to lead it? How What can we do? How can we make it happen without me doing all the teaching? And so the all of these programs have have happened because someone has come up and said, I, you know, could we could we have this and then been willing to step forward into some kind of a leadership role. And so that's been a big part. And again, we'll talk more about that aspect. Actually, that's a big part of practice here at IMC is the involvement in volunteering in finding the way that the Dharma for you wants to express itself and that may be for you just sitting quietly in the room and not talking for a couple of years or it may be that There's an inspiration that you have, that you'd like to share with with the community. There are also other other kind of programs that are kind of tangential

but still very integrated with IMC. There's the audio Dharma website, which has really flowered that was another Gil is a true visionary. He doesn't he didn't think he was a visionary but he is a true visionary. I don't know when he came up with the idea I think it was called radio Dharma initially. And radio Buddhism. Me came he told me I have this idea about radio Buddhism. What do you think I thought? What is that going to be about? I don't know. That's kind of strange. But it's flowered into this amazing thing. Basically, audio Dharma has pretty much all the recordings of most events that happen here, including this we're recording this this is going to go up onto audio dharma. We record day Long's we record pretty much Pretty much everything that happens here. And so that's a resource that offers courses. It offers Dharma talks. And there's this now we have this entire widespread community that's all over the world, actually, of people who listen to talks from IMC and feel like they're part of this community. Every now and then somebody will come into my sitting group, and they'll come up to me and they'll say, they're kind of looking around why died and they're saying, I'm from Australia. And I've been listening to you for two years. And I'm here. I can't believe I'm here. And I am seeing. So there's this, this kind of really widespread network. And we're seeing that too, with the new retreat center, people coming to retreats, who from all over the country who are thrilled to be coming to meet us face to face and to meet the community that they've been participating in for All these years. So we also offer an online introductory course a couple of times a year through audio Dharma, which meets again, you know, people from all over the world sign up for that, I think somewhere between 150 and 250 people sign up for that course when it's offered. It's again a way that that the Dharma is reaching out from the center, we have way more impact on the world than is outwardly visible. It's quite amazing. Then the, the Sati center is another vision of gills, which provides more of the Buddhist kind of side of the training more of the the, the suit suit oriented, the actual teachings. The actual kind of perhaps, we could say, I can't think of the word study the study. Yes, the study. Buddhism and in the Sati center, we have these Buddhist study de Long's, we may offer some retreats at the retreats at the new Retreat Center is the affiliate retreat, actually a study center? And so yeah, we're having a retreat in a few weeks that will be the first Sati center retreat, which will be offered by a monastic, a study retreat on the foundations of mindfulness. And the Study Center also is the home for a chaplaincy program.

Another one of Gil's visions really is this little fountain of of ideas. I won't talk too much about the chaplaincy program and that and then more recently an another aspect of the Sati Center has been the creation of a Sati Institute for Buddhist studies, which is offering a master's degree in Buddhist studies in conjoining with the graduate theological you in Berkeley. So this is partly connected with the idea of chaplaincy, because Buddhist chaplains generally get a master's in divinity in order to become chaplains, and there wasn't quite a way to do that. And this, I think, was part of the founding of this idea that finding a way for the Buddhist chaplains to get this kind of Master's in divinity training. And then we have retreats, which I'll talk more about later.

With us, it's been an hour so hopefully still engaged. The Yeah, it's kind of an amazing thing that we start from this little thing in Palo Alto or Menlo Park, and we've grown up to be so much here and sometimes I think maybe easy to take it for granted were established institution and, and I still remember we were just a little you know, all we had was a key that will open the door and so we've grown quite a bit. There was a time in the mid 1990s, where I said we have to stop growing. And we I could declared a moratorium on growth. That didn't work well. The so one of the one of the opportunities with owning a building like this was to enhance the sense of a community, that it's a community of people practicing together. And for me, I think of us as IMC as as practice focused rather than teacher focused. So even though I feel it's a little unfortunate, the way we set up here is that you know, was icons half circles, going to focus, the focal point is kind of sometimes the teacher is not even the Buddha. And the kind of little bit efficient that way in terms of the my preferred way would be all sat in the circle, but then you have need a bigger building and loudspeakers, bigger loudspeakers. But the

