

FRIENDS NIGHT AT NAGALOKA -- Wednesdays, 6:45-8 pm, via Zoom

“Friends Night” is an opportunity for everyone – *from new meditators to long-time Buddhists* – to enjoy an evening of meditation and discussion of Buddhist teachings. We meet online every Wednesday using ZOOM video-conferencing. Links can be found on our website or in our weekly e-newsletter.

WHAT IS NAGALOKA/TRIRATNA? The Nagaloka Buddhist Center in Portland, Maine supports the study and practice of meditation as well as the Buddhist ideals of mindfulness, compassion, generosity, and wisdom. Nagaloka is one of many Centers around the world affiliated with the Triratna Buddhist Order, which was founded in 1967 by Sangharakshita so contemporary Westerners could benefit from teachings common to all Buddhist schools.

There is no expectation that people attending Nagaloka will be Buddhists or agree with all Buddhist teachings. Friends Night is an opportunity to learn and test out Buddhist practices in the light of one’s own experience, and in an atmosphere of friendly, encouraging, open communication.

WHAT HAPPENS AT FRIENDS NIGHT? An experienced Buddhist practitioner leads the following activities.

- Attendees introduce themselves, perhaps sharing what is on their minds.
- A few minutes of chanting is next. Newcomers can enjoy the sound or join in by getting the words from dharmasuri@gmail.com.¹ Our chanting, called “saluting the shrine” and “reciting Buddhist refuges and ethical precepts,” can seem religious or foreign to newcomers, but it is simply a technique to prepare for meditation by focusing our attention on the here-and-now and reminding ourselves of our goals for the evening. Specifically, we are honoring the Buddha (not as a god, but as an actual human being we aspire to be like), the Dharma (the Buddha’s teachings on how to live ethically and alleviate suffering for ourselves and others), and the Sangha (the supportive community of practitioners helping us grow and develop). We chant in Pali and Sanskrit (the languages of the Buddha’s homeland) because we are an international community with non-English speaking members.
- Next comes 20 minutes of lightly-guided meditation, in one of two formats:
 1. Mindfulness-of-Breathing mediation calms the body and stills the mind. The facilitator initially instructs you to count your exhales, then to count your inhales, and eventually to drop the counting and focus on the bodily experience of breathing in and out.
 2. Loving-Kindness or *Metta Bhavana* mediation cultivates positive emotion. The facilitator initially instructs you to cultivate loving kindness for yourself (may I be well, may I be happy, may I grow and develop), and then to cultivate the same feelings for someone you like, then someone you don’t know well, then someone you find challenging, and then all beings.

New meditators can find full instructions at <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/text/what-meditation>.

DONATION (dana): Nagaloka is a non-profit funded by individual contributions. Suggested donation for Friends Night is \$5-\$10. "Give what you can; take what you need." Mail a check payable to Nagaloka, 1 Forest Ave., Portland, ME 04101 or send funds via PayPal to info@nagalokabuddhistcenter.com. Using PayPal’s “Giving” option eliminates fees so your full donation reaches Nagaloka (log into PayPal, click “more” instead of “send”, click “support a charity” or “donate to a cause,” then search for “Nagaloka” in Maine). Thank you!

¹ Chanted words also at

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rc=1&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiMnvHZyrngAhXDmXIEHfwmC34QFjACegQIFxAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fthebuddhistcentre.com%2Fsystem%2Ffiles%2Fgroups%2Ffiles%2Fthe_refuges_and_precepts_v2.pdf&usq=AOvVaw2SWNQNRJstY9kXM7KMkcj