



Chapter 5: Information

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5.1 The UK Community of Interbeing

The Community of Interbeing is the charity name of Plum Village UK, which is the network of people in the United Kingdom who practise Buddhism according to the teachings of Zen master, Thich Nhat Hanh (*Thây* as we call him, meaning teacher in Vietnamese). The UK Community of Interbeing is part of the wider international Sangha of many thousands of practitioners worldwide, all of whom follow *Thây's* mindfulness practice and teachings.

The name *Community of Interbeing* has been used since 1994, when the organisation was granted charitable status (registered charity number 1057851) and adopted a formal structure and constitution. For some years before then, a small but growing group of UK practitioners had been meeting to practise together and hold days of mindfulness and short retreats, following this Buddhist tradition. Often, they met informally just to enjoy each other's company.

As *Thây's* teachings have become better known in the UK, so the community of practitioners – the *Sangha* – has grown, with more activities taking place locally and at a national level. Many people from the UK have visited *Thây's* residential and monastic retreat centre, Plum Village, near Bergerac in South-west France (*see this Chapter 5.2*). Many mindfulness retreats have been organised here in the UK, some of which have been led by *Thây* and other Dharma teachers. These retreats, and other mindfulness practices around the country, have introduced *Thây's* distinctive form of Buddhist practice to increasing numbers of people, many of whom have joined a local Sangha and continued to practise. In addition, *Thây's* books have grown in number and circulation, encouraging many newcomers to become involved.

Several thousand people in the UK have received the Five Mindfulness Training ordination from *Thây* and other Dharma teachers in this tradition. A smaller number – about 150 – have also received the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and joined the Order of Interbeing, created by *Thây* in 1964 (also called the *Tiep Hien* Order – *see this Chapter 5.4*). Sister Annabel Laity, an English nun, is one of the most senior Dharma teachers and scholars in the Order who regularly runs retreats in this country. Several UK Order members have received Dharma teacher ordination from Thich Nhat Hanh and other monastics in France and become Dharmacharyas.

The Community of Interbeing comprises a network of local UK Sanghas, each with their own activities and contacts. These Sanghas support the growing numbers of practitioners in our tradition. At the national level, the organisation is governed by a group of trustees who meet four or more times a year. They discuss and make decisions, by consensus, on many organisational and financial aspects of the Community's life.

A newsletter, *Here & Now*, is circulated by email several times a year and subscription can be made via the website: www.plumvillage.uk.

The Community also runs a service for the purchase of books, CDs, tapes and videos of Thich Nhat Hanh's teaching which is accessible from the website.



Sangha contacts

Besides the trustees, there are other members of the Community who undertake key roles to support the Sangha nationally. The list of these co-ordinators changes over time, so we recommend that you visit our website www.plumvillage.uk for the latest information.

Regional contacts coordinator

Membership secretary

Editor of newsletter, *Here & Now*

Books, tapes and CDs sales

Retreat coordinator

Website coordinator

Facilitator of the trustees

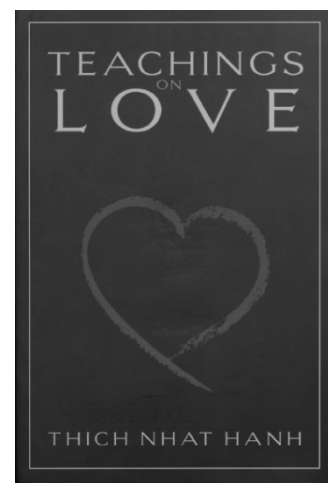
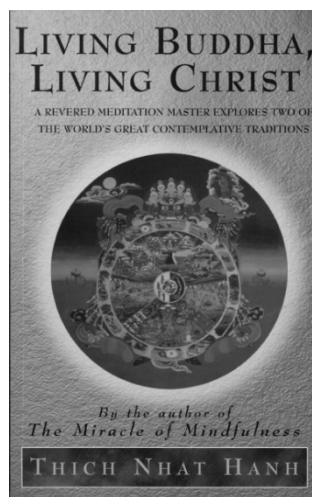
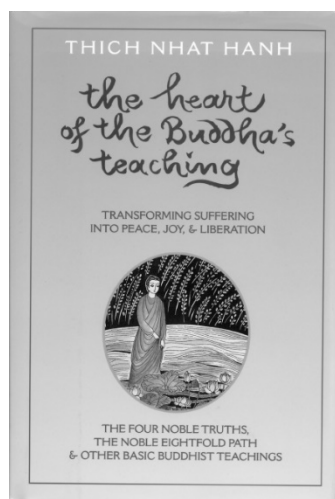
Treasurer

Plum Village contact

Books service

The Community of interbeing offers a service for the purchase of books, CDs, tapes, bells and videos of Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings.

You can email bookservice@plumvillage.uk or see the book list on the Plum Village UK website.





5.2 Plum Village – www.plumvillage.org

Plum Village – the home of Thich Nhat Hanh’s monastic community – is located in south-west France, near Bergerac in the Dordogne valley. It is a residential retreat centre and home to many monks, nuns, and lay practitioners. It is made up of three hamlets: *Upper* and *Lower Hamlets*, which are about two miles apart, and *New Hamlet*, which is some eighteen miles away. Other, smaller buildings belong to the Community, including the *Middle Hamlet* – between Lower and Upper Hamlets – and a separate building known as

West Hamlet, near Upper Hamlet.

During the year, retreats are held at Plum Village and these are attended by practitioners from all over the world, contributing an international atmosphere to the centre. In particular, there is a *Summer Opening* of four weeks held each year from around mid-July to mid-August. The three-month *Winter Retreat (The Rains Retreat)* is also a regular feature of the programme, taking place from around mid-September to mid-December. In addition, it may be possible to visit at other times of the year in order to practise with the residential community and support the work of the Plum Village community.

Plum Village was founded in 1982. The previous practice centre, called *Sweet Potato*, was at Fontvannes, 95 miles south-east of Paris but this had become too small to accommodate all those who wished to visit. Thây had heard there was cheap farmland in the South of France, so he and Sister Phuong headed southwards towards Aix-en-Provence. En route however, they suffered colds from the mistral (the strong local wind) and decided to move westward toward Bordeaux where it is less windy. Eventually they located a small farm of three small stone buildings at *Thenac* which Thây liked very much. This became the Upper Hamlet. They were joined by a Vietnamese friend who bought another farmstead near Loubes Bernac with arable land to support his family. This later became the Lower Hamlet.

Collectively the two hamlets were given the name *Làng Hông* which literally means *Persimmon Village* but, because the surrounding land was so good for growing plums, it was decided to transform this into *Village de Pruniers* – Plum Village. One thousand plum trees were planted in the Lower Hamlet fields and these have slowly matured over the years. In 1992 over six tons of plums were harvested, the proceeds from their sale going towards hungry children in the Third World.

