

2003
Jerry Braza,
Dharma teacher

Oregon Sangha's Order of Interbeing Aspirant Training

"The aim of the Order is to actualize Buddhism by studying, experimenting with, and applying Buddhism in modern life."

"The Order of Interbeing (Tiep Hien) was formed by Thich Nhat Hanh in the mid-1960's, at a time when the Vietnam War was escalating and the teachings of the Buddha were desperately needed to combat the hatred, violence, and divisiveness enveloping his country. The word *tiiep* means "being in touch with" and "continuing." *Hein* means "realizing" and "making it here and now." (Hanh, *Interbeing*). From its inception, the Order was composed of all four membership categories of the original Buddhist community - monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. Members of the Order of Interbeing vow to study, practice, and observe the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and to provide leadership in sangha building. Order of Interbeing lay and monastic members embody the practice of mindfulness in daily life and relationships, helping to awaken bodhicitta (the mind of love) in ourselves and others. Our teacher Thich Nhat Hanh (Thay) says, "It is easier to become an Order member than to be one."

The following information is intended to support and guide your aspiration to become a member of the Order of Interbeing. Please read the book *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism* by Thich Nhat Hanh, in particular the Charter of the Order of Interbeing (pp. 105-113), as well as the articles from the Mindfulness Bell #21, April 1998 issue entitled "Order of Interbeing Training and Mentoring".

Guidelines:

- Be involved in a local Sangha and demonstrate leadership.
- Individuals should have *formally* received the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) and the Five Mindfulness Trainings and have practiced these with a sangha, for at least one year.
- Have a desire to deepen practice through making a commitment to study, practice and observe the 14 Mindfulness Trainings.
- Attend at least one retreat taught by Thich Nhat Hanh and ideally spend some time at Plum Village, Deer Park, or Green Mountain. In addition, attend retreats and Days of Mindfulness led by other Dharma teachers in Thay's lineage.

Aspirant Training and Mentoring:

- The process to become a member of the core community of the OIB begins with expressing this interest in a letter of aspiration written to Thay with copies sent to Dharma teacher (Jerry Braza) and mentors (OIB member or other Dharma teacher). Keep a copy for your own file.
- Find at least one Order member who will agree to be your mentor. Having more than one mentor is recommended. Having several practice partners comes from the first chapter of *Old Path White Clouds*, in which there is a description of elder Sangha members teaching newer practitioners in small groups.

- The minimum training period is one year from the date of the aspirant letter. Training and mentoring is designed to nourish a readiness, a "ripeness" in deepening practice. The training generally involves: study, ceremony leadership, sangha leadership, community building skills, and deepening a stable daily mindfulness practice. You are encouraged to attend monthly sessions to review practice and practices, and recite the 14 Mindfulness Trainings with the Oregon Core Community and other aspirants.
- It is advised that your commitment be made at a periodic aspirant training ceremony which will typically be held at an Oregon OIB retreat in December or January of each year. This is an opportunity to publicly announce your aspirancy and to receive the support of the Oregon OIB.
- "When the aspirant, Dharma teacher, and mentor(s) agree that the aspirant is ready (a minimum of a year), the aspirant prepares a packet of information to send to Plum Village. This packet includes an application form, a letter to Thay, letters of support recommending ordination from Dharma Teacher Jerry Braza, OI mentors, and the sangha. The letter to Thay is a request to receive the 14 Mindfulness trainings in a formal ordination ceremony. This letter is a love letter...He wants to know where you live, what Sangha you practice with, how you've prepared, why he's your teacher and why now. Include a brief history of your spiritual journey, practice, and desire to provide leadership in the future. The letters of recommendation should indicate how the aspirant is deeply engaged in active, daily practice that will allow him or her to achieve increasing stability, happiness, and transformation." The person should keep copies of all written materials sent in the packet, and bring them to the ordination in case of a mix up as well.

Being a Member of the Order of Interbeing:

The aim of the Order of Interbeing is to actualize Buddhism by studying, experimenting with, and applying Buddhism in our daily lives. It has as its base the spirit of nonattachment from view, direct experience of reality, teachings reflecting the needs of people, and practical means to make the teachings accessible. Thay and the Plum Village sangha have defined expectations of being an Order member:

1. You will vow to study, practice and observe the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings.
2. You will renew your vow by repeating the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings on a bi-monthly basis.
3. You will agree to observe 60 days of mindfulness a year.
4. You will be active in a sangha by attending regularly and being active in sangha leadership.

Members are encouraged to contribute \$50 per year (\$75 a couple) to the Community of Mindful Living in Berkeley, CA. and subscribe to the Mindfulness Bell.

Developed by Deb Bassett, Jerry Braza, Shelia Canal, Barbara Casey, Nancy Nina, Robert Sorrell, and Mary Zinkin (Core Members of the OIB Oregon) on July 26, 2003.

for additional information contact: Jerry Braza

jbrazai@wvi.com

503-391-1284

in California

Lyn Fine