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SPEAKERS

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So last week I gave a talk on the topic of skillfulness. With the idea that skillfulness is one of the key concepts in the teachings of the Buddha, that the whole enterprise what the Buddha was trying to teach was learned through the vehicle, of avoiding states of mind, activities of mind activities of body, which are unskillful and promoting and cultivating those which are skillful. And I mentioned that synonym from perhaps synonym for the word skillful could be helpful or healthy. So it's to avoid unhealthy things, unhealthy qualities of mind, cultivate, develop the healthy ones, or the helpful ones. And one of the key helpful, healthy For the quality of the mind, activities of mind, in the teachings of the Buddha, his love. And this morning I'd like to talk about love a little bit. Not that I'm an expert, but I could, you know a little bit talk about it. And if you go back again to look at the teachings of the Buddha, you find remarkably frequent mentions of the importance of love and expectation that his monastics the most nuns that the Buddha had, that they were to cultivate loving kindness, as a foundational practice foundational attitude of mind, all the time, it kind of is in the background. And in contrast to other according to the Buddhists and the Buddhist texts that survive, they in contrast to other ascetic Or renunciant people have their times, the Buddhist monk stood out as being happy and peaceful kind of radiant people. They weren't grim about their practice, they weren't starving themselves and being kind of misstated. And but there was a kind of this buoyancy that was described that and one of those qualities, I think is of loving kindness, making that a frequent, frequent abode, a frequent place for the mind lives with the heart lives. And when people start doing mindfulness practice, which is another one of the fundamental practices of Buddhism, one of the things we're expected to be attentive to noticing is what is going on in our minds, what's happening with us. And one of the great questions you could ask yourself all day long is whereas your mind right now what is your mind up to You must be in possession of your mind at all times and attended mines should be reported to authorities immediately

and attended mines will be hauled away. No, no unattended minds will haul their owners away at their owner's expense. So they know where your mind is what's going on. And if you started noticing that he's paying attention to that, then you start noticing some of the frequent patterns. What your mind is caught up in concerned about is some of the things that the mind is caught up then. With either little analysis or some analysis, you realize this is not helpful or healthy. Certainly the endless repetition of the mind is not particularly helpful. But also some of the trains of thoughts and attitudes of care the mind is concerned about isn't it? Very helpful or healthy, to have on a regular basis, to be caught up in thoughts or attitudes of ill will or hate, to be caught up in thoughts and attitudes of desire and wanting, wanting to be caught, be caught up with thoughts of revenge, or caught up with the thoughts of fear and apprehension planning is not so useful. And so what is our attitude towards this mind when we start noticing what's going on in the mind? What's our attitude? How do we relate to it? And Buddhism says you don't have to leave the mind. As it is you don't have to use to kind of kind of pass away except the mind this is the way things are. My mind has a mind of its own My job is just to somehow get by, in

mindful to get by with the mind that I have. But But rather, this idea of developing the skillful means we can you can take some, some responsibility for what your mind is up to about what's going on in your mind. And it's possible to change the direction of your mind, your thoughts, your attitudes, your concerns, from those which are not helpful and healthy to those which are helpful and healthy, skillful. And, and some people might protest and say that that's manipulating the mind. It's kind of artificial. The natural state of enlightenment natural state of being just allows the mind to do whatever it wants. Well, that's fine. However, if you have that attitude, you should be very honest about what your natural mind is really about. And then you can ask yourself, Is this really is what your mind is about right now? Is it really so good? Is it really beneficial? Isn't it better things to do? And, and I look at my mind, there are times when I look and say, you know, there are much better things for me be doing right now. Then what it's up to you right at this moment and It doesn't sometimes it doesn't take a lot to redirect the mind to engage in something more helpful and skillful. So it could be something as simple as there's some kind of social situations like maybe the airport or the freeway or lines, it's long lines at Safeway or something where the unattended mind might start complaining, judging other people, how could they have bought so many chocolate chip cookies? You know, don't they know that? You know, they have so many zits already they don't they know that. chocolate chip cookies, you know, they, you know, in on the mind goes right. And, and so I don't think that in the grand scheme of things. It's particularly beneficial to the judging People's Choice of cookies by Safeway and so you can watch you know, so many of the First judgment was okay, the second or third, you know, and, you know, it's not so useful. And so it's possible to shift the mind and see some other way of relating to this person situation, which is more helpful for everyone concerned. And one of the things that's helpful for everyone concerned is to have some feelings of love, or kindness or goodwill towards the other people. Now, how do we do that in such a way that it's authentic and sincere. I used to be somewhat suspicious, very suspicious of the Buddhist teachings of loving kindness, because it seemed artificial, it seemed like something you're supposed to conjure up. And I assumed that love is something that is that they are not there to natural state and it's artificial. That is not to be a love. But it turns out that because of the state of mind, we don't have to leave it to chance how much longer is there, we can create the conditions so that If we want to call the natural state, the natural state is more likely to bubble up and arise. So it can be as simple as if you live a harried life. Very busy stressed out life, then

