



"I TEACH ONE THING;
THE TRUTH OF SUFFERING
AND THE END
OF SUFFERING."

Siddhartha Gautama

"The Buddha"

BUDDHIST MEDITATION SERVICES



**BUDDHIST PATHWAYS
PRISON PROJECT, INC.**

BUDDHIST SERVICE

Leader:

Welcome. Let us begin Buddhist meditation service and bow in reverence to the Three Treasures:

the Buddha *(ring bell, all bow)*

the Dharma *(ring bell, all bow)*

the Sangha *(ring bell, all bow)*

Leader:

Fortunate it is to be born into human life,

Now we are living it.

Rare is it to encounter the Teachings of the Buddha,

Now we hear it.

If we do not have Faith and seek the Truth of the Dharma in this life, in what life shall we find it?

Let us reverently take refuge in the Three Treasures of the Truth.

All repeat 3 times:

I take refuge in the Buddha

I take refuge in the Dharma

I take refuge in the Sangha

I take refuge in the Buddha

I take refuge in the Dharma

I take refuge in the Sangha

I take refuge in the Buddha

I take refuge in the Dharma

I take refuge in the Sangha



The Four Noble Truths

All:

I understand there is suffering in life.

I understand there are causes for all suffering.

I understand there is a final state of no suffering.

I understand there are paths to overcome suffering and the way to overcome suffering is by following the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path

Going around the circle, each sangha member reads one of the factors of the path:

I shall see things as they are - Right View

I shall be conscious of my intentions - Right Intention

I shall speak truthfully and with compassion - Right Speech

I shall act unselfishly - Right Conduct

I shall live honestly - Right Livelihood

**I shall follow the teaching of the Buddha with patience -
Right Effort**

**I shall cultivate awareness in the present moment -
Right Mindfulness**

**I shall strengthen mindfulness through meditation -
Right Concentration**



The Five Precepts

Leader: The Five Precepts are the basis for a happy life. They have the capacity to protect life and to make it beautiful and worth living. They are also the door that opens to enlightenment and liberation. Please listen to each precept, and answer “Yes” silently every time you see that you have made the effort to study, practice and observe it.

Leader: The First Precept - Kindness and Compassion

I strive to practice not killing or harming other living beings.

Sangha: Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I strive to cultivate compassion and learn ways to protect the lives of people and all living beings. I am determined not to kill or harm others, not to let others kill or harm others, and not to condone any act of harm in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life.

Leader: This is the first of the Five Precepts. Have we each made the effort to study and practice it during the past (week, two weeks or month)?

Pause to reflect and reply silently. Leader rings bell.

Leader: The Second Precept - Generosity and Non-Attachment

I strive to practice taking only what is freely given.

Sangha: Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing and oppression, I strive to cultivate loving kindness and learn ways to work for the well-being of all living beings. I strive to practice generosity by sharing my time, energy and material resources with those who are in real need. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others. I will respect the property of others, and I will prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on earth.

Leader: This is the second of the Five Precepts. Have we each made the effort to study and practice it during the past (week, two weeks or month)?

Pause to reflect and reply silently. Leader rings bell.

Leader: The Third Precept - Restraint

I strive to practice responsible sexual conduct.

Sangha: Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I strive to cultivate responsibility and learn ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families and society. I am determined not to engage in sexual relations that cause harm to others. I will do everything in my power to protect others from sexual abuse.

Leader: This is the third of the Five Precepts. Have we each made the effort to study and practice it during the past (week, two weeks or month)?

Pause to reflect and reply silently. Leader rings bell.

Leader: The Fourth Precept - Honesty and Truthfulness

I strive to practice speaking truthfully.

Sangha: Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I strive to cultivate loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I strive to learn to speak truthfully using words that inspire self-confidence, joy and hope. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord, or that can cause the family or the community to break. I will make every effort to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

Leader: This is the fourth of the Five Precepts. Have we each made the effort to study and practice it during the past (week, two weeks or month)?

Pause to reflect and reply silently. Leader rings bell.

Leader: The Fifth Precept - Health and Mindfulness

I strive to protect my mental health through mindful consumption and to avoid intoxicants.

Sangha: Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I strive to cultivate good health, both physical and mental, for myself and others by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. In order to safeguard my mind and cultivate awareness and clarity of mind, I strive to ingest items to preserve peace, well-being and joy in my body, in my consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my community. I am determined not to use any items that contain toxins, such as may be found in certain TV programs, magazines, books, films and conversations. I will work to transform violence, fear, anger and confusion in myself and in society by practicing Dharma, for myself and for society. I understand that practicing Dharma is crucial for self-transformation and for the transformation of society.

