
The Order of Interbeing

A Handbook for Aspirants and Mentors

Together
we are One

© 2008



Contents

Introduction	3
Part 1: The Order of Interbeing – Origins and Structure	4
Part 2: Is Joining the Order for Me?	7
Part 3: Guide to Becoming as Aspirant	8
FLOWCHART: Application to Become an Aspirant	9
Part 4: Mentoring – A Guide for the Aspirant	10
Part 5: Am I ready to Request Ordination?	12
FLOWCHART: Application to Request Ordination	14
Part 6: Mentoring – A Guide for the Mentor	15
Appendices	
Appendix 1	20
‘Teaching for Order of Interbeing Members’ Transcript of a talk given by Thay at Deer Park 22.08.2001	
Appendix 2	32
Charter of the Order of Interbeing	
Appendix 3	37
Article on ‘Service’	
Appendix 4	39
Books and Resources	
Appendix 5	41
Useful Contacts	



Introduction

The Aspirant Handbook is not just for the start of the aspirant process; it is recommended that you keep it to hand and consult and reflect on its contents from time to time during the mentoring period, alone and with others, as appropriate.

The Handbook is divided into parts which together offer information and guidance for both aspirants and mentors including the Aspirant Application Process, the Ordination Application Process, and becoming an active member of the OI sangha. There are also appendices for ease of access to recommended resources e.g. the Charter of Interbeing.

It is intended that whether reading as aspirant or mentor, you familiarise yourself with all sections. For example, in order to avoid a lot of repetition, the 'Mentoring Models' appear only in the final section of the Handbook aimed primarily at prospective mentors. It is important, however, that aspirants read this section in order to be aware of the range of potential ways that mentoring can be enjoyed.

Part 1

THE ORDER OF INTERBEING – ORIGINS AND STRUCTURE

What is the Order?

The International Order of Interbeing

The Tiep Hien Order or Order of Interbeing (the Order) was first established by the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh (affectionately known as *Thây* - meaning teacher) in 1966 during the Vietnam War. At this stage it consisted of six dedicated followers who were involved in social work and were committed to the principles of Engaged Buddhism. The Order was founded on the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings (which are periodically revised, most recently in 2013) and a Charter written by *Thây* (see Appendix 2).

Thây and Cao Ngoc Phuong (later ordained as Sister Chan Khong, and one of the 6 original Order members) moved to France in 1968. *Thây* set up Plum Village as a Buddhist community and practice centre, near Bordeaux in 1982, and offered retreats there and throughout the world. The Plum Village community have since established practice centres with monks, nuns and lay people (often termed fourfold centres) in America, Hong Kong, Australia, Thailand and the European Institute of Applied Buddhism in Germany. An ever increasing number of both monastic and lay practitioners, from all parts of the globe, have received the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and joined the Order. The Order is sometimes referred to as ‘The Core Community’.



The six original members of the Order of Interbeing

The Community of Interbeing and its relation to the UK Order

The Community of Interbeing UK (The COI) was formed in 1994 and is the name given to the network of those following *Thây*'s teachings and the practice of Plum Village - several thousands of whom have received the Five Mindfulness Trainings.

The COI is a registered charity with a group of trustees (see www.coiuk.org).

The COI is part of the international sangha of many thousands of practitioners worldwide, who follow Thây's mindfulness teachings and the Plum Village practice. In structure it comprises a network of local sanghas, each with their own activities and contacts.

A member of the UK Order of Interbeing is expected also to be a member of the COI.

To become an Order member one formally commits to the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings in a transmission ceremony led by a senior monastic. (See the Plum Village chanting book 'Chanting from the Heart' pub 2007 p.127).

The UK Order of Interbeing

To date, over 100 members of the COI have become members of the UK Order of Interbeing.

Order members are entitled to wear a brown jacket as an outward visible sign of their ongoing commitment to Thây's teachings and the practice.



“The meaning of wearing a brown jacket is not to say that you are an ordained member of the Order of Interbeing...That's like having a student identity card in a famous university and not studying...When we receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and have ordination, we get a brown jacket, and that is our identity card. It allows us to profit from the sangha, the teaching and the practice. We are able to make good use of Dharma centres, monasteries, teachers and Dharma brothers and sisters who practise in order to advance on our path of freedom. And as we have freedom in us we begin to make other people around us happy.”

Thich Nhat Hanh – Friends on the Path.

In structure, the UK Order is divided into Regional Families and has an Order Council (the Order of Interbeing Council, TOIC) which acts as an advisory body to the Order members.

The UK Order has two retreats a year, usually in the spring and autumn, which are open to aspirants (those aspiring to join the Order).

Dharma Teachers within the Order

The UK Order includes members who have received the Lamp Transmission from Thây to become lay Dharma teachers. Together they form the Dharmacharya Council.

The active UK Dharmacharyas are currently:

Martin Pitt, Jane Coatesworth, Murray Corke, Vari McLuskie, Michael Schwammberger, Teri West, Dene Donalds, Leslie Collington, Barbara Hickling and Susanne Olbrich.

Who joins the Order?



Ordination Ceremony Nottingham 2012

Some members of the COI choose to deepen their practice by joining the UK Order.

It is essential that an applicant be an active member of their local sangha and ideally active in the national sangha.

You can apply to become an aspirant to the Order if you have several years' experience of the practice, facilitate the practice within your sangha and have previously received the Five Mindfulness Trainings. You will have a commitment to sangha building with a close connection to Thây's teachings and the Plum Village tradition.

Becoming a member of the Order of Interbeing is neither a qualification nor an indication of authority. It is a further commitment to Thây's teachings, made by people who have benefitted from the practice and wish to share it with others.

What inspired you to become a member of the Order of Interbeing?

Taking the 14 Mindfulness Trainings symbolizes the trust and faith I have in the Sangha and the practice. It also expresses the loyalty and commitment I have for Thay, Plum Village and the practice of mindfulness. I want to serve the community in whatever way I can.

It's a commitment to learn how to share the practice of mindfulness and the fruits of the practice with others, and learn how to build a Sangha.

From 'An Interview with Stuart Watson'

Part 2

IS JOINING THE ORDER FOR ME?

Plum Village has provided the following guidelines for practitioners to consider before making an application to become an aspirant.

With assistance from your local sangha and Order members known to you, you should, with confidence, be able to make the following statements:

I have a regular practice and feel a close connection to the tradition of Buddhism as transmitted by Thây, the Order of Interbeing and Plum Village.

I have received the Five Mindfulness Trainings. (A minimum period of one year is necessary between receiving the Five Mindfulness Trainings and applying to become an aspirant to receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings).

I practise in harmony with my local sangha and have experience of practising with the wider community (for example: on local retreats, national retreats, at Plum Village or the EIAB).

I have a commitment to sangha building and am aware of the responsibilities which accompany this. (If there is already a local group this does not mean that you have to organise a group elsewhere. Rather, that you are making a positive contribution to the life of your local sangha).

I am sufficiently familiar with the practice to be able to explain it to others, and to lead the basic practice.

I am able to explain to other people, from my own experience, basic teachings including the Five Mindfulness Trainings. (Applicants should consider whether they have taken them sufficiently into their own life that they can share them with others).

(If you are in a long-term relationship) I am sure that becoming a Order member will not threaten the harmony of my relationship. I have the support of my partner/spouse.

I am confident that joining the Order will not have a negative effect on the happiness of my family.

I am able to demonstrate my ability to change by having made some progress or breakthrough in my own life.

Before submitting your application, you will also be expected to be familiar with this Handbook.

You are also strongly advised to have read:

“The Long Arm of the Fourfold Sangha” published in *The Mindfulness Bell*, Autumn 2010, <http://www.mindfulnessbell.org/articles/mb55.pdf>

The Transcript of Teaching for Order of Interbeing Members”; a talk given at Deer Park 22.08.2001). (see Appendix 1)

The two items are teachings by Thây explaining what is expected of Order members.