there's very little room for some of the helpful healthy qualities of mind, which might have a chance to bubble up in a healthy environment kind of naturally bubbled up. And I've seen that in myself, that if I am stressed in a hurry, it doesn't occur to me to feel thoughts of goodwill and kindness to people who are interfering with me at the toll booth you know, I need to get somewhere and suddenly divided taking such a long time. You know, they're they should be finished now should have paid their money. Why do they still sitting there? They're talking to the tollbooth operator, you know, and that doesn't occur to me to think kind thoughts from harried but if I'm relaxed, have all the time in the world feel like you're at ease, then. Oh, that's interesting. Maybe they're friends or maybe there's a nice thought going on there. Maybe they're lost and who asked him for help. And, you know, so I can easily kind of switch to have more more sense of goodwill for the person in front of me at the tollbooth if I'm relaxed. So, if we're relaxed or at ease, we give much more opportunity for love or goodwill to bubble up. If we don't have it. If we're stressed out, it's not going to be there very often. Now, I've noticed in some environments, like Buddhist monasteries, there's a one of the kind of problems in Buddhist monasteries is that people fall in love with each other much too easily. Tassajara for example, because they're so relaxed, relatively, and they're willing to face a fight, you're practicing all the time, very open, very vulnerable, you know, kind of kind of just pretended, you got your degree guard is down, you're opening, relax and that kind of stuff. It's easy kind of fall in love. And now it's hopefully not one of the worst problems people can have falling in love too easily, but certainly requires some wisdom, you know, when we, you know, this happens. So they wouldn't try to say here is that love or loving kindness doesn't have to be left to

chance. But it's something that can be you can create the conditions for its arising. If you feel it's valuable, you can create the conditions that's more likely to arise and surface. In addition to that it can be evoked intentionally. And so not only can create the conditions are more likely to be there, but you can actually, if you develop the capacity to evoke it on a moment's notice, doesn't have to be something that just chemistry, something like that. So I would say in looking back over the teachings of the Buddha, that Buddhism is a religion of love. It is not often characterized that way. To some degree, maybe the Dalai Lama characterizes That way when he says, my religion is kindness, neglected, when you when you say that, that you know, Buddhism is religion of love, then you have to define what love means. And since freedom is the measure the goal, the purpose of all the Buddhist teachings, then a love someone has to live in relationship to freedom. And so love is his Buddhist love that love that's a champion and Buddhism is characterized by quality of freedom, or to say, inversely, it's the absence of love. It's not love which is characterized by clinging. So love which is characterized by freedom is championed in Buddhism, love this characterized by clinging is not and so there's a wide range of what human beings call love to hear the English we call love. And there's a lot of different qualities that come part of it come as part of love And part of this task of mindless practices is to notice what we bring together and not to take it as a given. This is just love. You know, love is great, this was the song say, but but rather to look at it more carefully, and what is actually going on in my free is clinging in this state of love. And one of the interesting things to notice I believe, in mature Buddhist practitioners. The aim is to find the records of the ancients, ancient Buddhist masters and modern met Buddhist masters is sometimes their loving kindness is quite strong. It kind of some tips some teachers have hard to characterize people say oh, that person can feel the loving kindness is there. But it's a loving kindness that is a love. It's a strong movement to love. But there's no movement to want to be loved. And this is a very important distinction because I think for many people, the whole Association have with love is they would like to be loved, they might have loved they might have warmth, appreciation, delight in someone else. But it's, it's

