

Oregon's Many Rivers Sangha
and Oregon's Community of Mindful Living's

Five Stones Sangha

Five Stones Sangha Brochure

Welcome



We welcome you and offer this little pamphlet to help you feel at home in our Sangha. A Sangha is a community of people who follow the same path, support each other, and exist in harmony and awareness.

"It is a joy to find oneself in the midst of a sangha, where people are practicing well together. Each person's way of walking, eating, and smiling can be a real help to us.

She is walking for me, I am smiling for her, and we do it as a sangha. We don't have to practice intensively or force ourselves. We just have to allow ourselves to be in a good sangha where people are happy, living deeply in each moment, and transformation will come, without much effort." -Thich Nhat Hanh

We practice mindfulness meditation in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh and have been meeting in Corvallis since 2008. We celebrate and promote respect for all individuals. We recognize that wisdom, insight, nurturing compassion and loving-kindness are enhanced by our appreciation and understanding of diversity in all aspects of life. Attendees are not required to be Buddhists. Rather, a Buddhist philosophy framed within Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings is offered so as to support each other in practicing a *mindful way of living*.

We meet in the Worship Room of the Friends Meeting House at 3311 NW Polk Street, Corvallis, Oregon 97339 from 5:30 until 7:00 PM each Monday. Chairs are provided. If you prefer to sit on a cushion, please bring your own. If this is your first visit, please arrive early for a short orientation. If you have any questions please email one of the Sangha stewards (see below). Visit our webpage at www.fivestonessangha.org for more information. To get added to our email list, contact Irene at yoga4joy@yahoo.com.

Sangha Stewards

If you have any questions about our practice, please contact one of the Sangha Stewards:

Ken at peacefulstep@gmail.com; Irene at yoga4joy@yahoo.com; Paul at awryday@gmail.com; Patti at dharmapatti@comcast.net; Gary at gary.angelo@hp.com.

THICH NHAT HANH

Zen Master, poet, peace and human rights activist, Thich Nhat Hanh was born in central Vietnam in 1926 and joined the monkhood at the age of 16. In Saigon in the early 1960's, he founded the School of Youth for Social Services (SYSS), a grass roots relief organization that rebuilt bombed villages, set up schools and medical centers, resettled homeless families, and organized agricultural cooperatives. Rallying some 10,000-student volunteers, the SYSS based its work on the Buddhist principles of non-violence and compassionate action. Despite government denunciation of his activity, Nhat Hanh also founded a Buddhist University, a publishing house, and an influential peace activist magazine in Vietnam.

Exiled from Vietnam, he traveled to the U.S. where he made the case for peace to federal and Pentagon officials including Robert McNamara. He may have changed the course of U.S. history when he persuaded Martin Luther King, Jr. to oppose the Vietnam War publicly, and so helped galvanize the peace movement. The following year, King nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize. Subsequently Nhat Hanh led the Buddhist delegation to the Paris Peace Talks.

Often referred to as the most beloved Buddhist teacher in the West, Thich Nhat Hahn's teachings and practices appeal to people from various religious, spiritual, and political backgrounds. Nhat Hanh offers a practice of "mindfulness" that is beneficial for people of all faiths, by helping us resist and transform the speed and violence of our modern society. His life and teachings have deeply influenced millions of people, including scores of luminaries in different fields: politician Jerry Brown, civil rights champion Martin Luther King, Jr., eco-activist Joanna Macy, and Catholic mystic Thomas Merton - to name a few.

He has published more than 100 titles, including more than 40 in English: *Peace is Every Step*, *Being Peace*, *Touching Peace* and many more. His books are published by [Parallax Press](http://www.parallaxpress.com).

Text courtesy of The Community of Mindful Living www.iamhome.org.

Oregon Dharma Teachers:
Jerry Braza, Ph.D., Salem, Oregon
Barbara Casey, Ashland, Oregon



How We Practice

Sitting Meditation

Each session begins with a welcoming and orientation followed by a short guided meditation, walking or mindful movement meditation, and sitting meditation. We follow the tradition of using bells to mark the beginning and ending of meditation periods as well as during reading and discussion. When we hear the bell we bring our awareness to the present moment, and simply breathe in and out 3 times. A small bell is used to signal when to stretch, stand after sitting, during walking meditation, and when bowing. We bow to acknowledge the awakened potential in others and ourselves.

Following the guided meditation we generally practice walking meditation. Mindful walking is making peace with every step, and helps us be mindful as we move through the world. We walk all the time, usually without full awareness. When we walk that way, we lose our chance to be fully alive in that moment. In sangha, we practice walking in a way that brings peace and serenity. We walk for the simple joy of walking, with no destination or goal. We are aware of the feeling of each foot as it touches the floor or earth. We are also aware of our position in the group and adjust our steps to keep the same pace with others so our spacing is consistent. Our attention is on each step. We bring mindfulness to the soles of our feet. We bring our solidity and peace to the ground. We become aware of each lifting of the foot, and each setting down of the foot.