Since its inception Plum Village has grown. Some forty monks and nuns are being ordained each year and more and more retreatants come to enjoy mindfulness practice in the peaceful surroundings. For instance, about one hundred retreatants attended the 1982 Summer Opening, but now more than a thousand visitors visit every Summer. This growth has necessitated the building of new accommodation and meditation halls in the grounds of all three main hamlets of Plum Village, to house monastics and retreatants, and to provide halls large enough for meditation and dharma talks. Centres have also been established in the United States: Green Mountain Dharma Center (for women) and Maple Forest Monastery (for men and couples) in Vermont; and Deer Park Monastery in



California. Like Plum Village, these centres are home to monks or nuns ordained by Thây, as well as offering residential retreats (*see details below*).

The European Institute of Applied Buddhism (EIAB) in Germany was founded by Thây to bring peace, harmony and stability to individuals, families, our society and the world through the non-denominational practice of Buddhist meditation and mindfulness in everyday life. Retreats and days of mindfulness are held there following the Plum Village practice.

Accommodation at Plum Village is simple and basic, with good vegetarian food. Retreatants sleep in dormitories of varying sizes in the original stone buildings or more modern additions. The West Hamlet, which is a short distance from the Upper Hamlet, provides more comfortable rooms especially suited to older retreatants. During the Summer many retreatants, in particular families with children, bring tents and camp in the extensive grounds. The daily programme varies during the week.

During Plum Village retreats, senior monastics will generally offer dharma talks on most days. The teachings are in Vietnamese, English, or French, with simultaneous translation into these and several other languages as appropriate for those attending. Some retreats are conducted predominantly in English. Besides the teachings, each week will include a variety of meditations, discussions and celebrations. Retreatants are expected to contribute fully to the work of the Community which is a vital part of our mindfulness practice. Every week also incorporates a *Lazy Day* which is a day when everyone can relax and enjoy having no scheduled activities.



A Joyful Path – Community, Transformation and Peace by Thich Nhat Hanh and friends. Parallax (1994). A celebration of Plum Village compiled from the contributions of many members of the community. Fully illustrated.



Plum Village was created by Thich Nhat Hanh and some of his first monks, nuns and students, most notably Sister Chân Không. Below we offer a short biography of Thầy and, on the next page, of Sister Chân Không.



Thây as a novice monk aged 16

Thich Nhat Hanh

Thây was born in 1926, in *Nguyen Xuan Bao* in central Vietnam, and he felt drawn to monkhood even as a child. Aged 16, he entered Tu Hieu monastery and received the name *Thich Nhat Hanh* – *Thich* is pronounced “tik” and is a family name that monks and nuns assume upon ordination. It does not, as commonly supposed, mean venerable or reverend. The name *Thây* – pronounced “tie” – means *teacher* and is commonly used by his students.

In the monastery, he underwent a thorough training in Zen and the Mahayana school of Buddhism. His teacher was a 41st generation Lin-chi (Rinzai) Master of the Lieu Quan School of Vietnamese Buddhism. Thây received full ordination in 1949 and a year later he co-founded the An Quang Temple in Saigon. In 1956 he was appointed editor-in-chief of *Vietnamese Buddhism* – the periodical of the All Vietnam Buddhist Association.

In 1959 Thây left Vietnam to study Buddhism at Columbia University in New York, but he was called home after two years to assist in the Buddhist peace effort. During the next few years, he founded La Boi Press, and established Van Hanh Buddhist University in Saigon, as well as *the School of Youth for Social Service*. This movement trained groups of Buddhist peace workers in rural areas. Increasingly it was oppressed by both sides as fighting in the Vietnam war escalated. In 1964 Thây founded the Tiep Hien Order (The Order of Interbeing) based on the principles of *Engaged Buddhism* which emphasises social responsibility and peace work.

After a lecture tour of the US and Europe in 1965, Thây found himself exiled from Vietnam. He was finally allowed back to visit after 40 years in exile. He settled in Paris and established the Buddhist Peace Delegation. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by Martin Luther King Jr in 1967. In the early 70s the Sweet Potato Community was founded at a small farmhouse near Fontvannes outside Paris. Later, in 1982, needing larger premises, the community moved to Plum Village in south-west France and it continued to grow steadily. Since 1983 Thây has travelled widely, offering lectures and mindfulness retreats in many parts of the world, especially in the US and Europe. He has published many articles, poems and books on Buddhism, peace and related themes. He understands English and French as well as Vietnamese.



Thây suffered a severe stroke in 2014, which affected his mobility and his speech, and he now lives at his root temple, Tu Hieu, in Vietnam.



Sister Chân Không

Sister Chân Không (meaning *True Emptiness*) was born in a small Vietnamese village on the Mekong River Delta in 1938. Her family name is Cao Ngoc Phuong and many still affectionately know her as *Sister Phuong* – pronounced “Fong”. As a teenager she was driven by her compassion and Buddhist practice to help the poor and campaign for social change. In 1958 she enrolled in the University of Saigon to study biology, but she spent much of her time helping the poor and sick in the slums of the city. She was also involved in political action, becoming the student leader at the University.

She first met Thich Nhat Hanh in 1959 and in subsequent years trained in the Dharma under his supervision. In 1963 she left for Paris to finish her degree in biology which was awarded in 1964. But her heart was in Vietnam, and that year she returned home and joined Thầy in founding the School for Youth and Social Service (SYSS). She was central in many of the activities of the SYSS which organised medical, educational and agricultural facilities in rural Vietnam during the war. At one stage the SYSS involved over 10,000 young peace workers who rebuilt many villages ravaged by the fighting.

In 1966 Sister Chân Không was ordained as one of the first six members of the Order of Interbeing, embracing the Fourteen *Tiep Hien* Precepts newly formulated by Thầy. She joined him in Hong Kong in 1968 and accepted his invitation to become his assistant in his international peace work.

From 1969 to 1982 she worked with Thầy in Paris organising the Buddhist Peace Delegation which campaigned for peace in Vietnam. She worked with Thầy establishing first the *Sweet Potato* community near Paris and then *Plum Village* in 1982. She accompanied and assisted Thầy when he traveled. In addition, she has continued to organise relief work for those in need in Vietnam, coordinating relief food parcels for poor children and medicine for the sick.

Sister Chân Không was ordained as a nun by Thầy in 1988 on Vultures Peak, in India, receiving the name *Chân Không*. She is central to the organisation of the activities of Plum Village and continues to be an inspiration to many in the Sangha.