idea of a circle is that we're all in it together, practicing together and the teachers are practicing Just as well as everyone else is practicing and we're sharing the practice, the practice is at the center, not a teacher, and also an instance not the teachings either the teachings are important, but the teachings are here to support the practice and the practical benefits that come out of here. And it's a time honored Buddhist idea that practicing community is very supportive. It's one thing to practice alone. It's another thing to practice with other practitioners, where you bump up against each other, you learn from each other, you can have conversations about the practice together. You can be in conflict with each other in a good way in the sense that you good way means that it's a place you can kind of talk about the conflict and work it out. Because the commitment I hope for a Buddhist community like ours, is we never turn our backs towards anybody. But you know, it doesn't mean we don't have conflict, but then we meet and try to discuss it and work it out. And so part part of that not turning our back towards anybody, so always having to do or when we're when we're done, lock made programs and Anybody can come in here. And, and we try to be welcoming even though some people don't feel very welcomed when they come here. Because, you know, we're kind of quiet, no one's no one greets them. But eventually I think people stay calm long enough, it feels like a friendly group of people. But we try, I try, you know, we don't want to shun anyone. And we've had people come in off the street who were a little challenging for some of us. And I've tried to create a situation where we're hold them and so community and make space for them, rather than saying, you know, you can't be here. And so he has to be inclusive, accepting of people to be open and have have the community parking port and park. So the community, so we've created a community meditation center, and it's been very satisfying to do this in Redwood City. It could have been elsewhere. But one of the satisfying things has been, how many people from the local community here run into us and by used to driving down the street, and then they say something like, well, I've been looking for something like this for years or you know, or Can't believe it's bright in my own neighborhood. And so many people do this here in Redwood City, that I think there should be a place like this in every town. Because they're finding there's probably interest like this all over. And, and that's kind of my my, you know, more of my vision is, I would rather have more in this is relatively small church, if you call it a church and more of these small places sprinkled around the peninsula, then they have, you know, a mega church, you know, I think is something healthy about the size because the size helps create community. And I think our success as a center has a lot to do with having created a sense of community that is fairly porous and pretty adaptable to the different needs that people have. There are people who've told me that have meaningful lives to come here because for years, they can come and sit in the back and no one bothers them. No one asked them or anything, and they'd like to come someplace the only place they can come and public, where people leave them alone. And other people come in here And say this is an unfriendly group, because they wanted their extroverts maybe and they wanted people to greet them. And so it's a little bit of takes a while then to make the connection. But then people do make a connection here and one of the great ways to make a connection to kind of enter into the community in a deeper way is to be a volunteer. And I think a good percentage of the people who do offer to be volunteers do it because they want to be part of a community in a more kind of integrated way.

The idea of of, so one of the one of the aspects of Buddhism, one of the ways Buddhist teachings or philosophy has been divided sometimes is between that part of Buddhism that has form and that which is formless. And form is often rituals, robes, particular ways of techniques of practice, a ways of holding yourself, the temples, Buddha's, you know, all the forms all the stuff in the behavior. As you can see, for me what you can see, and the formless is what you can see, doesn't have a physical form that there are behavior that you can watch. And, and liberation is usually understood to belong to the formless realm. It doesn't really it might be expressed in behavior might be expressed in what you do and what you create, but that it's a liberation and freedom of heart that has no form. And in that free that formless space of freedom of awareness, of compassion that might be there, that that's the deepest and the

