

Annual Business Meeting Agenda
Monday, January 23rd, 6:30 PM – 9 PM

(Start promptly)

Opening meditation (5 min)

Welcome (5 min) (Don)

Get acquainted activity (10 minutes) (Don leads)

Review of our current governance structure, with Q&A (15 min) (Karuna leads)

Business Item: consider change in Sangha governance (25 min) (Don leads)

Mindfulness Song (5 min) (Don leads)

Business Item: consider approval of conflict resolution guidelines (10 min) (Don leads)

Council reports and vacancy announcements (20 min)

- Steering Council – 3 vacancies (Jim leads)
- Caretaking Council – 1 vacancy (Celeste leads)
- Scheduler’s Council – 5 vacancies (Susan leads)
- Other projects and tasks

Break while people volunteer for openings (15 min)

Business Item: Consider approval of budget (15 min) (Karen leads)

Business item: Joining MOSES (presented by Coming Home) (10 min) (Carol leads)

Appreciations (10 min) (Don leads)

Ending meditation (5 min)

Documents for packet and Info for body of email announcement

of vacancies for each council (info) – include names of people on committee and names of people leaving in italics

Warning that we will start promptly at 6:30 PM (info)

Roles and Responsibilities (Doc)

Governance proposal (Doc)

MOSES proposal (Doc)

Treasurer's Report including last year's budget (Doc) – get from Karen in January

Budget Proposal (Doc)

Summary reports of year's activity highlights for each Council and (optionally) for any projects/tasks

Conflict Resolution guidelines (if ready)

Rationale and History of the Annual Business Meeting Committee

In March, the Steering Council (STC) reviewed how the Annual Business Meeting (ABM) held in early 2011 had gone. Since the last two ABM's were significantly contentious, the Council decided to create an ad hoc advisory committee to look into alternative procedures for the Annual Meeting that would balance the need for meeting efficiency with the desire to promote harmony in the community. Members of the community were invited to participate by email and by announcements at Sangha, and eight Sangha volunteers* participated in one or more of the three meetings of the ABM committee.

The ABM committee concluded that, given the size of the Sangha, there were too many decisions that required Sangha-wide approval to consider well in one annual business meeting. So we decided to propose that all community decision-making be vested in the three Councils, with the following three exceptions: budget; volunteer sign-up for councils and projects; and significant changes in Sangha structure.

In order to ensure that this change did not disenfranchise Sangha members who wanted input into particular Sangha decisions, we created a structure that we hoped would maximize the opportunity for all sangha members to be informed about and have input into matters being considered by each Council.

With most of the decision-making moved to the Councils, we suggest below a redesign of the ABM (renamed the Annual Meeting)

- to incorporate contemporary meeting processes and roles to promote efficiency and engagement.
- to have reports and information-sharing on all Sangha activities.
- to have a significant focus on community-building through celebratory activities and mindfulness practice.

Proposal of the Annual Business Meeting Committee

1. Change the name from Annual Business Meeting to Annual Meeting, to reflect our suggestion (below) that its purpose be changed.
2. Community decision-making will be delegated to the Councils except for budget, volunteer sign-up for councils and projects, and significant changes in Sangha structure, which will still be decided at the Annual Meeting. The roles and responsibilities of the councils will not change.
3. Councils will provide greater opportunity for community input at their meetings, by publicizing agendas in advance and openings their meetings to any community member who wishes to attend.
4. If a Sangha member strongly disagrees with a decision made at an earlier Council meeting, the Council will reconsider the decision at a later meeting at which they can be present to express their concerns.

5. The Annual Meeting will be a celebratory and practice-oriented meeting, with more reporting than decision-making, that is designed to nurture community. The following agenda items and roles are recommended:

Agenda items:

- a. *tightly facilitated reports from committees and projects*
Each committee and project will distribute prior to the meeting a detailed written report of their activities in the previous year. At the meeting, each council or project will have time to make a very short presentation of the highlights of their report with one flip chart sheet as reference, but are encouraged to try to keep their reports to two minutes, followed by a short question/answer period. A council/project member (preferably the convener or chairperson, if there is one) will stand by the flip chart to answer further questions during the later part of the meeting in which people are signing up for community roles
- b. *presentation and approval of budget*
- c. *sign-up for roles supporting the Sangha*
The councils and other opportunities to support the Sangha will be described followed by the opportunity to sign up for councils and other roles in the community.
- d. *celebratory functions*
An opportunity to celebrate our achievements and appreciate those who have served the community.
- e. *a significant practice-enriching and community-building activity*

Roles and Process for decision-making:

- a. *decision process facilitator*
The person filling this role should be (i) an experienced and skilled facilitator, (ii) either the President or someone chosen by them, (iii) intimately familiar with the Sangha, (iv) resilient, and (v) able to field issues out of left field.
- b. *a "keeper of the container" aka "vibes watcher"*
The keeper will invite the bell periodically to provide space for participants to be quiet/breathe/regain perspective. They could also provide process comments and/or suggestions, if they choose.
- c. *a timekeeper* to ensure that no one speaker dominates the discussion.
- d. *use of gradients of agreements* in "straw votes" to improve the quality of our decisions and the community's satisfaction with these decisions, by (i) giving us a deeper understanding of the differences in the room, (ii) seeking modifications of the proposal that would allow everyone present to be comfortable with its provisions; and (iii) avoiding voting if possible.

6. The foregoing changes in the nature of the Annual Meeting, and the delegation of most decision-making to the Councils, should be brought to the Sangha for approval at a last regular Business meeting in the old format (in January or February, 2012). At this meeting, the Sangha will consider this proposal and any other decisions brought before the whole Sangha but will incorporate aspects of the agenda, roles, and process described above, when possible.
7. Information should be distributed before the meeting detailing these proposals and the reasons behind them. The reasons we discussed included:
 - a. councils meet more often
 - b. councils are small enough to make decisions effectively
 - c. council membership is open to all
 - d. there are 3 councils, and 27 council seats, providing opportunity for over 20 people to be involved in council decisions
 - e. in addition, proposal #3 makes it easier for non-council members to have input on specific issues
8. If approved, these recommendations go into effect immediately and, after one year, the ABM will convene as the Annual Meeting as proposed here.