Learning True Love – How I Learned & Practiced Social Change in Vietnam by Sister Chân Không. Parallax (1993). A remarkable autobiographical account of Sr Chân Không's life and work.



5.3 Visiting Plum Village

Booking your stay

Plum Village is open for all but a few weeks in the year for retreatants who are happy to stay for a minimum of one week. Registration for all retreats and visits must be made in advance and arranged directly with Plum Village (*see below for details*). Registration for retreats can be made online on the website: <https://plumvillage.org>

You can also fax or call one of the three hamlets – *see below*.

Which hamlet?

Women may stay at either Lower Hamlet or New Hamlet; men are accommodated at Upper Hamlet; and couples and families may stay in any of the three main hamlets. During the Summer Opening, and for some other retreats, visitors are accommodated with others of the same nationality, speaking the same language, though the separation of single men and women is usually maintained. When registering, you will be invited to state which hamlet you prefer to stay in, but you may be allocated to another hamlet if space is insufficient. There is a contact form for each hamlet on the Plum Village website.

Contact details:

Upper Hamlet – for single men, couples and families

Le Pey

24240 Thenac

France

Office hours: Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday from 16:00 to 17:00

Friday from 15:00 to 18:00 and from 19:00 to 20:00.

Closed on Mondays, Thursdays and Sundays.

Tel: +(33) 5.53.58.48.58

Email: UH-office@plumvillage.org

Lower Hamlet – for single women, couples and families

Meyrac 47120

Loubes-Bernac

France

Office hours: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 11:00 to 12:00.

Closed on Mondays, Thursdays and Sundays.

Tel: +(33) 5.53.94.75.40

Email: LH-office@plumvillage.org

New Hamlet – for single women, couples and families

13 Martineau

33580 Dieulivol

France

Office hours: Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday from 16:45 to 17:30.

Friday from 10:00 to 11:30 and from 15:00 to 17:30.

Closed on Mondays, Thursdays and Sundays.

Tel: +(33) 5.56.61.66.88

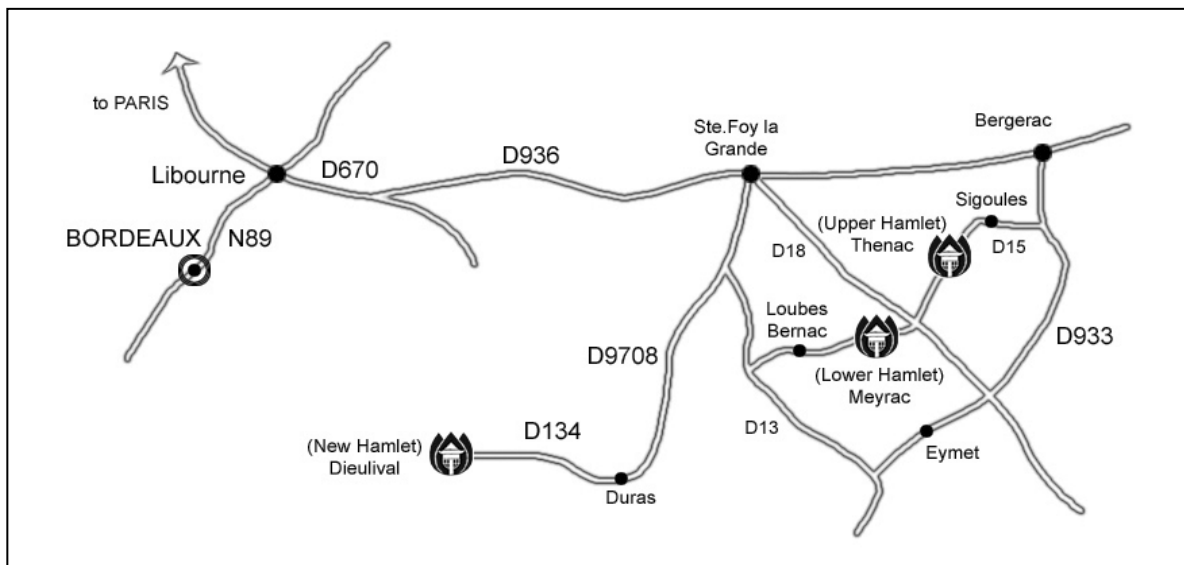
Email: NH-office@plumvillage.org



Below is a map showing the three hamlets and the roads between them.

Map of Plum Village

Travelling to Plum Village



Please confirm your reservation with Plum Village prior to making any travel arrangements. There is a designated **arrival/departure day** for all retreats, and at other times of the year, so please find this out before making your bookings. On those days, Plum Village will generally arrange to pick you up from the nearest railway station, Ste Foy-La-Grande, which will be much cheaper for you than taking a taxi which costs around 40 to 60 euros.

Coach services

This is the cheap and cheerful way for budget travellers. Coaches depart most days of the week from London Victoria Station (and other pick-up points en route), with a change at Tours, in France, arriving Bordeaux St Jean railway station after an overnight journey time of 17 hours or so. The coaches are operated by National Express and Eurolines, an associated company.

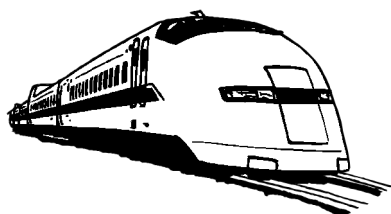


Once you reach Bordeaux (you will be dropped off at the station), take the train to Ste Foy-La-Grande. There are some direct trains, and others which will require you to change at Libourne (*see more train details below*). The cost of your return train ticket to/from Ste Foy-La-Grande and Bordeaux can start from as little as 14 euros if you book in advance but expect to pay around 35 euros. Seat booking is not necessary.

The cost of coach travel from London to Bordeaux varies considerably from one company to another, so it pays to look online to find the best deal.

Train services

There are two routes by train, both starting on Eurostar through the tunnel. The route you are most likely to be offered first is via Paris, where you will need to change stations from Gare du Nord to Montparnasse. Those who are nervous of the Paris metro, or who have heavy luggage, may prefer the route via Lille in Belgium, although there is the option of a bus between Gare du Nord to Montparnasse. The route via Lille involves only a platform change, though the train options and times may not be so convenient. You may like to travel as early in the day as possible, so that you can have supper and settle in at Plum Village during the evening.



Average cost from London St Pancras to St Foy-la-Grande via Lille is around £260.

This very useful website lists all the ways to get from London to Ste Foy-la-Grande and the range of prices: <https://www.rome2rio.com/s/London/Sainte-Foy-la-Grande>

Travel by air

As the impact of budget airlines has grown, so air travel has become relatively cheaper (leaving aside the hidden environmental costs!). The nearest airport to Plum Village is Bordeaux. Ideally, you should book a flight arriving by late afternoon, to give you time to complete your journey the same day.



