

River Sangha



... a mindfulness meditation community

March 2019

You are invited to join us for mindfulness meditation on Wednesday evenings from 7-8:30 p.m. at the library in Woodland Chapel, located at 582 High Street SE in Salem, Oregon (come up the back stairs). We welcome newcomers and people from all spiritual traditions, sexual orientations, and racial and cultural identities.

A Heartfelt Tribute to Mary Oliver

River Sangha lost a beloved poet and spiritual guide with the passing of Mary Oliver on January 17. Her work has been recited, quoted, and held close to our hearts since the beginning of our community. Over the years she touched countless readers and inspired future poets as she quietly and gracefully showed us the natural world through the eyes of her soul. She was a part of our dharma discussions and helped us see a richer path towards the five fundamental practices of mindfulness.

Through her vivid and beautiful imagery, we are reminded that we are interconnected, with each other and with nature. We think of her words as they arise in our meditation practice and as we walk through gardens, forests, and mountains...as we watch the *Wild Geese* fly, see the *White Owl* soar, and hear the *Red Bird* sing in the tree. Her voice comes to us as a gatha, "*Have I experienced happiness with sufficient gratitude? / Have I endured loneliness with grace?*"

We are filled with appreciation for the many gifts she left us and for the way she lived her *one wild and precious life*. In the end, she herself said it best. "*When death comes / like an iceberg between the shoulder blades, / I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering: / what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness.*" And now she knows. She lived and loved well, filled our hearts to bursting, left us far too soon.

- Vickie Stiteler

Mary Oliver published her first book of poetry in 1963 at the age of 28. [American Primitive](#) won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry and the National Book Award in 1984.



With Ricky in 2013. © Angel Valentine

To live in this world
you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it

against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.

-At Blackwater Pond, Mary Oliver

News From Plum Village

The Lunar New Year, or "Tết," is the most important festival in Vietnamese culture. It is celebrated this year on February 5, the Year of the Pig. It was Thầy's New Year tradition to offer the sangha a simple parallel verse in calligraphy to inspire and nurture our mindfulness practice. The Plum Village Community is happily continuing this beautiful custom with calligraphy by [Thầy Pháp Huu](#).

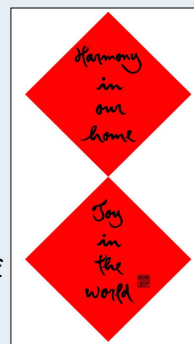


The phrases for this year's collective practice are "*Harmony in our Home*" and "*Joy in the World*." This poetic gift can be combined with our breathing as a gatha:

*Breathing in, Harmony in our Home
Breathing out, Joy in the World*

"These words are not a declaration, but a living aspiration we wish to nurture."

Join in this practice – Print and Post
Plum Village recommends printing the calligraphies on red paper (traditional in Vietnamese culture) and posting the two complementary diamonds as a pair, near each other (above, below, beside – it doesn't matter which). Post them on doors, windows or walls as a gentle reminder to be mindful of their message and to renew yourself by applying them in your daily life.



[Download PDF of the verses.](#)



We Can All Make Miracles Happen

While reading an article by Thich Nhat Hanh (Thầy) in the latest issue of the Mindfulness Bell, I was reminded of a recent lecture by Shariff Abdullah, J.D., the Director of Commonway Institute in Portland. Both are

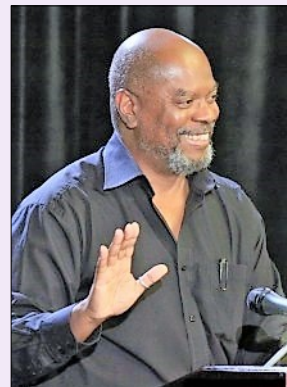


Thầy at the North American Tour, August 2011.

insightful teachers helping us to understand how things go wrong in the world and our role in transforming suffering. In the article, "Miracles of Reconciliation," Thầy wrote about sponsoring groups of Palestinians and Israelis to come to Plum Village to practice together. In the beginning the groups could barely look at one another and saw each as the cause of their suffering. It was a gradual process, beginning with exercises to calm and release tension, followed by practicing deep listening and loving speech, but in time, transformation occurred in their thinking and in their actions toward one another. **"For the first time, they saw the other group not as enemies but as human beings who suffered like they did."** Thầy believes that the miracles of reconciliation happen when you end the suffering by looking with compassion and allowing the healing to begin. **"It's very moving to see Palestinians and Israelis holding hands**

while doing walking meditation."

Abdullah spoke of a similar transformation in 2002 when he worked with Sarvodaya, a local Sri Lanka development organization, in negotiating a ceasefire between the Sri Lankan government and the rebel army, Tamil Tigers. His approach was very similar: bring adversaries into the same room, develop a relationship, and talk about divisive issues "without dividing." He introduced them to his idea of inclusivity, a spiritual, but non-religious, philosophy of knowing that all lives are inextricably linked. Knowing that whatever is done to one is done to all, he enabled both sides to see their mutual "humanness" and begin the process of making peace.



Shariff Abdullah, J.D.

"We're stronger than our fears and better than our limitations."

Here we have two brilliant teachers advocating the same idea: that it is possible to fundamentally transform our world when understand that we are interbeing. They remind us of our obligation in these troubled times to be the agent for change. - Vickie Stiteler

Shariff Abdullah, J.D. is a consultant, speaker, author and advocate for societal transformation. His book, [Creating a World That Works for All](#), asks us to stop blaming others, embrace inclusivity, and become "menders."