fullest teachings and are the kind of possibility of this practice here. So little bit partly to align ourselves with this kind of formless dimension of what freedom is. We're a little bit formless here, and I IMC. We don't have a lot of forums and people bow for is not required. We have a you know, we have a Buddha but Some people say that in much of the lighting, it's so dark, you can't even tell what you know, it's kind of disappears and the darkness and the, the, you know, we don't have robes and we ring bells at the end of the sitting, but there's not a lot of rituals and, you know, stuff that goes on here just a minute to kind of forgive people to kind of get along together. The and, and that you know, and so that's primarily for two reasons. One is, but the main one, the important one is that it's meant to express the formless nature of freedom itself, not to be bound by a form. And some people say that that kind of teaching and approach is actually a much more difficult way of learning than when you have a lot of forms, because then it's really up to you. The other side of that formless is it to be over casual. And so we're by design here casual as well, not only because it expresses the full This aspect of freedom, but also because to make it relaxed and easy for people to come and feel comfortable here, the not only for people who are not interested in Buddhism and for many reasons, but also because as a as a as a as a meditation center in a community and maybe in an urban suburban area, people work, people have family and obligations of many kinds. We want to like it like its beach, people feel comfortable and coming and going as they need to. So we don't really tell people to cut you know, you don't have to come on time to be here. You can leave anytime you want. And so, you know, there are I've had people who were used to other Buddhist centers say, Gil, we have to have strong, you know, close the doors and lock the doors from the beginning of sittings and no one has to they're late. They're, you know, they have to learn how to come on time. And, you know, it's a it's a it's a useful way to teach that way. But I think it's an orange To make it accessible to the kind of life that people live here, we have one hand it looks casual and other hand, it's expressing something very deep and profound about the nature of freedom itself.

And part of that, then is the freedom of liberation, the openness of liberation, the open handedness of it goes along with the idea that we offer everything freely here. And it's perfectly a practice for everyone here, especially for the teachers to show up and just teach freely, and not tried to try not to be concerned about, you know, any kind of thing we might get in return financial return for doing it. And that's our dedication to try to stay pure, clean as we can without offering it freely. And so, everything here is offered as freely we don't charge for anything here. Not only don't we charge as probably most of you realize, it's actually fairly rare that anybody talks about that even just you pass the donor box and donation box. Every time you leave so you know, it's kind of obvious but but my, my, my kind of hope for this is that people would come here and feel quite relaxed and easy to come and after someone's new, and after coming three or four months, they kind of look around see what's going on here that no one's asking for money. I mean, isn't that kind of unusual in our society, and then the teachings of generosity, the teachings of open handedness, the teachings of generosity and gratitude and goodwill that represents this, what we're doing here, somehow sinking deeper to the heart and they understand something that they wouldn't understand if there was a monetary exchange. The and so part of that is I think we want to cultivate in Buddhist practice, an open generous heart because of the generosity and also something that expresses the freedom of not clinging and holding things. And so much of what we're set up here is is to help support that gentleman If when people pay people to have it, and one of the ways is to volunteer, everything that happens here, except occasionally like last week, we had to call in rotor route rotor router, but we paid them but, but we've had the kitchen remodeled, and that was a that was a one of the members here who stepped forward and said, I'm gonna offer to remodel the kitchen. And my labor is my donation to the community, but the you know, IMC paid for the parts. And so there's, you know, there's a tremendous amount of volunteerism that supports this place years ago, we counted 150 volunteers, and anything from changing the flowers to people who kind of like some people like in the past, it's been like grayness Friedman. It's like a full time job, but she did, what she