Leader: This is the fifth of the Five Precepts. Have we each made the effort to study and practice it during the past (week, two weeks or month)?

Pause to reflect and reply silently. Leader rings bell.

Leader: We have recited the Five Precepts, the foundation of happiness for the individual, the family, and society. We should recite them regularly so our study and practice of the precepts can deepen within us day by day. Hearing the bell, please bow three times to the Three Treasures to show your gratitude.

Bell - bow in silence to the Buddha

Bell - bow in silence to the Dharma

Bell - bow in silence to the Sangha



TAKING REFUGE

We take refuge, or shelter, in what has traditionally been called the ‘Three Jewels’ in order to establish a foundation of trust and respect from which our practice can grow.

To take refuge in the Buddha is to remember that the Buddha was a human being, like us, who through his own efforts became fully “awake.” He personifies the potential for wisdom and compassion each of us can experience.

To take refuge in the Dharma is to see the truth of how life lawfully unfolds through the teachings and practices taught by the Buddha.

To take refuge in the Sangha is to seek the support of the community of people who share Buddhist practice. This includes our prison Sangha and the millions of other practitioners, as well as wise and compassionate people in our lives and in the world.

Many of the reflections in Buddhist services are spoken three times. This is because the original discourses of the Buddha were memorized and not written down. Traditionally, numerous recitations was the method of setting these statements firmly in the mind.

MEANING OF THE 4 NOBLE TRUTHS

Rather than focusing on metaphysical questions — such as the origin of the universe, the concept of God — the Buddha addressed the practical issue of “What is the basic problem with life that causes distress, and how can it be fixed?” He used the medical model of making a diagnosis (1st truth), describing the cause (2nd truth), giving the chances for recovery (3rd truth), and prescribing treatment (4th truth).

The First Noble Truth is the reality of the suffering we bring on ourselves by the behavior and attitudes we choose to act on. The First Noble Truth includes the suffering we create in how we respond to physical and emotional pain and other challenges in our lives.

The Second Noble Truth is the reality of the origin of this suffering: craving. When we react to life with aversion or clinging, justification or condemnation, we add complications and additional suffering to our lives.

The Third Noble Truth is the reality of the possibility of the end of this additional suffering. This is the good news of Buddhism.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the reality that the cessation of this additional suffering can be attained through observance of the Noble Eightfold Path.

THE THREE TRAININGS AND THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

The Buddha’s teachings are practical and aimed directly at the goal of ending suffering in our lives. To achieve this goal the Buddha taught three trainings: ethical conduct, meditation practice, and insight, or seeing things as they really are. These three trainings are divided into the eight areas of practice — The Noble Eightfold Path.

TRAINING	NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH FACTOR
Ethical Conduct	Right Speech Right Conduct Right Livelihood
Meditation Practice	Right Effort Right Mindfulness Right Concentration
Wisdom Practice	Right View Right Intention

THE FIVE PRECEPTS

Ethical conduct in Buddhism does not advocate unquestioning obedience of rules and regulations. The Precepts are considered “training tools” which are an aid in reminding each of us to pay attention to our motivations and actions in daily life. Mindfulness of daily life situations is the key to beginning to see where we are “off track.”

The Precepts are guidelines to help us develop effective habit patterns for a calmer and happier life.

Practicing the Precepts means that we study how we can follow them in our daily lives and then pay attention to the effects in how we feel, think and act.

Many prisoners make observing the precepts a primary focus of their practice. It is the practice of mindfulness and awareness in everyday life.



MEDITATION PRACTICE



Before embarking on a meditation practice it is useful to reflect on your reasons for wanting to meditate. Cultivating a regular practice of meditation requires a commitment of time and energy. Although most people find immediate and long-term benefits to meditation, there can also be periods of difficulty, painful insights and boredom. You will also notice significant internal and external changes in your life resulting from meditation practice. Most people who invest the time in developing the skill of meditation find it a highly worthwhile endeavor.

The following is a list of some of the benefits of meditation. It is important to know that not everyone experiences all of these benefits.

- 1) improves physical and mental health
- 2) improves concentration and memory
- 3) allows us to be kinder to ourselves and others
- 4) reduces stress, fear, and anxiety
- 5) reduces chronic pain and helps in coping with chronic ailments
- 6) improves connectivity to family and friends
- 7) provides a belief system and a blueprint for living that many people find comforting and skillful
- 8) shifts the focus from a chaotic and unmanageable external world towards a peaceful and stable internal one
- 9) promotes self-awareness and self-acceptance
- 10) reduces insomnia, helping people to sleep more deeply, and to require less sleep
- 11) increases one's appreciation for life.

