

## Hosting a Tuesday Gathering

Updated March 2024

Offered with a bow of appreciation for your kind and diligent preparation of our time together. Please note that these guidelines pertain for the most part to Tuesday and Friday gatherings in the Friends Meetinghouse. Sunday and Wednesday gatherings do their own.

### Advance Preparation

- Feel free to take home a bell the week before you facilitate.
- Review these guidelines and obtain contact information for your scheduler.
- Review/research topic; prepare and practice your dharma talk/presentation (feel free to discuss with scheduler, especially if the topic is new to you, or if you are new to facilitating).
- Please consider that each talk should include Buddhist teachings as well as one's own personal experience of them. Speaking one's own experience without relating it to the Dharma, or simply reciting teachings without personal grounding are generally not fitting for most weekly SnowFlower Sangha meetings. We seek to combine Understanding (the Dharma) with Love (speaking from the heart of personal experience).
- Be sure to leave enough time for discussion. Tuesday ends at 8:30. Suggested format: Facilitators end meditation period by 7:55 – 8:00; end talk by 8:10 – 8:15; allow 2-3 minutes for contemplating the talk before beginning the discussion period; end discussion period by 8:25.
- Make copies of any handouts you wish to distribute relating to your dharma talk.
- Arrange to bring flowers for altar.
- Note: If you need assistance with any of the facilitation tasks (setup, greeting, reading, inviting the bell, etc.) ask the scheduler or sangha members ahead of time or as they come in.

### Email Invitation

- Send a reminder message to the listserv informing members of your topic a 2-3 days before you facilitate: [snowflower-sangha@googlegroups.com](mailto:snowflower-sangha@googlegroups.com).

### Sample Email for Tuesdays Containing all the Information Participants Need

*Paragraph introducing your topic*

The bell for silence in the meditation hall will be invited at 6:55. This will give us the opportunity to settle in for our sitting and walking meditation before the official start at 7:00 pm. The gathering will be available both in person at the Friends Meetinghouse and via Zoom.

### Join In Person

- Friends Meetinghouse, 1714 Roberts Court, Madison
- Masks are available for those who choose to wear them.
- Please take care of our scent sensitive members by coming scent free.

## Hosting a Tuesday Gathering

Updated March 2024

— OR —

*Join Zoom Meeting Online (via computer or smartphone)*

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88256404466?pwd=NDU1V1ZndmtzNXVmTjJvekY3dHcvQT09>

**Join Zoom Meeting on Your Telephone for Audio Only**

[312-626-6799](tel:312-626-6799)

Meeting ID: 882 5640 4466

Passcode: 965306

### Opening Up the Friends Meetinghouse

**To enter the building**, type in the **door entry code 8237** and the left-hand door will open.

Enable the automatic door opener in 1 of 2 ways:

- (1) Above the door is a metal box with 2 switches on the end. Push the right-hand switch down. This will allow anyone to push the automatic door opener and it will open. Please do not do anything with the left-hand switch.
- (2) You can manually 'dog' the door. There is an allen wrench hanging inside the door (looking out of the building, it's about 4 feet high on the left). Insert this into the hole in the middle of the door you want to 'unlock'. Turn the wrench clockwise. Holding that, push the bar towards the door. Then remove the wrench. The bar should remain pushed in. Now anyone can open the door.

### Coordinate with Tech Host

- Coordinate with Tech Host on when to unmute Zoom after the sits and the walk. For the walk, two full circles around the entire room is about ten minutes.
- Get the microphone from the Tech Host and test it.

### Setting up the Meditation Hall

- Acquaint yourself with the lights in the meditation hall. Switches for the overhead and wall lights are to the right as you enter.
- Check the room temperature. In the winter, if the room seems too cold, you may turn up the heat by pressing the “up” arrow button on the thermostat. The system will automatically revert to “run” settings two hours later.
- Gather the following from the closet on the right end of the room (SnowFlower’s closet is the one farthest to the right as you are looking at it): Buddha and Bodhisattva statues; meditation cushions; tablecloths, candles, donation basket, photos of Thay, signs, bells, Silence Please sign.
- Roll out the library cart and place it opposite main door to the meditation hall.
- Place (large) “Welcome to SnowFlower” sign on a chair in the hallway outside the door to the meditation hall.