The ABM Committee recognizes that the proposal represents a significant change from how SnowFlower Sangha has historically conducted its decision-making and communication activities. Where those activities continue to serve the community well, we have preserved them. In other areas, the Sangha's growth has prompted us to recommend changes. In short, the proposal demonstrates, yet again, the law of impermanence. We ask Sangha members to read and reflect on the proposal, contact any of the ABM Committee members if you have questions, attend the 2012 ABM to discuss it and, if it is approved, treat the ensuing year as a practice opportunity for discerning the degree to which the changes serve their intended purposes.

* Anne Forbes, Ed Jacobson, Don Katz, Cheri Maples, Karuna Namenwirth, Micha Namenwirth, Jim Roseberry, Janet Zimmerman

SnowFlower Sangha Conflict Resolution Guidelines

The ultimate basis for working with conflict in our community is the Fourth (of the Five) Mindfulness Training:

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and compassionate listening in order to relieve suffering and to promote reconciliation and peace in myself and among other people, ethnic and religious groups, and nations. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am committed to speaking truthfully using words that inspire confidence, joy, and hope. When anger is manifesting in me, I am determined not to speak. I will practice mindful breathing and walking in order to recognize and to look deeply into my anger. I know that the roots of anger can be found in my wrong perceptions and lack of understanding of the suffering in myself and in the other person. I will speak and listen in a way that can help myself and the other person to transform suffering and see the way out of difficult situations. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to utter words that can cause division or discord. I will practice Right Diligence to nourish my capacity for understanding, love, joy, and inclusiveness, and gradually transform anger, violence, and fear that lie deep in my consciousness.

Working with our own upset and anger

- What happens to our upset and anger when we use mindful breathing to stop the racing thoughts and create a bigger space around our anger?
- What happens to our anger when we send phrases of lovingkindness to ourselves, or put our hand on our heart and tell ourselves, "I care about this suffering"?
- What happens to our anger when we send phrases of lovingkindness to the other person?
- What happens to our anger when we look deeply into our feelings and reactions, using the question "What else is there?" to uncover the feelings behind the feelings?
- What happens to our anger when we turn our attention to activities that we know will nourish our happiness and well-being?
- How does our anger shift and change the day after the incident that upset us? A week after the incident that upset us?

Getting together with the other person

- Consider writing a Peace Note to the other person, letting them know about the issue and asking for their consent to meet. How might your feelings and perspectives about the conflict change?
- Avoid getting together with the other person if we still feel significantly upset or triggered. It is best to let some time pass, using the opportunity for practice, before meeting.
- If the hurt is deep, it may be useful to get together with a spiritual friend before meeting with the other person.

At the meeting:

- What happens to the energy between us when we sit in silent practice together?
- What happens to the energy between us when we acknowledge our own imperfections and part in the conflict?

- What happens to the energy between us if we truly hear the other person's story, perhaps rephrasing what they say so they know we have heard the essence of what they said? If they can truly hear our story?
- What happens to the energy between us when we express our own hurt without blaming or criticizing the other person, genuinely asking the other person to help us understand why they have spoken/acted the way they have?
- What happens to our own feelings and the energy between us when we focus our attention on the grain of truth in the other person's story? Or if we cannot do that, on our appreciation of the other person's willingness to share deeply with us, and the opportunity that creates to deepen our relationship with them?
- If intense emotions or thoughts arise, what happens if we invite the bell and come back to the breath for a few minutes?
- What happens to the energy between us if we each listen deeply at the end of the meeting to each other's answer to the question, "What is still left unresolved for you?"

Seeking support from spiritual friends and senior practitioners

- Would it be helpful to seek support and clarity from a trusted spiritual friend? (See list of senior practitioners in the additional resources.)
- Would it be more helpful to get support from one person or have a group of people hear me out and ask questions to deepen my understanding?
- A spiritual friend helps most by:
 - listening deeply
 - not rescuing
 - not judging
 - not offering advice
 - not taking sides
 - helping me take 100% responsibility for my experience and let go of blame
 - supporting the way forward rather than letting me get lost in my story
 - trusting my inner wisdom
 - being present with an attitude of openness, "Beginner's Mind"

My joy is like spring, so warm it makes flowers bloom in all walks of life.

My pain is like a river of tears, so full it fills the four oceans.

Please call me by my true names,

so I can hear all my cries and laughs at once,

so I can see that my joy and pain are one.

Please call me by my true names,

so I can wake up,

and so the door of my heart can be left open,

the door of compassion.

Sangha conflict resolution process document

Conflicts have been known to tear the carefully woven fabric of a sangha. As a step toward preventing and healing conflicts in our sangha the following process and suggestions for approaching interpersonal conflicts may be helpful.

From The Dharma we learn that*

- difficult times are inevitable, but whether we suffer or not depends on how we react to that difficulty
- by facing difficulty with an open heart, we discover insight, love, and courage
- the basic practice is to stop everything we're doing and just look at what's happening
- the best way to be happy ourselves is to put others' happiness first
- the only really solid ground is open ground

*From the introduction to the book, Solid Ground: Buddhist Wisdom for Difficult Times (p.11) by Melvin McLeod: "Neither Buddhism nor meditation insulates us from pain." "But we have choices about how we respond inside." Continuing, "This is the greatest and most virtuous alchemy of all: to take suffering and, through our practice, transform it into wisdom and love. We have this power and, in every moment, the freedom to use it." (pp. 13-14) Norman Fischer comments that, "The most astonishing fact of human life is that most of us think that it's possible to minimize and even eliminate suffering." (p. 27) He goes on to talk about the richness of learning that comes from wisely handling our suffering, which is what we hope this document will help to facilitate for its readers.

The following are some considerations if you wish to prevent conflict in your relationships or are in a conflict or experiencing conflict within yourself which involves other persons.

Before a conflict develops

In Thay's teachings we are offered Beginning Anew as a process for handling conflict, which is referred to as a practice of reconciliation.

