

Palomitas de Paz
Member Handbook
DRAFT September 2024



June 2024

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Introduction	4
Plum Village Vision of Sangha Practice	4
Shared Values	6
Honoring Our Three Traditions	7
Engaged Buddhism of the Plum Village Tradition as taught by Thich Nhat Hanh	7
First People of the Land and the Earth Herself	8
Palomar Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.....	8
Our Practices	9
Breathing Practice	9
Entering the Dharma Hall.....	9
Bowing in Greeting	9
Noble Silence.....	10
Dharma Sharing.....	10
Touching the Earth	11
Sounding and Listening to the Bell	12
Practicing with Anger, Suffering, and Trauma.....	12
Dana Practice	14
Sharing our Pronouns	15
Chanting and Sangha Songs	15
1. Breathing in, Breathing out	16
2. Dear Friends.....	16
3. Happiness is here and now	16
4. I am free	17
5. I like the roses	17
6. Island of the self	17
7. In, out, deep, slow	18
8. Loving kindness.....	18
9. No coming, no going.....	18
10. Please call me by my true names	19
11. We are all leaves of one tree	20

12. The Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore (The Heart Sutra)	21
The Roles and Responsibilities of Sangha Stewards	24
The Roles and Responsibilities of Sangha Members.....	25
FAQ and a Quick Glossary of Terms	27
The Three Jewels	27
Bodhisattvas.....	27
Buddha	27
Dharma	28
Diversity	28
Four Noble Truths	29
Eightfold Path.....	29
Gathas.....	30
Entering the Dharma Hall.....	30
Inviting the Bell.....	30
Listening to the Bell.....	31
Using the Restroom	31
Waking Up	31
Washing our Hands	31
Palomitas de Paz	32
Sangha.....	32
Thây	32
The Three Jewels.....	32
Additional Resources	33
Links to Sangha Resources.....	33
Other Links to Support our Practices.....	33
Deepening our Practice with the Five Mindfulness Practices:.....	34
Our Covenant	38

Introduction

Welcome to Palomitas de Paz Engaged Buddhist Sangha!

Our Sangha has been meeting continuously since 2008. Palomitas de Paz was assembled by four individuals who understood that the teachings of Engaged Buddhism as transmitted by Thich Nhat Hanh in the Plum Village Tradition are a key element to addressing the violence of war and domestic aggression. Over the years, our Sangha has grown to meeting multiple times per week with opportunities to practice in a diversity of methods. The connecting thread of our practice is Engaged Buddhism.

We recognize each of us has value and worth. We allow the space for each person to live their life as they understand it. Sangha practice is both beautiful and joyful while also being difficult and challenging.

Plum Village Vision of Sangha Practice

Sangha participation is one of the three jewels of Buddhism. The Buddha teaches us the Three Jewels are the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Being an active member of a Sangha allows us to practice in the “here and now” of our life.

The Plum Village tradition reminds us that a sangha is the best way to practice meditation, as it offers deep support and wisdom for beginners and seasoned practitioners alike, and can start with a minimum of four practitioners. Not only does sangha help create a routine and improve individual practice, but the energy of a community of practitioners can create ripples of understanding and compassion that reverberate throughout society and the world.

You will need to learn how to practice with a sangha; therefore, we invite you to listen to key Dharma Talks by Thich Nhat Hanh and Plum Village dharma teachers on this subject.

For instance, in a Dharma Talk, Thay takes a deep dive into what it means to be a sangha. Some of what Thay shares relates to monastic sanghas, but much can equally be applied to a lay community, like the Six Togethernesses a real sangha must practice:

1. Body: being physically present in one place
2. Mindfulness training
3. Sharing: dharma discussion; nonverbal action; presence. (View, insight, understanding, wisdom)
4. Speech: loving; calm and gentle
5. Material resources: shared equally
6. Happy and joyful; synthesis of all ideas.

Thay also explains the difference between the core sangha and the extended sangha.