Part 3

GUIDE TO BECOMING AN ASPIRANT

It is no longer possible for Plum Village to know personally everyone who wishes to receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and join the Order of Interbeing. Thây therefore requests that the national and local sanghas in each country be responsible for recommending practitioners to receive them. Existing Order members in each sangha have a particular (though not exclusive) responsibility in this regard. The process in the UK is overseen by the Ordination Guidance Group (the OGG) currently comprising three lay Dharma teachers and an Order member who acts as the secretary (see Appendix 6)

If you aspire to take the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and join the Order of Interbeing the process is explained in the flow chart on the next page.

It is helpful to be aware that the application itself is part of your spiritual journey. You may continue to need advice and support while completing the application or just take more time to pause and reflect along the way. It is not uncommon for applicants to take some time before finally submitting their application. However if after six months you have not returned your application form, please contact the members of the Ordination Guidance Group (OGG) via the Secretary (see Appendix 6) for advice.

The Aspirant Application Process

The flowchart is offered so that each stage of the application process can be clearly identified. While completing your application form as described in the flowchart we ask you to reflect on the following.

Where am I with my practice?

What is the next concrete step for me in the direction of solidity and freedom?

What is my motivation for joining the UK Order at this time?

What will I bring to the UK Order?



APPLICATION TO BECOME AN ASPIRANT

1. ASPIRATION

VIEW the Aspirant Handbook.

REFLECT on its contents for as long as you need to.

DISCUSS your aspiration with existing Order members

CONTACT the OGG secretary for Aspirant Application Form, which will be personalised..

2. LOCAL SANGHA

INFORM your local sangha of your aspiration.

ENABLE them to access and read the Aspirant Handbook.

ENSURE that at least TWO sangha members are happy to sign the Application Form in support of your application.

3. MENTORS

CONTACT the Mentoring Co-ordinator to discuss possible mentors. (The normal expectation is TWO mentors but see notes on Mentoring Models).

ENSURE that potential mentors are familiar with the Aspirant Handbook

4. APPLICATION

RETURN your completed application form, signed by sangha members, to the OGG secretary.

SEND A COPY to the OGG members AND your mentors

ASK your mentors to email (or send a letter to) the OGG secretary to:

CONFIRM they have read the Handbook

AND CONFIRM they are willing to become your mentors, and which mentoring model you expect to use.

5. CONFIRMATION

OGG secretary will confirm receipt of your application and the emails/letters from your mentors..

You will be introduced online to the Order as a New Aspirant.

CONTACT your mentors to arrange your first meeting.

Your period of mentoring begins.

CONTACT Regional Families Coordinator see Appendix 5

Part 4

MENTORING – A Guide for the Aspirant.

The Mentoring Period

Is my practice helping me to transform my suffering into happiness, develop compassion and is it improving the quality of my relationships at work, at home, and within the practice community?

This is a key question. You are encouraged to return to it regularly, with your mentor, throughout the mentoring period and crucially before asking for Ordination.

Once you become an Aspirant a period of mentoring begins. You will find below some questions for you to explore with your mentors. The length of the mentoring period will vary depending upon individual circumstances. The minimum recommended period is one year but it may be more appropriate to enjoy a longer period.

A member of the Order is a student of Thây's and represents his teachings and practice to the wider world.

Recommended Practice for Aspirants:

It is important that you continue to strengthen your enjoyment of and commitment to this practice on your own and with your sangha in the following ways:

You embrace the practice of mindfulness in your daily life, in your own personal practice and with your local sangha

You observe regular Days of Mindfulness (See Thây's book 'The Miracle of Mindfulness' Chapter 3).

You enjoy formal practice (sitting and walking meditation) on your own and with your local sangha.

You enjoy regular recitation of the Five and Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, including facilitating.

You enjoy supporting your local sangha.

You can introduce others to mindfulness practice in daily life and speak from personal experience about the Five Mindfulness Trainings.

You enjoy engaging with the practices and discourses in the most recent Plum Village Chanting Book and Thây's commentaries on the sutras.

In order to have grounding in our practice tradition, it is highly recommended that you read the suggested books. (See Appendix 4).

In addition, you are encouraged to visit Plum Village, the EIAB, and take part in national and international retreats - health and circumstances permitting. Attending retreats with monastic practitioners is an important way of directly experiencing their practice. (If the cost of a retreat is a problem for you please check whether OI or COI bursaries are available).

You are advised as an Aspirant to participate as much as possible with the local and national UK sangha, to become increasingly confident in the following, according to your skills and talents:

Dharma sharing

Guided meditation

Inviting the bell harmoniously and in accordance with current Plum Village practice

Introducing sitting meditation

Introducing and leading slow walking meditation (kinh hanh) and outside walking meditation

Deep relaxation

Practices that include the chanting of the sutra opening and closing verse, the Three Refuges, sharing the merit and the Sutra of The Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore

Sharing your personal experience of incorporating the 5 and 14 Mindfulness Trainings into your life

If, at any time in the process, you experience any sort of difficulties as an aspirant or decide not to continue with your aspiration to receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, please contact a member of the Ordination Guidance Group (see Appendix 6).



Part 5

AM I READY TO REQUEST ORDINATION?

Do I have confidence in the practice, knowing that it is helping me to transform my suffering into joy and happiness, to help me be more compassionate to myself and others and is it improving the quality of my relationships at work, at home, and within the practice community?

Before asking for ordination, please return to this key question with your mentors.

Please reflect on the question above and the following statements to establish if you can, with confidence, say yes to them.

I have a practice which is stable and regular.

I continue to integrate the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings into my daily life and take part in recitations e.g. the OI/Aspirant monthly skype recitation.

I continue to practise in harmony with my local sangha and the wider practice community.

I am currently engaged with my local sangha, with my OI Regional Family and (where possible) with the UK sangha

I enjoy regular days of mindfulness to nourish and sustain my practice.

I aspire to embody the practice in all aspects of my life.

I feel ready to receive the Transmission of the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and in so doing, understand that I also commit to being an engaged member of the Order of Interbeing.

Am I ready to become an active member of the UK Order?

The Order of Interbeing is a sangha. By becoming an Order member we are joining this sangha, sharing and supporting the practice which is an extension of what we do as active members of our local sangha.

There are opportunities to meet with the OI sangha at Order Retreats and through contact with our OI Regional Family. We can experience the joy of sharing practice with those who have made the same commitment, and draw strength from the presence of elder brothers and sisters.

Practising as an Order member

We aspire to embody the practice in all aspects of our life.

We aspire to practise generosity by offering the following practices to our local sangha (and as our confidence grows) to the national sangha and all those who attend events:

Explaining and facilitating sitting meditation, guided meditation, Dharma Sharing, inviting the bell, indoor walking meditation (kinh hanh), outside walking meditation and deep relaxation.

In addition, we commit to learning, generally through participation, the form within ceremonies, including the chants, for reciting the Five and Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings so that we can contribute wholeheartedly. According to our skills, and as appropriate, we may offer to lead practices involving the following chants, the Morning or Evening chant and The Heart Sutra - The Insight That Brings Us to the Other Shore.

As we gain confidence in our own practice we will be happy to share our experience of living with the Five and Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings.

We recognise that through our commitment to sangha building, we are often required to take a lead in suggesting and organising activities. According to our health and circumstances, we will look for opportunities to offer our skills and talents to the local sangha, the OI regional families and the UK sangha as well as the wider community.

There are opportunities, while an aspirant, to talk with our mentors about all of the above as well as taking the opportunity to serve as a 'second body' in retreat organisation and to our Regional Family Representative.

How to feel part of the Order

Things you can do to help you as a new member of the of the Order sangha are:

Arrange to remain in touch with your mentors with whom you will have developed a spiritual friendship.

Connect with your Regional Family, if you have not already done so, and attend the meetings.

If time and energy allows, offer to take part in the preparations, or work during, national retreats.

Try to attend the bi-annual Order and Aspirant retreats whenever possible.

All the above will help you get to know other OI members and gain confidence in working with them.

The Flowchart on the following page outlines the process for applying to receive the Transmission of the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings.