was, you know, volunteering yourself. And so everything is kind of all the labor to run this place is run by volunteers. It's quite remarkable that it should work. This way, and I wouldn't want to have any other way I'd rather have a shrink and become less, because that's so meaningful. And so such a profound way of practicing the Dharma is to practice in that kind of field, the generosity and goodwill that comes with it. The in terms of the philosophy here of the Dharma, that is one of the aspects has to do with the nature of the teachers, how the teachers are seen. There's many different attitudes, understanding of the role of teachers and different lineages of Buddhism. One end or the extreme is the guru model that you find in some traditions where you basically are obedient to the guru and you have to kind of turn your almost your decision making over to the guru and you're told what to do and it's a complete surrender to the teacher. the other end there the extreme is that the teacher is a what's called a kalyāṇa-mitta which means a good spiritual friend. So it's more like the feeling is more like their friend and supporter, their fellow traveler with you, they feel a bit further along in the path. And they're kind of there as your friend and support, work and that's in that range from the guru to the to the good spiritual friend. And we are closer to that a good spiritual friend, rather than a guru. I think both Andrea and I are not particularly eager to be gurus. And probably we're aversive to it, you know, are frightened of the idea. The, but we're more kind of, you know, good spiritual friends. But where we are, that's and that range varies, I would say from for every person that we encounter, some people were just kind of like peers with and we share the practice together and have Dharma discussions with more. Some people we have a little more important role in their life and, and the relationship is sometimes quite strong. Sometimes there's some authority that people grant us in our role it seems appropriate to have. So it kind of varies and changes. But the default is we're a good spiritual friends. In fact, my default is that I'm never a teacher, until someone makes me one. Someone shows up and asked me a question and then I'm a teacher for them. But otherwise, you know, it's a student that makes the teachers my kind of feeling. The part of being a community center is caring for each other. And that's been something that we've tried to do and focused on a number of ways over the years when it became clear that I community was too big for me to meet all the pastoral needs of the community. Then we created a chaplaincy council that could go visit people when they're dying visit people who are going through some major crisis in their life. If there are people wanting to have a wedding, I should do a lot that a lot. I used to do more weddings. I try not to do it. Many more, but rather the other people in our community now who are sanctioned to perform weddings. And so memorial services, things like that. So we have a group of 12 people have that role. To my delightful surprise, they haven't been called on very much in the last six, seven years, because not a lot of people have died or gone through this kind of transition needed that kind of support, much less than expected. But what they've, the primary role is chaplains, a counselor has fulfilled his because of audio Dharma, we get a tremendous amount of tremendous we get a lot of email. from all over the world asking Dharma questions sometimes have a very personal level, you know, really needing help. And so the chaplaincy council are people who some of them are therapists. Some of them have all heard some kind of training, where they're suitable to engage and respond to those people and have exchanged with them. We've tried various other ways of offering care the support group for people with life threatening illnesses and chronic illnesses is one way. We've tried to have a council of people who offer sonka care available in Santa Cruz Vipassana group, it's called the tofu brigade. And, you know, during meals to people are sick and stuff. And we've tried, I would say very hard over many, many years, 12 years to try to put together something that worked for us in terms of some kind of ongoing brigade or people community. And we haven't figured out how to make it work. We've tried many different ways. So we've kind of given it up, try and make make the effort to have that kind of thing seems like many churches, for example, have something like that. Something about our community with that kind of hasn't worked very well for us. So what we've committed to now is more informally, if, hopefully, two, we know each other well enough, that, that if someone has a need that somehow informally, as a community, we figure out and if I learn about it, I try to organize something or find a way to do it. And because I think caring for each other is very important. It's just how to do it in the traditional way has been a challenge for us given who we are.

So that we can learn more about the student teacher relationship. It is historically in Buddhism very important. And we don't emphasize it so much here. We don't give a lot of teachings for it about how to do that, can we let it kind of evolve and my attitude is mostly I just respond to people who come and that relationship becomes what it is in response, we discover what it is as we respond, we negotiate it as we get together. But historically, in Buddhism, having a student teacher relationship is often considered very important. And a few things that works well here at IMC, I think in order to develop that is to show up a lot. You know, there's a showing up something eventually I notice. And, and then show up and then come and talk, you know, maybe a little bit of so helps to be a little bit assertive, rather than waiting for me or Andrea to do something. So I mean, don't be too But But you know, you know, it's but showing up counts contribute. Being a volunteer tends to help because then it's easier to kind of cross paths and snatch or talk to each other and things like that. And, and then going on retreats. So being on retreats that we teach is one of the primary ways of developing that relationship and getting to know each other in some deep ways. And then, the last thing about IMC, as we've taken root here in and Redwood City in this place, there is individualization practice, that's important here. We support people to come as individuals in practice here. There's a practice of a community, some people feel more connected to community than others. But there's a growth and development of us as a community as well. And I think we all do anybody who comes here, benefits from that, even if they sit in the back and ever talk to anyone. There's a way by osmosis, you can kind of feel the mature Of the people who are here. That was not the not the case 20 years ago, and it's quite impressive to come into this space to feel so many mature people. The but then, but then there's also our community's relationship to the wider world. And at some point we're going to grow up. I don't know where we are in the growing up phase. If we, if we if we take the beginning of kind of our birth being, or having a nonprofit status as a church is that was 1997. So I guess we're 16. So we haven't grown up yet. But it's time to begin kind of aware that we're part of the wider world. And, and I feels you know that we have some responsibility to the wider world. We're citizens in a sense and institutional citizen in our community. And so how do we serve and how are we responsible members of our wider community, not only here, Redwood City To peninsula but the world itself is an interesting question as we keep growing and developing. And so there are a few things that, you know, we have you know, we've done a few things in the area, we try to respond the best we can to requests to come and teach Buddhism or meditation to almost anybody who asks, schools and other institutions have asked us to come the churches have asked us, we tried to do what we do here the best we can to be open to the community as a whole. We've done various efforts and service projects in the neighborhood and the community wider community. I think we could do a lot more it's pretty minimal, but we've done a few things. We've done things over the years, that way. A group of people from within IMC coming out of us part of this effort is also you know, what are you saying it but maybe for you, part of this vision vision was the inside world aid and, and the inside world aid is more like an international medical aid organization. Buddhists and America haven't really done much in this regard. And it feels like we're kind of ready to start kind of contributing to the world that way. It's kind of unfortunate. I know. It's unfortunate, you go to places like Cambodia. And there's a lot of aid organizations in Cambodia, and most of them are Christian, and which is great. It's not a problem. But the but, you know, the Buddhist country, and it's must be a little odd to people. They're like, these Christians are coming and help us and why aren't the Buddhists helping us? And, and we're just very resist 16. Right. So you can't expect too much from us. But, but as we grow that one of our efforts were permitted this inside world aid and group of 28 people just came back from doing the first medical mission to Cambodia, which worked out really well this Saturday, the Sunday there's a presentation about that trip here. And so I think there's more possibilities for this. Actually, the inside All day did a couple of kind of health fairs that they supported here in the in the Bay Area as part of their outreach.