- The first step in Beginning Anew, which is called Flower Watering, is really about preventing an environment of tension and conflict; laying a foundation so that conflicts are much more easily dealt with when they occur. It is acknowledged that conflict is inevitable in human relationships but that it can be dealt with skillfully. We do Flower Watering by focusing on appreciations, gratitude, and loving kindness in our relationships day to day. We do this consciously, creating positive habit energy within ourselves by thinking appreciatively of others in our lives and expressing our appreciations and gratitude to them openly and generously.
- The second step of Beginning Anew is expressing regret. We also do this often and soon, as situations arise where we feel regrets for our own words and behavior or for any tensions

that might have developed between ourselves and another person that might be causing pain.

By taking these steps we hope to prevent small misunderstandings from accumulating and becoming much larger ones, taking care of them as they arise. We are cultivating our awareness and appreciation for the positive qualities that our loved ones, friends, and co-workers bring to our life. We are also owning our part in creating tension between ourselves and others when we express our regrets soon upon realizing that we have played a part in creating the tension.

Conflicts may still arise between people, but these steps help to establish a positive atmosphere of feelings of mutual support and appreciation as well as of taking responsibility for one's own actions and perceptions. These two are essential components to resolving conflicts constructively.

When a conflict arises, we return to the Fourth Mindfulness Training

Loving Speech and Deep Listening

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and compassionate listening in order to relieve suffering and to promote reconciliation and peace in myself and among other people, ethnic and religious groups, and nations. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am committed to speaking truthfully using words that inspire confidence, joy, and hope. When anger is manifesting in me, I am determined not to speak. I will practice mindful breathing and walking in order to recognize and to look deeply into my anger. I know that the roots of anger can be found in my wrong perceptions and lack of understanding of the suffering in myself and in the other person. I will speak and listen in a way that can help myself and the other person to transform suffering and see the way out of difficult situations. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to utter words that can cause division or discord. I will practice Right Diligence to nourish my capacity for understanding, love, joy, and inclusiveness, and gradually transform anger, violence, and fear that lie deep in my consciousness.

Dealing with our feelings

When conflict does arise, the first step in dealing with it is to breathe! Sit with what you are feeling. Turn toward your suffering and open to the process of what it can teach you.

Often the first feeling we are aware of in a time of conflict is anger. In his book titled Anger Thay reminds us not to act on this feeling, saying "When you get angry, go back to yourself, and take very good care of your anger. And when someone makes you suffer, go back and take care of your suffering, your anger. Do not say or do anything. Whatever you say or do in a state of anger may cause more damage in your relationship." (p.24)

Norman Fischer tells us that, "In the Zen Buddhist tradition we have a precept about anger: 'A disciple of the Buddha does not harbor anger.'...our commitment is not to harbor and hold on to that anger, not to encourage it and make more of it than is necessary." (Solid Ground, p. 43)

Sylvia Boorstein comments that, “One of the biggest fuels of our anger is blame. The Buddha talks about ‘the bliss of blamelessness’.” Meaning that ‘I’ve made amends I can for whatever mistakes I’ve made, but that I’m not blaming other people either.’ That’s really the bliss of blamelessness...” (Solid Ground, p. 117)

It has been said that anger is a twin emotion (or sometimes a triple or quadruple!) It is helpful to examine our anger and to identify the other emotions we are having that are supporting and perhaps even feeding our anger. Perhaps we feel hurt, scared, rejected, abandoned, jealous, deceived, or any of a number of emotions. We are all different in our reactions and perceptions. We all come to situations with our personal histories which inform our perceptions and reactions to situations. We cannot assume that another person correctly anticipates how we may feel in response to a situation.

The crux to any workable resolution to a conflict lies in responding to the feelings underlying the conflict. No one can respond productively to our anger, but they may respond compassionately to our feeling hurt or scared. They may understand the cause beneath our feelings of rejection or jealousy. But, first we must know ourselves and be willing to be open, vulnerable, and honest about our feelings.

Suzanne Kilkus has written a piece about this for sangha entitled A “**no victim, no blame,**” **conflict resolution process** in which she says

The skills to resolve conflict involve being open to learning from the experience, being willing to let go of the victim perspective, and having an intention of restoring the flow of love and good will within ourselves and toward the other(s) involved. We can look at this as restoring integrity within a system (integrity here means the organic natural balance of things). That’s the ground that is solid enough to hold the process and all the people involved.

This perspective of resolution holds that each person involved in the situation is 100% responsible for their experience. Responsible means having the ability to respond, not the blame game that is our cultural definition. It also means that each person is bringing something of themselves, i.e. their history, their current level of functioning in conflict, their feelings and sense of self, their mental formations, and their particular perception in this moment, etc. When this level of truth is identified and spoken, conflict can resolve in organic and creative ways.

Seeing responsibility in this way ends blaming because there is no more trying to divide up the “pie” in an attempt to identify who’s the victim (the wronged) and who’s the perpetrator (the wrong-er). All conflict is based on the view that the experience is 1 pie (one 100% responsibility) that needs to get divided into what belongs to whom and so an argument ensues because nobody will agree on the division. And so this creates a race for the victim position and many reasons why our perspective is the right one. (This way of handling conflict is pervasive in our species. And it doesn’t work.) This all ends when each person

takes 100% responsibility for their experience so in any relationship experience there is 100% X the number of people involved. That way everyone gets the opportunity to learn something that may not be able to be learned in any other way and share in the restoration of love and well being.

What Suzanne is describing is supported by Norman Fischer's comments on suffering as a place from which to learn and grow. When looked at as an opportunity to deepen our knowledge of self and our connections with others, we can see how vital this process can be to our practice. Tsoknyi Rinpoche comments that it is necessary for us to "gradually cut through the habit of identifying with each emotional wave that passes through our awareness. We can be angry, jealous, or scared without having to act on those emotions or let them take over our lives. We can experience joy or love without becoming attached to the object that we think is the cause of our joy." (Solid Ground, p.75)

Sylvia Boorstein writes, "Suffering can be differentiated from pain. There is pain in life, without doubt, but suffering is the extra tension in the mind that is unable to accommodate change and accept the truth of its experience. The first two noble truths are that life is difficult and that suffering is the tension in the mind that insists an experience be different from the way it is. It's the imperative in the mind that this moment be different that causes our suffering." (Solid Ground, p. 95)

(Are you still remembering to Breathe?)

How to talk about the conflict with the other person

After doing one's own work on our reactions to being in conflict, we may still feel it is important to talk to the other person about the conflict we are experiencing in our relationship with them.