Here are some links to talks about Sangha in our tradition:

https://youtu.be/kmtbYDOjyPw?si=_m_XjpbCqCjeHHPH

https://youtu.be/idHSeRRTQ_8?si=l1pgrzCh2vkcKEK_

<https://youtu.be/VYznVZCM7Ws?si=5tJkn4oiHe05j84a>

“In order to cultivate and strengthen our Sangha, we first need to cultivate and strengthen our own practice. Once we know how to generate joy and happiness; once we know how to handle our suffering;

and once we know how to listen deeply and speak lovingly in order to re-establish communication with our brothers and sisters, then we will have great success in Sangha-building” – Thich Nhat Hanh

Shared Values

Agreements adapted from Akaya Windwood (empowered spaces - human rights)

- Listen and speak from our authentic heart.
- Let's be fully present for our time together.
- There are no “experts” here. We are all learning and will make mistakes.
- Let's meet each other where we are and not where we hope each might be.
- Let us value risk-taking and courage and create brave space so that all of us can learn and grow.
- Let's assume good intent and also recognize and acknowledge when we cause harm. Let's be aware of the difference between intent and impact.
- Let's honor the incomplete, the ambiguous, the imperfect, and the inarticulate.
- Let us honor that we have never been here before, and we are collectively on a new path.
- Let's bring a spirit of curiosity

- Let's trust our inner wisdom.
- Let us be kind rather than "nice."
- Let's follow clock time and be respectful of boundaries and honor our commitment to each other. Time is power, so be mindful of how you use it.
- Let us honor our bodies – take a break when necessary, stretch, drink water, have a snack.

Honoring Our Three Traditions

In Our Sangha, we weave together three traditions that have helped to shape our practice in our Sangha. The recognition of these three traditions does not limit other traditions that we add to the tapestry of our Sangha, but these three traditions help to ground our practice in the history that brings us together in practice.

Engaged Buddhism of the Plum Village Tradition as taught by Thich Nhat Hanh

Engaged Buddhist practice is the core of our Sangha. We rely heavily upon dharma talks offered by both monastic and lay Dharma Teachers to shed light upon our path and we benefit from these talks offered both in person and through technology. We also look to the written word of authors in our tradition. We rely upon the guidance offered to us by our founding Dharma Teachers, Dr. Larry Ward and Dr. Peggy Rowe-Ward, along with guidance offered from other Dharma Teachers in our tradition. We will look to other sources from Buddhist traditions, science, arts, nature, personal experience, other religions, and other teachers from a

myriad of traditions, but we always return to Engaged Buddhism as our core tradition.

First People of the Land and the Earth Herself

We recognize, embrace, and weave in the teachings of the indigenous people of the land we stand upon. The indigenous people have long understood that there are no true differences between humans and the Earth and all of the plants, animals, and minerals of the Earth. Our honoring of the First People of the Land is also a reminder to us all that we inter-are with one another. Interbeing is a core belief of our Sangha and as such we recognize our responsibility to welcome and embrace all who wish to practice with us with the intention of healing and unifying self and the planet. We practice to the best of our ability to accept all beings, living and nonliving, embracing diversity of ideas, nationalities, races, abilities, sexual identity, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, socio-economic status, age, citizenship, legal history, or political orientation.

Palomar Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

The Palomar Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (PUUF) is part of our ancestry. Four members of PUUF were the initial gardeners of our Sangha. They recognized that in order to promote peace, justice, equality, and inclusiveness in the world they first must cultivate these very same characteristics in themselves.

PUUF offers us beautiful buildings and grounds to meet in and explore. The Palomar Unitarian Universalist Fellowship members also support very synchronous beliefs as our Sangha and we honor the benefits we receive from our close relationship with PUUF.

Our Practices

Breathing Practice

Awareness of our breathing is central to mindfulness practice. We arrive in the here and now by focusing on our in breath and our out breath. If we experience difficulty, we return to awareness of our breath. As Thay says, “Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.”

Entering the Dharma Hall

We invite you to enter the Sangha with respect for yourself and all present with respect and compassion. Our tradition has taught us that to help reinforce the aspiration of presence, equanimity and compassion we may find it helpful to enter the room that we practice in with Noble Silence. Please see our suggestions for Noble Silence below.

You may also find it nurturing to your compassion to remove your shoes before entering the building. By removing our shoes we are helping our body recognize that we are leaving our cares and concerns at the door. We enter free of who we think we are and who we think others are. As you enter the door to the room, stop for a moment to bow and affirm your attention to be present in the moment and let go of all distraction.

