

# Kingfisher Sangha

## Welcome Packet



A Buddhist community that meets in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh

Kingfisher South: Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church, Schenectady, NY

Kingfisher North: Still Point Interfaith Retreat Center, Stillwater, NY

Kingfisher East: RPI's Newman Center Hospitality House, Troy, NY

<http://www.kingfishersangha.com/>

[www.facebook.com/KingfisherSangha](http://www.facebook.com/KingfisherSangha)

# *I have arrived. I am home.*

Welcome to Kingfisher Sangha. We are so happy that you have come to sit with us. Kingfisher is a Buddhist community of mindfulness practitioners. We practice in the tradition of the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh (pronounced Tik · N'yat · Hawn) who we often call Thay, which means teacher in Vietnamese.

We are one of the many groups that meet to practice mindfulness meditation, share the Dharma, and participate in engaged Buddhism throughout the United States and around the world. We have three local branches in the Albany area that meet individually once a week for regular practice and communally several times a year for days of mindfulness and other activities. You can choose to attend one or more of the regular sessions, depending on which location and time works best for you. All are welcome to all events and meetings.

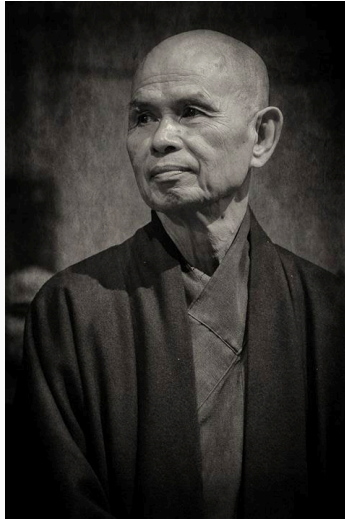
- **Kingfisher South** meets on Sunday afternoons from 4:30 to 6:00 at the Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church in Schenectady.
- **Kingfisher North** meets on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:00 at Sill Point Interfaith Retreat Center in Stillwater, near Saratoga Lake.
- **Kingfisher East** meets on Wednesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 at RPI's Newman Center Hospitality House at 4 Sherry Avenue in Troy.

If you wish to be notified of Sangha events, please sign up for our weekly email message by sending a request to Brett ([bbartow@nycap.rr.com](mailto:bbartow@nycap.rr.com)) for Kingfisher North, Tamara ([tcgeveci@gmail.com](mailto:tcgeveci@gmail.com)) for Kingfisher South, or Martin ([drmartinilyden@gmail.com](mailto:drmartinilyden@gmail.com)) for Kingfisher East.

You can also follow Kingfisher Sangha on Facebook. To join, visit: [www.facebook.com/KingfisherSangha](https://www.facebook.com/KingfisherSangha) and click on Like.

If you have any questions about mindfulness practice, sitting or walking meditation, the Five Mindfulness Trainings, etc., or should you need any support in your practice, please feel free to contact Starr ([starrregan@aol.com](mailto:starrregan@aol.com)), Tamara ([tcgeveci@gmail.com](mailto:tcgeveci@gmail.com)) or Brett ([bbartow@nycap.rr.com](mailto:bbartow@nycap.rr.com)).

# Thich Nhat Hanh



Thich Nhat Hanh, photo courtesy of Paul Davis

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh is a global spiritual leader, poet and peace activist, revered throughout the world for his powerful teachings and bestselling writings on mindfulness and peace.

His key teaching is that, through mindfulness, we can learn to live happily in the present moment—the only way to truly develop peace, both in one’s self and in the world.

Thich Nhat Hanh has published over 100 titles on meditation, mindfulness and Engaged Buddhism, as well as poems, children’s stories, and commentaries on ancient Buddhist texts. He has sold over three million books in America alone, some of the best-known include [Peace Is Every Step](#), [The Miracle of Mindfulness](#), [The Art of Power](#), [True Love](#) and [Anger](#).

Thich Nhat Hanh has been a pioneer in bringing Buddhism to the West, founding six monasteries and dozens of practice centers in America and Europe, as well as over 1,000 local mindfulness practice communities. He has built a thriving community of over 1,000 monks and nuns worldwide, who, together with his tens of thousands of lay students, apply his teachings on mindfulness, peace-making and community-building in schools, workplaces, businesses – and even prisons – throughout the world.

Thich Nhat Hanh is a gentle, humble monk – the man Martin Luther King called “An Apostle of peace and nonviolence.” In the media has also been called “The Father of Mindfulness,” “The Other Dalai Lama” and “The Zen Master Who Fills Stadiums.”