so much part of it so much a big part of it is, is desire, wanting something in return, wanting to be appreciated, wanting to be seen wanting something, wanting to be loved and return. And the whole emphasis in Buddhism is not in relationship to love is not being loved and returned, not being loved. The emphasis is on loving. And it's almost as if, from the Buddhist point of view, there's a it's so important the idea of loving kindness, there's almost it's almost as if there's a biological urge to love, but not one to be loved. Now, that's a strange thing to say because a lot of people associate love with biological urges of the physical physical type but the matrices innate innate movement and a healthy mind to want to love. Now, if you are living your life in a dark room and you want to see, it didn't make sense to go around looking for someone who has liked, who can, you know has a lighter carrying a light so you can see because you don't have the light. But if you hold the light, then you have looking around for someone else to bring the light to you. So in the same way, if you're filled with this kind of warmth, love, loving kindness of goodwill, that's kind of like a radiant force within you flowing out, then there's no need to look for that radiant force for someone else to come in towards you. So that so the idea is to kind of fill yourself with a sense of goodwill in general kind of a generous state of being. So the forms of love in Buddhism that are considered that are connected to freedom kind of forms of love, which are most central to Buddhism are called the Brahma viharas. And the Brahma vihara is sometimes translated to English as the divine abodes, or the sublime abodes or sublime dwellings. And the reason that why it's called brahma vihara is that in Buddhist cosmology, the theology whatever, there are levels and levels of heavens, and heavenly realms are characterized by bliss, by joy, delight, and the higher up you go in these levels of heavens, the more bliss you get, until you come to the level of Brahma, and Brahma is said to live continuously, in a state of the bliss or delight or joy, of loving kindness, sympathetic joy, compassion equanimity, the four brahma vihara. And this was characterized as the realm of Brahma. So to live like Brahma to dwell like Brahma You do well in the states of loving

kindness, sympathetic joy, equanimity and compassion. So it's some people in English now translating the Brahma vihara as, as the divine about, which resonates for some people very well with kind of Western theistic thought, Oh, we have something divine in Buddhism. Isn't that great? We have love. That's the divine thing in Buddhism. And some people who don't like the no care for theism. Why are these Buddhists doing bringing divine in, please? But, but the point the point I'm mentioning here is that these brahma viharas are elevated in Buddhism to a very high degree, and the state of bliss or delight, is said to be comparable to something mythic mythically or not to the delight is verified and like the joy, that of a Brahma with great kind of great, great God. So four types loving kindness, of love, loving kindness which has the word love in it. compassion, which Buddhists take is a very important form of love, appreciative joy or sympathetic joy, which is a kind of a joy that comes from appreciating the successes, the well being the delights of other people. And then the very peculiar form of love for Buddhists, the Buddhists call equanimity. And I think many people in the Westerners attribute or associate equanimity with love, because it has a conflict has a suggestions of being indifferent, or kind of aloof rather than warm. But the association with love is can be can be made, when you call it grandmotherly love. And, you know, a grandmother, you know, at least the archetypical one is, loves the grandchildren. However, the grandmother has raised kids herself, so she's seen it all and so she's not going to be frazzled or get upset by some of the things the grandchildren do. So they're going to stay, stay balanced even in that warm, warm, loving