They tells us that, "In the third step of Beginning Anew, we express our own hurt with mindful, loving speech, without blaming or criticizing. We speak in such a way that the other person can listen and receive our words. If we blame and condemn the other person, their heart will close and they will not be able to hear us. We ask the other person to help us to understand why they have spoken as they have, acted as they have to cause us so much pain. Perhaps at a later time they can share with us so that we can understand more deeply. If a strong emotion arises in us while we are expressing our suffering, we should simply stop and come back to our breathing until the emotion subsides."

They reminds us that, "The Buddha gave us very effective instruments to put out the fire in us: the method of mindful breathing, the method of mindful walking, the method of embracing our anger, the method of looking deeply into the nature of our perceptions, and the method of looking deeply into the other person to realize that she also suffers a lot and needs help. These methods are very practical, and they come directly from Buddha." (p. 25)

A process for discussing a difficult subject with another person is suggested by the teachings of Nonviolent Communication (NVC). This is a 4 step process that includes the following:

- Observations: communicating what I observe (see, hear, remember, imagine) free from evaluations, that does not contribute to my well-being. “When I hear, see, etc.”
- Feelings: how I feel (emotion or sensation rather than thought) in relation to what I observe.
- Needs: what I need or value (rather than a preference, or a specific action) that causes my feelings. “...because I need/value....”
- Requests: the concrete actions I would like taken. “Would you be willing to....?”

NVC is a practice that many have found helpful in enhancing their communication skills. It is very helpful to study and practice these techniques with others. If you are interested in pursuing this in more depth, training opportunities and practice groups are available through Madison Area NVC: www.madisonareanvc.org/

Sylvia Boorstein reminds us that we need to choose carefully when and where to approach a conflict. We need to be sure there is time for deep listening to occur. “There’s a list in the Vinaya, the Buddha’s code of monastic rules, of what the Buddha said people should think about before they admonish another person. The first is ‘In due season will I speak, not out of season.’ This means, wait until it’s a good, propitious time and you have reconstituted yourself and are in your right mind, and also that the other person is in the frame of mind to hear you. Then you can speak on the other side of anger.” (Solid Ground, p. 117)

Deep Listening

The goal of deep listening is to hear beyond the words of the other person and yourself, to the essence of what the words and feelings are pointing to. Deep listening occurs when your mind is quiet. Deep listening is not defensive, argumentative, or intrusive. It is not about struggling to analyze or interpret. It is a purely receptive state of mind. In a state of deep listening, we realize our oneness. We realize that we are not separate; we are connected. When we listen deeply, we let go of any beliefs we have about the other person. We let go of our prejudices and past memories of him or her. We enter a state of deep listening to be touched by the other person and to hear the essence of what he or she is saying. (from What is Deep Listening? By Joe Bailey)

Constructive feedback

During the discussion of a conflict one needs to be ready to skillfully take in the feedback given by the other person. One needs to be personally aware of what one is willing and able to agree to change. Both sides need to find points of agreement and to accept that there may be some places

where an agreement to disagree may be necessary for the time being. Indeed, you may need to leave the process for some time and return to it at a later time.

Forgiveness

Once the situation has been carefully and compassionately explored together, it is also important to be ready to ask and give forgiveness as it is appropriate. It may be helpful to use a forgiveness meditation. The following practice is adapted from a guided meditation taught by Eric Kolvig.

*Bring attention into your body, in whatever position you are in right now.
Bring attention to the heart center in middle of chest, the energy center that is right behind
breastbone, and feel whatever is there without judgment.
Send your breath through the heart.
Send the following phrases along with your breath, through your heart.*

*Bring to mind the ways that you may have harmed yourself in this difficult situation, and say
to yourself,
"I allow myself to make mistakes
I allow myself to be imperfect
I allow myself to be a learner, still learning life's lessons
I forgive myself for this harm I have done to myself
And if I can't forgive myself now, may I forgive myself sometime in the future."*

*Now bring to mind the ways that the person with whom you are entangled may have harmed
you, thru speech or action. Hold that being in your heart, and say to yourself,
"Just as I allow myself to make mistakes, so I allow you to make mistakes.
I allow you also to be imperfect.
I allow you to be a learner, still learning life's lessons.
I forgive you for the harm that you have done to me,
And if I can't forgive you completely now, may I forgive you sometime in the future."*

*Now bring to mind the ways in which you may have harmed the other person in this
situation, and say to yourself,
"I allow myself to make mistakes.
I allow myself to be imperfect.
I allow myself to be a learner, still learning life's lessons.
I forgive myself for the harm that I have done, for my sake and also for the other's sake,
And if I can't forgive myself completely now, may I forgive myself sometime in the future."*

*Finally, hold the image of that being who you have harmed in your mind's eye. And ask
their forgiveness by saying these phrases to yourself,*

*“Please allow me to make mistakes
Please allow me to be imperfect
Please allow me to be a learner, still learning life’s lessons.
Please forgive me for the harm that I have done to you,
And if you can’t forgive me completely now, please forgive me sometime in the future.”*

And, from the beginning of the conflict to a time of resolution, remember to send Metta to yourself and then to the others involved.

The following senior practitioners are willing (as of January, 2012) to assist Sangha members in resolving interpersonal disagreements with other Sangha members.

Jim Roseberry

Don Katz

Karuna Namenwirth

Lisa Glueck

Celeste Robins

David Haskin

Cheri Maples

SNOWFLOWER SANGHA

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Updated: June, 2011

SnowFlower Sangha is a lay practice community in the spirit of Thich Nhat Hanh. In addition to attending Tuesday and Friday meetings for meditation and discussion, we endeavor to engage our mindfulness practice as fully as possible throughout our day. Through the effort to bring mindful and respectful attention both to Sangha and to daily activities, we nurture mindfulness in ourselves and support it in each other.

Sangha is currently structured around the three councils whose individual roles and responsibilities are outlined below.