APPLICATION TO REQUEST ORDINATION

1. REFLECTION

If you feel ready to ask to receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings...
REFLECT on the contents of 'Am I ready to ask for ordination?' with your mentors.
You will be guided by your mentors as to their perceptions of your readiness to proceed.

2. FEEDBACK

Your mentors will respond to your request for ordination. If they agree you are ready, the application will go ahead as outlined in the next stage.
If either/any mentor feels you are **NOT** ready, they will consult with your local sangha and the UK Order.
If any mentor remains of the view that you are not ready, it is their responsibility to advise you of aspects of your practice needing further attention.

3. NOTICE OF APPLICATION

In general, notice will be circulated 8 weeks before each UK Order/Aspirant retreat to invite mentors and aspirants to reflect on whether to be considered for ordination
If, after reflection and consultation with local sangha/UK Order members, mentors are confident of your readiness, they invite you to...
WRITE a letter to the OGG secretary (see section 4)

4. APPLICATION LETTER

WRITE a letter (by email if possible) to the OGG secretary **NO LATER THAN THREE WEEKS BEFORE** the Order retreat.
INCLUDE:
Why you wish to receive the 14 Trainings at this time.
Where you are **NOW** in your practice.
The progress you notice in your peace and happiness.
Your aspiration in becoming a UK Order member.

5. MENTOR SUPPORT

At the same time as you write your letter, your mentors will notify the OGG secretary to confirm that you have had regular meetings together, that you have discussed your reflections on your readiness for ordination, and that they fully support your request.
NB You are also encouraged to invite UK Order members from your regional family to confirm their support to the OGG secretary.
Once support is established, members of the UK Order will be included in the process (see 6.)

6. FEEDBACK

Your letter of application will be circulated to all Order members.
All feedback is reported to the meeting of the UK Order members present at the Order/Aspirant retreat (Aspirants will not attend that part of the meeting).

7. OUTCOME

EITHER...
Your application is endorsed by the UK Order and details sent to yourself and Plum Village
OR...
You will be asked to wait, to deepen your practice and your links with the UK Order.
You will receive a letter/email from the OGG Secretary informing you of the decision.

8. ARRANGEMENTS

Having received the endorsement of the UK Order, you can take part in a formal ceremony of ordination at any convenient time.
This can be in the context of a UK retreat where arrangements will be made.
Alternatively you may chose to attend a ceremony in Plum Village.
NB keep the OGG secretary informed of your plans for ordination.

9. THE NEXT STEP

Write a personal letter to
They expressing your aspiration to receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and join the Order of Interbeing..
Discuss this with your mentors who will give guidance.
SEND YOUR LETTER (by email) to the OGG secretary.
Your letter will be sent to Plum Village but not shared with the UK Order.

10. AFTER ORDINATION

After ordination you are entitled to wear the brown jacket.
The brown jacket is not an indication of authority but shows your further commitment to the practice and the Order.
Continue to meet with your mentors.
Inform the OGG secretary of your new Dharma name.

Part 6

MENTORING – A guide for the Mentor

Preparing to become a mentor

Mentoring is a great privilege and source of joy for all participants.

You do not need to wait until you are invited to become a mentor to prepare to offer this service to the Order.

Firstly, a strong commitment to the practice is essential. Additional guidance is included in the following pages, aimed mostly at supporting you at the point of having been asked. You can express your aspiration to become a mentor by contacting the Mentoring Coordinator (see Appendix 6).

How to gain understanding.

Approach an experienced mentor in the Regional Family.

Attend a Mentors'/Aspirant and Mentors' Retreat or Day.

Take an opportunity to 'sit in', with agreement of all concerned, on mentoring sessions. Confidentiality would have to be emphasized in the latter case.

Visit an active and experienced mentoring group locally or anywhere in the UK.

Reflect on your Practice.

When invited to become a mentor, you are first required to reflect on your own practice and your readiness to make regular contact with the aspirant as a spiritual friend.

As a mentor, you will be able to state with confidence that:

My practice is stable and regular.

I continue to integrate the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings into my daily life and recite the Trainings as required.

I have confidence in the practice to transform my suffering into joy and happiness and to help me be more compassionate to myself and others.

My confidence in the practice helps me in my relationships and helps resolve all conflicts, however small.

I practise in harmony with my local sangha and the wider practice community.

I am currently engaged with my sangha and the Order.

I enjoy regular days of mindfulness to nourish and sustain my practice.

I aspire to embody the practice in all aspects of my life.

I am ready, as a spiritual friend, to offer support and challenge to a fellow practitioner on the aspirant path.

Contact the Mentoring Co-ordinator

The Co-ordinator will discuss with you possible aspirants for you to mentor. Once you have agreement the aspirant will be asked to contact you directly to arrange a meeting, face to face if possible. If you agree to go ahead with the mentor/aspirant process together, this is the time to plan your further meetings.

It is suggested that you discuss whether the aspirant is open to joint meetings/Skype sessions to include their second mentor. Then jointly consider what levels of support are needed and how best to proceed. It is important to be aware and open about your own needs in this as well as those of the aspirant. Once again the Mentoring Coordinator may offer guidance.

Keeping in touch and meeting is the responsibility of both mentor and aspirant.

Here are some current methods used in mentoring in the UK:

Skype one to one.

Skype with both mentors.

Group meetings – a number of aspirants together with one or more mentors, usually face to face but this is also possible on Skype.

Face to face meetings one aspirant/one mentor.

A combination of two or more of the above.

Depending on circumstances, some mentors include informal meetings with others to share a lunch or picnic. This helps to build sangha.

The strong recommendation is that face to face informal meetings take place when and wherever possible. Activities might include such things as preparing lunch together, enjoying a picnic, walking or gardening.

Suggested exercises to do through the mentoring period are living with the same practice for a month and then sharing experiences of this e.g. The Five Remembrances guided meditation, the love meditation, touching the earth etc.

Whatever methods of meeting are agreed, please ensure that you and the aspirant are satisfied these are sufficient to prepare the aspirant for ordination, and that you have sufficient opportunities to consider together all aspects of the aspirant process, as described in the Aspirant Handbook. The Handbook addresses both a growing confidence in transformation through practice and a growing understanding of what it means to commit to becoming a cell in the body of the Order.

As a mentor, you will be a spiritual friend, responding appropriately to the aspirant's needs and habit energies. You will be accompanying the aspirant on the path, establishing mutual trust and respect. The relationship is not one of teacher/student but of mutual sharing and growth. Mentoring enables mentors and aspirants alike to deepen their practice.

You will aspire, with skilfulness and compassion, to reflect back the aspirant's practice to himself in a way that supports and challenges, as appropriate to his needs (not necessarily the same as his preferences!)

Please familiarise yourself with the contents of the Aspirant Handbook before beginning the mentoring process. It, though addressed to the aspirant, outlines a process which is shared with the mentor. If you are unclear about any part of this shared process, please ask the OGG for clarification.

Some Recommendations

You might consider ways in which you can join with other mentors and possibly other aspirants during the mentoring process, developing a sangha approach. Sangha eyes, hearts and insights are not only supportive of all concerned; over time they can create conditions for continuity, consistency, sustainability and growth.

The mentoring sangha may be within the Regional Family (and your Regional Family may be actively seeking to build this support). Skype enables us to make contact with fellow mentors and aspirants across the UK. Even Regional Family members may be at some distance from each other. The potential for increasing mentoring potential and sharing insight may well outweigh disadvantages over distance. In any case a 'local' mentor may not be possible for some aspirants.

It is highly recommended, where possible, face to face meetings do take place within the mentoring process, even if you some distance apart. This could be in the context of a retreat or a time arranged at mutual convenience. If meeting as a Regional Family or local mentoring group, you might enjoy practice days together.

We offer the following notes by way of guidance from current mentors:

A clear structure can be helpful if you are meeting on Skype; a more formal approach may make the best use of limited time together e.g. beginning and ending with a bell and sit, possibly looking at one training or identifying one clear area of focus.