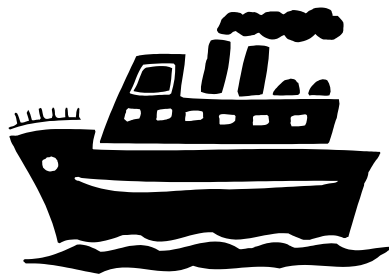
Bordeaux from UK Airports (at 29 April 2020)

- Birmingham £131
- Bristol £88
- Glasgow £131
- Liverpool £84
- London Gatwick £95
- London Heathrow £136

From Bordeaux airport, take the shuttle bus into the centre of the city where you will be dropped off at the station, Bordeaux St Jean. Once you reach Bordeaux, take the train to Ste Foy-La-Grande. There are some direct trains, and others which will involve you changing to a local train at Libourne. The cost of your return train ticket to/from Ste Foy-La-Grande and Bordeaux, bought in France, will be around 20 euros. Seat booking is not necessary.



Car ferry or tunnel crossing and the open road



You may wish to drive your car to Plum Village, especially if you plan to extend your stay with a holiday elsewhere on the Continent or share your journey with a number of friends.

The Channel Tunnel has created more options for crossing the channel and the main operators are listed below. Sample costs have not been included as these vary greatly between operators and according to the time of year.

The driving time to Plum Village from the French Channel ports is approximately 10 – 14 hours, depending on which port you arrive at, rest stops, speed etc.

Details and booking: You may check alternative routes and prices at www.uk-ferry-directory.co.uk or www.ferrybooker.com. The first of these sites includes Eurostar (passengers only) and Eurotunnel details as well as ferries. The main operators and their ports of departure and arrival (France only) are:

Brittany Ferries: www.brittanyferries.co.uk telephone 0330 159 7000, from Portsmouth, Plymouth or Poole to Caen, St Malo or Cherbourg.

Condor Ferries: www.condorferries.co.uk, telephone 0345 609 1024, from Portsmouth, Poole or Weymouth to St Malo or Cherbourg.

Eurotunnel: www.eurotunnel.com, telephone 08443 35 35 35, from Folkestone or Dover to Calais.

DFDS Seaways: www.dfds.com, from Dover to Dunkirk and Calais.

P & O Ferries: www.poferries.com, telephone 0800 130 0030, from Dover to Calais.

MyFerryLink (formerly SeaFrance): www.frenchconnections.co.uk, also www.directferries.co.uk, www.cheap.co.uk, www.ferrytravel.com, all travel from Dover to Calais.

Environmental awareness

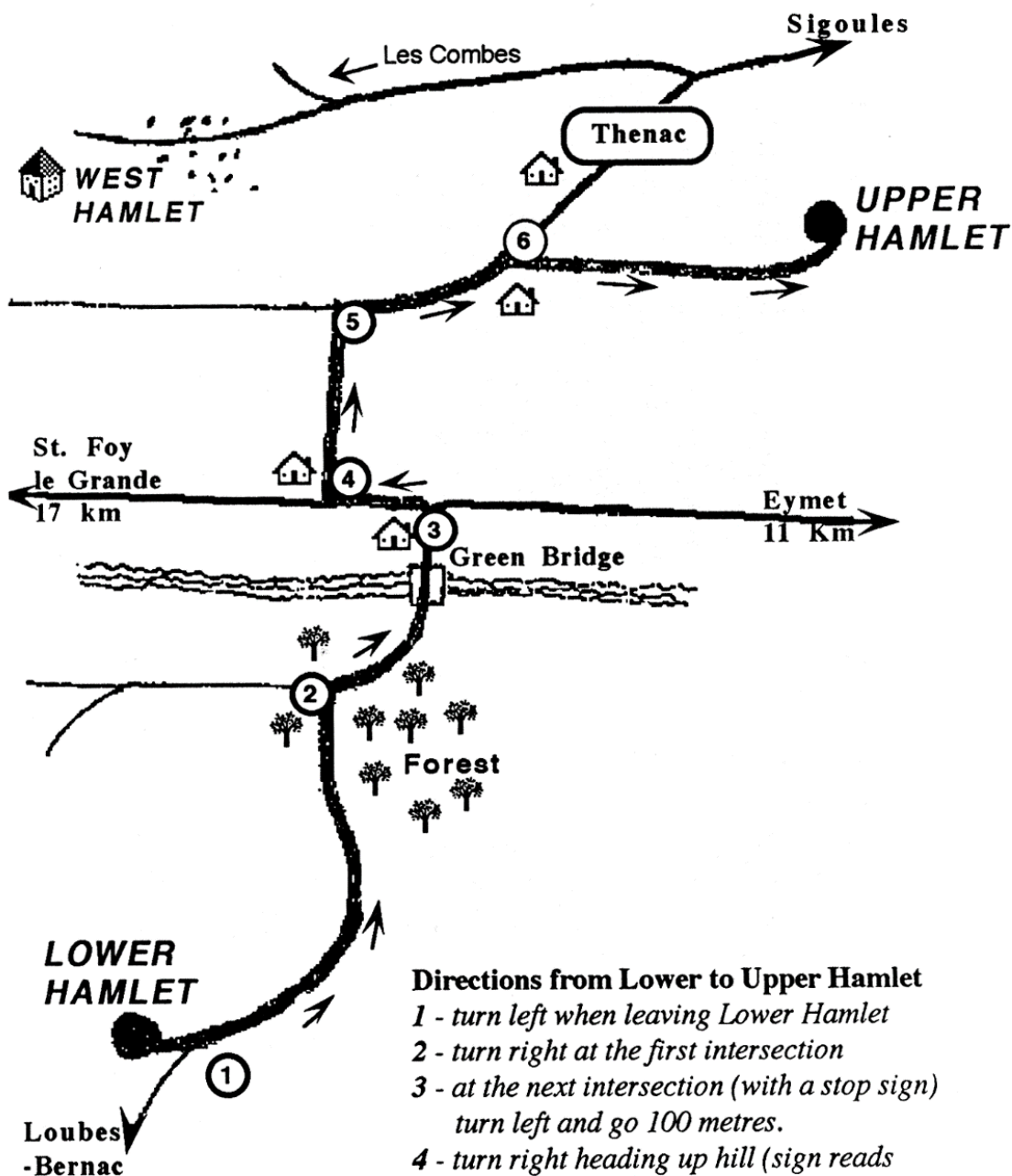


All journeys have an environmental cost which will generally not appear in any financial reckoning!