GENERAL RULES OF GOVERNANCE

- Each council determines the issues it will take up.
- Each council will fill interim vacancies that occur during the year by seeking and choosing a volunteer to serve out the departing member's term until the next Annual Business Meeting (ABM), which is held in February.
- To allow for input from sangha members, each council will post to the listserv
 1. Its next meeting date
 2. The Agenda for that meeting
 3. The Minutes of that meeting

Any Sangha member who wishes to raise a question or express a concern may do so by contacting a member of the relevant council. (See pages 2, 4, and 5 of this document for names of current Council members.)

STEERING COUNCIL (STC) Sangha Administration and Record Keeping

Role: To address issues that have the potential to affect the entire Sangha, including conflict resolution; to attend to legal and budgetary issues; to sponsor the Annual Business Meeting. Duties include but are not limited to:

- Determining which issues need to be brought to the entire Sangha at the ABM. Should an issue arise which requires prompt action (i.e. sooner than the next ABM), the Council may decide the issue and notify the Sangha via listserv and newsletter until the next ABM.
- Planning the agenda for the ABM and following up on decisions made there. Making the agenda available via the listserv and the website at least 2 weeks prior, clearly designating which items are reports; which are Council recommendations for Sangha review and approval; and which are decisions for Sangha consideration without any recommendation. *Each anticipated all-Sangha decision will be clearly designated.*
- Dealing with legal issues and annual filing responsibilities
- Working with financial and budgetary matters affecting the entire Sangha
- Selecting Sangha officers. (Officers are chosen by members of the STC at the first meeting after the ABM.)
- Resolving conflicts
- Sponsoring the Fall Retreat

Criteria for Membership

- Commitment to the practice
- Demonstrated commitment to the Sangha
- Commitment to spend sufficient time and be willing to make difficult decisions when necessary
- Ability to attend at least three quarterly meetings a year
- When possible, at least 1/3 of the members should come from those who regularly attend Tuesday meeting and 1/3 from those who regularly attend Friday Meeting.

Desired Composition - 9 members with staggered three year terms

- 1 from Care Taking Council
- 1 from Schedulers Council
- 1 from Tuesday Sangha
- 1 from Friday Sangha
- 5 open seats

Volunteers

1 Year term: Walt Keough (Schedulers), Carol Rubin (CTC), Karen Reppen

2 Year term: Karen Pluim, Chuck Heikkinen

3 Year term: Don Katz, David Haskin, Jim Roseberry, Susan Pearsall (Tuesday)

Officer Responsibilities

President: Don Katz

- Creates & distributes agendas for each meeting
- Leads & facilitates each meeting

Vice President: Jim Roseberry

- Assumes President's duties in his or her absence
- Becomes next Council President

Secretary: Walt Keough

- Takes & distributes Minutes for each meeting
- Keeps records of all Minutes

Treasurer: Karen Pluim

- Participates in the Steering Council as a voting member
- Chairs meetings of the finance committee
- Prepares, together with the finance Committee, financial reports and budget proposals for the STC and the ABM
- Receives and deposits weekly donations; maintains file of monthly statements; reconciles checking account
- Pays rent
- Makes payments for budgeted and non-budgeted expenditures
- Receives and deposits money from the Annual Retreat
- Makes payments related to the annual Retreat
- Calls meeting for charitable donations
- Acts as liaison with Friends Meetinghouse
- Trains a successor

The office of Treasurer may be extended for a second 3-year term. When the role of Treasurer is

open, it is made known to the Sangha. Interested parties will submit their names to the STC who will make the selection.

2010-2011 Officers – Don Katz (President), Jim Roseberry (Vice-President), Walt Keough (Secretary); Karen Pluim (Treasurer)

STAND-ALONE ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE STEERING COUNCIL

Finance Committee

- Advises the Treasurer on financial matters
- Assists the Treasurer in preparing the financial reports and budget proposals.
- Solicits volunteers to collect weekly contributions and deliver them to the Treasurer.

Volunteers – Pat Arnold, Walt Keough, Micha Namenwirth, Karen Pluim (Treasurer)

State of Wisconsin Non-Corporation Form Submitter Maintains Legal Documents

- Fills out the required state form annually.

Volunteer - Mary Michal

Roles & Responsibilities “Keepers”

- Keep this document up-to-date and posted on the website

Volunteers - Karuna Namenwirth, , Mary Gallagher

Fall Retreat

- See Page 7

Volunteer Coordinators for 2011: David Haskin, Walt Keough

Scholarships

Volunteers: Lisa Glueck, Walt Keough, Karuna Namenwirth, Carol Rubin

SCHEDULERS' COUNCIL (SC)

Role: To plan and schedule Tuesday and Friday meetings that support and sustain Sangha and the mindfulness practice of members. Duties include but are not limited to

- Determining a theme (this can be loose) for the two month cycle
- Finding people to lead the sit and discussion each week, and sending the schedule to the *SnowFlower Sun* editor by the agreed-upon deadline.
- Supporting, offering guidance, discussing topics with leaders
- Providing the leaders during your cycle with the most recent guidelines for leading.

Criteria for Membership

- Experienced mindfulness practitioner of at least two years standing
- Willingness to help the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh flow through the Sangha
- Experience with and commitment to SnowFlower Sangha
- Willingness to work with and support members who volunteer to lead Sangha

Desired Composition - 12 members with staggered 3-year terms.

- 6 for Friday Each member to schedule a two-month cycle each year.
- 6 for Tuesday Each member to schedule a two-month cycle each year.

Volunteers

Friday

1 year term: Steve Spiro (Mar/Apr), Karuna Namenwirth (May/June)

2 year term: Steve Fleck (September/October), Linda Jordan (July/August)

3 year term: Jane Peckham (Nov/Dec), Susan O'Leary (Jan/Feb)

Tuesday

1 year term: Maureen Brady (January/February), Mary Michal (Nov/Dec)

2 year term: Savitri Tsering (Sept/Oct)

3 year term: Walt Keough (July/August), Mary Gallagher (March/April), Cheri Maples (May/June)

Responsibilities of Tuesday & Friday Leaders

- Preparing the evening program as outlined in the Leaders' Responsibilities Documents. These documents can be found both in the Tuesday and Friday bags and on the website.
- All leaders – newer and seasoned practitioners alike - **should read the Leaders' Document** before leading Sangha

Volunteers Varies from week to week

Note: Everyone who attends should be mindful of helping with set-up and clean-up. Members are also asked to support new people by greeting them upon arrival and being available to answer questions after closing.