“I see my true self. As I sit down, I vow to cut off all disturbances.”

Nhat Hanh, Thich. Chanting from the Heart Vol II: Ceremonies and Practices from the Plum Village Community (p. 29). Parallax Press. Kindle Edition.

Bowing in Greeting

You may see practitioners greet one another with hands touching and a gentle bow. This tradition is recognizing the buddha-nature of each

other. When we are mindful of our greeting we are inviting our buddha-nature to offer a lotus bud (symbolized by our hands together) to the buddha-nature of the one we bow to. We remind ourselves the one we bow to and the one receiving the bow are equally empty of a separate self.

Noble Silence

Our Teacher has taught us that “silence” becomes “Noble Silence” when we quiet our speech and our mind. Noble Silence is a radical act! The majority culture has taught that strength is demonstrated when we “speak our mind.”

Our tradition teaches that our mind is pulled in many different directions and that one minute our mind will judge something as “bad” and in the next moment our mind is justifying our actions which are a reflection of the same behavior. True strength comes from practicing Noble Silence, particularly when our mind is preoccupied with judging, revenge, and comparing.

We invite you to enter our Sangha in Noble Silence. Let go of the culturally prescribed “niceties” of saying hello or “catching up” with people in Sangha. We ask that you offer the gift of Noble Silence to all of us in Sangha. We all will stray from this path at times; when you do stray, please do it with love, acceptance, and full awareness.

Dharma Sharing

Dharma sharing is a buddhist practice of authenticity and presence.

In dharma sharing, we work together as a sangha to create space for all to practice with our oneness, diversity, mistakes, growth, awakenings, and imperfections.

- ❖ We hold all dharma sharing in confidence.
- ❖ We speak only about our own lives and practice and we avoid referencing other Sangha members, cross talk, advice, or teaching during dharma share.
- ❖ We center listening, presence, and non-judgment in our practice. When judgment arises, we return always to awareness of our own areas of privilege and examination of our assumptions about others.
- ❖ If we are disturbed by something, we return to our breathing. We practice generosity by allowing others to be where they are in their practice.

Feel free to share about the topic of the day, suffering, the state of your heart, or anything else you feel called to share about your life or your practice. Silence is welcome.

Touching the Earth

Sometimes we will offer a practice of touching the earth during Sangha. To a person unfamiliar with the practice, it may appear like we are lowering ourselves to a “god” or something more powerful than who we are.

When we look deeply at the practice of touching the Earth, we see that our aspiration is to connect deeply to Mother Earth. When we connect our body to the Earth, we have an opportunity to remember that we are the Earth and the Earth is us. We may look deeply and remember in Touching the Earth that we will not experience true and unending happiness and joy until all of the beings of the earth are free, happy, and joyful.

Sounding and Listening to the Bell

You will hear a number of bells in our Sangha. The bell is sometimes called “the voice of the Buddha.” We use the term “inviting the bell” when we ask the bell to bring forth its sound. This tradition of using the word “inviting” instead of hitting, ringing, or striking is a gentle reminder to wake up our compassion for all creatures with the sound of the bell.

When the Bell Master prepares to invite the bell, they may repeat this Gatha either aloud or silently,

“Body, speech and mind in perfect oneness, transcending anxiety and sorrow I send my heart along with the sound of the bell. May the hearers awaken from forgetfulness and transcend the path of anxiety and sorrow.”

For those of us preparing to listen to the sound of the bell, we may find it helpful to repeat this gatha silently,

“Listening to the bell, I feel my afflictions begin to dissolve. My mind is calm, my body relaxed, a smile is born on my lips. Following the sound of the bell, my breathing guides me back to the safe island of mindfulness. In the garden of my heart, the flower of peace blooms beautifully.”

Practicing with Anger, Suffering, and Trauma

We all carry the seeds of anger, suffering and trauma within us. Our tradition teaches us that those seeds we water will rise up and manifest themselves in our lives and those seeds we do not water will remain dormant. It is important that we care for ourselves and understand what waters the seeds of our suffering.