Please be aware of *all* the costs of your journey to Plum Village. Least damaging to the environment are walking and cycling (or swimming!); causing most damage are the car and the aeroplane.

The route between Upper & Lower Hamlets

Retreatants staying at Upper and Lower Hamlets will usually walk between these Hamlets, to attend Dharma talks for instance, but buses are provided to take you to and from New Hamlet, which is farther away. The map below shows you how to find your way between the two original hamlets.



Directions from Lower to Upper Hamlet

- 1 - turn left when leaving Lower Hamlet
 - 2 - turn right at the first intersection
 - 3 - at the next intersection (with a stop sign) turn left and go 100 metres.
 - 4 - turn right heading up hill (sign reads Thenac 1.6 km)
 - 5 - at top of hill bare right and go 100 metres
 - 6 - turn right (not the neighbours driveway). Follow straight for 0.5 Km. and you arrive at the Upper Hamlet
- (Total Distance 3.1 Km.)**



5.4 The Order of Interbeing – The Tiep Hien Order

The *Tiep Hien Order* or *Order of Interbeing* was first established by Thich Nhat Hanh in 1964, during the Vietnam War. At this stage it comprised a small number of dedicated followers who were involved in social work and were committed to the principles of Engaged Buddhism. The Order was founded on the Fourteen Precepts or, as they are now known, Mindfulness Trainings (see *Chapter 4.2*) and a Charter was written by Thây which outlined the constitution. This Charter is amended from time to time and is shown below.

Since Thây and Sister Chân Không moved to France, they have offered retreats both at Plum Village and throughout the world. An ever-increasing number of practitioners, from all parts of the globe, have received the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and joined the Core Community. The Order of Interbeing has become a widespread international Sangha and many of its members have gone on to be ordained as Dharma teachers. Many monks and nuns receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, during if not before taking monastic vows, and are members of the Order of Interbeing.

The International Order of Interbeing has convened conferences at Plum Village in France and at Deer Park Monastery in the US, during which members of the Core Community have come together and discussed how best to organise within the international context. The first such conference was held in June 1992.

One general theme to emerge from discussions of the Core Community is the importance of the relationship between the monastic and lay communities of the Sangha. For this reason, developmental activity within the Order always involves both monastic and lay practitioners.

Clearly much work needs to be done within the International Community as it continues to grow. New forms of organisation and communication between members are developing to meet these needs. In this context the various Plum Village websites, as well as the magazine, *The Mindfulness Bell* (see *this Chapter 5.6*), are an important source of information about activities Worldwide.

In recent years, Thich Nhat Hanh has stressed the importance of Sangha building as the key to creating a stable foundation for our practice. Sanghas have evolved in many different countries, often reflecting the distinctive flavour of their local and national cultures. Centres of practice, sometimes with residential communities, are emerging as groups formalise their wish to share mindfulness practice together and offer it to others in their locality.

The increasing number of Dharma teachers, both lay and monastic, has promoted the transmission of the practice, teachings and Mindfulness Trainings. Teaching is flourishing throughout the wider Sangha, carrying forward Thây's tradition.

The emergence and strength of the particular form of Buddhism inspired by Thich Nhat Hanh and represented by the Order of Interbeing and many Sanghas in many countries, demonstrates the great benefits of the practice.



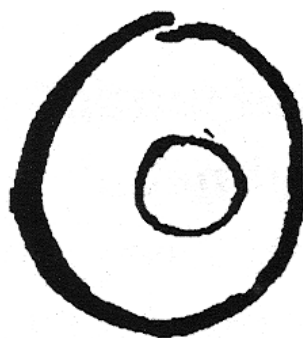
Interbeing – Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism by Thich Nhat Hanh. This book contains and explains the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and the Charter of The Order of Interbeing.



Sister Chân Đức, True Virtue – Sister Annabel from the UK, the first Western European woman to be ordained as a nun by Thây on 10 November 1988 in India. She became a Dharma Teacher in 1990.

(Sister Annabel's autobiography "True Virtue; The Journey of an English Buddhist Nun" published by Parallax, is available from the PVUK bookshop)





Joining the Order of Interbeing

A Sangha member is accepted into the Order of Interbeing (The *Tiep Hien* Order or *Core Community*) when he or she formally receives the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings. This is an important step for the practitioner and is taken only after much reflection on the significance of the Mindfulness Trainings and the Core Community in their life. In general, someone who applies to receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings will have been involved with the practice for a sustained period. He or she will have already received the Five Mindfulness Trainings, at least a year before, and will have maintained a continuous practice, probably for several years. In addition, an aspirant is likely to be an active member of their local and/or national Sangha and be known to a number of people in their Sangha. On being accepted as an aspirant, there is a period of at least two years mentoring before receiving the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings.

As the international community of practice has grown, it has become increasingly difficult for everyone who wishes to receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings to be known personally by Plum Village. Therefore, *Thây* requested that the national and local Sanghas in each country be responsible for recommending practitioners for ordination. Existing Core Community members in each Sangha have a particular (though not exclusive) responsibility in this regard. For this reason, members who are considering applying to receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings are encouraged to have good contact with at least one core member, if at all possible.

In order to fulfil their responsibility of recommending people for ordination, The Community of Interbeing in the UK has established a group of its Core members (elected by rotation) to co-ordinate the application process. This process will ensure that all relevant Core members are informed and consulted about each practitioner's request for ordination. It also provides clarity for anyone in the UK Sangha who wishes to be considered for ordination into the Core Community.

Guidelines for joining the Core Community and the basic steps in the application process for UK Sangha members is as follows:

Guidelines for aspiring UK Order members

When considering an application, the aspirant, local members and Order members should be guided by the following:

- ◆ An applicant should have a regular practice and feel a close connection to the tradition of Buddhism as transmitted by *Thich Nhat Hanh*, The Order of Interbeing and Plum Village.
- ◆ An applicant should already have received the Five Mindfulness Trainings. There should, in general, be a period of two years between receiving the Five Mindfulness Trainings and the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, although an application can be made before this period is complete with a view to receiving them after the period is complete.
- ◆ An applicant should practise in harmony with their local Sangha. Some experience of practice with the community is usually expected – eg on retreat.



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- ◆ An applicant should have a commitment to Sangha building and be aware of the responsibilities which accompany this. If there is already a local group this does not mean that the applicant has to organise a group elsewhere. Rather, the applicant should be making a positive contribution to the life of the Sangha.
 - ◆ An applicant should be sufficiently familiar with the practice to be able to explain it to others, and to be able to lead the practice.
 - ◆ The applicant should be able to explain to other people, from their own experience, basic teachings including the Mindfulness Trainings. Applicants should consider whether they have taken them sufficiently into their own life that they can share them with others.
 - ◆ If an applicant is in a long-term relationship, they should ensure that receiving ordination will not threaten the harmony of that relationship. Ideally, they will have the support of their partner/spouse. If they are a member of a family, they should consider the effects of ordination on the happiness of the family.
 - ◆ An applicant should be able to demonstrate the ability to change by having made some progress or breakthrough in their own lives.