STAND-ALONE ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE SCHEDULERS' COUNCIL

Materials & Inventory Caretakers

- Keeps the files with handouts up-to-date
- Ensures that all supplies are accounted for and maintained
- Sees that the Buddha statue is oiled twice yearly

Volunteers

Celeste Robins, Mary Gallagher, Delia Unson, Pam Moran

CARETAKING COUNCIL (CTC)

Role: To look after the on-going practice and well-being of Sangha. Duties include but are not limited to

- Sponsoring & promoting activities that nurture Sangha and its members, such as
 - Integration & mentoring of new members
 - Kalyana Mittha groups
- Encouraging Sangha members to suggest and plan other practice-related activities

Criteria for Membership

- Mindfulness practitioner
- Commitment to Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings

- Experience with and commitment to SnowFlower Sangha
- Commitment to attend regularly Tuesday and/or Friday night Sangha meetings

Desired Composition- 6 members with staggered three year terms.

- 1 from Tuesday night
- 1 from Friday night
- 4 open seats consisting of both newer and older members of Sangha

Volunteers

1 year term: Celeste Robins

2 year term: Steve Fleck, Don Katz

3 year term: Michelle Bowman, Rachel Murray, Tom Loomis

STAND-ALONE ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE CARE TAKING COUNCIL

Music Coordinator:

- Directs Vox Ephemera for special nights and at retreats
- Makes copies of music for retreats and sits

Volunteer - Jane Peckham

Librarians

- Maintain library collection & ensure good condition of books
- Solicit book returns, as needed

Volunteers

Tuesday: Bonnie Schmidt

Friday: Jane Peckham and Pam Moran

“Care Group”

- Proactive approach to serve with equanimity Sangha members in need of support in times of illness, death in the family, etc.

Volunteer Contact - Jane Peckham

Mentoring:

- See details of Mentoring program and Kalyana Mitta program on the website.

Coordinators: Susan Pearsall, Jane Peckham

Volunteers - Maureen Brady, David Haskin, Don Katz, Mary Michal, Karuna Namenwirth, Susan O’Leary, Celeste Robins, Steven Spiro

COMMUNICATIONS

Newsletter Editor & Staff

- Solicit schedules for Calendar from Tues & Fri schedulers
- Solicit announcements and articles, including half-days of mindfulness, social events, etc.

Volunteers: Erin Hanusa (Editor), Karuna Namenwirth

SnowFlower Listings on Internet

Volunteer: Jane Peckham

Website Maintenance

Webmaster

- Ensures payment for domain registration and website hosting
- Adds Newsletter and other notices/info to the website
- Improves functionality of website
- Makes site accessible to multiple webmasters if more volunteers step forward

Webmaster: Don Katz; Sue Hessel

Website Content

- Keeps documents current
- Adds appropriate Sangha related texts (such as the Mindfulness Trainings)
- Communicates with the Webmaster through the Liaison

Volunteer: Mary Gallagher

Email Group Manager (snowflower@yahoo.com)

- Provides general maintenance of yahoo groups memberships, including response to viruses
- Adds & removes participants, as requested
- Changes addresses, as requested

Volunteer: David Haskin

Member Database Coordinator

- Maintains address / phone/ email list
- Adds & removes names, as requested
- Makes changes to addresses, phone-numbers, and e-mails as requested
- Updates list yearly

Volunteer: Mary Gallagher

SANGHA PROJECTS

LOVE & UNDERSTANDING

- Coordinated directly with Sister Chan Khong and the monastics

Criteria for membership: commitment to this program, willingness and ability to help out

Volunteers: Chuck Heikkinen, Linda Jordan, Mary Michal, Susan O'Leary, Jim Roseberry, Delia Unson

“COMING HOME”

- "Coming Home" promotes and supports engaged Buddhism through projects involving incarcerated and previously incarcerated individuals.

Criteria for membership: commitment to this program, willingness and ability to help out, complete training

Coordinating Council: Kate Edwards, Steve Fleck, , Cheri Maples, Carol Rubin

LOCAL SANGHA ACTIVITIES

Half-Days of Mindfulness

Volunteers: Karuna Namenwirth (oversees scheduling April-Oct)

Social Events

- American Player's Theatre: Efrat Livny
- Holiday dinner: Susan O'Leary & Jim Roseberry, Karen Foxgrover
- Girlfriends Gathering: Susan Spiro
- Sangha of the Silver Spokes: Bike rides on country roads. Contact Jane Peckham
- Other Social Events: Susan Spiro, Karen Foxgrover and any other inspired friend

REGIONAL SANGHA ACTIVITIES

October Retreat

2011 Volunteers

Coordinators: David Haskin; Walt Keough
Registrar: Celeste Robins

SnowFlower Steering Council - Summary of Activity 2011

Report to Annual Business Meeting - January 23, 2012

The following officers served this year: President - Donald Katz, Vice President - James Roseberry, Secretary - Walter Keough, Treasurer - Karen Plum.

1. Annual Business Meeting Follow-up

Following the last Annual Business Meeting the Council decided to create an ad hoc advisory committee to look into alternative procedures for the Annual Meeting that would balance of the need for meeting efficiency while better promoting harmony in the community. The committee would be formed of any Sangha members interested in the issue and would report back to the Steering Committee with suggestions for improvement. Their report was received and after some modification is being presented at the current Annual Business Meeting with our recommendation for approval.

2. Sangha Website:

Don headed up the renewal of the Sangha's website, with Sue Hessel doing much of the work. The new site will be able to be updated by multiple people, so we will have a gatekeeper for permissions to edit the site.

3. Scholarship Committee:

We approved Karuna's request to expand the amount of the national scholarships while still keeping the total spending for scholarships within the budgeted amount. Later, Karuna requested an increase in the allotment for scholarships for the Bethel Horizons Retreat from \$1,500 to \$2,000. This was approved. The Council also decided to broaden the scope of retreats eligible for scholarship usage. In the past, scholarships have been limited to events directly linked to Thay and/or the monastics: e.g., Plum Village, Deer Park, Estes Park; and also the annual Plano retreat. It was decided to make several additional opportunities available, to include retreats sponsored and facilitated by members of our Sangha such as: Mindfulness and Recovery Retreat; Thaypassana Retreat; Sharon Salzburg Retreat; and other retreats sponsored by the Center for Mindfulness and Justice. The scholarship committee will be responsible for deciding how the money is allocated.