Please ensure that the mentoring process itself is reflected upon from time to time (perhaps even at the end of each meeting) so that all concerned are happy that meetings (place, formality/informality, regularity) and content (readings, recitations, sharing, 'tasks' etc) are enabling transformation and a growing confidence in the practice. (You will be asked to write about this when supporting the aspirant's application for ordination. See flowchart, page 14).

Please ensure that the aspirant commits to attending at least one Order/Aspirant retreat during the mentoring period and has the chance to share her experiences and insights.

Please ensure that you provide an opportunity to talk about commitment to the Order of Interbeing and becoming a cell of the UK sangha body. (See article on 'Service' Appendix 3).

You may want to offer the aspirant an opportunity to familiarise him/herself with the ceremony for receiving the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, and explore together, with beginner's mind, references to the Bodhisattvas and the reason for the ritual elements involved.

Aspirants will be mentored in a wider sense by the local sangha, Regional Family, attending Order/Aspirant retreats, Dharma Training programmes and national retreats; in agreeing to become a mentor, you are offering continuity of contact and the opportunity to share insights gained in all of these contexts.

If you choose to join with others during mentoring, you will remain your aspirant's named mentor who, along with the second named mentor, will support the aspirant's application for ordination. (See flowchart page 14).

You are not expected to 'have all the answers' but to share from your own experience of transformation and insight, reflecting your own confidence in the practice.

If you experience difficulties at any time in the process, or are unsure whether to continue as a mentor, please contact the Mentoring Coordinator. If you decide that you can no longer act as a mentor before the mentoring period is complete, please contact the OGG secretary as soon as possible.





Appendices

Appendix 1
'Teaching for Order of Interbeing Members'
Transcript of a talk given by Thây at Deer Park 22.08.2001

Appendix 2
Charter of the Order of Interbeing

Appendix 3
Article on 'Service'

Appendix 4
Books and Resources

Appendix 5
Useful Contacts

Appendix 1

‘Teaching for Order of Interbeing Members’

Transcript of a talk given by Thay at Deer Park 22.08.2001

Three sounds of the bell

There is a lot of dharma talk in the air, and there is a lot of air in the dharma talk.

There is a sutra with the title Yasoja - that's the name of a monk, the Sangha leader. This sutra, Udanakarmad is found in the collection called Udana, Inspired Sayings. Yasoja was a Sangha leader of a community of monks, about 500. One day he led the 500 monks to the place where the Buddha lived, hoping that they could join the three-month retreat with the Buddha. It was about ten days before the retreat began and they arrived very joyfully, thinking that they would see the Buddha and the other monks. There were lots of greetings, lots of talking and from his hut the Buddha heard the loud noise. He asked Ananda, "What is that noise? It sounds like fishermen landing a catch of fish." Ananda said that the Venerable Yasoja had come with 500 monks and they were greeting and talking with the resident monks, which was why there was such a great noise.

The Buddha said: "Ask them to come to me." And when the monks came they touched the earth in front of the Buddha and they sat down. The Buddha said: "You are to go away. You cannot stay with me: you are too noisy. I dismiss you."

So the 500 monks touched the earth, went around the Buddha and left the monastery of Jeta Park. They went to the kingdom of Vajji, on the east side of Koshalā, and it took them many days to reach this territory. When they arrived on the bank of the river Vaggamuda they sat down and then they began to build small huts for their rain retreat. During the ceremony of starting the retreat the Venerable Yasoja said: "The Buddha sent us away out of compassion. You should know that He is expecting us to practise deeply and successfully. That is why he sent us away. It was an expression of his deep love."

All the monks were able to see that and they agreed that they should practise very seriously during the rain retreat to show the Buddha that they were worthy to be His disciples. So they dwelled quietly and practised very deeply, very ardently, very solidly. After only three months' retreat the majority of the monks had realised the three enlightenments, the three kinds of achievement. One is about remembering all past lives. The second is to see the lives of human being- as other beings - how they have come and after a time they go - and to see this very clearly. The third realisation is achieved when basic afflictions within the practitioner have ended: no more cravings, anger and ignorance.

One day after the rain retreat the Buddha told Ananda: "When I look towards the east I notice that there is some good energy - the energy of light and goodness - and when I use my concentration I see that the 500 monks that were sent away by me have achieved something very deep." Ananda said: "That is true Lord, for I have already heard about them. After being

dismissed they settled down in the Rajghir territory and began serious practice. Now they have all realised the three realisations.” So the Buddha said: “That’s good. Why don’t we invite them to come over for a visit?”

The 500 monks, when they heard the invitation of the Buddha, were very glad to come and visit Him. After many days of travelling they arrived at about seven o’clock in the evening and found the Buddha sitting quietly. They found out that the Buddha was in a state of concentration called imperturbability. In this state you are not perturbed by anything you are very free and very solid. Nothing can shake you, including fame, craving, hatred or even hope.

When the monks realised that the Buddha was in the state called imperturbability they said: “The Lord is sitting in that state so why don’t we sit like him?” So they all sat down like the Lord, in the Jeta Park, very beautifully, very deeply, very solidly. All of them entered into the state of imperturbability and sat like the Buddha. They sat for a long time. When the night was very advanced and the first watch was finished, the Venerable Ananda came to the Lord and knelt down and said: “Lord, it is already very late in the night. Why don’t you address the monks?”

The Lord did not say anything and they all continued to sit. The second watch of the night had gone by and it was about two or three o’clock in the morning. Again Ananda came, knelt down and said: “The night is very far gone. It is now the end of the second watch. Please address the 500 monks.” But the Buddha kept silent and continued to sit. All the monks continued to sit also.

Finally the third watch of the night passed and the sun began to appear on the horizon. Ananda came for the third time and he knelt in front of the Buddha and said: “Great Teacher, now the night is over why don’t you address the monks?” The Buddha opened his eyes, looked at Ananda and said: “Ananda, you did not know what was going on. That is why you have come and asked me three times. This is what was going on: I was sitting in a state of imperturbability and all the monks sat in that state of being, not disturbed by anything at all. That is the best situation we can have. We don’t need anything else. We don’t need any communication. We don’t need any greetings. We don’t need any talk. It is the most beautiful thing that can happen between teacher and student. We just sat like that, each of us dwelling in a state of peace and solidity and freedom.”

Long pause.

I find that sutra very, very beautiful. The communication between teacher and disciple is perfect. What a student should expect from a teacher is nothing less than the freedom of the teacher. The teacher should be free from craving, free from fear, free from despair. When you come to the temple you should not expect small things like having a cup of tea with the teacher or having him say that you are a good person who has many merits and so on. These things are nothing at all. You should expect from a teacher much more than that. If your teacher has enough freedom, enough peace and enough insight, then that will satisfy you entirely. If he does not have any solidity, any freedom, then he should not be your teacher and you should not

accept him or her as your teacher because you'll get nothing out of him.

As a Dharma teacher or a big brother or sister in the Dharma what do you expect from your students? Again, you should not expect small things. You should not expect him or her to bring you a cup of tea, a good meal, a cake or some words of praise. They are nothing at all. You should expect from your student their transformation, their healing and their freedom.

When teacher and students are like that they are in a perfect state of communication. They don't have to say anything to each other. They don't have to do much. They just sit with each other like that, in a state of solidity, imperturbability and that is the most beautiful aspect of a teacher-student relationship.

When a student practises well he can see the teacher in himself, in herself. Likewise when a teacher practises well he can see himself in the student. They should not expect less than that. If you always see the teacher as someone outside of yourself, you have not profited much from your teacher. You have to see that your teacher is in you, in every moment. If you fail to see that, your practice has not gone well at all. So too, if as a teacher you look at your students and do not see yourself in those students, your teaching has not gone very far.

When I look into the person of a disciple, whether she is a monastic or a lay person, I would like to see that my teaching has only one aim - to transmit my insight, my freedom and my joy to my disciples. If I look at her and I see these elements in her eyes, I am very glad. I feel that I have done well in transmitting the best that is in me. Looking at a student disciple's way of walking, of smiling, of greeting and of being, I can see whether my teaching has been fruitful or not. That is what is called "transmission".