Care must be taken not to blame others for our suffering, as They taught us, other people are not our enemies. Our enemies are ignorance, violence, hatred, and prejudice. When we feel anger arise within us, we are taught to stop and focus on the experience. We do not attempt to “stuff” or hide the anger; rather, we practice to hold the anger, suffering, or trauma and look deeply for its roots. If we believe someone has hurt us or triggered our suffering, the first thing we practice is self-care. Self-care will look different for each of us. After we have cared for our immediate suffering and we are not carried away by our anger, we are freer to speak compassionately about our experience and seek understanding between ourselves and others.

Trauma is present in all of us and we must be aware of our tendencies to avoid effectively addressing our own trauma by “spiritual bypassing” and projection. Spiritual bypassing is a habit some of us use to avoid the pain that exists in our life by covering it up with words or actions that may appear to lessen the pain, but actually allow the pain to deepen and grow. Projection is the process of blaming others for the suffering we experience. While it is true, others actions may trigger our anger and suffering. We practice to understand that we need to begin with caring for ourselves and understanding the habit energies that support our suffering rather than blaming others and attempting to change them with our anger or hatred.

We understand that our mindfulness practice is not a substitute for trained mental health treatment. Some of us will need to care for ourselves through outside resources to address some of the deep scars we carry. Our mindfulness practice is a great asset to our healing journey and will support us as we receive the care and treatment we need.

Dana Practice

The practice of Dana should be a practice of freedom and joy. Dana is the offering of goods, services, or coins to support the Sangha practice. Dana is not used to pay for the services offered with joy by the Sangha Stewards.

Currently, the distribution of dana offered to Palomitas de Paz is used in the following ways:

Approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ of dana is donated to Palomar Unitarian Universalist Fellowship general fund for use of space and utilities.

Approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ is donated to Deer Park Monastery to support the monastic projects that may include food, blankets, capital improvements, or maintenance.

Approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of dana is held by the Sangha for special projects such as advertising costs, audio visual equipment, special service projects in the community, and other needs of the Sangha.

We will occasionally have other fundraising events for special or unforeseen needs of the Sangha or of the Monasteries of the Plum Village tradition.

Dana donations are voluntary and special preference or consideration to members is not dependent upon dana donations.

You can ask for a copy of our quarterly financial statement of the sangha's fund balance from the Palomitas de Paz Mitra. Mitra means spiritual friend and this person is selected annually by the stewards to coordinate and support the sangha.

Sharing our Pronouns

You may notice some of our Sangha Stewards share their pronouns online or in person. We optionally share our pronouns to make space for all people to be seen and accepted in our Sangha. Please refer to our FAQ Section with a discussion of Diversity within our Sangha.

Chanting and Sangha Songs

We love to sing and chant in our Sangha. It is important for all voices to be heard without comparison and judgment as chanting is a profound practice of bringing body and mind together. Here are the words for some of our Sangha songs and chants:

1. Breathing in, Breathing out

Breathing in, breathing out (2x)

I am blooming as a flower

I am fresh as the dew

I am solid as a mountain

I am firm as the earth

I am free

Breathing in, breathing out (2x)

I am water reflecting

What is real, what is true

And I feel there is space

Deep inside of me

I am free, I am free, I am free

2. Dear Friends

Dear friends, dear friends

Let me tell you how I feel

You have given me such treasures

I love you so

Love joy, inner peace

Like a summer morning breeze

Oh my dear you are so welcome

I love you so. I love you so.

3. Happiness is here and now

Happiness is here and now

I have dropped my worries

Nowhere to go, nothing to do

No longer in a hurry

Happiness is here and now
I have dropped my worries
Somewhere to go, something to do
But not in a hurry

4. I am free

I am a cloud, I am the blue sky
I am a bird spreading out its wings
I am a flower, I am the sunshine
I am the earth receiving a seed
And I am free when my heart is open
Yes I am free when my mind is clear
Oh dear brother, oh dear sister
Let's walk together, mindfully (2nd joyfully)

5. I like the roses

I like the roses, I like the daffodils.
I like the mountains, I like the rolling hills.
I like the twinkling stars when the sun goes down.
Doo bi di doo bi di doo bi di...
I like the rabbits, I like the squirrels too
I like the bluebird, I like the roaming moose
I like all animals, all animals like me
Doo bi di doo bi di doo bi di...