relationship with the grandchildren. And I can tell you that the difference between a first time parent and the grandmother in terms of equanimity is can be quite remarkable and so grandmotherly love something like liquidity so the kids come and say, I hate you. You know the grandmother, you know, this would be a bit low kids do that four year old will say that, because Five minutes later they'll say, I want to marry you. You know, and if you get caught by that, you know, the grandma's not gonna get cockfights Oh. Or if they scratch it scrape their knees on the playground. Oh, no, my poor baby. deformed for life. Could this be I failed this Parents I wasn't watching, I wasn't hovering, being protective. The grandmother, look at that. It's about time they scraped their knee. It would have been kind of, you know, strange if they didn't growing up. So grandma's there takes care of the kids and loving but it doesn't get wrapped, he doesn't get caught up. So equanimity is a form of love. So the primary one in the Theravada tradition, the early Buddhist tradition is loving kindness, called metta. And one of the reasons why it's primary is considered to be the foundation for the other three. It's kind of like the base. So it's a feeling of goodwill, for others, or for oneself feeling of goodwill, that from that base, if that goodwill encounter someone who's suffering, that goodwill morphs into compassion and compassion meeting, wanting Compassion is a movement of desire to want that person to become free of the suffering you're having. If that basic goodwill encounters someone who is having great time, I mean, I'm not any great time to say there is some great success and wonderful things happen in your life, some great joy or something, then then that goodwill morphs into sharing and that joy celebrating with them. And if you're if that goodwill encounters situation, where there's nothing much you can do, it doesn't make sense to you know, compassion doesn't really make sense because you can't really do anything for their suffering, or there's not really a time to rejoice with them for what they're doing. And so the only possible way of manifesting love is through equanimity. So some people make terrible choices in their life, and you try your best to help them. But you have to realize at some point that even with all the help and care and concern you have, that they're making their own choices, and so they can be kind of aggressive. motherly attitude towards them. Well, this person's responsible for their own choices. So I'll stay balanced with it. But the warmth is still there. But I'm not going to get agitated, like they're caught pulled into the, into the pulled into the entanglement with this kind of situation. I'll stay even in balance through a warm does not aloof, but it's not being agitated by a situation. So the base one is loving kindness and metta and the most common translation into English is loving kindness. And, but there are other translations which could be used as well. And other one common one is goodwill,

which I used earlier, benevolence. Sometimes, friendliness was used gentle friendliness succeed sometimes. And we're all in the early 100 years ago, English translators tried Amethi, so you pronounce it so weird. Don't speak by reading those old books, Amethi, which means, you know, like a friend, like love. And the idea of loving kindness the word loving kindness has advantages because as these two words, love and kindness, and the love suggests a warmth, warm appreciation, a warm attitude towards something heartfelt, warm, heartfelt attitude towards something, that kindness emphasizes that itself again does towards something, it's concerned for someone if someone to welfare, somebody else's welfare, or even your own, but it's concerned with the welfare of something. And this is a very important movement in loving kindness because again, the movement of loving kindness is one with the direction of care, concern of love goes outwards towards something as opposed to sitting here waiting, I wish someone would love me, but rather rather kind of outward. And so even if you have kindness towards yourself, again, you're not sitting there. As a victim to being lonely or a victim to being inadequate or a victim to, you know, something, but rather you're kind of taking responsibility for your mind. You know, looking at what's skillful and unskillful

self pity is not a very skillful state to be in, so easy to let go over to change. But through practice, it can be changed. And one of the ways that changes is switch over and start to start to initially very, very slowly, perhaps, and very haltingly, start cultivating, replacing it with loving kindness, kindness towards oneself. So there's a direction of going outwards, in a sense, even though towards myself, being outwardly directed, letting the glow the flow, the warmth go outwards, as opposed to sitting and waiting for something to happen to you. So, loving kindness, that compound I think works works very well. So just the warm is a very warm, satisfying feeling. The love part and the kindest part, you know, it's concerned with the welfare of someone else or someone And what's remarkable is that compassion as a form of love, when it's operating in a healthy way, also has this warm, satisfying feeling, as part of it. Compassion also will have feeling of discomfort often because we're encountering someone who's suffering which is uncomfortable. But together with that discomfort, there's also kind of what's holding it or what's relating to that. In pure compassion is sense of warm, warm, satisfying feeling. There's something very, very nice about it. So when the Dalai Lama and other people Buddha say that if you want to be happy, have compassion for others care for others. There's a variety of reasons for that. But one of the reasons is that simply so mostly is a physiological fact, that when the compassion is not messed up with anxiety, or fear, or things like that, that the compassion has a very kind of has a satisfying feeling feels right, feels good. And then modern scientists have pointed out that in the states of pure compassion, again, it's not mixed up with anxiety and worry that it seems that oxytocin is released in the body, you know, so there you go, warm, satisfying feeling, this warm chemical that kind of goes off into the body. So to switch from the unskillful states of mind to skillful states of mind, one of the options you have is to cultivate loving kindness. And in the teachings of the Buddha, this was strongly emphasized, to do that, to cultivate loving kindness and develop it. And it's creates a very, very helpful foundation for doing all of the Buddhist practice to create a helpful, helpful foundation for the practice of Buddhist ethics. Because ethics doesn't come out of a should some moralistic idea, but will naturally come out of this understanding. Understanding and actually come out of the point of view you have from the state of love. It's a foundation for meditation practice and mindfulness practice, because it's a lot easier to cultivate and develop mindfulness. If there's a friendly attitude towards yourself and your experience than one of aversion or criticism or whatever fear. So, then Buddhist will practice and cultivate loving kindness. And there are specific practices for developing loving kindness when they're the group harmony Bihar's. And the central key to the practice of loving kindness is not eliciting some kind of warm, sympathetic, Hallmark kind of feeling. But rather, the key to it kind of turns turns the whole mind to healthy loving kindness is having the intention and intention of goodwill. an intention is not a warm intention is not Feeling. intention is almost like a decision in the mind. It's a value in the mind, it's a priority in the mind, that this is how this is this is valuable. This is something that I want, this