The meditation process asks you to engage your experience in a new, direct, non-judgmental way. The emphasis is on understanding your experience at a body-based, sensation-based level rather than a conceptualizing, mental-centered level. Meditation is not about learning how to avoid, suppress, manage, cope with, or merely tolerate what is difficult in our lives. It is about learning how to enter into a new relationship with what our minds tell us is problematic. It is about learning how to engage what is troubling, confusing, and painful in our lives. It is about learning how to live with what we perceive as adversity and still feel well, whole, and healthy. This is one of the true gifts of a meditation practice, because there are many realities in our lives that we cannot avoid or change.

In addition to attending the weekly Buddhist Services in the chapel, you are encouraged to establish a daily meditation practice. This may require creativity and determination. Find a time when there is the least amount of noise and distraction in your cell. Some inmates have found ear plugs helpful. Begin with 10 minutes and eventually work up to 30 or 40 minutes. Ideally, you want to have an upright posture while meditating. You can either sit on the edge of your bed or create a floor cushion from blankets. If there is no possibility of sitting upright, then meditate lying down. Since it is very easy to fall asleep this way, raise and lower one arm throughout the meditation. Have the arm at your side, bending the elbow to raise and lower the forearm.

Once you have established your posture, put your attention on your breath. Take a few deep breaths, exhaling fully. Then let your breath settle into its natural rhythm. Sit still and keep your focus on your breath. When your attention wanders, bring it back to the breath again...and again...and again.

When you notice your mind racing with thoughts, emotions, or sensations, make a simple note of what is happening in the mind and simply return to your breath coming in and out of the nostrils, or the rise and fall of the chest or abdomen. So-called 'good' or 'bad' thoughts are all the same - you could be having a thought about hitting someone or about playing with a puppy - all are just thoughts. Train your mind like this and you will soon realize that you don't need to act on every thought that appears. You'll see that thoughts come and go and you don't need to latch on to them or make a big deal out of them. Thoughts are natural. They arise like clouds in the sky and slowly drift from view.



MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is a skill that can be intentionally developed and usefully applied to every aspect of our lives. It is non-judgmental, present-moment awareness. This is a quality of attention that is based in the present moment that is free from interpretations, commentaries, judgments, memories, planning, and the grasping or avoidance that we usually bring to our experience. Using mindfulness we connect with our bare experience and are attentive to the constant change occurring in each moment. We learn to become free from our usual habitual reactivity in order to experience and to be present for whatever is happening with a calm, balanced mind. We begin to have a choice about our actions and this brings freedom.

The most challenging aspect of practicing mindfulness is to remember to do it. Like any skill (such as playing a sport or musical instrument), developing mindfulness requires practice. As with all skills, the results obtained are proportional to the amount of effort invested.

Here are some ways to work on developing mindfulness:

- **“Be a Witness to Your Own Mind.”** Make a habit of ‘checking in’ and witnessing the thoughts that pop up throughout your day. Stop and notice that you are thinking before you act. Remember, don’t believe everything you think! If you recognize that your thoughts are not peaceful - stop, look at the thought like a witness and pause. Train your mind to see what kind of thoughts lead to different kinds of actions. The more you do this, the more you will realize the cause and effect reality of what happens when you impulsively act on your thoughts. Thoughtfulness will begin to replace reactivity.
- **“Remember to Pause.”** An example of “pausing” may be an intense conversation. Stop, take a deep breath, and focus on the present moment. These ordinary ‘gaps’ will help grow your discipline and will help you relax in the moment.
- **“Notice Body Tension.”** Develop a habit to stop several times a day and check for physical tension. Scan your body for tense areas. Silently tell the tense muscle to relax. Take a few deep breaths as you do this.
- **“Grow Everyday Awareness.”** During the day, notice how you eat food, how fast or slow you walk, how fast you talk, how you hold your body, etc. Every time you bring your attention to what you are doing in the present moment, your mindfulness and awareness will grow.



MOVEMENT MEDITATION

BENEFITS OF MOVEMENT MEDITATION

The Buddha said there are four positions for meditation: sitting, standing, walking and lying down. In other words, any position or activity is an opportunity to practice mindfulness. In our prison sanghas, we often do qigong, yoga or walking meditation together. Movement prior to sitting meditation has many benefits. Here are a few you might keep in mind:

- It is sometimes much easier, especially when you are just starting a meditation practice, to be mindful of large movements rather than the smaller more subtle movement of the breath. Qigong, yoga and walking are great opportunities to practice staying aware of just movement without going into the past or the future. The body can only stay in the present!
- Movement brings calmness and quietude to the body AND to the mind. The body and mind are intimately connected and when our body is calm, the mind follows.
- Our bodies were built to move. In our Western culture, we ignore the needs of our bodies to the detriment of our health. Movement brings a sense of well-being and appreciation of the body's ability to support our efforts.

