

SERVING THE DHARMA CLASS AS MOKUGYO MASTER: A Step-by-Step Overview

General guidelines:

- Approach your service as mokugyo master with an open heart and calm mind. This is a practice of mindfulness for yourself and a gift of your mindfulness to others. It is not about performing beautifully or perfectly. It is an offering.
- Please practice the service before it is your turn to be mokugyo master. You can borrow a mokugyo (wooden bell) from the monastery, purchase one for your own use at home (Zen Mountain Monastery's online store has a small, reasonably priced one), or improvise with a can and a stick.
- Whenever you are not serving as mokugyo master or bellmaster, pay attention. We learn by paying attention to how others perform. This also will help acquaint you with the format of our service.
- When sounding the mokugyo, strike it strongly and precisely, but do not beat it.
- Sit up straight when playing the mokugyo, and put the instrument directly in front of you.
- Strike the mokugyo directly on the "soft spot" on top of the instrument. This gives the most pleasing and resonant sound.
- Make an effort to memorize the incense offering verse and the Three Refuges.

PROCEDURES FOR SERVICE

Opening meditation (9 a.m.)

1. INCENSE OFFERING

Bellmaster will say, "Please rise for the incense offering."

Mokugyo master approaches altar, picks up incense, lights it, bows to the Buddha, places incense in incense burner, then recites offering verse:

In gratitude, we offer this incense to all buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout space and time.

May it be fragrant as Earth herself, reflecting our careful efforts, our wholehearted awareness, and the fruit of understanding, slowly ripening.

May we and all beings be companions of buddhas and bodhisattvas.

May we awaken from forgetfulness and realize our true home.

Bow to the Buddha.

2. THREE REFUGES

Mokugyo master recites Three Refuges. After each refuge verse, the bellmaster rings the bell and everyone prostrates, then rises. Allow enough time between the verses to allow everyone to rise and be still. Don't rush!

I take refuge in the Buddha, the one who shows me the way in this life

I take refuge in the Dharma, the way of understanding and love

I take refuge in the Sangha, the community that lives in harmony and awareness

All bow a half-bow (from the waist).

3. SUTRA CHANTING

Wake the bell then sound it three times, stopping the last ring.

Mokugyo master begins. ("O" indicates inviting the bell, "X" indicates inviting the mokugyo.)

X XX
O
X
O
X
O
X XX X
O O [stop]

The mokugyo should be played at the same pace as a heartbeat. Faster, and people will not be able to catch their breath. Slower, and they will fall asleep!