Transmission isn't organised by a ceremony with a lot of incense and chanting. Transmission happens every day in a very simple way. If the teacher/student relationship is good, then that transmission is realised in every moment of our daily life. You don't feel far away from your teacher. You feel that he is, she is, always with you because the teacher outside has become the teacher inside. You know how to look with the eyes of your teacher. You know how to walk with the feet of your teacher. Your teacher is never apart from you. This is not something abstract: it is something that we can see for ourselves. If you look at a monk or a nun or a lay disciple and you see Thay in him, you know that he is a full disciple of Thay. But if you don't see that, he may be a newly-arrived person who does not have any Thay within himself and is filled with curiosity.

When we look into ourselves, we can see it also - we can see whether our way of walking or smiling or thinking has that element of freedom, of joy, of compassion - and then we know that Thay has been taken into ourselves as a true continuation of our teacher. You don't need another person to tell you: you can know it by yourself. And when you look at the other fellow you see it by yourself also. If the teacher/student relationship is good, then the transmission is taking place in every moment of daily life.

Every time we take a step we know, by ourselves, whether that step contains peace, joy, solidity or not. You don't need your teacher to tell you. You know whether your step is a real step, containing solidity and freedom, or not. If your step does not have freedom, you know it

doesn't. If your step doesn't have the element of solidity, you know it doesn't. It's not hard: it's so obvious.

Your step is like a cup which can be empty and some juice or tea can be poured into it. If there is something in the cup, it is obvious. When there is tea in the cup, you can drink and enjoy it. First I make a step here, a step here, a step here (*Thay takes a few steps as he talks*). My practice is to fill each step with the element of solidity and peace. For I know very well that every step like that is highly nourishing and healing. When I make a step I say: "I have arrived" or "I am home". So there is the element of arrival here and you know whether you have arrived or not. You don't know how to enjoy every step you make because you've been running all your life. Now you have become a student of the Buddha, you want to make real steps and every step should be full of the element of arrival, full of the element of here and now, full of the element of stability, solidity and freedom.

In the time of the Buddha there were no aeroplanes, there were no buses, there were no cars. And the Sangha just walked from one country to another country. They spent time in many countries and yet they only walked. They had their way of walking and they were able to enjoy every step they made. The Buddha was a monk and his disciples were monks. They walked together like this from one place to another as travelling monks, stopping only for the three months' rain. So they had plenty of time to practise walking meditation and wherever they went they inspired people because of their way of walking and sitting. You can arrive fully when you are sitting and when you are walking. You are not in a hurry, you are not looking for something else outside yourself. You know that everything you are looking for is in the here and now, and that is why every step you make helps you to arrive in the here and now. That is why the teaching and the practice of arrival is so wonderful, so marvellous.

Our society is characterised by running. Everyone is running, running to the future. You want to assure a good future and since you see other people around you running, you cannot resist running. If you do not have peace you are not capable of being in the here and the now and touching life very deeply. Running like that, you hope to arrive. But running like that has become a habit and you are not able to arrive any more. Your whole life is for running. In this teaching, in this practice, the point of arrival is not over there. The point of arrival is here in every minute, in every second. Life is a kind of walk: it can be found here, here, here, here and here, in every step. We continue like this (*Thay walks slowly*). So life can be found in a step and in the space between steps. If we expect to see life outside of these steps and the space between steps, we don't have life. It is very clear, yet the great majority is running. That is why the practice of arrival is so important. It's a drastic kind of medicine for healing our society because you carry, in each of you, the whole of society. The whole of society is running, and therefore we are running. So awakening can bring the desire to resist, to stop.

The teaching of the Three Doors of Liberation is crucial: the door of emptiness, the door of signlessness and the door of aimlessness. Aimlessness means that you are not running any more. You are not running after anything at all because what you want to become you already are. What you are searching for is already there in the here and the now. Your peace, your happiness, your solidity, your freedom is available in every step. Aimlessness is your chance to stop. You

should not run any more. If you think of gaining peace and freedom, peace and freedom are right here, right now. The belief that peace and freedom is in the other direction is an error. That is why every step you take should bring you to the place where freedom and solidity exist. Freedom and solidity are the ground for true happiness: without solidity, no happiness is possible; without freedom no happiness is possible. Every step can generate stability and solidity. Every step can generate the energy of freedom. If you are walking correctly, then the energy freedom and solidity can be generated in every step and happiness is there, in every step. Another person looking at you walking is able to see whether your steps have the element of solidity and freedom. The Buddha need not tell you. You don't need her or him to tell you. You yourself know very well whether the step you take has, or has not, the element of solidity. You are walking but you have already arrived, with every step, and walking like that is your daily practice. Arrival is achieved in every step. It would be very nice to send Thay a postcard to say: "Thay, I have arrived." It is the thing that will make him happy. "I have arrived; I don't run any more."

The habit of running has become very strong. It is a collective habit, a collective energy. Mentally you find it normal to run but it is not normal because if you continue to run like that, happiness will not be possible, peace will not be peace. This contributes to the collective suffering and the individual suffering. So it is very important to learn how to stop. The Buddha and his monks did not have a lot to consume. They did not have a bank account. They did not own big buildings and houses. Each monk was supposed to have only three robes, one begging bowl and one water filter. They travelled around with only these things. The monks and nuns of our time try their best to follow this example.

If you want to become a monk or a nun you should not have a personal bank account. No one at Deer Park has a bank account. No one has a personal car. Even the robes we wear do not belong to us: they belong to the Sangha. If you need a robe, the Sangha will provide you with one, but then it still remains a robe of the Sangha. Even your body is not your personal property, it does not belong to you. You have to take care of your body because it is part of the Sangha body. Other monks and nuns have to help take care of your body and you have to allow them to take care of you. They can intervene in the way you eat and drink because your body belongs to the whole Sangha - the Sanghakaya. You don't own anything at all, including your body, and yet happiness is possible, freedom is possible. Happiness is easier if you don't own many things. Usually if you don't own anything you are fearful, you are very afraid, you don't feel secure. But the practice of a monastic is the opposite: what guarantees your wellbeing is not possessions but the giving away of all possessions.

I remember when Sister Thuc Nghiem, Sister Susan and many other sisters like Emilie became nuns. They took everything from their pockets and they gave it to Thay: 25 cents, the key of their car. To become a nun or a monk you should give up everything: you should not have an apartment or a car or anything. You have to donate everything before you can be accepted as an ordained novice and you are asked not to donate it to the temple where you are to become a monk or a nun but to some other organisation. One day Thay gave an exercise for all the monks and nuns: "Tell me of your daily happiness. Use a sheet of paper and a pencil and write about your daily happiness." Many of them built up more than two pages. I remember that one

of the things that Sister Susan wrote down was: “My happiness is that I don’t have any money anymore.” That is true. Before she became a nun she handed over a very large sum of money, but she had not had peace. She did not have happiness. She gave away all these things to become a nun and she gained a lot of liberty, a lot of freedom, and that is the foundation of happiness which is why she wrote “My happiness is that I do not have any money anymore.” She really felt this happiness.

Three sounds of the bell.

Many people believe that practising as a monk is the hardest path ... but that is not the case. It is easy to practise as a monk or a nun. First you have entrusted yourself entirely to the Sangha. You don’t have to worry about anything at all - food, shelter, medicine or transportation. Also, everyone around you is practising - practising walking mindfully, enjoying every step. It would be strange if you didn’t do the same. So mentally you are transported by the boat of the Sangha and even if you don’t want to go in the direction of peace and freedom, you go anyway! You have left behind your family - your father, your mother, your friends, your job - in order to become a monk or a nun and your purpose is to gain freedom because you know that true happiness is not really possible without freedom. You aspire deeply to freedom and freedom here means freedom from afflictions.