Yeah. So I may say a couple of more things just to be up really quick. So because we don't have time for questions. So we have this great retreat center now. And it's been very important for us to have a retreat center because it's both a way for people to continue growing and developing. It's one of the primary ways in our particular meditation tradition. That's, you know, for the growth of practice, you don't have to go and retreat but it's historically that's really the, the source out of which these teachings come out of and, and how our teachers have matured. So it's important for people to have this opportunity to do that. And also it is still this this the this primary, we see it as a primary place to incubate the next generation of teachers, people who are going to teach and offer more is a chance to do retreats. So we see it as part of our responsibility for the carrying on into the future and even for the care of IMC some point on doing I'll be long gone. And so we have a little bit prepare for that. And so there's no creating teachers and, and creating teachers. That's one of the important places to do that. And then the last thing to say was we had, I still have vision. It's been a surprise to me that this is part of my role, because I feel like when I was before I started being at IMC, I never was a person, that vision that was kind of naive and just did my thing. But I felt that it was something that that grew with this role. And as the community grew, it seemed appropriate to have it be a little bit ahead of the community with the vision, right. And that was part of my job and part of our job. You're not there yet. I'll hand it to you. And, and so there still is, you know, there's Plenty of vision still around it, there's no I have no shortage of vision, you know, so you know, hopefully hold up likely and not get too too ambitious about it. But one of the things, one of the visions for us is to create a richer, wider Mandela kind of kind of collection of Buddhist practice programs, teachings, events, culture for this peninsula here for us here. I mean, to give you a little that we're going to do this to give you a little example, of the early vision we had for having a center was to have next door, a hospice, that we would also care for so that people who in our community in the wider community who were dying could come there and be taken care of in a nice environment. And so, you know, kind of cradle to death kind of the cradle to grave that was kind of, you know, offer a Buddhist culture, so that people who are serious about the practice, and really make part of their life feel like they're met with what they want. It's been rather unfortunate, like, you know, when people feel like they're committed to a religion or to a practice or their community, and this which has happened in some are they inside communities in the West, that they don't, you know, they're dying to be coming for years, but no one really knows them in the communities aren't really set up to offer anything. And there's no one who comes and cares for them, or no one offers any kind of ceremony or anything that supports them, or people who get married and so I've been coming for some years, can I have a wedding involved? No one's here to do it for you. And so it's important I feel to be able to meet people so they do so there's more we could do in terms of developing this Buddhist culture, Buddhist practice, kind of, you know, for the full range of, of human life as people need it. Part of the vision also is, as I said is I don't not that interested in growing bigger here. I like the size. I think having other developing other sitting groups in the peninsula would be nice and as some of the senior practitioners have developed, they've been ready to have sitting groups. And the latest one that was started was started by Kim who's sitting in the back row. She started a sitting group in Los Gatos, that meets Sunday mornings. And we've had other ones start in different places. The but you know, we're packed here it's hard, you know, to for us to offer more programs here. And there is more programs we'd like to offer as as we grow and develop it be good to offer more things for bigger richer package of things. And we're packed you know, we can't just schedule this packed and we can't really offer much. So I don't know what to do about that. My dream is that we can have the building across the street, which is currently for sale but I think it's too expensive. And, but or someplace really close by here so that we can have another space another classroom and other place to have programs