6. Island of the self

Breathing in I go back
To the island within myself
There are beautiful trees
Within the island
There are clear streams of water

There are birds
Sunshine and fresh air
Breathing out I feel safe
I enjoy going back to my island

7. In, out, deep, slow

In, out
Deep, slow
Calm, ease
Smile, release
Present moment,
Wonderful moment

8. Loving kindness

May I be filled with love and kindness
May I be well
May I be peaceful and at ease
And may I be happy (2x)
May you be filled with love and kindness
May you be well
May you be peaceful and at ease
And may you be happy (2x)
May we be filled with love and kindness
May we be well
May we be peaceful and at ease
And may we be happy (2x)

9. No coming, no going

No coming, no going
No after, no before
I hold you close to me

I release you to be so free
Because I am in you
And you are in me
Because I am in you
And you are in me

10. Please call me by my true names

My joy's like spring so warm
It makes flowers bloom all over the Earth.
My pain's like a river of tears,
So vast it fills the four oceans.
Please call me by my true names
So I can hear all my cries and laughter at once,
So I can hear that my joy and pain are one.
Please call me by my true names
So that I can wake up
And the door of my heart could be left open
(The door of compassion)

11. We are all leaves of one tree

We are all the leaves of one tree (x2)
The time has come for all to live as one,
We are all the leaves of one tree.
We are all the waves of one sea (x2)
The time has come for all to live as one,
We are all the waves of one sea.
We are all the stars of one sky (x2)
The time has come for all to live as one,
We are all the stars of one sky.
The time has come for all to live as one,
We are all the stars of one sky.
We are all the leaves of one tree,
We are all the waves of one sea

12. *The Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore (The Heart Sutra)*

Avalokiteshvara
while practicing deeply with
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore,
suddenly discovered that
all of the five Skandhas are equally empty,
and with this realization
he overcame all Ill-being.

“Listen Sariputra,
this Body itself is Emptiness
and Emptiness itself is this Body.
This Body is not other than Emptiness
and Emptiness is not other than this Body.
The same is true of Feelings,
Perceptions, Mental Formations,
and Consciousness.

“Listen Sariputra,
all phenomena bear the mark of Emptiness;
their true nature is the nature of
no Birth no Death,
no Being no Non-being,
no Defilement no Purity,
no Increasing no Decreasing.

“That is why in Emptiness,
Body, Feelings, Perceptions,
Mental Formations and Consciousness
are not separate self entities.

The Eighteen Realms of Phenomena
which are the six Sense Organs,
the six Sense Objects,
and the six Consciousnesses
are also not separate self entities.

The Twelve Links of Interdependent Arising
and their Extinction
are also not separate self entities.

Ill-being, the Causes of Ill-being,
the End of Ill-being, the Path,
insight and attainment,
are also not separate self entities.

Whoever can see this
no longer needs anything to attain.

Bodhisattvas who practice
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore
see no more obstacles in their mind,
and because there
are no more obstacles in their mind,
they can overcome all fear,
destroy all wrong perceptions
and realize Perfect Nirvana.

“All Buddhas in the past, present and future
by practicing
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore
are all capable of attaining
Authentic and Perfect Enlightenment.

“Therefore Sariputra,
it should be known that
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore
is a Great Mantra,
the most illuminating mantra,
the highest mantra,
a mantra beyond compare,
the True Wisdom that has the power
to put an end to all kinds of suffering.
Therefore let us proclaim
a mantra to praise
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore:

Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!
Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!
Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!”

The Roles and Responsibilities of Sangha Stewards

The Stewards have been chosen to serve as the caretakers of our Sangha. Our Stewards are long-time members and most are ordained or in preparation to be ordained as members of The Order of Interbeing in the Plum Village Tradition.

The Order of Interbeing, Tiep Hien in Vietnamese, is a community of monastics and lay people who have committed to living their lives in accord 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 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.

Our Stewards offer their time and energies voluntarily to our Sangha. Please do not get caught up in seeing the Sangha Stewards as somehow more advanced in practice than anyone else. Each Steward is doing their best to walk their path with courage, honesty, and integrity. Stewards, like anyone else, will sometimes speak or act unmindfully or may be very deeply engaged with their own practice so that they may not see opportunities to meet everyone's needs or expectations.