is something that I'm hoping for. So an intention of goodwill. It's my intention, my wish that this person I'm thinking about, that that person be happy. Even if you don't feel even if you feel irritated by someone which can happen, it doesn't mean that you can't at the same time feel goodwill toward them, which you know, I wish them well. In fact, some Buddhist I know, will will will want to do will want their enemies to be happy, because then their enemies won't be their enemies anymore. They want if they're happy, they're not going to be irritating anymore. So sometimes it'll be self serving that way. But the but have the intention.

And so then we have to get to know ourselves. know our mind. Our hearts know our attitude and stuff, and know what our values are what's important for us. And so it takes some reflection, some thinking. And once we kind of get get a sense of our values and priorities and things like that, is it a value for you? Is there a priority for you to wish other people well, that goodwill for them? Or is it a higher higher value for you to consider? What can I get from that person? What can this person do for me? which some people that's from fifth house, some people operate, or another attitude people have is, how can I protect myself from those people? The first the first approach is not safe. Show me how it can be safe, make make make me say. Some of those attitudes are not very skillful or helpful in some situations. So are there better ways that we want to live Are there other intentions we can have? And so are their intentions of goodwill, wishing someone well? If you don't want to wish someone Well, why? Look at that, and be very honest about it, and try to question it. What are the assumptions or the values? What are the beliefs behind? Not wanting to wish somebody well? So maybe you want to start with people that you know, who are not your enemy, someone who's not irritating you. But it could be someone in your family or neighbor or someone in your community, who maybe is a neutral person or maybe someone who's considered a friend. Is that what's the degree of goodwill you have towards that person? What percentage of the time when you're relating to them? Are you relating from wish that you're concerned for their wish for their welfare, their happiness, or representative time are you caught up in wanting something from them or wanting to be seen by them in a certain way, wanting to be you know? And I find that it's a really beautiful thing. To sit back in a sense, and say, you know, it'd be really great if this person that I'm thinking about this person I'm with, if this person could be happy

for me when I sit back again, sitting back, comes to replace at least some of relaxed, some more of these. So that ease and relaxation is very important. And then think, Oh, yeah, I like sometimes to take in the whole person like the airport, sometimes really great airport, sometimes. There's a lot of things you could do in airports. One of the things you can do in airports, notice how few people smile. And then you can ask, how often do I smile at the airport? In what state of mind are you at the airport and, and sometimes I'll sit there in the lounge of the airport lounge and watch people walk by and I look at their faces. And if they're happy and laughing and smiling then I just feel good. It's great. But if they're not, now look at their faces. And I imagine what their faces would look like if they were really happy. And then I think maybe So, this would be really great if this could be so. And now you might think is a silly thing to do with airports. However, if I watch my own mind, if my mind left to its own devices, the things it would do at the airport, you know, are not so solitary, you know, not so great. So sometimes, you know, you know, to better the more useful more or more, you know, better things to do. So, what does it take? The other thing I like to do is to try to see the beauty in other people. The problem or the proximate cause for loving kindness is seeing the beauty in other people or to see the potential beauty in other people to see how beautiful can be, if they, you know can tap into places of freedom of love of relaxation of ease of joy. And so, you know, as I've developed my as a practice Buddhism over these many years, I've seen that both through my intentional direction of directing myself to this topic, but also unintentionally, kind of naturally kind of moving in this direction, and more and more, seeing what's beautiful and other people. And it's really something to be able to see past people's behavior, which sometimes is not so wonderful. It's really wonderful to see past people's outer appearance, and all the