After walking meditation, we usually have another period of about 20 minutes of sitting meditation. This is followed by a short presentation, a reading from Thich Nhat Hanh's writing, or Dharma sharing from someone in our group. Sometimes we have a focus on building our sangha, a recitation of the 5 Mindfulness Trainings (precepts), or a tea ceremony, followed by Dharma Discussion/Sharing.

Please feel free to ask questions afterwards, or to ask for a private orientation time with one of our Sangha Stewards.

Mindfulness Meditation

Before beginning meditation, it is helpful to remember to relax and enjoy it. This is not work. There are three parts to mindfulness meditation:

Stopping and Calming:

"The object of our mindfulness is our in-breath and our out-breath, nothing else." We begin by simply observing our breath as it enters and leaves our body. "It is easy." When I am breathing in, I know that I am breathing in", can be shortened to "in", and "out" as you are breathing out. This will help you maintain your concentration to look deeply. We continue to observe our breath, noticing if it is a long breath or a short one. We don't do anything to change the way we are breathing. We allow our breath to enjoy itself. "When we touch our breathing with mindfulness, the quality of our



breathing improves, and a feeling of well-being is born in body and mind. The calm and harmony of our body affects our mind.”

Looking Deeply, or Concentration:

When we enjoy the calm and rest of our peaceful breathing, we can practice looking deeply. This is a process of focusing on one aspect of ourselves {e.g., habit energy of impatience, anger, fear, etc}.

First we acknowledge its presence in our lives.

Next, we accept it without denial, judgment, or criticism.

Then we use the energy of mindfulness to send compassion to it, gently holding and examining it. This stops us from fighting within ourselves and opens up space to allow insight, or understanding, to develop.

Insight and Understanding:

Then, transformation is possible. Remember to enjoy the process. It is important to be physically comfortable. For prolonged sitting periods, an erect position that allows each vertebra to rest, be stacked, upon another is most relaxing unless a physical injury dictates otherwise. When we keep our bodies still and quiet, our minds settle down more easily.

The Bell of Mindfulness

“Every time we hear the sound of the bell, it is an opportunity to go back to our mindful breathing.” When we hear the bell, we stop all activity (walking, talking, thinking, etc.) and we take 3 calming breaths. “We may lose our mindful breathing, in our projects and worries. The sound of the bell is the voice, or light-within, the voice of the Buddha, or Jesus, Mohammed, or our own inner voice calling us back to our true home, the here and the now, like a friend smiling to us and wanting us to enjoy each moment of our time together. The practice of mindfulness is our true presence in the here and the now, so that everything becomes real and alive.”

Dharma Discussion/Sharing

This is a special time to share our personal experiences of our practice. We quiet ourselves with three breaths, settle into ourselves, and we speak deeply from our hearts.

- We bow to the Sangha when we are ready to share what arises or is deeply present for us: insights we have gained, obstacles that have arisen, the fruits of our practice, touching calmness, compassion, joy, or the ongoing struggles.
- We speak to the whole group—not to a particular person, focusing simply on what is present within us at this moment. When questions arise, we may sit with them, not needing anyone to give us their answer.
- We also do our best to be concise and limit the time we speak so that everyone has an opportunity to share, also knowing that anyone is free not to share. We avoid speaking a second time until everyone has had a turn.

- We keep our focus on our practice. We do not intellectualize, nor do we promote favorite causes, or urge others to use our personal way of doing things. We bow to let others know we are finished.
- Deep Listening:
As we listen to our dharma sisters and brothers, we diligently remain present with the person who is sharing. We keep our hearts open with loving-kindness. We give our deep respect to the one sharing by keeping confidentiality. We do not cross talk by giving advice, questioning, negating, or putting down what another has said. We do our best to understand deeply, to be able to quietly share in the other's suffering and joy. We listen so that the speaker feels heard though we have not spoken.

Our beloved teacher Thay is in his upper 80's, and has not selected a successor to follow him. It is the Sangha that will succeed him. We find the time we share together in our meditation and in our Dharma Sharing/Discussion sacred. We find our connection deepening and our joy increasing as we walk this path together, and we happily welcome you to walk it with us.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Voluntary donations (aka, *Dana*) are accepted on Monday practices.

Dana is *Sanskrit* for generosity, which our sangha cultivates in appreciation for the teachings. *Dana* supports practice space rent. All sangha activities are freely offered.

Many thanks for the many hands that contributed to this practice, and this newcomers guide. Special thanks to Oregon Order of Interbeing, Many Rivers Sangha, River Sangha, and Thursday Night Sangha who have graciously lent their support and encouragement.