The UK process for applying to become an aspirant

1. Aspiration

- a) View the Aspirant Handbook.
- b) Reflect on its contents for as long as you need to.
- c) Contact the Order Guidance Group (OGG) to discuss your aspiration.
- d) Discuss your aspiration with existing Order members.
- e) Contact the OGG secretary for the Aspirant Application Form, which will be personalised.

2. Local Sangha

- a) Inform your local sangha of your aspiration.
- b) Enable them to access and read the Aspirant Handbook.
- c) Obtain the signature of at least two longstanding members of your sangha (one an OI member if possible), all of whom know you well, on your application form.

3. Mentors

- a) Contact the OGG to discuss your possible mentors. (The requirement is two mentors.)
- b) Ensure that your potential mentors are familiar with the Aspirant Handbook.

4. Application

- a) Return via email your completed application form and a jpg passport photo to the

OGG secretary.

- b) Send a copy (via email if possible) to your mentors.
- c) Ask your mentors to email the OGG secretary to confirm they have read the Handbook and that they are willing to become your mentors, and which mentoring model you expect to use.

5. Confirmation

- a) OGG secretary will confirm receipt of your application and the emails from your mentors.
- b) A summary of your application will be shared with the Order and aspirants, once you have checked it, to introduce you as a new aspirant.
- c) Contact your mentors to arrange your first/next meeting.
- d) Contact OI Families Co-ordinator.

Notes on the process of Core Community application

[1] The *Order Guidance Group* is comprised of three experienced members of the Core Community of the UK Sangha all of whom are actively engaged in Sangha activities.

[2] The first two steps in the application process (*see above*) are essential in order to give the Core Community notice of an applicant's intentions, and also to allow the applicant to register an interest without, at this stage, committing themselves totally. An important aspect of the application form/letter and guidelines is the need to discuss the application with other members of the community, and for an applicant to obtain the support of their local Sangha of practice (if this exists). These documents, sent to the applicant, also include useful information describing the experiences of some existing core members and their thoughts on receiving the mindfulness trainings.

[3] On behalf of the Core Community as a whole, the *Order Guidance Group* is invested with the decision-making authority for accepting and welcoming applicants into the Core Community in the UK, and for communicating with applicants and core members with regard to the application process.

[4] The *Order Guidance Group* is responsible for communicating to all existing Core members, details of the outcome of all applications to join the Core Community of Interbeing in the UK.

[5] In general, if an applicant satisfies the conditions necessary to receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and join the Order of Interbeing UK, their application will be considered favourably. Good reasons, clearly expressed to the applicant, will be needed if the decision is made to ask the aspirant to continue to deepen their practice. In these circumstances, the Core Community will accept the responsibility to support and work with an applicant on their practice, to a point where their application can be endorsed.

Correspondence should be addressed to:

The Order Guidance Group, UK Order of Interbeing. Email:

orderofinterbeingogg@gmail.com



The Charter of the Order of Interbeing

CHAPTER I: Name, Aim, Tradition

1. A Buddhist community is formed with the name Order of Interbeing.
2. The aim of the Order is to actualise Buddhism by studying, experimenting with, and applying Buddhism in modern life with a special emphasis on the bodhisattva ideal.
3. The Order of Interbeing was founded within the Lin-chi School of Dhyana (Zen) Buddhism. It is grounded in the Four Spirits: the spirit of non-attachment from views, the spirit of direct experimentation on the nature of interdependent origination through meditation, the spirit of appropriateness, and the spirit of skilful means. All four are to be found in all Buddhist traditions.

CHAPTER II: Basic Scriptures, Teachings, Methods

4. The Order of Interbeing does not consider any sutra or group of sutras as its basic scripture(s). It draws inspiration from the essence of the Buddhadharma in all sutras. It does not accept the systematic arrangements of the Buddhist teachings proposed by any school. The Order of Interbeing seeks to realise the spirit of the Dharma in early Buddhism, as well as in the development of that spirit through the history of the sangha, and its life and teachings in all Buddhist traditions.
5. The Order of Interbeing considers all sutras, whether spoken by the Lord Buddha or compiled by later Buddhist generations, as Buddhist sutras. It is also able to find inspiration from the texts of other spiritual traditions. It considers the development of original Buddhism into new schools a necessity to keep the spirit of Buddhism alive. Only by proposing new forms of Buddhist life can one help the true Buddhist spirit perpetuate.
6. The life of the Order of Interbeing should be nourished by understanding and compassion. Compassion and understanding, radiated by the Buddhist life, can contribute to the peace and happiness of humankind. The Order considers the principle of non-attachment from views and the principle of direct experimentation on interdependent origination through meditation to be the two most important guides for attaining true understanding. It considers the principle of appropriateness and the principle of skilful means as guides for actions in society. The spirit of non-attachment from views and the spirit of direct experimentation lead to open-mindedness and compassion, both in the realm of the perception of reality and in the realm of human relationships. The spirit of appropriateness and the spirit of skilful means lead to a capacity to be creative and to reconcile, both of which are necessary for the service of living beings.
7. The Order of Interbeing rejects dogmatism in both looking and acting. It seeks all forms of action that can revive and sustain the true spirit of insight and compassion in life. It considers this spirit to be more important than any Buddhist institution or tradition. With the aspiration of a bodhisattva, members of the Order of Interbeing seek to change themselves in order to change society in the direction of compassion and understanding by living a joyful and mindful life.

CHAPTER III: Authority, Membership, Organisation

8. To protect and respect the freedom and responsibility of each member of the community, monks, nuns, and lay-people enjoy equality in the Order of Interbeing.
9. The Order of Interbeing does not recognise the necessity of a mediator between the Buddha and lay disciples, between humans and ultimate reality. It considers, however, the insight and experiences of ancestral teachers, monks, nuns, and lay-people, as helpful to those who are practising the Way.
10. Members of the Order of Interbeing are either in the Core Community or the Extended Community. The Core Community consists of those who have taken the vow to observe the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order and the Five Mindfulness Trainings, and who have been ordained as brothers and sisters in the Order. The Extended Community consists of members who, while trying to live up to the spirit of the Order of Interbeing, have not formally taken the vow to observe the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, nor received ordination in the Order of Interbeing. The members of the Core Community accept the responsibility to organise and support a local Sangha, and help sustain Mindfulness Training recitations, days of mindfulness, and mindfulness retreats.
11. The Extended Community lives in close relationship with the Core Community by attending the recitation of the Mindfulness Trainings every two weeks and by participating in spiritual and social events sponsored by the Core Community. Long-standing members of the Extended Community, those who have participated regularly for one year or more, should be consulted on an advisory basis on the application of individuals to become members of the Core Community, whether or not these long-standing members of the Extended Community have received the Five Mindfulness Trainings.
12. Dharmacharyas (Dharma Teachers) are members of the Core Community who have been selected as teachers based on their stability in the practice and ability to lead a happy life. They function to inspire joy and stability in the local Sanghas. Local Sanghas are encouraged to suggest potential Dharmacharyas.