WALKING MEDITATION

Walking meditation is a traditional method for practicing mindfulness while moving. During walking meditation — focus on movement of the feet. When you notice you are lost in thought, simply bring your attention back to your feet and their movement. You don't need to look at your feet— simply be aware of how your feet feel one step at a time as they lift and move through the air. Heel, sole, toe, heel, sole, toe. In particular, pay attention to the action of the foot touching the ground, and the sensations of contact with the earth. Experience each step as it happens. Keep your posture upright, alert, and relaxed. Keep your eyes open, cast down, and slightly ahead. Experiment with how fast to walk. Find the pace where you feel most present and aware. You can do this in a way that does not draw attention to you. No one will know that you are meditating.



WHO WAS THE BUDDHA?



The Buddha was born a prince in Lumbini, Nepal in the foothills of the Himalayas. The date of his birth is approximately 480 BCE. He was a member of the Sakya clan, one of many clans located in northern India (now Nepal.) His father, Suddhodana, was the tribal chief of the clan. His mother was named Maya. Maya died shortly after the Buddha's birth.

He was given the name Siddhartha Gautama. His father assumed that he would follow in succession as the Sakya tribal chief. An astrologer predicted that Siddhartha would become either the chief of the Sakya clan or a spiritual seeker who would one day leave his father's kingdom. We are told that he was a very handsome, athletic and charismatic

person and his father did all he could to keep Siddhartha happy and satisfied. His father and step-mother raised him in a state of luxury, and kept all disturbing elements of life away from him, in the hopes that he would become satisfied with all the fine things and pleasure provided to him. It was not to be.

At the age of 16, as was the custom in India, he was married to his wife Yasodhara. Yet, even with everything that a human could possibly want, he felt a spiritual yearning that the luxurious life he lived did not satisfy. At 29, shortly after the birth of his son, he took a pivotal journey outside the tribal affluence to which he was accustomed. He encountered what are called the "Four Messengers." He saw an old, frail man; an emaciated man suffering from an advanced disease; and a grieving family carrying the corpse of one of their own to a cremation site. According to the legend, these sights — which foretell what is in store for all of us — pained him deeply. He then saw a religious, reclusive mendicant who appeared calm and serene. These four "messengers" motivated

him to follow the path of a wandering mendicant and find a spiritual solution to the problems brought about by being born as a human. He left his family and privileged lifestyle to pursue a life of homelessness.

His search for truth led to seven years of practice with various teachers who taught a variety of methods for “transcending the body.” They believed this was the method which took us beyond human suffering. These methods brought relief for awhile, but did not bring permanent happiness. Siddhartha determined that he would sit and meditate for as long as it took to realize complete freedom from greed, aversion and delusion — the three poisons that make life so difficult. One night In 445 BCE, at the age of 35, he was seated underneath a large tree — later known as the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya India. At long last, he saw the path that should be followed, and went beyond suffering. He achieved Nirvana. He called this path the Four Noble Truths. Siddhartha Gautama became “The Buddha”, which means “Awakened One.”

The Buddha initially could not decide whether to teach the “Dharma” (Truth) to the people living in his time. He knew it was “going against the stream” of how people live their lives and he thought very few would understand his discovery. His Middle Way went against the prevailing attitude towards life which often encouraged gratifying all sense desires and denying the impermanence of all phenomena. Fortunately, he determined that there were some people who had “just a little bit of dust in their eyes” and would understand his profound insights. He taught that an “unconditioned” happiness could be achieved by following the steps he laid out. Thousands of people followed him and practiced his teachings and became “enlightened” which means to “wake up.” After forty-five years of teaching, the Buddha died in a small town named Kusinagara, at the age of 80. His final words were: “Be a lamp unto yourselves. Strive with diligence.”

The Buddha was not a god and did not rely on a god. He said that he was “awake” and what he accomplished could be achieved by anyone who was sincere and resolute in his or her practice. We have all had moments of clarity in our lives when for a moment — perhaps longer — we were “free.” The Buddha’s teachings expand on these experiences and with mindful practice, we become permanently “free” and leave all suffering behind.



THE BUDDHA'S WORDS ON KINDNESS (METTA SUTTRA)

This is what should be done by one who is skilled in goodness,
and who knows the path of peace.

Let them be able and upright, straightforward and gentle in speech,
humble and not conceited, contented and easily satisfied.