Of course political freedom is enjoyable but if you not free from your afflictions then political freedom is not worth anything to you. Say you are a refugee who cannot go anywhere you want and it is your deepest desire to have an identity card or passport. You may wait ten, twenty, thirty years and still you don’t get that passport to become free, to go anywhere you want. There are other people who have that passport, that piece of paper, but who don’t feel any happiness and some of these people even commit suicide. Political freedom is enjoyable but if you not free from your afflictions - namely craving, despair, jealousy - suffering will still be there within and around you. That is why the purpose of the practice is to get free ... to get free in order for the Kingdom of God to be available to you in the here and now. Get free in order for true life to be possible for you in the here and now ... for the pure land of the Buddha to be available to you in the here and now.

Sometimes the pure land of the Buddha and all its marvels seem to be very close. In fact everything in us and around us is a miracle: your eye is a miracle; your heart is a miracle; your body is a miracle; the orange you are eating is a miracle; and the cloud floating in the sky is a miracle. If they do not belong to the Kingdom of God then to what do they belong? From time to time we have the clear impression that the Kingdom is here, is available in our daily life. But since we are running all the time, we do not have the freedom to enjoy it - it is not available to us. I would say that the Kingdom of God is available to you but you are not available to the Kingdom of God. That is why we need to learn to live, to walk, in such a way that we become a free person. That is the meaning of all the practice.

To practise is not to become a Dharma teacher: a Dharma teacher is nothing at all. It does not mean to become a Sangha leader: to be a Sangha leader does not mean anything at all. What is the use of being the head of the big temple if you continue to suffer deeply? The purpose of

practice is to become free and with your freedom, happiness is possible. With your freedom and happiness, you can help so many people for you have something to share, to offer to them. You don't share your ideas; you don't share what you have accumulated from your Buddhist studies. Even professors of Buddhism may suffer very deeply because Buddhist ideas have not helped them at all. What you need is freedom and, whereas Buddhist studies may be helpful, our happiness is the accumulation of peace, including what we study and the authority we are given in the Sangha and in society. Many people in our society are not truly happy and many of them commit suicide. Our way should be different: it is the way of freedom.

Is it possible to be free? Looking into the person of a practitioner, whether a Dharma brother, a Dharma sister or your teacher, you can see how much freedom he has, how much freedom and happiness she has. We would like to have true Dharma brothers and sisters because sitting close to them, living close to them, we profit from their happiness and freedom because their happiness is based on their freedom and not on anything else, like change, authority, power. What we profit from in a Sangha is the opportunity to do what the other people are doing, namely sitting, walking, smiling, greeting - all of these aimed at gaining freedom, at stopping. What is the meaning of wearing a brown jacket? It's not to declare that I am an ordained member of the Order. That's nothing. It's like the value of a student identity card: you got into a famous university and you were given a student identity card, but if you don't study, what is the use of having the identity card? Having the ID is about making use of the library, sitting in the classroom and having professors and the means to study. So, when you are ordained, you receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and get the jacket. These are identity cards which allow us to profit from the Sangha, from the teaching, from the practice.

There are Dharma centres, there are monasteries, there are teachers, there are Dharma brothers and sisters who practise and being a member of the Order of Interbeing helps us to profit from all of these in order to advance on our path of freedom. With enough freedom we can make others around us happy. We know that practising without a Sangha is difficult so we try our best to set up a Sangha around us, where we live. To be an OI member is wonderful. To be a Dharma teacher is wonderful. Wonderful, not because we have the title of OI membership, or of Dharma teacher, but because we have the chance to practice and to organise. As an OI member you have to organise the practice. Wherever you are it is your duty to set up a group of people to practise, otherwise it does not mean anything to be an OI member. An OI member is expected to organise the practice in his or her area - for five people, six people, ten people, twenty people - and to practise very reliably, at a local level and sometimes at a national level. You have to take care of the Sangha and support the Sangha because the Sangha is what supports you in your practice. So building the Sangha means building yourself. If the Sangha is there, you practise with the Sangha so as a Sangha-builder you enjoy the benefit, the opportunity to practise. Being a Dharma teacher is also an opportunity to practise - you cannot not practise! You need to practise in order that your teaching has content. How can you open your mouth and give the teaching if you don't do it yourself? The teaching is an opportunity: even if you are not an excellent teacher yet, being a Dharma teacher helps very much when you speak about the Dharma, for you have to do what you are sharing, otherwise it looks odd. It's like a monk living with other monks: when everyone is doing walking meditation it would look strange if that monk did not do the practice. So, as a Dharma teacher, you have a great opportunity to practise.

Every member of the Sangha can create favourable conditions for you, whether that member is good at the practice or not. A person who has a strong practice may inspire you to be at least like him or her, and another person who is very weak in the practice may draw you to help them. So being a Dharma teacher is a good thing. It would be strange if you got the transmission and you got a jacket and you didn't build the Sangha to practise with. It would be exactly like getting a student ID and never going to the library or the classes, saying: "You know I am a student of that famous university." So Sangha building is what we do and Sangha building is our practice. Sangha building means to identify elements of the Sangha and to invite and help each element of the Sangha to join the practice. You are like a gardener: you take care of, you help the growth of, every member of the Sangha. There will be members who are very easy to be with and to deal with and there will be members who are difficult to be with and to deal with, but as a Sangha builder you have to help everyone. There will be members of the Sangha whose presence you can enjoy deeply. There will be other members of the Sangha with whom you have to be very patient.

Please don't believe that every monastic or lay person in Plum Village is equally easy for Thay! That's not the case.

There are monastics that are very easy to be with and to help, and there are monastics who are so difficult. But a teacher has to spend more time and energy with those who are difficult. You may find you get angry and you want to say "no" to these difficult elements. But that is to surrender. You cannot grow into a good Dharma teacher if you want only the easy things. In a Sangha there must be difficult people and that is normal. The difficult people are a good thing for you for they will test your capacity for Sangha building and practising.

One day you will be able to smile and you won't suffer at all when that person says something unpleasant to you. Your compassion will have been born and you will be capable of embracing him or her within your compassion and your understanding. Then you will know that your practice has grown, and you should feel delighted to be able to see that such a sentence, such an act, no longer makes you angry because you have developed enough compassion and understanding. So that is why we must not be tempted to eliminate the element whom we think to be difficult in the Sangha.

Sangha building needs a lot of love and compassion. If you know how to handle difficult moments, you will grow as a Sangha builder and you will grow as a Dharma teacher. Thay, speaking to you out of his own experience, can say that he has developed a lot more patience and compassion and that his happiness is very much greater because he has more patience and compassion. You should believe Thay in these respects. We suffer because our understanding and compassion are not great enough to embrace the difficult people. But with the practice, your heart will grow, your understanding and compassion will grow and you will not suffer any more. You will have a lot of space and you will give others a lot of time and space in order to transform. Thanks to the Sangha practising, thanks to your model of practice, those you found difficult will transform. That is a great success, much greater than with pleasant people. Love is not only enjoyment - we enjoy the presence of pleasant people. Love is a practice of generating more compassion and understanding. You must always remember that love is not just a matter

of enjoyment. Love is a practice. And it is that aspect of love that can bring you growth and happiness - the greatest happiness.

There is no way to happiness; happiness is the way. Happiness should be found in every moment of your daily life and not at the end of the road. The end of the road is the stopping, because life is now, in every second, in every moment.

Peace is every step; happiness is every step. It is so clear; it's so plain; it's so simple. Suppose I draw a circle representing my root Sangha where I was ordained in the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, where I had a teacher and many Dharma brothers and sisters. I was born of that place. The root Sangha is my spiritual birthplace and every time I think of it I should feel joy, pure joy and hope. Every time I think of it I feel inspired; I feel happiness. All of us should have such a place which we carry around within us, everywhere we go. That place is situated not just in space: it is internal within us. Those of us who do not carry such a place in our hearts do not have enough happiness. It is a pleasure to go back to the root Sangha and to be there. Because I have my function, my role in society, I am here. I am here but I hold my root Sangha within my heart, as a source of inspiration, a source of energy for me.