CHAPTER IV: Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing, Conditions for Ordination

13. The Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing reflect the life of the Order, which considers spiritual practice as the basis of all social action.
14. The Mindfulness Trainings are the heart of the Charter. Members are expected to recite the Five Mindfulness Trainings and the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings every two weeks. If there is a three-month lapse in the recitation, their ordination is considered nullified.
15. All persons eighteen years old or older, regardless of race, nationality, colour, gender, or sexual orientation, are eligible to join the Order if they have shown the capacity of learning and practising the Mindfulness Trainings and other requirements of Core Community members of the Order of Interbeing, and have formally received the Three Jewels and the Five Mindfulness Trainings.
16. A candidate begins the application process by announcing his or her aspiration to become a member of the Core Community of the Order of Interbeing. The announcement should be in writing to the local Sangha Core Community members, or if none are located nearby, to the appropriate Dharma Teacher(s). A candidate must



have received the Three Jewels and Five Mindfulness Trainings. One or more Core Community members shall then mentor and train the candidate for at least one year, until the candidate is happy and steadfast in the practice and practices in harmony with the Sangha. These steps enable the aspirant to get to know Core Community better. Similarly, they enable the Core Community to get to know the aspirant better, to offer guidance and support, especially in areas of the practice where the aspirant may need additional guidance, and to train the aspirant in the role of Order member. When appropriate, the Core Community members and Dharma Teacher(s) will decide, after making an advisory consultation with long-standing members of the extended community, whether or not that candidate is ready to receive ordination into the Order of Interbeing. The work of a Core Community Order member includes Sangha building and support, explaining the Dharma from personal experience, and nourishing the bodhicitta in others while maintaining a regular meditation practice in harmony and peace with one's family, all as manifestations of the bodhisattva ideal.

17. When the Core Community and the Dharma Teacher(s) make a decision on an application, they will strive to use their Sangha eyes and take care to nourish the bodhicitta (mind of love) of the aspirant, even if a delay in ordination is suggested. Local Sanghas are authorised to embellish the application procedures in this Charter in a manner that reasonably addresses local culture, geography, and circumstances, provided that the goals and aspirations of the Order are not defeated. The application provisions set forth in the Charter respecting an individual's ordination may be waived in individual cases under special circumstances such as medical hardship, provided that, as appropriate, the coordinators of the Executive Council and most appropriate Dharma Teacher(s) are consulted first, and, if time permits, the local or most appropriate Core Community members. When it has been indicated that the candidate is ready to receive the Order ordination, his or her name shall be reported to the person designated by the core community Assembly. When an ordination ceremony has taken place, it shall be declared in writing to the Secretary of the Order, giving the name, lineage name, and Dharma name of the ordinee; date and place of the ordination; and the name of the presiding Dharma Teacher.
18. Members of the Core Community are expected to observe at least sixty days of mindfulness per year. It is recognised that this sixty-day requirement may be difficult for some members to achieve at times, due to family or other responsibilities, and the requirement is intended to be flexible in such cases, if it is agreed upon by the Sangha.
19. All members of the Core Community are expected to organise and practice with a local Sangha.
20. Provided they are consistent with the spirit of the Five Mindfulness Trainings and the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, all lifestyles (whether in a committed relationship or celibate) are considered equally valid for Core Community members. To support both partners in a relationship, it is helpful if the partner of a Core Community member is a member of the Core Community, a member of the extended community or, at the minimum, live in harmony with his or her partner and that the member's partner supports and encourages the member's practice.

CHAPTER V: Leadership, Community Properties, Accounting

21. At regular intervals, an Assembly of all Core Community members should gather for a council. All members shall be notified six months in advance of the date and location of the meeting. Any member unable to attend can appoint a proxy to speak for him or her. The process of consensus shall be presented, reviewed, and revised at the beginning of the meeting. Rotating teams of facilitators, one woman and one man, each of different nationality, shall conduct the meeting. Minutes of each meeting of the Assembly will be kept as an ongoing record of the life and work of the Order of Interbeing. They will be made available to members on request.
22. At the Assembly meeting, the Core Community will select members to serve on an Executive Council to organise and guide the work of the Order of Interbeing between Assemblies, and to approve coordinators of the Executive Council from among the members of the Executive Council. The Assembly will decide on the specific structure and organisation that will best support the goals of reducing suffering, realising the bodhisattva ideal, and maintaining a strong Sangha network. The Core Community will draw on the life maturity and practice maturity of its elders and on the freshness of its younger members for assistance and support, and encourage and benefit from an ongoing Council of Elders and Council of Youth.
23. In order to facilitate interaction with the Worldwide Sangha, local Sanghas are encouraged to organise in a manner compatible with the spirit of this Charter.
24. To be member of the Order Core Community one is not required to pay financial dues, but dues may be suggested by the Executive Council and the Assembly as *Dana* (donation) to support the work of the Order. All Order of Interbeing monies, including contributions and dues, are to be held in a separate fund under the name "Order of Interbeing". A detailed financial report prepared by the Treasurer(s) shall be presented to the membership annually. After administrative costs have been covered, funds of the Order may be used to help local Sanghas offer scholarships to members to attend Order retreats and in their work to relieve suffering.
25. Any community properties of the Order should be held under the national and local regulations of its site. To protect those who may be responsible for the management of community properties, all assets, including bank accounts, currency, real estate, vehicles, etc, are to be accounted for using common accounting practices. If and when local Sanghas hold funds for the international Order of Interbeing, accounting will be kept separately and detailed reports sent yearly to the Treasurer(s) of the Order.

CHAPTER VI: Amending of the Charter

26. Every word and every sentence in this Charter is subject to change, so that the spirit of the charter will be allowed to remain alive throughout the history of the practice. Previous versions should be preserved and made available for consultation by later generations. All versions are to be clearly dated for future reference.
27. The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and this Charter are to be re-examined at each Assembly of the Core Community members.