and then utilize Part of the vision is that Andre mentioned was some point I think I'm getting. I've been teaching long enough and getting old enough that it seems like what's happening is I'm beginning to think about that part of my role is important part of my role is to empower to support other people to

teach and to help make opportunities for others to teach and, and look for those opportunities, develop those opportunities. And so part of the vision is both, hopefully to create more of that, but also to have a training program for teachers. And so I'd like to be able to some point 10 kind of trying to prepare myself someday to be able to offer that in a stronger way. So your questions, your comments, where did we leave out? It was important to mention. What didn't we cover that you expected us to cover? We do here today. Yes.

The personnel know theravada is a really broad movement of Buddhism that it's hard to put exactly finger exactly what it is. But it's the Buddhism of that is based on the earliest surviving teachings of the Buddha. And it's Buddhism of Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand. Vipassana is a in the earliest teaching Vipassana meant insight. That's why insight meditation center, and it, but it's come in the modern world to refer to a practice of mindfulness, particular kind of practice. So the practice of Vipassana people say it's a practice of insight. And, and so then, in the in the in the mind in America, sometimes the modern West It's called a bit some people call it the Vipassana tradition. And, you know, whereas, you know, usually you think I think of tradition taking hundreds of years to develop that 40. And so some people will say there's three Buddhist traditions in America, there's Tibetan Buddhism, there's Zen Buddhism, there's the past, and that Buddhism is seen as kind of like, little strange to be a tradition venerated tradition, and that category already, it's also erroneous, because there are other Buddhist traditions, lineages here that are left out that one of the biggest and most of the some of the biggest and most long lasting is the Japanese Buddhist traditions. And the Japanese Puroland traditions have been here for over 100 years, and at churches all over, and also the so called kinds Japanese Buddhists have a lot going and so by saying those are the three traditions, it leaves out a lot, but I think what the three have in common, that when when people use that expression, you know, in America, Tibetan Zen and the vipassana tradition, they're kind of referring to the kind of more meditation based Buddhism that arose out of the, or kind of was part of the unfolding of the counterculture in 1960s. And whatever legacy that brings us,

is it. I this is kind of a quick question about a volunteer thing. I noticed that there's a few things on audio Dharma that have transcripts, but not everything. And I wonder is that due to lack of volunteers or a choice to not have them or?

Yeah, I think that we had more volunteers, we probably transcribe more.

Yeah. You have one.

Okay. So, if you if there's a volunteer form, on the counter, if you fill it out to make that clear, Hillary will contact you. That'd be great. Thank you. It's a great thing to, to transcribe because it's a way of letting the teachings go in deep. I transcribed some of the talks of my teachers in 1980s. It's a way of really living with the teachings and kind of massage them as I did it.

So as you as you know, maybe I said that sometimes you get really good karma and Buddhism for asking questions. Yes.

