

SnowFlower Sangha Friday Night Leaders Responsibilities

Obtain bag with key and bell from the leader in previous week.

Bring flowers for the altar.

Be at the Friends' House no later than 6:45 to open door and set up space.

Turn on outside lights and lights in hall and in the sanctuary.

If there is more than one leader decide who will do what during the evening and how the dharma talk will flow.

If you need help with any of the tasks, ask Sangha members ahead of time or as they come in to help with setup, greeting, reading, inviting the bell or anything else that will assist you.

If there is more than one leader, agree ahead of time who will do what so that you can have ease and clarity throughout the evening and enjoy sharing.

Room Setup:

Remove two rows of chairs on each side of the middle aisles.

Stack chairs in the back of the room.

Bring low round table from the stage for the altar.

Place piano bench or chairs to the L of the entrance to the sanctuary for printed materials.

Bring in two plastic boxes from the upper shelves on the L in the back room.

Roll in library cart from back room and place in a spot that is visible, yet will not obstruct the flow of walking meditation.

Place Welcome to SnowFlower Sangha sign on easel outside door to Zendo

Documents setup:

Documents are found in an accordion tabbed folder in one of the plastic boxes.

Place the following documents on the piano bench or chairs at the door:

Into to Snowflower Sangha

Kalyana Mitta and Mentoring for New Members Information Sheet

Recent Newsletter

Love & Understanding Project Pamphlets and envelopes

Mail list sign up sheets for newcomers

Altar Setup:

Cover with one of several cloths that are in plastic boxes.

Place a statue of Quan Yin along with one of Thay's photos.

Place one or more candle holders with tea candles in them.

Get matches.

Place flowers.

Light candles when the space is ready and people are seated or coming in shortly before inviting the first bell. You may chose to light the candles in a ceremonial manner as part of the opening of the first sit.

Setup of your sitting space:

Set up your own sitting space in the front of the room to one side of the altar facing the entry doors. If there is more than one presenter sit on both sides of the altar facing the entry doors.

Place the large bell and the small bell close by.

Place the clock (to be found in the bag) close to your seat.

Place any papers or books you will be using for the evening at easy reach.

Put remaining boxes and materials on benches in the back behind the altar.

Be available for greeting people and notice if there are new people. If you prefer not to be responsible for newcomers, ask another Sangha member to do so.

Lights:

Check the lights and make sure that they are not too bright yet provide enough light for people to move around the room and for you to read if you plan to do so. You may also choose to have dimmer lights during the meditation and ask someone to turn them up for the dharma talk.

Opening the Sit:

Be seated around 6:55 and be ready to invite the first bell at 7:00.

Invite the first bell once.

Welcome everyone to SnowFlower Sangha.

Ask for everyone to say their name, starting with yourself, and ask that new people identify themselves as such.

If there are new people welcome them again and let them know that there is written info including an intro pamphlet and contact person on the bench by the door. Also let them know that you and/or other Sangha members will be there at the end of the evening to speak with them and answer questions. You may ask members who are willing to act as resources to raise their hand.

Explain the format of the evening. Do so more elaborately and in more detail if there are new people, less so if there are no new people.

You may or may not wish to mention the evening's topic or theme and/or provide further information such as a short reading or specific instructions that pertain to the topic or theme.

First Sit:

Wake the bell and invite it three times to mark the beginning of the first sit.

Specific instructions for bell invitation are available.

If you are new to inviting the bell, it is good to read those and to practice the bell.

The first sit is 20-25 minutes.

At the end of the sit wake the bell and then invite it once.

Guided Meditations

When leading a guided meditation, it is most important to remember that when people are meditating, they should not be startled by the sound of words. To avoid jolting people, the bell is gently used before words are spoken. This is done by wakening the bell, rather than inviting it with a full sound, by touching the rim of the bell firmly with the inviter and not moving the inviter away. This muffles the sound. (For more complete information, consult Thay's book, The Blooming of a Lotus.)

Preparation for Walking Meditation:

Invite people to stretch their legs.

Announce that walking meditation will be starting.

Explain walking meditation basics if there are new people.

Let people know how to arrange themselves for the walking (how many circles and the flow).

Explain bell sequence if there are new people.

Bell 1 standing, moving sit-upons if necessary and getting into circle(s)

Bell 2 bowing

Bell 3 turning to left and beginning to walk

Bell 4 stopping and turning to face into the circle

Bell 5 bowing and then returning to seats

Use the small bell and invite it once for the first time.

Stand up and move your sit-upon and materials

Take small bell with you as you walk and place the clock in a place where you can see it.

Walking Meditation:

When everyone is in the circle, invite the bell once the second time.

Invite the bell once for the third time and begin walking.
After 10-15 minutes, invite the bell once for the fourth time.
When people are facing into the circle, invite the bell once for the fifth time.
Begin to move slowly towards your seat, rearrange yourself and have the large bell at hand.

Second Sit:

Wake the bell and then invite it three times.
After 20-25 minutes wake the bell and then invite it once.

Dharma talk:

Ask people to move closer so that everyone is able to hear.
Announce your topic or theme.
Spend 10-15 minutes providing your comments.
If there is more than one presenter the entire presentation time should not exceed 20 minutes so that there is sufficient time for discussion.
When you are done, bow and if there are new people explain the practice and the intention behind bowing.
You may want to mention that silence is also a wonderful way to take in the topic.
Be attentive and respond to Sangha members who are bowing.
At about 8:55 announce that there are just a few minutes left and if there are any additional comments.
After a couple more minutes invite the bell once and ask if there are announcements.
After announcements invite everyone to form a circle, hold hands, and, if they wish, to put into the circle those who may need support.
After a few minutes, raise your hands to signal the end of the evening.
If there are new people explain the money bag (how much and what for).
Tell people that they may leave quietly or hang out and talk, encouraging new people to meet Sangha members.
Pass around the money bag.

Room Re-Setup and closing down:

Place chairs back into the rows and make sure that the soft gray chairs are dispersed amongst the red chairs.
Put documents back in folder and folder back in box.
Take down the altar:
Wrap the Quan Yin in a scarf and place her carefully in the box
Putting the photos and table cloth in the box

Put the large and small bells in the bag making sure that the key is
on the string that is attached to the bag handle
Do your best to find the leader for the following week and give her/him the
bag.
Put the boxes back on the shelf in back room.
Roll the library cart into the back room below the shelf.
Make sure that the sanctuary is clear and tidy.
Turn off the lights and lock the door behind you when you leave.

Thank you for your courage and generosity in volunteering to lead Sangha.

Remember that these guidelines are intended as supports rather than
mandates: we appreciate your efforts and don't expect perfection!

May you be Happy and May you have Peace

Last Revised, April 2008