Around me I have built a local Sangha. I am aware that, although it is my local Sangha, it will be the root Sangha of many other people. Whether it is in Chicago, in Buffalo or somewhere else, my local Sangha will become the root Sangha for friends who come here to learn the practice. So the root Sangha is not out there: it is here in me. The seat of my root Sangha in me will help make this local Sangha into a root Sangha for others. I am a member of the OI. I have to make it into a home for those of my friends who constitute my Sangha here and my Sangha here reflects the image of my root Sangha there.

In my Sangha people know how to enjoy every step, every breath. They know how to take care of each other. They know that the purpose of the practice is to get freedom and nothing else. I build my Sangha out of love, out of my deepest desire. That is the path I undertake, the path of freedom, and I devote my time, my energy, into building the Sangha whereby the root becomes a reality. If brotherhood is not there happiness cannot be possible. The mark of an authentic Sangha is the brotherhood. Those who come to the Sangha, do so not to become proficient in the Sangha, but because they want to have brothers and sisters in the practice of freedom. If the practice is correct, then the brotherhood should be built and should be strong. It is that brotherhood which sustains us, to help us stand firm in our practice.

We know that a little further away there is another local Sangha and there is another OI member who is doing just what we are doing here. So, weekly, we practise with our local Sangha. We organise local events - days of mindfulness, short retreats, Dharma discussion, tea meditation, walking meditation - all at a local level. From time to time we invite other Sanghas to join us to make it into a regional activity.

So we have the local and then the regional level. And of course we combine our talents and experience with other OI members, with other Sangha-builders, to make the regional events. Everyone can contribute and everyone can learn a lot from activities on the regional level.

Then from time to time we organise, together with our root Sangha, national activities on a national level. You might use places like Deer Park, the Green Mountain Dharma Centre or Plum Village for your national activity. Finally there will be activities on an international level. Then we might meet with practitioners from Sidney, from Denmark, from Germany, from England and we can learn a lot from each others' practice and experiences.

So there are four levels of practice: local, regional, national and international. Happiness should be possible at a local level, in our daily practice. We recognise and we take into account the difficulties, the suffering that is going on in and around us. Our practice is just to deal with what is ... because the practice is not to get away from our real problems, our real difficulties, our real suffering. The practice, according to the path shown by the Buddha, is to recognise suffering as it is; to call it by its true name; and to learn the Dharma in such a way that the Dharma should be able to ease the deep causes of suffering, always. The division in families, the violence in schools and in society - all these have to be confronted with our mindfulness in order for us to see deeply the nature of suffering, how suffering has arisen, the making of suffering. Illbeing, that is the first noble truth. The second noble truth is the making of illbeing. We should develop a deep and very clear understanding of the making of illbeing. We have to consider every cause that has led to the suffering - things like alcoholism and drugs, AIDS, violence, the breaking up of families. We have to look deeply into suffering to see exactly what are the causes. We have to call these by their true names. Understanding the nature of suffering is the practice - it is the second noble truth. When understanding of the second noble truth is deep, then naturally the path will emerge: the fourth noble truth - the path leading to the cessation of illbeing. This is the same as the birth of wellbeing. So with understanding of the nature of illbeing, the path leading to the cessation of illbeing becomes apparent.

The third truth is just the cessation of illbeing. It has been repeated and repeated that once the second noble truth is understood then the fourth noble truth will reveal itself. That is the true Dharma. The true Dharma should be embodied by the Sangha leader, by the OI member. You have to organise your daily life in such a way that that way of life can express the fourth noble truth - the path, the living Dharma. It will bring great happiness if someone in the Sangha can embody the living Dharma. Your Sangha may be five people, ten people, twenty people, fifty people. If one of you can embody clearly the path, the living Dharma, that is wonderful. Then everyone can look to him, can look to her, in order to practise. Very soon the Sangha will carry the Dharma within itself; the Sangha will embody the Dharma. Once this happens, the Sangha will have become that most convincing element, the true Sangha, the living Sangha - the Buddha and the Dharma being contained within it. A true Sangha always carries within herself the true Buddha and the true Dharma.

So, if you are a Sangha-builder, be sure that in the Sangha there are those that can embody the living Dharma. They live in such a way as to make the Dharma apparent - the Dharma not only in cassette tapes, books and Dharma talks but the Dharma in the way they live their daily life. So when considering training, OI members should remember that training does not mean taking in a lot of Buddhist studies, although Buddhist studies can be very helpful. We are looking for something more than Buddhist studies. At the Green Mountain Dharma Center, Sister Annabel offers teaching and training for OI members and for those who practice in mindfulness centers.

She doesn't just offer Dharma talks. People go there and practise walking and sitting and other practices so they see that the living Dharma is more than a set of theories.

We can organise training on a local or regional level so that OI members can learn, can be trained. Members-to-be can be offered a chance to learn also because after practising for one year a person might like to apply for ordination to become a member of the Core Community. If during that period of one year he or she has had no chance to train, then ordination would not be possible because it is based on the training and not on the desire to become a member of the Core Community alone. The desire is good but it is not enough. There should be training. So if you are a member of the Core Community, it is your path to train people in your local Sangha so that he or she knows what is the true Dharma, the practice and how to apply the Dharma in their family life and in social life. So the Dharma should be a very concrete way of life - the art of mindful living.

Many of you have met to talk about how to organise a regional event. This might be a gathering of seven or ten days for regional-level OI members and aspirants for ordination to come and receive training. You might ask one, two or three sisters from the root Sangha to come and help you. Or you might do it yourselves because among you there are OI members who are Dharma teachers, who are capable of training. It is always possible to invite a few members of the root Sangha to come and help you and, of course, on a national level the root Sangha has to be involved in some way. There should be documents and materials to ensure that the training is done in very concrete terms so that during the training transformation can really become possible. In principle, OI members should be able to benefit in this way: to transform and heal during the time of training.

In any five-day, six-day retreat we see a lot of people transform - like the one we just offered at the University of Massachusetts when 850 people came for a retreat of six days. The quality of the retreat was very high and people enjoyed it so much. Reports on transformation came every day - many, many cases. Reconciliation was made among members of the family; reconciliation took place even with people who were not there, by a telephone call. If you had been at the retreat you would have experienced how the presence of those of us who have a solid practice is very helpful to other retreatants.

There were at least 70 monastics at this retreat, which is quite a large number. Many OI members attended as well as other experienced practitioners. Then again there were so many people new to the practice, who had just read books and came to a retreat for the first time with no experience of practice, of vipassana or anything at all. They simply took part and enjoyed it very naturally - like a stream joining a big river. They are very happy and from many streams of society and there were plenty of young people - about 28 young people took the three refuges. If you talk to people such as the sisters and brothers who attended the retreat you will hear many stories of transformation, and these make us very happy.

I remember one day I invited all the children to come to sit on my deck - something like one hundred of them - and I invited all the schoolteachers to come as well - 100 of them. I asked them to talk to each other about their expectations and experiences. It was so wonderful. Many

people cried during the retreat because they heard about their own suffering and they learned the practical way out of suffering. And they got a lot of energy and they got many good seeds in themselves watered. Many of them regretted that the retreat did not last longer.

So, on the regional level we get a training, not only for helping other people but to help us also. At the end of a retreat we should come out as a stronger practitioner, a stronger Sangha-builder, a stronger and more skilful Dharma teacher.

This should be organised regularly. So please do use your intelligence, your power of organisation, in order to arrange this because Sangha building is the most noble task. The most precious thing we can offer to our society is Sangha. So everyone has to learn to be a Sangha-builder. There are many monks, nuns and lay people who are excellent Dharma teachers - who can teach Buddhism very well- in Vietnam and in other countries, but not many have the skill of Sangha building. My fixation, my desire is that every OI Member should learn the art of Sangha building, because Sangha building should bring you a lot of happiness. With Sangha building you acquire a lot of merit, because what we need desperately in our society is Sangha, where people can come and feel embraced, and feel understood and learn to see the path of emancipation. A true Sangha is what we need because a true Sangha always carries within itself the Buddha and the living Dharma. It is the living Dharma that makes the Sangha into a true Sangha, a living refuge for us and for our society.