The small group that existed in Palo Alto,

or any of those folks here tonight

know we've had a lot of continuity of people. And but no and he From that time I probably the person here, what? A small group in Palo Alto before. Before me? Yeah. Or before me around that time. The

mean are people still coming? Bonnie Goodman came in 19 1990 when I started and she's still involved here and there's a variety of people forget Chilean teachers here sometimes was back then. Ursula was here. I don't know if Hugh McMillan was here. McMillan might have been before me and he comes still and peshwa brownings i think i think i don't know i think he came around the same time as I did. But there are there are a bunch silver he doesn't come so much. He has cancer now. So it kind of keeps him home more. But But silver was before me. I think we all know deep Our thanks to those people. Yeah, those people are great. And the it was a couple named Howard Ingrid Nudelman, who started it. And Howard was also at that time, the president of spirit rock. So when we started here in 1990, when I started this was clearly a satellite sitting group of Spirit Rock. And we we put up literature for spirit rock by I would make announcements for spirit rock and we would do work days in spirit rock up there and help support them. And it was clear that we were kind of part of spirit rock. And over the years and the early years spirit rock supported us by this thing us in their newsletters and stuff and, and also they provided us with our liability insurance we needed for the places we rent, all through the 90s ever, all the places always five different places we used. They provide the liability insurance for us as support for us. But as we grew and developed it, you know, we speak it became more independent, more independent. And so now, people can come here probably for a long time and not realize that there's a connection between us in spirit rock and there's no formal connection. But there is a very strong informal connection. And this is one of the characteristics of the insight movement. I call it the insight movement, that we're part of the movement of insight practitioners and teachers have come out of IMS, spirit rock, the place in England called Gaia house that we're all part of. And we have meetings every three years for the teachers meet that kind of teacher meeting. And so there's a lot of college ality as the teachers teach together a lot of emphasis on teachers on retreats where, you know, four, sometimes five, six teachers can teach together. And they did that were a lot of peers working together is also somewhat little bit unusual in history of Buddhism. Most countries in Asia, I think you're an Abbot or Abbess, most likely an Abbot and you're like in charge. There's a clear hierarchy and what you say goes, and here in the West, there's much more of this democracy and a gala terian ism. And so the whole our scene is developed with this collegial peer relationship with teachers where teachers have a lot of contact with each other meetings together and teach together. And so it's been a very important part of Andre and I practice of being teachers to also be connected to other teachers. And so like we're both in the spirit rock teachers Council. And, and so that keeps us, you know, connected and this peer group of support. So I don't know how it got to that. But anyways, I heard Nudelman started and he was the one who got sick in 1990. And, and then, and here's a nice story. So how are Nudelman started, I started what would became us, and he asked me to take it over when he got sick. He was a doctor, and he had gotten interested in early on before it was really popular Jon Kabat Zinn's Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program, and before there was any teacher training for that. He talked to Jon Kabat Zinn and he was going to he was working at El Camino Hospital to set up a mbsr Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program. at El Camino Hospital, and then he got sick, right. So he turned the sitting group over to me. And this is what happened. He turned the his fledgling efforts to start the MBSR and El Camino over to Bob stall. And Bob Stahl took that baby and grew it up and Bob Solow is now one of the one of the premier MBSR teachers in the world really, and developed the El Camino and many people have been trained, they're going through that program. And so this one man, Howard Nudelman, you know, and his wife, you know, lost, you know, their efforts kind of blossomed, and he died in the early 90s from his prostate cancer, but then a wife I didn't see for years and years, and then when we had, I think, a work day or open house at IRC, she showed up into something she was working in case she's coming down. Sometimes it works in the garden.

Okay, Mike up here. There's nine o'clock. So maybe if it's okay, well, maybe we'll, you know, there's an end. Maybe we'll take about another six, seven minutes.

And I went to IRC and I thought it was a beautiful venue, very peaceful and lovely and contemplative. I really enjoyed the retreat. I was wondering if you might have any visions or plans for a non for contemplative slash meditative retreat there anything

like that, what is it what do you mean by contemplative,

contemplative or writing or something that would mix or mindfulness discussion kind of retreat as well as or as well as meditative

based So?

So,

we have, we have actually already several kinds retreats happening. Just this past weekend, we had what we call the Dharma integration weekend,

where we

did more of an in and out of silence. So it wasn't it wasn't quite what you were describing in terms of, you know, writing or some something like that. But it was we, the teachings were geared towards integrating the practice with our activities. And we're going to have a cup. I don't know if the plan is to have a couple of those a year. We're going to have another one scheduled in July. And then we have the studies retreats that the Saudi center is going to be hosting a guess. So we have one of those this this year with this man with a monk coming to teach that and next April Gil and I are going to teach one of those.