4. Conflict Resolution Committee:

An ad hoc committee was formed to discuss whether the Sangha should have guidelines and a policy for conflict resolution. The STC decided that the guidelines that are developed by the Committee will go to the Annual Business Meeting for approval even though they would only be guidelines. If the Committee doesn't finish its work by the January ABM, the guidelines would need to be approved under any new process implemented at the ABM.

5. Name and Address List:

Mary Gallagher updated the document listing Sangha names and addresses, and the STC decided that she should send the updated list by e-mail to everyone on the list; and provide printed copies only on a case-by-case basis to people who request one.

6. Retreat Report:

The annual retreat at Bethel Horizons was successful. The price of the retreat had been raised because of increased costs of food and facilities.

7. Mold Removal It was decided that we would assist the Friends in their plans for mold remediation, up to a maximum of \$600.

Caretaking Council 2011 Overview

If there was a theme to our work over the last year it might be characterized as welcoming and supporting newcomers. Some of these projects included fine-tuning our Mentoring and Kalyana Mitta Group coordination, including clearer definitions of what is the work of the Coordinators and what is the responsibility of the CTC for these two sangha sponsored efforts. Included in this was a suggestion to the Schedulers Council that panels be set up for a Tuesday and a Friday evening dharma discussion about Kalyana Mitta groups.

Another of our efforts was a discussion with the facilitators of our Introductory Sessions about how they approach them and suggestions they might have about them. A summary of that discussion is now available for anyone doing an Introductory Session and a suggestion was made to the Schedulers Council about having these sessions begin at 6:15 rather than at 6:30 as they have been. In the future we hope to get feedback from Newcomers about what has been helpful about the sessions for them and what they might suggest be changed or added to the sessions.

We also explored the idea of a Newcomer's Group similar to a Kalyana Mitta group which would be facilitated by 2 long-term practitioners. If members of the group would like to study some specific key points of the Dharma (such as the Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, etc.), the experienced practitioners in the group may volunteer to lead such sessions or to invite other experienced practitioners from sangha to talk about the subject of interest at a session of the group. At the 2012 ABM, a coordinator for a Newcomer's Group will be sought.

The past year for the Schedulers Council

Discussion included:

--If no new people, leader talk would be kept to a minimum. The following agreed-upon wording was added to the Guidelines for Leaders document: "Talk by the leader will be kept to a minimum. If new people are not present, it is not necessary to describe the process of the Sangha evening or to give instruction. Inspirational quotes or gathas, however, are welcome."

--When there are new people, mention that we walk as a sangha, which includes paying attention to the interval ahead and behind us, keeping an equal amount of space between people without allowing large gaps to form.

--Expanding the role of silence in the programming by occasionally having longer sits and no dharma talk. Possibly in combination with chanting, gathas. This remains optional and up to the leader to decide in collaboration with the scheduler. Members are encouraged to make their wishes known!

--It was agreed that the option of metta meditation should stand out in the "Instructions for Schedulers" as they consider the components of their cycles.

--It was agreed that recitation of the MT's remain as is for now: once every two-month cycle, either the Five or the Fourteen. Schedulers are, however, encouraged to explore fresh ways of handling recitation nights. Example would be to use the Five as a guided meditation during the sitting and have the dharma talk be on another topic.

--It was agreed that the Roles and Responsibilities document be reviewed on an annual basis at the first Schedulers meeting after the Annual Business Meeting in order to familiarize new Schedulers with the document and schedulers' responsibilities.

--Delia and Chuck will coordinate winter Half Days of Mindfulness and Karuna summer Half Days. One year terms of this subcommittee will be revisited when the R&R document is reviewed each year.

--Regarding outside speakers: there was consensus that there be a connection between the subject presented and Thay's teachings

--Suggestion to the Caretaking Council that a K.M.-type group for newcomers be formed to study "Buddhist Basics". This would allow newcomers (and other practitioners) to deepen their study of the dharma and to meet others as well.

--Laminated card detailing the end-of-meeting routine was created for leaders' use. Another was made with "Bell Basics". Both are kept in the bell bag.

--Regarding cancellation policy. The following line will be added to newsletter on perpetual basis. "In case of inclement weather, an email will be sent to the listserv by 3 p.m."

--New schedulers will be lined up with a past scheduler to help them learn the ropes. There is sufficient flexibility within the process to allow for both "hands-on" and "light-touch" schedulers.

--Leaders will be asked to mention the \$2.00 donation without sounding apologetic.

The Love and Understanding Committee members have given careful thought to our next steps in supporting the greater Sangha. We believe that Love and Understanding continues to be an important opportunity for SnowFlower Sangha to engage with the larger community and specifically with our sisters and brothers in Vietnam, and we would like to see it continue beautifully into the future. We have a very special connection with Thay's support for children and others in the poorest rural areas of Vietnam. Sangha members have made a deep commitment, financial, and through sending loving kindness. Each year, there is a line on the registration form for our annual retreat, soliciting donations for Love & Understanding, and there is an ongoing financial commitment on the part of many of us to contribute to Thay's work in rural Vietnam. Those of us who attended the SnowFlower Retreat this past weekend were able to purchase handmade cards with beautiful photography, and all of the proceeds support Love and Understanding.

Last year, the commitment to produce a wonderful DVD and distribute it to each North American sangha, was accomplished beautifully, through the efforts of dedicated SnowFlower members. We also continue to raise significant funds through soliciting individual donations, and making and selling cards and other items. Each year we request individual donations via a mailing to Sangha members. We have been collecting the donations, forwarding them on to Deer Park monthly, and tracking donations. Initially we thought that by aggregating our donations and tracking them as a Sangha, we would be more able to establish a direct link with the villages. Sister D was our main contact person and she is no longer able to play that role. Her successor at Deer Park is very grateful to SnowFlower, and also is very clear that there is no one available to be a liaison with us in this way. That is understandable, since there is so much work to be done. It also means that the initial reason to have SnowFlower act as an intermediary for donations has ended. We now warmly invite and encourage individual donors to send donations directly to Deer Park.