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28. This Charter, consisting of six chapters and twenty-nine items should be revised and amended at each Assembly of the Core Community members in order to keep it relevant to today's societies.
 29. In keeping with the tradition of the Sangha, all changes must be made by consensus and not just by simple majority.

5.5 Our Dharma Name & Lineage

When we receive the Five Mindfulness Trainings, we also receive a dharma name (our *Heart* or *Source* name). This signifies our place in the lineage of the tradition of Zen Buddhism to which our practice belongs. If you receive the trainings from Thich Nhat Hanh you will receive a *Heart* name and you will belong to the Ninth generation of the *Liu Quán* School of Zen, and the Forty-third generation of the *Lin Chi* (Japanese: Rinzai) School. If you receive the trainings from a senior monastic dharmacharya (dharma teacher) who has received their teaching transmission from *Thầy*, then you may have a *source* name and you will belong to the Tenth and Forty-fourth generations respectively.

The words *Heart* and *Source* are translations of the ninth and tenth words in an original verse by Vietnamese Zen Master Liễu Quán, who founded our school of practice. Each successive generation of the Order takes a successive word from this poem as the basis for the dharma name given in the transmissions of the trainings. The following is an edited version of an article which explains the origins of the poem, and includes the verse itself. The article was published in the *Mindfulness Bell* (Vol 1 Issue 2).

Master Liễu Quán was born in the village of Bạc Mã in the Phú Yên province of Vietnam in 1670. At the age of ten, he was accepted as a novice at the Hôi Tôn temple and studied with Master Tế Viên for nine years. When Master Tế Viên passed away, Liễu Quán went to the far away province of Thuận Hóa (now Huế) to study with the Master Giác Phong at the Thiền Thọ Temple. He was ordained as a bikkhu in 1697 at the age of twenty-seven.

In 1702, he met Master Tü Dung and began to study with him at the Ấn Tông Temple in the Thừa Thiên. For five years, he was given the following Công an (Koan): "All dharmas return to the one. Where will the one return to?"

In 1708, he went back to his teacher. Master Tü Dung told him:

"Alone let yourself go down to the abyss.

The only way to be reborn is to die.

Who could blame you after that?"

Liễu Quán clapped his hands and laughed.

Tü Dung said: "Not ripe yet."

Liễu Quán tried once more: "The hammer is iron itself."

Tü Dung shook his head.

Liễu Quán went back to his cell.

The next day, Tü Dung was passing by Liễu Quán's cell and called out to him: "Our conversation of yesterday is not finished yet. Tell me again!"

Liễu Quán replied: "If I had known that the lamp is fire itself, then the meal could have

been ready a long time ago.”

Master Tü was delighted by this reply.

Liễu Quán was thirty-eight when he received this transmission and set up the Thiền Tông Practice Centre. The Viên Thông Centre was built by his students at the foot of the Ngự Bình Mountain. In the years 1733-1735, four national ceremonies of ordination were organised in the Thừa Thiên province over which Liễu Quán presided. His disciples were as many as 4,000. In 1740 and 1742, he resided over ordinations at the Long Hóa and Viên Thông Centres. Practice centres of the Liễu Quán School were set up everywhere in the country. The Phú Yên province is one of the strongholds of the school, along with the Hội Tông, Cổ Lâm and Bào Tinh temples.

On the morning of the twenty-first day of the eleventh month of the lunar calendar 1742, Master Liễu Quán asked his attendant to bring him a pen and a piece of paper. He wrote this gatha:

During the seventy or more years I have been in this world,
Form and Emptiness have always been the same.
Today, all vows fulfilled, I am going back to my home.
Do not tire yourselves out asking questions
Concerning schools and patriarchs.

After finishing the gatha, the Master sat quietly drinking his tea. Monks living at the centre came to see him. Some of the monks cried. Liễu Quán said: “Please do not cry. Even Buddhas have to enter nirvana. My coming and going is clear. There is nothing to be sorrowful about.” The monks stopped crying. He asked: “Has the mùi hour (from 1-3 pm) come?” People replied: “Yes,” and then Liễu Quán said:

“The Great Way of reality is the pure ocean of the true nature.
The source of the Mind has penetrated everywhere.
From the roots of virtue springs the tradition of compassion.
Vinaya, samadhi and prajna,
The nature and function of all three is one.
The fruit of transcendent wisdom can be realised
By being wonderfully together.
Maintain and transmit the wonderful principle
In order to make known the true teaching!
For the realisation of true emptiness to be possible,
Wisdom and action have to arise together.

Reality, Domain, Great, Way, Nature, Ocean, Clear, Calm, Heart/Mind,
Source, Expanse, Penetration, Virtue, Roots, Love, Tradition, Precepts,
Concentration, Merits, Wisdom, Body-self-nature, Function, Complete,
Communication, Eternity, Transcending, Wisdom, Fruit, Mystically,
Corresponding, Realisation, Work, Transmission, Maintaining-Practising,
Wonderful, Truth, Expounding, Speech, True, School, Action, Understanding,
Together, Corresponding, Attaining, Awakening, True, Emptiness.”



5.6 Mindfulness Bell Magazine

The Mindfulness Bell is a journal of the art of mindful living, published three times a year by the *Community of Mindful Living* in the USA. It is an inspiration and teaching resource for those practicing mindfulness in daily life.

Each issue includes a teaching by Thich Nhat Hanh, plus essays, stories, and teachings by monastic and lay practitioners. Illustrated with photos, artwork, and poems, each issue reflects the deepening mindfulness practice of the worldwide Sangha.

The Mindfulness Bell also contains news on sangha activities, outreach projects including social work in Vietnam, and schedules of retreats and talks by Thây as well as those of other Dharma teachers.

Contributions

The editors welcome contributions from around the world, in the form of art, photos, poetry, and articles about the experience of mindfulness practice in daily life. Check the [submission guidelines](#) and send submissions to : editor@mindfulnessbell.org

Subscriptions

The subscription for 3 issues, paper copy including postage is now £36. For UK subscriptions, please send a cheque, payable to *Community of Interbeing*, to: Sarah Sweet Sarahsweet8906@gmail.com

An **online digital copy** is now available. The cost is 18 US dollars (approx £14.25) – this needs to be ordered through the Mindfulness Bell magazine website (www.mindfulnessbell.org).

For **those on low income** there is an option to get an annual subscription of 3 issues of a paper copy for 20 +18 US dollars postage (currently around £30), and a low-cost digital option for \$12 USD. These also need to be done directly through the US website.

Back issues

You can freely download previous editions around a year or more after the magazines have been published from the Mindfulness Bell website.