WELCOME TO

THE FIREWEED SANGHA FOR MINDFUL LIVING

If this is your first visit, we hope this sheet will help you become familiar and comfortable with our Sangha's weekly practice. If it is not, we hope you will review this template and offer any suggestions to better welcome persons who have come to practice with our Sangha.

We enter the room quietly and sit silently either on the floor cushions or in chairs, whatever is most comfortable. Each evening our mindfulness practice begins with the evening 's Bell Minder’s inviting and then sounding the bell three times, which begins a 15-minute meditation.

At the end of the meditation the bell is again heard three times and we have a brief round of introductions. We bow into the group before speaking, say our name and may choose to share with the group a brief account of how we are in the present moment or in past week. At the end of each introduction the member bows out.

After the round of introductions another member will lead us in a walking meditation. We follow their slow, mindful step cadence around the circle, usually three times. This takes about 15 minutes.

This is followed by another member who has volunteered to offer a dharma reading. Usually it is a selection from Thich Nhat Hanh's tradition, but may vary depending on the member's interest. There are many ways we do a Dharma reading. One member may read the entire passage, or we may pass it around and take turns. No member is required to read or participate. If they chose not to read or speak, they simply pass on the reading to the next per son .

A dharma discussion follow s the reading. The member who did the reading begins by restating the guidelines for Dharma discussions that have been a tradition with Thich Nhat Hanh 's mindfulness groups. Our Sangha has a lovely softness during this time, often sitting quietly for many minutes before someone speaks. Each person bows into the group, announces her or his name and speaks from the heart. There is no cross talk, we respect confidentiality, and members speak to the group as a whole. We try to avoid lecturing or getting in a teaching mode. It is a lovely process that graces us each week. Usually not everyone speaks, and no one is encouraged to speak if they choose to be silent.

Following the Dharma discussion, we usually have a 5 minute final sitting meditation. The Bell Minder invites the bell at the beginning and again at the end three times. Next, it is the time for housekeeping, where we spend a few minutes, organizing volunteers for the next week 's practice. Members volunteer to be the dharma reader and discussion leader for the following week. It is also a time we can invite the group to be mindful for particular persons who may need our thoughts and prayers.

Members often gather around and chat after the closing meditation bell and before leaving. There is a box for financial contributions which we offer to the Anchorage Zen Center for their generous sharing of their meditation practice room.

We are happy to welcome you and hope this description helps you become familiar and comfortable with our Sangha practice. If you would like to be on our mailing list a member will ask for your email address and you will receive weekly announcements of the next practice. We also have a website at [www.fireweedsangha.org](http://www.fireweedsangha.org)

On behalf of our Sangha and with metta (loving kindness),

Fireweed Sangha for Mindful Living Members

INTRODUCTION TO SITTING MEDITATION

Sitting meditation is like returning home to give full attention to and care for our self. Like the peaceful image of the Buddha on the altar, we too can radiate peace and stability. We sit upright with dignity, and return to our breathing. We bring our full attention to what is within and around us. We let our mind become spacious and our heart soft and kind.

Sitting meditation is very healing. We realize we can just be with whatever is within us- our pain, anger, and irritation, or our joy, love, and peace. We are with whatever is there without being carried away by it. Let it come, let it stay, then let it go. No need to push, to oppress, or to pretend our thoughts are not there. Observe the thoughts and images of our mind with an accepting and loving eye. We are free to be still and calm despite the storms that might arise in us.

If our legs or feet fall asleep or begin to hurt during the sitting, we are free to adjust our position quietly. We can maintain our concentration by following our breathing and slowly, and attentively change our posture.

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We can find suggestions for guided meditations in Thay’s book, “The Blooming of a Lotus” or also from one of the Dharma teachers.

Excerpted from: <http://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/sitting-meditation/>