So if you have time left for discussion, please give your attention to the question of training and sangha building.

Three sounds of the bell

Transcribed by Kate Atchley, The Vow of True Virtue

Appendix 2

The Charter of the Order of Interbeing

Chapter I: Name, Aim, Tradition

A Buddhist community is formed with the name Order of Interbeing. 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. The Order of Interbeing was founded within the Linji (Rinzai) School of Dhyana 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

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 realize 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.

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.

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. 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, Organization

* 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.

* The Order of Interbeing does not recognize 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 practicing the Way.

* 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.

* 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.

* 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

* 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.

* 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.

* 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 practicing 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.

* 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.

* 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 authorized 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 ordainee; date and place of the ordination; and the name of the presiding Dharma Teacher.

* Members of the Core Community are expected to observe at least sixty days of mindfulness per year. It is recognized 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.

* All members of the Core Community are expected to organise and practice with a local Sangha.

* 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

* 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.

* 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, realizing 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.

* 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.

* To be a 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.

* 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

* 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.

* The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and this Charter are to be re-examined at each Assembly of the Core Community members.

* 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.

* In keeping with the tradition of the Sangha, all changes must be made by consensus and not just by simple majority.

Appendix 3

In the Service of Life

by Rachel Naomi Remen (Noetic Sciences Review, Spring 1996)

In recent years the question 'how can I help?' has become meaningful to many people. But perhaps there is a deeper question we might consider. Perhaps the real question is not 'how can I help?' but 'how can I serve?'

Serving is different from helping. Helping is based on inequality; it is not a relationship between equals. When you help you use your own strength to help those of lesser strength. If I'm attentive to what's going on inside of me when I'm helping, I find that I'm always helping someone who's not as strong as I am, who is needier than I am. People feel this inequality. When we help, we may inadvertently take away from people more than we could ever give them; we may diminish their self-esteem, their sense of worth, integrity and wholeness. When I help I am very aware of my own strength.

But we don't serve with our strength, we serve with ourselves. We draw from all of our experiences. Our limitations serve, our wounds serve, even our darkness can serve. The wholeness in us serves the wholeness in others and the wholeness in life. The wholeness in you is the same as the wholeness in me.

Service is a relationship between equals. Helping incurs debt. When you help someone they owe you one. But serving, like healing, is mutual. There is no debt. I am as served as the person I am serving.

When I help I have a feeling of satisfaction. When I serve I have a feeling of gratitude. These are very different things.

Serving is also different from fixing. When I fix a person, I perceive them as broken, and their brokenness requires me to act. When I fix, I do not see the wholeness in the other person or trust the integrity of the life in them. When I serve, I see and trust that wholeness. It is what I am responding to and collaborating with.

There is distance between ourselves and whatever or whomever we are fixing.

Fixing is a form of judgment. All judgment creates distance, a disconnection, an experience of difference. In fixing there is an inequality of expertise that can easily become a moral distance. We cannot serve at a distance. We can only serve that to which we are profoundly connected, that which we are willing to touch. This is Mother Teresa's basic message. We serve life, not because it is broken, but because it is holy.

If helping is an experience of strength, fixing is an experience of mastery and expertise. Service, on the other hand, is an experience of mystery, surrender and awe.

A fixer has the illusion of being causal. A server knows that he or she is being used and has a willingness to be used in the service of something greater, something essentially unknown. Fixing and helping are very personal; they are very particular, concrete and specific. We fix and help many different things in our lifetimes, but when we serve we are always serving the same thing. Everyone who has ever served through the history of time, serves the same thing. We are servers of the wholeness and mystery in life.

The bottom line, of course, is that we can fix without serving. And we can help without serving. And we can serve without fixing or helping. I think I would go so far as to say that fixing and helping may often be the work of the ego, and service the work of the soul. They may look similar if you're watching from the outside, but the inner experience is different. The outcome is often different, too.

Our service serves us as well as others. That which uses us strengthens us. And we can help without serving. And we can serve without fixing or helping. I think I would go so far as to say that fixing and helping may often be the work of the ego, and service the work of the soul. They may look similar if you're watching from the outside, but the inner experience is different. The outcome is often different, too.

Over time, fixing and helping are draining, depleting. Over time we burn out. Service is renewing. When we serve, our work itself will sustain us.

Service rests on the basic premise that the nature of life is sacred, that life is a holy mystery which has an unknown purpose. When we serve, we know that we belong to life and to that purpose. Fundamentally, helping, fixing and service are ways of seeing life. When you help you see life as weak, when you fix, you see life as broken. When you serve, you see life as whole. From the perspective of service, we are all connected: All suffering is like my suffering and all joy is like my joy. The impulse to serve emerges naturally and inevitably from this way of seeing. Lastly, fixing and helping are the basis of curing, but not of healing. In 40 years of chronic illness I have been helped by many people and fixed by a great many others who did not recognize my wholeness. All that fixing and helping left me wounded in some important and fundamental ways. Only service heals.

Appendix 4

Books and Resources

Most of the books in this list are by Thich Nhat Hanh, unless otherwise stated, and therefore available from the COI Bookshop, see <http://www.coiuk.org/the-coi-book-service/>

**** Books of particular importance**

Trainings:

‘Interbeing’ (14 Trainings) **

‘For a Future to be Possible’ (5 Trainings) **

Sutras

‘Breathe! You Are’**

‘Transformation and Healing’

‘Our Appointment with Life’

‘The Heart of Understanding’ **

‘The Diamond that Cuts Through Illusion’

‘Thundering Silence’

Practice

‘Plum Village Chanting and Recitation Book’ **

‘The Blooming of the Lotus’ (Guided Meditations) **

‘Soundbites’ (Guided Meditations)

‘The Miracle of Mindfulness’ **

‘The Long Road Leads to Joy’ (Walking Meditation) **

‘Touching The Earth’

CD: ‘Breath by Breath’ – Plum Village Chanting

‘Mindfulness Trainings Recitation Booklet’ from the COI **

Tradition

‘The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching’ **

‘Old Path, White Clouds’ **

‘Learning True Love’ by Sister Chan Khong. **

Sangha

‘Joyfully Together’


‘Friends on the Path’

‘Sangha Building’ by Jack Lawler

“Classics”

‘Being Peace’

‘Peace is Every Step’



‘The Sun in My Heart’

‘Zen Keys’

Other Resources of Interest

‘A Basket of Plums’ Songbook

‘The Mindfulness Bell’ – Journal

Online Dharma Talks at TNH audio, YouTube, Plum Village website and Dear Park website

Appendix 5

Useful Contacts*

Ordination Guidance Group

Current members of the Ordination Guidance Group are listed below. Initial enquiries about joining the Order will normally be directed to them via the Secretary.

THERESA PAYNE (Secretary)	Email: tmp@portpyn.com Tel: 01672 520876 OR 07867781240 Address: New House, Burdett St, RAMSBURY, Wilts. SN8 2QX
MARTIN PITT	Tel: 01647 432202 Address: Eaglehurst, Mill St, CHAGFORD, Devon. TQ13 8AR
JANE COATESWORTH (Mentoring Co-ordinator)	Tel: 01223 842941 Address: 1, Dingle Dell, Sawston Road, STAPLEFORD, Cambs. CB22 5DY
MURRAY CORKE	Tel: 01223 872776 Address: Stable Cottage, 20 High St., BARRINGTON, Cambs. CB22 5QX

Regional Families

EDITH HUSK (Regional Family Co-ordinator)	Email: edith@ehusk.co.uk Tel: 01162393833 Address: 11 Garfit Rd, KIRBY MUXLOE, Leics. LE9 2DE.
--	--

Other Contacts

Community of Interbeing (COI)	Web: www.coiuk.org
Plum Village	Web: www.plumvillage.org Tel: +33 533 94 75 40
European Institute of Applied Buddhism (EIAB)	Web: www.eiab.eu Tel: +49 2291 9071373

* All information correct at time of writing, August 2016.