In our Sangha, Stewards provide the following very important duties:

- Create the calendar of events for Sangha meetings;
- Coordinate and conduct Sangha events;
- Serve as an example of Engaged Buddhism in Sangha practice;
- Help to guide and protect our Sangha when members ask for assistance;
- Serve as a "Caring Council" that looks deeply at the health and safety of our Sangha and with the help of all Sangha members,

- Practice to deepen the Sangha's understanding and benefits of Buddhist practice;
- Make day-to-day decisions about how to invest the energies and financial resources of our Sangha;
- Serve as a conduit of information and support between the our Sangha monastic communities and other Sanghas of Engaged Buddhism; and
- Serve as a conduit of information and support between our Sangha and the members and leadership of Palomar Unitarian Fellowship.
- Keep their own daily mindfulness practice strong, so they can authentically share their direct experience of the Dharma.

The Roles and Responsibilities of Sangha Members

We have been taught that the next Buddha will be Sangha. Sangha is one of the three jewels of our practice. It is hard to describe Sangha in words; Sangha can best be described by the experience.

In Sangha we enter as one body. There are no leaders and no followers. The one who leads is the one who follows. The one who follows is the one who leads.

In Sangha, we practice to remember and live what we already know, we are one. In order to generate the energy of true Sangha practice, we rely upon each other to deeply practice with the four immeasurables.

“In the Tevijja Sutta (Sutra of the Threefold Knowledges) the Buddha introduces the “four immeasurables” of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity to Vasettha, a young brahmin, saying, “Vasettha, a tathagata arises in the world, a fully-enlightened buddha, and preaches the dharma that is lovely in its beginning, in its middle, and in its ending, in the spirit and in the letter, and displays the perfected and purified holy life. Following the tathagatha's example, a disciple then

goes forth, practices the moralities, and attains the first jhana. Then, with a heart filled with loving-kindness, the disciple fills the whole world, upward, downward, across, everywhere.” Vanessa Zusei Goddard. The Four Immeasurables Leave Nothing Untouched. Lion’s Roar.

<https://www.lionsroar.com/four-immeasurables-leave-nothing-untouched/>

FAQ and a Quick Glossary of Terms

The Three Jewels

The Three Jewels of our Practice are:

- The Buddha
- The Dharma, and
- The Sangha

Bodhisattvas

Bodhisattvas are awakened beings. We also have our nature of awakening, no less than they, but we have to train ourselves. One way is to practice invoking the names of four great bodhisattvas—Avalokiteshvara (Regarder of the Cries of the World), Manjushri (Great Understanding), Samantabhadra (Universal Good-ness), and Kshitigarbha (Earth Store). When we recite their names in a deep, relaxed way, every word can touch our hearts and the hearts of those listening. In the beginning, we still feel separate from these bodhisattvas. But, practicing steadily, we realize that we are Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, Samantabhadra, and Kshitigarbha. It is not important whether they were historic figures, born in such and such a year or in such and such a place. The key is to realize their qualities within ourselves. Thich Nhat Hanh. *The Mindfulness Bell*.

<https://www.parallax.org/mindfulnessbell/article/dharma-talk-cultivating-our-bodhisattva-qualities/>

Buddha

The Buddha is a historical person that lived about 2600 years ago, but the Buddha also exists today in each of us. The historical Buddha was not and is not a god, the story of his life is so much richer when we understand that he was a person like you and me. The historical Buddha never claimed to be a god or a saint, he explained that he was like a physician with a remedy to help all of us let go of the cycle of pain and suffering.

Dharma

Dharma has many different definitions, but one that we use is that dharma is found everywhere when we are mindful. Dharma or teachings are available to us in mindful practice of watching the sun rise or set, in the giggle of a little child, or the scent of a rose in the air. Dharma is also available in reading sutras, washing dishes, crying over the death of a loved one, or even cleaning the bathroom, the essential element is mindfulness of the present moment.

Diversity

Diversity is a key issue in our Sangha; it is such a deep and broad body of experiences and knowledge that a thorough discussion lies outside of the bounds of this manual. We recognize that we each bring our own diverse self to Sangha; that diversity may include the color of our skin, the education we have achieved, the abilities of our bodies, the people we love, the politics we profess, our cultural heritage, the perceived “beauty” of our bodies, our gender identity, the history of our ancestors, the language(s) we understand, the religion of our family, and a myriad of other conditions.