different manifestations, manifestations of outer appearance that people have and look behind the outer appearance and see some inner beauty. I think it's really wonderful to see someone who's physically beautiful look past it and see the inner beauty. It's some it's really a beautiful thing to do see past that. And it's also so wonderful to see someone who's not physically beautiful, and look past that to see something beautiful there as well. And sometimes once like once you can see something beautiful, you can see it shining through their eyes, sometimes, or since there. And so that kind of intentionally kind of looking for that taking time to look for that is one of the conditions and then can more easily arouse a wish a goodwill wish of kindness of wish wishing for people's welfare. So the key for turning on loving kindness is has to do with intention. And in Buddhism intention is sometimes called the seed and the seeds you plant are consequential the fruit that you are the fruit that you harvest depends a lot on the seeds that you plant. So if you plant seeds of hate, watch out for the bitter fruits you harvest but if you plant Seeds of loving kindness of goodwill, you plant wonderful fruits in return. So this takes some time. Takes that's why sometimes meditation times a good time for doing loving kindness practice, but it could be done there are times where you actually spend some time reflecting on what value you have for having goodwill towards others. And reflecting on how often do you actually intentionally have thoughts of goodwill for others, May that person be happy? May that person be safe, that person be at ease? How often is that a concern when you're with someone? And are you in presence of other people? Are you a force of promoting their welfare, or are you neutral or are you detracting from it? And so you know what's happening with you? You know, if you're at dinner with someone, what's happening in that situation? Are you a force for their welfare? Are you neutral? Or were you forced further not not for welfare?

And so what I'm trying to get to your idea of spending some time in your life, maybe together with friends, go for a walk with a friend or something. And actually think and reflect, journal, whatever you can do, about what the, what the role and presence is in your life, of having goodwill for other people. Is there how often do you have the intention for other people to be happy? How often do you have the intention for the opposite? Is there value in priority for you to want to tap into feelings, intentions of goodwill for others? Do you want to make that a bigger part of your life or not? If you don't want to make it a bigger part of your life, why? I'm not saying it's, you know, there's not a moralistic question. But, you know, the core of Buddhism is to be honest. So why is that? What's going on for you? and explore maybe as just use explore? Would it be advantageous to you to have more intentions and feelings and dispositions of goodwill, as part of your life as he goes through your life. And Buddhism says, it's really beneficial for you to have more loving kindness for other people. Some people will think well, gee, you know, nothing good for me. To love other people, you know, just thinking about them, you know, what's in it for me, you know, and I'm just thinking about other people and that there's going to push me over and take advantage of me and, you know, and voting for me. 11 benefits of loving kindness

The person who practices loving kindness, sleeps happily. wakes happily has no bad dreams is loved by others. Even though it's not so important, if you're, you know, a furnace yourself, one is loved by nonhumans. One is guarded by the devil. Fire poison or sword won't touch one. When his mind becomes concentrated quickly, one's complexion becomes clear. You save a lot of money. When dies with a mind, when dies with a mind free from confusion. And if no higher attainment is reached, when is reborn in the presence of Brahma Brahma places so maybe if somebody If it's gonna be much for you, some of you, but they're living benefits. And so I find this as wonderful mutuality in Buddhism. Where as we care for others, we benefit as we care for ourselves others benefit as we care for ourselves and more relaxed, more at ease. Our ability to care and have goodwill for others increases as we care for others in healthy ways and have goodwill for others. And we benefit as well. There's a wonderful mutual appreciate mutual benefit club that Buddhism is, and everyone in the world is in the club. So that's nice.

So I hope that you will give some thought and consideration to love and loving kindness and, and see if there's easy and healthy, appropriate ways that you can tap into your love more often. Don't leave it to chance that it shows up. By chance, we make it cultivate, make it a regular visitor regularly invited regularly make it part of your life. So thank you very much. We now have a potluck some of you might stay for we have actually two minutes before the official ending of the Dharma talk time. In the spirit or loving kindness method, the cognitive the word meta is Mita. And one of the definitions of meta is several definitions, but one of them is a friendly attitude towards others to be a friend towards others. And so in that spirit in the last two minutes, I think it'd be really nice if you would turn to someone near you can know or you know, person you know, be sitting close to you, and just say hello, introduce yourself. And then perhaps if they stay for the potluck, you can chance to talk more