Unburdened with duties and frugal in their ways,
peaceful and calm, and wise and skillful.

Not proud and demanding in nature.

Let them not do the slightest thing that the wise would later reprove.

Wishing in gladness and in safety, may all beings be at ease.

Whatever living beings there may be, whether they are
weak or strong, omitting none.

The great or the mighty, medium, short or small, the seen and the unseen,
those living near and far away, those born and to-be-born —
May all beings be at ease!

Let none deceive another, or despise any being in any state.

Let none through anger or ill-will wish harm upon another.

Even as a mother protects with her life her child, her only child,
so with a boundless heart should one cherish all living beings —
radiating kindness over the entire world.

Spreading upwards to the skies, and
downwards to the depths, outwards and unbounded,

Freed from hatred and ill-will.

Whether standing or walking, seated or lying down,
free from drowsiness,— one should sustain this recollection.

This is said to be the sublime abiding.

By not holding to fixed views, the pure-hearted one,
having clarity of vision, being freed from all sense desires,
Is not born again into this world.



Q/A ABOUT BUDDHISM

IS BUDDHISM A RELIGION?

The Buddha developed a method for the alleviation of suffering, based on scientific principles and ultimate truths that we can know for ourselves. These principles, truths, and the practices that bring our lives into harmony with these truths is called the Dharma. For Buddhists the Dharma is their religion because it provides ultimate meaning, purpose, and guidance for the way they live their lives.

DO BUDDHISTS BELIEVE IN GOD? OR A BUNCH OF GODS?

The Buddha did not address the concept of god, leaving that reality to each individual to define for him or herself. His concern was the elimination of suffering in this lifetime.

WAS THE BUDDHA A REAL PERSON? IS HE A GOD?

The historical Buddha was named Siddhartha Gautama. He was not a god. He taught that what he achieved could be achieved by any sincere practitioner.

I AM A (CHRISTIAN, MUSLIM, ETC). I THINK IT MAY BE WRONG FOR ME TO COME HERE. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

People of all faiths and of no faith, can be found at Buddhist services and retreats. All are welcome. Buddhism is not concerned with converting people to Buddhism. Rather, Buddhism's primary purpose is to alleviate suffering, both in oneself and in our social relationships. If no suffering is being caused, Buddhism has no issue with what religion people belong to or what religious beliefs they hold.

WHAT DO BUDDHISTS THINK OF JESUS? MOHAMMED?

Buddhists have reverence for all beings who follow a path of wisdom and compassion. The core teachings of Jesus and Mohammed emphasize these qualities.

DO BUDDHISTS BELIEVE IN HEAVEN? HELL?

Heaven and hell in Buddhist philosophy are not the same places as envisioned in Christianity. Most Buddhists believe both are a state of mind. Either of these can be experienced and/or alleviated in this lifetime.

DO BUDDHISTS BELIEVE IF YOU ARE BAD OR HAVE BAD KHARMA, YOU WILL BE REBORN A WORM OR A FLY?

Karma is simply the law of cause and effect. Rebirth as a theory is a result of past karma. For a person to be born as a human in this lifetime is a result of good karma in the past. Depending on what one does with this opportunity of human life causes the creation of helpful or harmful karma.

ARE BUDDHISTS VEGETARIANS?

The Buddha's first precept states, "Do not kill or harm living beings." Many Buddhists interpret that as following a vegetarian lifestyle. Others do not. In some cultures, such as Tibet, following a vegetarian lifestyle is impossible.

DO BUDDHISTS HAVE/DEVELOP PSYCHIC POWERS? IF I MEDITATE ENOUGH WILL I DEVELOP PSYCHIC POWERS?

To become obsessed with psychic powers creates an attitude that keeps a person in a state of suffering. Buddhist teachers discourage practitioners from any pursuit of unusual powers. When a person is truly liberated such a pursuit is neither desired nor needed.



FAMOUS QUOTATIONS FROM THE BUDDHA

“Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumored by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books. Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it.”

~ Kalama Sutra

“We are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think.
When the mind is pure, joy follows like a shadow that never leaves.”

~ The Dhammapada

“As a solid rock is not shaken by the wind, even so the wise
are not ruffled by praise and blame.”

~ The Dhammapada

Conquer anger by non-anger. Conquer evil by good.
Conquer miserliness by liberality. Conquer a liar by truthfulness.

~ The Dhammapada

Never indeed is hatred stilled by hatred;
it will only be stilled by non-hatred — this is an eternal law.

~ Kakacupama Sutta

I exhort you: All compounded things are subject to vanish.
Strive with earnestness!”

~ Paranibbana Sutta