We recognize that everything is empty of a separate self, and at the same time our Sangha members and creatures of the world suffer as a result of interpersonal and institutional bias. Both are very real at the same time. As one of our founding Dharma Teachers, Dr. Larry Ward, has taught, “it is our diversity that unites us.”

In our Sangha we understand that to practice deeply, we must be willing to walk a difficult, painful, and courageous path of exploring the deep conditions of our own biases both known and unrecognized. In our Sangha, we make space for all beings that are committed to practicing compassion and acceptance to the best of their abilities. We recognize that expecting perfection is both impossible and can be counterproductive to true understanding and respect. We do our best to

avoid all comparisons; you may hear some of us say, “I practice to avoid the traps of the superiority complex. I practice to avoid the traps of the inferiority complex. I even practice to avoid the traps of the equality complex.” All of these complexes are predicated on the false belief of a separate self.

Four Noble Truths

The Four Noble Truths can be understood in many ways, but simply, they are:

- The Truth of Suffering
- The Truth of the Cause of Suffering
- The Truth to the End of Suffering, and
- The Truth of the path that leads to the end of suffering (The Eightfold Path)

Eightfold Path

The Eightfold Path as taught by the Buddha is the path to freedom from the neverending cycle of pain and suffering.

The Noble Eightfold Path



Gathas

Gathas are short verses we can recite either silently or out loud during our daily activities to help us return to the present moment and dwell in mindfulness. Feel free to develop your own gathas that support your practice.

Entering the Dharma Hall

I see my true self. As I sit down, I vow to cut off all disturbances.

Nhat Hanh, Thich. *Chanting from the Heart Vol II: Ceremonies and Practices from the Plum Village Community* (p. 29). Parallax Press. Kindle Edition.

Inviting the Bell

Body, speech and mind in perfect oneness

I send my heart along with the sound of the bell
May the hearers awaken from forgetfulness and end all suffering OR
[may all who hear awaken together from forgetfulness and transcend the
path of anxiety and sorrow]

Listening to the Bell

Listening to the bell,
I feel the afflictions in me begin to dissolve.
My mind becomes calm, my body relaxed.
A smile is born on my lips.
Following the sound of the bell, my breath guides
me back to the safe island of mindfulness.
In the garden of my heart,
the flower of peace blooms beautifully.

Using the Restroom

Defiled or immaculate,
increasing or decreasing—
these concepts exist only in our minds.
The reality of interbeing is unsurpassed.

Waking Up

Waking up this morning I smile.
Twenty-four brand-new hours are before me.
I vow to live them deeply and learn to look at everything around me with
the eyes of compassion

Washing our Hands

Water flows over these hands.
May I use them skillfully to preserve our precious planet.

Palomitas de Paz

Our Sangha began meeting in 2008. Four people came together to create a space to explore the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh as a means to greater peaceful practice to protest the Middle Eastern war the US was waging at the time.

Sangha

Sangha is one of the three precious jewels of Buddhism. A Sangha is a group of friends on the path who practice together to bring compassion, harmony, and deep understanding into the Sangha and the world at large.

Thây

Pronounced “tie”. This is the word for teacher. We often refer to Thich Nhat Hahn as Thây. You can also use this term for other Dharma Teachers. For Monastic Female Dharma Teachers may be called sư cô pronounced “sew caw”. Although, the easiest title to call another is “Sibling.”

The Three Jewels

The Three Jewels of our Practice are:

- The Buddha
- The Dharma, and
- The Sangha

Additional Resources

Links to Sangha Resources

Here are some resources that you can explore to gain greater insight into Sangha practice:

- Here is a link to the Sangha Handbook offered by our tradition: <https://thichnhathanhfoundation.org/sangha-building-resources>
- Below is a link to a transcribed talk by Thich Nhat Hanh on Sangha: <https://plumvillage.org/articles/true-sangha>

