

## **WHAT TO BRING TO THE CHRISTINE CENTER AND EXPECT AT A MADISON VIPASSANA, INC. RETREAT:**

Location: Directions to the Christine Center, Madison, WI, are available on their website at <http://christinecenter.org/directions.html>

### **What to Bring:**

Clothing: Bring loose fitting, comfortable clothing for sitting, warm outer wear for outdoor walking, and you may want a blanket to put over your shoulders or on your lap while meditating.

Essentials: You should bring an alarm clock. **a flashlight**, shampoo, toothbrush, etc., towels and bed linen will be provided. Please avoid the use of perfumes or any strong smelling soaps or cosmetics as some people may be allergic to such things.

Meditation cushion, zabuton or blanket, or bench. Chairs will be available for those not wishing to sit on the floor.

**Arrival:** Please try to arrive to register and settle in between 4:30 and 5:30 P.M. Each participant will have a double or triple room. The rooms are not air conditioned. The Christine Center is a smoke free facility. If you must smoke, please use the areas designated by the Center.

**Orientation:** There will be a brief orientation period at 6:15 PM for those who are attending their first vipassana retreat. People attending a retreat for the first time sometimes find themselves uncomfortable with the silent format and the lack of interchange with the other retreatants. If this is your first retreat you may find the orientation beneficial, giving you a chance to talk about what to expect with someone who has some retreat experience.

**Questions:** Prior to the retreat call Julie, 608-231-1158; during the retreat talk to the retreat manager.

**Retreat schedule:** The schedule of retreat activities will be posted and will involve meditation instruction, 45 minute periods of sitting meditation alternating with periods of walking meditation, talks by the teacher and interviews with the teacher. We ask that you follow the schedule as close as possible to get the maximum benefit from the retreat. There is usually a period of rest after each meal and at tea in the evening. You are free to use this time to shower, sleep, exercise or continue sitting practice.

**Yogi jobs:** Meditators who wish to do so may spend time each day doing some assigned job to complete during a specified work period, e.g. chopping vegetables, washing dishes, sweeping the floor, cleaning. Jobs will be assigned at the beginning of the retreat. Yogi jobs are in silence with mindful attention.

**Noble Silence:** In keeping with Buddhist traditions, the retreat will be held in silence, except where it is absolutely necessary to speak. Please avoid eye contact or other forms of non-verbal communication. This will help minimize distractions so that each person can conserve energy for the work of meditation. As a part of noble silence we also suggest that you refrain from reading, writing and the use of any other media during the retreat. Please plan not to make or receive phone calls during the retreat except for emergencies. There will be a bulletin board for necessary communication with the teacher or the retreat managers. Also please remember to turn off alarms on electronic watches.

**Sitting:** Please remove your shoes before entering the meditation hall. Please be on time for group sittings and stay for the entire period. Please do not bring food or drink into the meditation hall.

**Interviews:** Interviews with the teacher will be scheduled during the retreat. These will be group interviews. There may be a limited amount of time scheduled for individual interviews, depending on the

number of people who attend the retreat. These interviews will provide participants with opportunity to ask questions, obtain guidance, support and clarification regarding the meditation process. Times will be posted on the bulletin board.

**Meals:** All meals will be vegetarian. A light dinner will be served on the first day for those requesting one. Please let the registrar know if you plan to arrive in time for the evening meal on the first day. Breakfast and a main meal will be served on the final day. Silence will be ended before the meal on the final day so that people will have an opportunity to meet and share experiences during the lunch period.

**Eight Training Precepts:** We ask that you observe the tradition and the spirit of the Five Training Precepts during the time of the retreat. It is a way of maintaining a purity of body, speech and mind.

Non-harming: Honoring and respecting all sentient beings (including insects), and not acting out of hatred or aversion in such a way as to cause harm to any living being.

Non-stealing: not taking that which is not freely given, respecting the property of all beings.

Refraining from false speech: Speaking only what is true and useful, speaking wisely, responsibly, and appropriately. In the context of this retreat this involves keeping noble silence.

Refraining from sexual activity: This means refraining from all sexual activity.

Refraining from the use of intoxicants and drugs which lead to carelessness: Abstaining from the use of alcohol or other non-prescription drugs.

**Dana:** In the Pali language, which was spoken at the time of the Buddha, *dana* means “generosity” or “gift giving”. It is intrinsic to the 2500 year Buddhist tradition that the teachings are considered priceless and are thus offered freely by the teacher as a form of *dana*. The early teachers, who were monks or nuns received no payment for their instruction. In turn, the lay community saw to it that the basic needs of food clothing and shelter were provided for the teachers.

Beyond this practical dimension, *dana* also plays a crucial role in spiritual life. It is the first of the ten *paramis* or qualities of character to be perfected in many lifetimes. When the Buddha would give a discourse to lay people he would almost always begin with the importance of generosity.

The act of giving itself is of immeasurable benefit to the giver, for it opens the heart, diminishing one’s self-absorption, and places value on the well-being of others. The simple gesture of offering a flower, a kind thought or a simple meal is in itself a sincere form of practice. The size or value of the gift is not important.

Continuing this tradition today, the teachers do not ask for any payment for leading a retreat. They are supported by voluntary contributions from the retreat participants. The fee you paid for this retreat covers the cost of the room, meals, use of the facility, organizational costs, and the teacher’s transportation, room and meals. At the end of the retreat there will be an opportunity to offer *dana* to the teacher. There is no suggested amount, each person gives what is comfortable. Please remember that as we depend on the teachers they depend on us.

**May you have a good retreat.**