## Hosting a Tuesday Gathering

Updated March 2024

- Entry counter is to the left after you walk in the door. Place the name tags and the donation basket on this counter.
- Altar:
  - Altar is on floor between benches on the north/east wall. Just move it forward into place.
  - Cover altar with a cloth and put the Buddha statue, flowers, candles, Thay photo on it.
  - Altar drawer has cloth and photos, song sheets, these guidelines, clock and small bell in it.
- Facilitator sitting space:
  - Set up your sitting space (chair or cushion) to one side of the altar with bells, clock, and any papers or books close by.
  - Get the microphone from the Tech Host.
- Group Sitting Space:
  - Stack extra sitting cushions to the right of the entry door next to the second row of benches.
  - Before arranging chairs in a circle, check to see how many rows of chairs and how many chairs in each row (so you can put it back as it was). Allow center space for a few cushions. Leave space between chairs and benches for walking meditation.

### Welcoming Practitioners

- Please be attentive to those entering the hall. Make eye contact with each person arriving, let a small smile blossom on your lips, as you bring your hands together and bow gently and warmly to each person entering the meditation hall.
- Please do this for everyone entering, creating a warm, welcoming environment

### Inviting Silence

- Five minutes before the session is due to start, put the Silence Please sign on the door and invite the bell to indicate time for silence for those in the room.

### Opening the Session

- At 7:00 p.m. wake the bell and invite the bell once (see [Sangha Bell Practice](#) website for more information). Be sure to always be near the speaker whenever you invite the bell.
- Please speak loudly into the microphone so those on Zoom can hear.
- Welcome everyone to SnowFlower Sangha. State that “I’m hosting tonight.” We practice in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh who emphasized that practicing together is essential to maintaining a mindfulness practice. He encouraged that lay people can form sanghas to support our practice and build community. I have the honor of helping us create and hold the space of sangha tonight.”
- Invite everyone to introduce themselves by stating their first name (start with yourself).

## Hosting a Tuesday Gathering

Updated March 2024

- Invite newcomers or visitors to identify themselves as new or visiting if they feel comfortable doing so when it's their turn to state their name.
- If there are new people, look at them with a smile and warmly welcome them. Let them know that you would be delighted to personally welcome them and speak with them afterward, should they desire it.
- Explain briefly the format of the evening (e.g., sit, walk, sit). Do so more elaborately (e.g., [Explaining Sitting and Walking Meditation](#) and [bells](#)) and in more detail if there are new people.
- You may wish to mention the evening's topic and offer a pertinent reading or instruction.
- During any time of the opening, you're welcome to introduce a song should you desire to sing and share in singing meditation.

### **First Sit (approximately 20 – 25 minutes)**

- Wake the bell and invite it three times, completing three breaths between each invitation.
- At the end of the sit, wake the bell, check to see that the Tech Host has unmuted Zoom, and invite it once. Bow.

### **Walking Meditation**

- [Explain Walking Meditation](#) basics if needed. Ideally, this is done before the first sit, so there can be a seamless transition into the walking meditation.
- Wake the small bell and then invite it for the first time. Rise and form a circle.
- When everyone is in the circle, invite the bell for a second time. Bow.
- Invite the bell a third time; turn left; begin walking.
- After 10 — 15 minutes, invite the bell for the fourth time. Be sure the Tech Host has unmuted Zoom before you invite the bell.
- When people are facing into the circle, invite the bell for the fifth time. Bow.
- Move slowly towards your seat, rearrange yourself and have the large bell at hand.