Other Links to Support our Practices

- Blue Cliff Monastery <https://www.bluecliffmonastery.org/>
- Deer Park Monastery <https://deerparkmonastery.org/>
- Magnolia Grove <https://magnoliagrovesmonastery.org/>
- Plum Village France <https://plumvillage.org/community/monastic-practice-centres#6>
- Plum Village Thailand <https://www.thaiplumvillage.org/>
- EIAB <https://www.mountainspringmonastery.org/>
- AIAB <https://www.pvfhk.org/about/aiab>
- Stream Entering Monastery <https://en.nhapluu.org/>
- Healing Spring Monastery <https://plumvillage.org/practice-centre/healing-spring-monastery>
- Maison de l'Inspir <https://maisondelinspir.org/>
- Thich Nhat Hanh Foundation <https://thichnhathanhfoundation.org/>
- Parallax Press <https://www.parallax.org/>
- Palomitas de Paz website **under construction**
<https://socalawake.com/palomitas-de-paz/>

Deepening our Practice with the Five Mindfulness Practices:

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.

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 stop contributing to climate change.

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 true love and a deep, long-term commitment made known to my family and friends. I will do everything in my 1 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 one, I am committed to learning appropriate ways to take care of my sexual energy and cultivating loving kindness, compassion, joy and inclusiveness – which are the four basic elements of true love – for my greater happiness and the greater happiness of others. 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.

Deepening our Practice with the Order of Interbeing (14 Mindfulness Trainings)

<https://orderofinterbeing.org/>

Our DRAFT Covenant

As members of the Palomitas de Paz Sangha, we aspire to practice together with great love and compassion for ourselves and each other. We will use the guidance offered in our *Member Covenant and Shared Values Handbook* and other teachings of Engaged Buddhism to

- Honor each other by listening and speaking from our authentic heart and being fully present for our time together.
- Honor ourselves and each other by acknowledging that there are no “experts” here; we are all learning and will make mistakes.
- Meet each other where we are and not where we hope each might be.
- Value risk-taking and courage and create brave space so that all of us can learn and grow.
- Assume good intent and also recognize and acknowledge when we cause harm. Let’s be aware of the difference between intent and impact.
- Honor the incomplete, the ambiguous, the imperfect, and the inarticulate.
- Honor the here and now by recognizing that we are collectively on a new path and that we’ve never been here before.
- Bring a spirit of curiosity and trust our inner wisdom.
- Be kind rather than “nice.”
- Follow clock time and be respectful of boundaries and honoring our commitment to each other. Time is power, so be mindful of how you use it.
- Honor our bodies – take a break when necessary, stretch, drink water, have a snack.
- Value all bodies feeling safe and at home in our Sangha. Violent or aggressive words or behaviors should not occur before, during, or after Sangha.

We understand none of us are perfect and seeking perfection may not be conducive to our growth in understanding of true Sangha practice.

We understand that harmony in the Sangha is necessary for our own harmony. We practice to speak our truth, with love and compassion for each other.

In Sangha, conflict will happen. We do not attempt to cause unnecessary conflict, and we do not avoid conflict at the sacrifice of our own or other's integrity and agency. If we all practice to keep our Sangha healthy and nurturing, we can experience the pain of the conflict while we use the pain to help us gain greater understanding of ourselves and others.

When we recognize we have misstepped, we will seek to begin anew with all members of the Sangha and practice to avoid similar missteps.

All Sangha participants shall value each person's agency and right to experience safety and feeling at home in Sangha. Violence, aggression, or other severe or chronic behaviors that are disruptive to the Sangha harmony will be addressed immediately. If the Sangha Stewards are asked to intervene, the Stewards shall review the experiences of those people directly involved in the situation and will take immediate action to restore harmony. If the Sangha Stewards determine by majority of opinion that the behavior cannot be adequately addressed within the Sangha, the Stewards shall determine the best course of action that may include, but are not limited to removal from Sangha participation until outside interventions, such as medical, emotional, or psychological issues have been assessed and effectively addressed.

If we believe another member of Sangha has not been honoring our shared aspiration, we will take a moment to reconnect with our best self and feel our connection to Mother Earth and the source of our endless love and compassion. We will use this energy to see that those that are doing harm are doing so out of unaddressed pains, hurt, and trauma. We will then have a loving conversation with the one we believe is struggling and offer assistance to help them understand the effects of their words and actions.

If we are unable or unwilling to address the concerns directly with others we will seek assistance from other members of Palomitas de Paz Sangha to assist us with addressing the concern.