We ask you to consider Love and Understanding in your charitable giving, now and in the future, and continue to remember those in our greater Sangha whose lives we touch through the practice of generosity, and in recognition of the deep truth of Interbeing.

Donations made out to Unified Buddhist Church can be sent directly to:

Deer Park Monastery
2499 Melru Lane
Escondido CA 92026
Attn: Sister Chan Nao Ngiem
Love & Understanding Program

For more information regarding Love and Understanding and SnowFlower Sangha's commitment, please go to our website, www.snowflower.org and click on "Projects." With a bow of gratitude for the generosity of the Sangha and for the teachings that sustain us.

The Love & Understanding Committee

Chuck Heikkinen, Linda Jordan, Mary Michal, Susan O'Leary, Jim Roseberry, Delia Unson

Sangha Website report

Members of Sangha website informal committee: Don Katz, Sue Hessel, Sam Katz with occasional advice and assistance by Dave Haskin and Linda Jordan

In the fall of 2010, the company that hosted our website went out of business without warning, causing us to lose our website and all the information on it.

So beginning in October, 2010, some Sangha members began meeting to create a new website. We decided to use a flexible content management system called Drupal 6, and to host the website on a larger and more stable web host named Network Solutions. The website went public on 6/20/2011.

The new website is designed to make it easier for non-technical Sangha members to change or add to the website. Currently, Don updates the content on the website, and Sue and Sam help with technical issues.

We would like to have one or two more people helping with this, both entering content and thinking about and implementing improvements.

Income Statement for the year ended December 2011 - SnowFlower Sangha

Operations

<u>Revenues</u>	Budget 2011	Actual amt.	Budget 2012
1. Weekly Donations Friday	\$2,600	\$2,598.87	\$2,700
2. Weekly Donations Tuesday	\$2,600	\$2,125.18	\$2,600
3. Dividend		\$2.48	
4. Donation towards Coming Home		\$100	
Total	\$5,200	\$4,826.53	\$5,300

<u>Expenses</u>	Budget 2011		Budget 2012
1. Insurance	\$252	\$262	\$262
2. Library	\$300	\$79.61	\$100
3. Printing/Reproduction	\$150	\$0	\$50
4. Postage	\$50	\$0	\$50
5. Misc s(candle, cushions)	\$98	\$122.49	\$138
6. Rent - F(\$2080) + T(1820)	\$3,900	\$3,925	\$3,900
7. Projects ComH, L+U	\$550	\$200 CH only	\$200
8. Donation to Friends - Mold Removal		\$600	\$600 New
Total	\$5,300	\$5,189.10	\$5,300

Net Income from Operations **(\$362.57)**

Retreat

<u>Revenues</u>		Budget 2012
1. Registration - total income (less discounts*)	\$16,803	
less Love and Understanding donations	\$515	
Less Refunds	\$1,375	
(Incl. Donations Received to cover discounts \$595)	\$14,913	
<u>Expenses</u>		
1. Lodging	\$4,744	
2. Food - Rajan	\$6,862.80	
Food - bread	\$140.50	
3. Flowers	\$85	
4. Copying/Misc	\$112.58	
5. P.O. Box + Cookies	\$55.42	
6. Retreat 2012	\$300	
Total	\$12,300.03	

*discount = scholarship for retreat \$972

Net Income from Retreat **\$2,612.97** **\$2,000**

Donations

	Budget 2011		Budget 2012
<u>1. Scholarships</u>	\$1,500		\$1,000
Estes Park		(\$650)	
Center for Mindfulness and Justice		(\$375)	
<u>2. Charity</u>	\$1,885		\$1,000
Comm.Shares (\$150), TimeBank(\$300),		(\$1,885)	
Cambodian School(\$175, Deer Park(\$1000),			
NAMI(\$100), GrassrootsLeadersCollege(\$100)			

Net Donations **(\$2,910)** **(\$2,000)**

Miscellaneous payment Unified Buddhist Church -Retreat 2011 (\$625)
Net Cash Receipts for the year **(\$1,284.60)**

Cash Balance as of Dec.30, 2010 **\$9,061.96**

+Net Cash Receipts 1/1/ - 12/31/11	(\$1,284.60)
Equals	\$7,777.36
- Permanent Reserve	\$1000
-Operating Reserve	\$1000
-additional reserve	\$3000
equals	
Discretionary Cash Balance	\$2,777.36

Request for Approval of SnowFlower Joining MOSES during 2012

The Coming Home Project Committee and the Steering Council have each recommended asking the Sangha to join MOSES, an inter-faith coalition in the Madison area, and to pay annual dues of \$200. MOSES is working on issues involving Wisconsin's rate of mass incarceration, alternatives to incarceration, and discrimination against those released from prison. This appears to be a valuable extension of the important and compassionate work being done both in and out of prisons by the Coming Home Project and other prison ministries in which Sangha members participate

MOSES is a newer affiliate of WISDOM, which is a faith-based organization devoted to social justice policy issues. WISDOM has 9 affiliates across the state, including in the areas of Milwaukee, Racine, La Crosse, Eau Claire, Green Bay, and Appleton. Each affiliate is a coalition of local faith-based congregations, including Catholic and Protestant congregations, synagogues, and at least one Islamic Center. Each affiliate focuses its efforts on whatever social justice issue it chooses, consistent with the WISDOM mission statement. The most active issues selected by affiliates tend to be prison issues (such as alternatives to incarceration) and immigration.

To date, the MOSES chapter has been very focused on prison issues, including its opposition to current legislative bills that would allow any employer to overtly discriminate by refusing to consider any applicant for employment, or firing any current employee, who has ever committed a felony. MOSES also has a Ban the Box campaign against employment discrimination, and is involved in the large inter-faith protest planned for February 20, 2012 in Madison to challenge Wisconsin's mass incarceration rate (called the 11X15 campaign, to cut Wisconsin's prison population in half to 11,000 by the end of 2015).

Carol Rubin is Secretary of MOSES and would function as Sangha liaison to MOSES. WISDOM has decided that given its relatively small size, SnowFlower would only be expected to pay \$200 dues to become a member for 2012.