# Order of Interbeing

The Order of Interbeing, Tiep Hien in Vietnamese, is a community of monastics and lay people who have committed to living their lives in accordance with the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, a distillation of the Bodhisattva (Enlightened Being) teachings of Mahayana Buddhism.

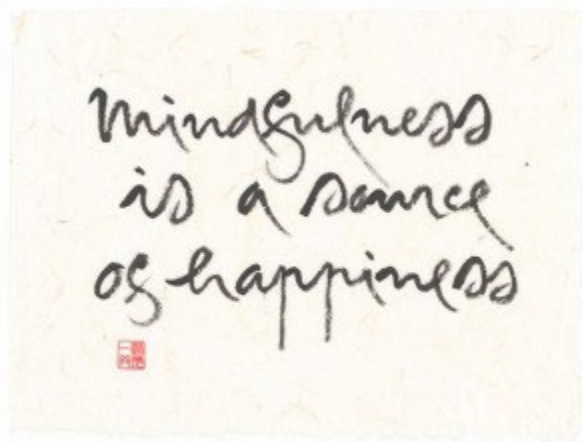
Established by Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh in Saigon in 1966, the Order of Interbeing (OI) was founded in the Linji tradition of Buddhist meditative practice and emphasizes the Four Spirits: non-attachment from views, direct experimentation on the nature of interdependent origination through meditation, appropriateness, and skillful means.

In addition to their commitment to deepening their practice, OI members are called to support and build the Sangha. Kingfisher Sangha currently has two members ordained to this order and has a group of aspirants discerning whether or not this is also their path of practice. If after participating in the community for a while, you are interested in becoming an aspirant please contact Starr ([starregan@aol.com](mailto:starregan@aol.com)), or Tamara ([tcgeveci@gmail.com](mailto:tcgeveci@gmail.com))

# Mindfulness Practice

*“There is no way to happiness; happiness is the way. Happiness should be found in every moment of your daily life and not at the end of the road.”*

*-Thich Nhat Hanh*



Mindfulness is the energy of being aware and awake to the present moment. It is the continuous practice of touching life deeply in every moment of daily life. To be mindful is to be truly alive,

present and at one with those around you and with what you are doing. We bring our body and mind into harmony while we wash the dishes, drive the car or take our morning shower.

As practitioners of mindful living, we aspire to do our daily tasks (walking, sitting, eating, working, doing the dishes, talking to a friend, etc.) with mindfulness, with an awareness of what we are doing. We strive to practice mindfulness throughout every moment of the day, not just while meditating, but also in the kitchen, in the workplace, at the grocery store, and while driving in the car.

In practicing together as a Sangha, as a community, our practice of mindfulness becomes more joyful, relaxed and steady. We are bells of mindfulness for each other, supporting and reminding each other along the path of practice. With the support of the community, we can practice to cultivate peace and joy within and around us, as a gift for all of those whom we love and care for. We can cultivate our solidity and freedom – solid in our deepest aspiration and free from our fears, misunderstandings and our suffering.

A typical agenda for a weekly gathering of Kingfisher Sangha includes the following activities:

- Sitting meditation
- Walking meditation
- Reading of the Five Mindfulness Trainings
- Dharma talk (a selection of readings from one or more of Thay's books or another teacher in his tradition)
- Dharma sharing (a time to practice deep listening and to share personal experiences of the Dharma and our practice)
- Dedication of the practice

## *Sitting Meditation*

*"You can arrive fully when you are sitting and when you are walking. You are not in a hurry; you are not looking for something else outside yourself. You know that everything you are looking for is in the here and now."*

*-Thich Nhat Hanh*

In mindfulness meditation, we sit upright and notice 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. Our breath is ground that we can take refuge in. Regardless of our internal "weather" (our

thoughts, emotions, and perceptions) our breathing is always with us like a faithful friend. Whenever we feel carried away by an emotion or scattered in worries and projects, we can return to our breathing to collect and anchor our mind.

As we meditate, we feel the flow of air coming in and going out of our nose. We feel our abdomen rise and fall. We feel how light and natural, how calm and peaceful our breathing can be. As we sit comfortably on our cushion or chair, we can say:

*Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in.*

*Breathing out, I know that I am breathing out.*

We do not need to control our breath. Feel the breath as it actually is. It may be long or short, deep or shallow. With our awareness it will naturally become slower and deeper. Conscious breathing is the key to uniting body and mind and bringing the energy of mindfulness into each moment of our life.

Sitting meditation is very healing. We realize we can just be with whatever is within us (pain, anger, and irritation; or 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. There is 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.