### **Second Sit (approximately 20 – 25 minutes)**

- Wake the bell and invite it three times, completing three breaths between each invitation.
- At the end of the sit, wake the bell, check to see that the Tech Host has unmuted Zoom, and invite the bell once. Bow.

### **Facilitator Sharing**

- Share from the heart what you've prepared, being mindful to leave enough time for discussion (see details in Advance Preparation above).
- When you are finished, bow and introduce contemplation time and dharma sharing.

### **Contemplation Time**

## Hosting a Tuesday Gathering

Updated March 2024

- After your sharing, announce that we will take a few minutes to contemplate your talk.
- Invite the bell once to begin the contemplation time and once to end it.
- Invite people to answer a question, share their thoughts or ask questions.

### Dharma Sharing

- Explain that we:
  - Bow in and bow out when we are moved to speak
  - After bowing, say our name before speaking
  - Be sure to speak loudly into the microphone so those on Zoom can.
  - Speak only from our own experiences using “I” statements, & keep it personal not theoretical
  - We share with the whole circle
  - Simply enjoy the silence together if it arises – no need to fill it, just watch our thoughts
  - Offer our support by simply bringing our full attention to the speaker and practice deep listening
  - Avoid responding to someone else’s sharing, thereby preserving a safe space for people to share without a concern for someone responding to them (they might not want responses)
  - Avoid giving advice even if it’s solicited
  - Honor right speech and deep listening – this is not a Q&A, cross-talk or therapy session
- Open the floor for discussion with an invitation of the bell.
- At about 8:25, announce that there are just a few minutes left.
- Ask if there are any additional comments. A few minutes later, invite the bell once.

### Closing comments and circle

- [Sharing the Merit](#) is offered before announcements. One version is printed out and in the altar drawer, while others can be found in the *Plum Village Chanting and Recitation Book*, page 19, or in *Chanting from the Heart*, page 33.
- Ask if there are any announcements.
- Mention the listserv for newer people and note that if they wish to be added, follow the directions on home page of the website.
- Invite new people to stay and meet Sangha members and encourage Sangha members to stay and talk with them after the closing.
- Invite everyone to form a circle, place their hand on their heart or up in the air, and, if they wish, offer names of those who may need support. Stay in circle for a few minutes allowing for names to be spoken. Initiate the bowing.

### End of Meeting Tasks

- Collect and store extra handouts in use that evening.
- Move altar back to the wall between the benches.

## Hosting a Tuesday Gathering

Updated March 2024

- Return all supplies to their storage spots.
- Either you or a volunteer is to count the money and log the amount and number of attendees in the donation log (found in a black binder in the library cart). If Kathleen, Gloria, or Walt is at the meeting, give them the money to deposit. If not, hold onto the amount collected and give it at the next meeting.
- Put the chairs back in order. Usually there are four rows of 6 chairs each.
- Make sure the Sanctuary is left clear and tidy. Close windows, turn off lights.

### Locking Up

**To leave the building**, you must make sure that the building is secure, i.e., locked.

- If you used the switch on the automatic door opener, you should push the switch up.
- If you manually 'dogged' the door, you must now 'undog' it. Put the allen wrench back into the hole. Turn it until the bar releases from its position so it is sticking out. Put the allen wrench away.

### Verify building is Locked

After you have secured the building, verify that it is locked by trying to open the door.

- Pull on the handles and make sure doors don't open.
- Push the automatic door opener and make sure that it is not working from the outside.

### Sangha Cancellation Policy

It is sangha policy not to cancel a scheduled sangha meeting. In case of illness or inclement weather, however, scheduler and facilitator will discuss the options, decide together what to do, and notify the listserv no later than 3:00 p.m.

### Instructions for Offering a Guided Meditation

When facilitating a guided meditation, it is most important to remember that when people are meditating, they could be startled by sudden words. To avoid jolting anyone, the bell is gently used before words are spoken. Waking 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) does this. It muffles the sound. (For more information, consult Thây's book, *The Blooming of a Lotus*)