We haven't come up with a theme yet but we need to do that.

And, you know, there are there's always a possibility for other other things I've kind of got the idea of more of a daily life practice retreat going on in my mind. I have, you know, the daily life practice retreat here that I do, but I haven't quite formed the notion of what that retreat would be. Then we have the, of course, the silent retreats, which are right now anywhere from a weekend to two weeks, and then we may take those two to longer retreats. There's always the possibility for other kinds of retreats. So if you have a thought, you know, you're welcome to share it with us.

You think slowly over the years, we'll probably develop a variety of different kinds of retreats.

Test. Okay.

I'm on the, the, I guess what we sometimes call the Karuna committee and the insight meditation southbay. And we just had a meeting not long ago. And actually last night, you guys got mentioned in having a fair like a volunteer fair or something like that. And we're looking into different ways of entry where we can kind of do compassionate work out into the communities and things like that. So I wanted to maybe if you could toss out a few examples of what came out of that kind of thing. And then also, um, is the hospice. Is that taking form beyond vision or Where's that? So,

having a hospice, I think that's not that much traction for that. But what we get your lane and a few people tried to do was where they did was they, they had twice now two parts training program for

people to offer a little bit contemplative care for people who are dying and with the idea that To create a group of people who could be companions to people who are at the end stage of death, kind of meditative, Buddhist kind of companions for anybody who requested it. However, there also there hasn't been any requests. So then what they have done that group so it's a few of them is they've taken their interest in their training and going over to Hopkins Manor right next door here. And they they go over there and meet with the residents there and offer something there. So that's as far as we've gotten with it. There is a you know, there's some, you know, there's there's, there's small little ideas of what we could do for our community, the small things but one of the beautiful things that happens is that example a small one is in the January and in November, December, we collect children's books here, and we offer it to disadvantaged children here in Redwood city who normally wouldn't get any books or those kinds of things. And so that's been a beautiful thing to do and very well received and appreciated by the people who receive the books. And then that's how I got maybe a relatively small thing. And then there's some I'm going to have a conversation with someone tomorrow. I mean, it's kind of far fetched at this point. But there's a local hospital that was pretty close to us who does not have chaplaincy services. And some hospitals have chaplains on staff who work there available to meet people. And, and it's a wonderful thing that interfaith chaplains offer to people. And, and so the idea is that we have this Buddhist chaplaincy training program, and that such efforts are there can and also imcs efforts could somehow be be integrated into that local hospital and we can have a Not necessarily it wouldn't be appropriate if a Buddhist chaplaincy program or offering as appropriate, but that we would offer it. I can say that San Francisco General Hospital is the Episcopal Church sponsors the chaplaincy services there. So perhaps in some way that study center and AMC could be involved in, in providing shopping to services interface services with this local hospital. So that's kind of grandiose. So

Well, I mean, obviously, that the hospital mentioned hospice, in conjunction with this RT center that chaplaincies it's pretty delightful to have something like right there if that were to happen. And I'm also thinking that probably the people that would be interested in the kind of companion with death would might have been getting sucked up into the chaplaincy training and you know, as well so they might be there. They're just going to somewhere else.

Okay, she's getting late. I think it's time to stop. So, but I would like to have a request from all of you before you go. And that is I'd like to know all your names. And I probably won't remember but it's part of my practice is try to try to get to know people and hear the names. Maybe if I hear it a few times it is slowly start to stick. So it'd be okay if you quit me with the mic. Where's the mic? If he made me start with you, Lisa. but ended up falling out on

test. Lisa

Penny

Tanya.

Lynn,

Judy,

Sandy,

Tom.

Arthur. I'm Dan

Kim,

Laura.

Joe

Jessica,

Susan,

Jim,

Marjorie

Beverly,

Jim.

Glen.

Edna

pulled Paul. Tom.

Roberto.

Kyle.

Kurt,

Steve.

Ellen,

Steve.

Evelyn.

Morning,

Steph.

Thank you, thank you for coming. I hope this was meaningful for you to come. It's a bit of a bright light, very important surprising part of my life this even should happen. And I feel so fortunate to be part of this community and I look forward to Many years of this being together as community with you and see where we go with all this great trip. Thank you