## *Walking Meditation*

*“Life is a kind of walk: it can be found here, here, here, here and here, in every step. We continue like this. So life can be found in a step and in the space between steps. If we expect to see life outside of these steps and the space between steps, we don’t have life. It is very clear, yet the great majority is running. That is why the practice of arrival is so important”*

*-Thich Nhat Hanh*

Wherever we walk, we can practice meditation.

This means that we know that we are walking.

We walk without hurry. We are present with each step.

Life is all around, and we are alive and healthy and capable of walking in peace. Let us walk as a free person and feel our steps get lighter. Let us enjoy every step we make. Each step is nourishing and healing. As we walk, we can imprint our gratitude and our love on the earth.

## *The Five Mindfulness Trainings*

*The Five Mindfulness Trainings represent the Buddhist vision for a global spirituality and ethic. They are a concrete expression of the Buddha's teachings on the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, the path of right understanding and true love, leading to healing, transformation, and happiness for ourselves and for the world. To practice the Five Mindfulness Trainings is to cultivate the insight of interbeing, or Right View, which can remove all discrimination, intolerance, anger, fear, and despair. If we live according to the Five Mindfulness Trainings, we are already on the path of a bodhisattva. Knowing we are on that path, we are not lost in confusion about our life in the present or in fears about the future.*

*The Five Mindfulness Trainings are not commandments. They are guideposts to help us on the path to enlightenment. When we recite them, we are not claiming to practice them perfectly; rather they are an aspiration to how we would like to live our life.*

### **Reverence For Life**

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life. Seeing that harmful actions arise from anger, fear, greed, and intolerance, which in turn come from dualistic and discriminative thinking, I will cultivate openness, non-discrimination, and non-attachment to views in order to transform violence, fanaticism, and dogmatism in myself and in the world.

### **True Happiness**

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to practicing generosity in my thinking, speaking, and acting. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others; and I will share my time, energy, and

material resources with those who are in need. I will practice looking deeply to see that the happiness and suffering of others are not separate from my own happiness and suffering; that true happiness is not possible without understanding and compassion; and that running after wealth, fame, power and sensual pleasures can bring much suffering and despair. I am aware that happiness depends on my mental attitude and not on external conditions, and that I can live happily in the present moment simply by remembering that I already have more than enough conditions to be happy. I am committed to practicing Right Livelihood so that I can help reduce the suffering of living beings on Earth and reverse the process of global warming.

### ***True Love***

Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. Knowing that sexual desire is not love, and that sexual activity motivated by craving always harms myself as well as others, I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without mutual consent, true love, and a deep, long-term commitment. I resolve to find spiritual support for the integrity of my relationship from family members, friends, and sangha with whom there is support and trust. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. Seeing that body and mind are interrelated, I am committed to learn appropriate ways to take care of my sexual energy and to cultivate the four basic elements of true love – loving kindness, compassion, joy, and inclusiveness – for the greater happiness of myself and others. Recognizing the diversity of human experience, I am committed not to discriminate against any form of gender identity or sexual orientation. Practicing true love, we know that we will continue beautifully into the future.

### ***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.

## ***Nourishment and Healing***

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will practice looking deeply into how I consume the Four Kinds of Nutriment, namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness. I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products which contain toxins, such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books, and conversations. I will practice coming back to the present moment to be in touch with the refreshing, healing and nourishing elements in me and around me, not letting regrets and sorrow drag me back into the past nor letting anxieties, fear, or craving pull me out of the present moment. I am determined not to try to cover up loneliness, anxiety, or other suffering by losing myself in consumption. I will contemplate interbeing and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy, and well-being in my body and consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth.

## *Dedication of the Practice*

This is how we close our time together. Bowing is traditional in the Vietnamese culture and it is simply a sign of respect. If it feels uncomfortable to bow, please know that it is fine just to stand quietly while others bow.

Bow four times:

- Bow to the Buddha
- Bow to the Dharma
- Bow to the Sangha
- Dedicate the practice, "May the fruits of my practice benefit all beings and the earth," followed by a final bow.

## *Resources*

- International Sangha Directory: <http://www.mindfulnessbell.org/directory/>
- Blue Cliff Monastery website: <http://bluecliffmonastery.org/>
- Deer Park Monastery website: <http://deerparkmonastery.org/>
- Plum Village Monastery website: <http://plumvillage.org/category/news/>
- Kingfisher Sangha website: <http://www.kingfishersangha.com/>
- Kingfisher Sangha Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/KingfisherSangha](http://www.facebook.com/KingfisherSangha)