

Guidelines for SnowFlower Sangha Friday Night Leaders

Coming into the Friends' House:

- Obtain bag with key and bell from the leader in previous week.
- Bring flowers for the altar. If no flowers are available, use the dry flowers in the box below.
- Be at the Friends' House no later than 6:30 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, have an understanding ahead of time who will do what and how the dharma talk will flow so that you can have ease and clarity throughout the evening and enjoy sharing.
- 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.

Room Setup:

- Remove three rows of chairs on each side of the middle aisles.
- Stack chairs in the back of the room.
- Bring crate with meditation pillows from back room.
- Bring low round table from the stage for the altar.
- Place piano bench or chairs to the left of the entrance to the sanctuary for printed materials and donation basket.
- Bring in the plastic box from the upper shelves on the left in the back room.
- Roll in library cart from back room and place it outside the entrance to the meditation hall.
- As people come in who want to sit on the floor make sure that they form rows facing each other in front of the chairs. Have the first rows created be closer to the center of the room so additional cushion seating is available behind them without blocking the first row of chairs.

Documents setup:

- Documents are found in an accordion tabbed folder on the library cart
- Place the following documents on the piano bench or chairs at the door:
 - Intro to Snowflower Sangha
 - Recent Newsletter
 - Love & Understanding Project Pamphlets and envelopes
- Donation basket and sign

Altar Setup:

- Cover with one of several cloths that are in plastic box.
- Place a statue of Quan Yin and/or Buddha statue along with one of Thay's photos.

- Place three "candles" in their holders and light on the bottom.
- Place flowers.

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. There is information on the website in the "Info" section and "Newcomer Information" within that section that may be helpful.
- 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.

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 - one large outer circle or an additional inner circle.
- 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.
- You may want to Dedicate the Merit of the practice at this point or wait until just before the forming of the closing circle. Some suggested formats for this Dedication can be found on the website.

Closing Comments and Circle:

- Ask if there are announcements.
- After announcements explain the suggested \$2 donation and ask people to leave it in the basket by the door as they leave.
- Ask that socializing be held off until those who want to leave quietly can do so.
- Encourage new people to stay and meet Sangha members and ask Sangha members to stay and talk with them.
- Invite everyone to form a circle, hold hands, and, if they wish, to put into the circle those who may need support.
- Stay in circle for a few minutes allowing for names to be placed in it. Then raise your arms to signal the end of the evening and as everyone raises their arms, bow to the circle.

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 on the library cart
- Take down the altar:
 - Wrap the Quan Yin in a scarf and place her carefully in the box
 - Put the photos, candles and table cloth in the box
 - If dry flowers were used, put them on top of the other items, gently.
- Put the large and small bells along with the clock, in the bag making sure that the key is on the string that is attached to the bag handle.
- If money put in the basket was not collected, put it in the white bag along with the bells. Put the basket in the box.
- Do your best to find the leader for the following week and give her/him the bag. Otherwise, if you are not sure you will be there the following week, find someone who can be there and can come early and give it to them.
- Put the box back on the shelf in back room.
- Put the crate with the cushions in the 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 being a leader.
May you be Happy, May you have Peace.**

SnowFlower Sangha, April 2009