Shariff Abdullah, J.D. on Inclusivity:

I mean something very specific, and that is, the idea that all of our lives are inextricably linked to each other. My life is linked to your life, whether I know you or not. My life is linked to your life, whether I like you or not. I'm not trying to get us to a state where we all like each other. I'm trying to get us to a state where we all recognize that we're linked to one another. Because once you recognize that I'm linked to you and you're linked to me you will treat me differently ... If we can recognize that our lives are linked to each other, then we can start to do something on a very, very different level.

Beginning Anew: Thầy's Meditation Instruction on Starting Over.



Can the new year really be a new year or will it be just a repetition of the old year? It depends very much on us. Do we know yet how to produce feelings of joy and happiness? Do we know how to handle painful feelings? In order for the new year to be new, you have to renew your-

self, you have to make yourself new. The value of the year depends on our way of living. And if we know the practice of mindful breathing and mindful walking, helping us generate happiness and handle our feelings of pain and sorrow and anger, then we can improve the quality of our action, we can improve the quality of our life, and improve the quality of our days and months and years.

- Thich Nhat Hanh

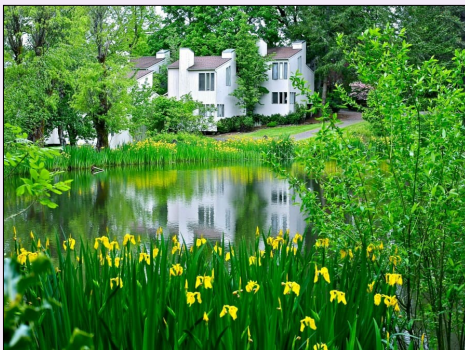


Recitation of the Five Mindfulness Trainings

Please join us on Saturday, **March 2nd** from 9 am to 11 am for a lovely recitation of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. This is a rich and wonderful way to deepen your meditation practice. We will gather at the home of Ann and Tom Moore at 4553 Fir Dell Drive SE in Salem. We begin at 9 am with our ceremony, break at 10 am for visiting and tea, then spend the last half hour until 11 am for dharma sharing. Call Alice at 503-569-1282 for more information. All are welcome!

Day of Mindfulness At the Trappist Abbey

You are welcome to join us on Friday, **March 22nd** for a Silent Day of Mindfulness at the Trappist Abbey near Lafayette. Whether you are a new or experienced practitioner, this is an opportunity to water seeds of compassion and joy while finding peace and calm within. Plan to arrive between 8 and 8:30 a.m. and conclude at 3:45. The suggested donation/dana is \$25 for a group (not individual).



Guest House & Pond © Trappist Abbey

[LEARN MORE](#)

Announcements

Oregonians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty is sponsoring an informal discussion about repealing the death penalty in Oregon. Everyone is welcome to come and share your ideas about making Oregon a more peaceful place. **March 4, and every first Monday**, 7pm to 8 pm at IKE Box Café, 299 Cottage Street NE. [OADP Death Penalty Discussion](#),

Salem Peace Vigil - **First Wednesdays** from 12 Noon to 1 pm - Polly's corner (Liberty and Chemeketa St). Signs are provided or bring your own peace and economic justice signs. Sponsored by the Salem Friends Meeting and the Salem Fellowship of Reconciliation. Information: 503-371-6109.

If you have an announcement for future newsletters, please send it to vs.trwc@gmail.com.

Sangha Leaders

Dharma Teachers: Jerry Braza & Nisi Ségor
Sangha presenters include Jerry, Alice Phalan, Brad New, Cheryl Randall, Julie Frazier, Kamala Priest, Nadene LeCheminant, Val Self, Bob Muir, and Lisa Umscheid.
Stewardship Council Chair: Kirsten Bammes
Finance: Val, Kirsten, and Alice
Mindfulness Trainings Recitation Facilitators: Alice & Sharon Cooper
Room Coordinators: Kamala, Julie, and Bob
Website & Communications: Nadene
Newsletter: Vickie Stiteler

Retreat Opportunities

Five-Day Silent Retreat at Great Vow Zen Monastery, Clatskanie, Oregon

Wednesday, May 8, 5 pm – Sunday, May 12, 1 pm.

Fred Eppsteiner, Dharma Teacher of the Florida Community of Mindfulness will present “The Pith Meditation Practices of Thich Nhat Hanh: Stopping, Deep Looking, Breakthrough.”

[LEARN MORE](#)

Resources



[The Mindfulness Bell](#): a journal that inspires insight into the benefits of a committed practice

of mindfulness and includes teachings by Thich Nhat Hanh. [Subscriptions](#) support the work of Thầy and the worldwide Sangha.

[Books by Thich Nhat Hanh](#)

[Books by Jerry Braza](#)

[Books by Mary Oliver](#)

[Books by Shariff Abdullah, J.D.](#)

Books are also available on the River Sangha bookshelf at the Woodland Chapel library for check out on the honor system.

Helpful Links:

[River Sangha Website](#)

[Plum Village](#)

[Deer Park Monastery](#)

[Thich Nhat Hanh Foundation](#)

[Thich Nhat Hanh Facebook](#)

[Mindfulness Apps](#)

FIND US HERE:

Woodland Chapel Library
582 High Street SE, Salem, Oregon

AND ONLINE HERE:

Visit the [River Sangha](#) website

CONTACT US:

RiverSangha@gmail.com



SUPPORT US:

Voluntary donations (“dana”) are welcome. Dana, in Sanskrit,

means generosity, which we offer in appreciation for the teachings. Dana can be offered on Wednesday evenings, and supports our rent, Dharma teachers, retreats and other activities.