



A LIFE HELD IN CARE

Buddhist Rites from
Birth to Remembrance

TI-RATANA DHAMMA
Ti-Ratana Buddhist Society

An inclusive household and community companion
First public edition · 28 September 2026



Contents

Choose a life event, festival or practical chapter. The optional scripts can be adapted for your household or community. Page numbers and headings below are clickable in supporting PDF readers.

1. A book for the whole of a life	5
2. Welcoming culture with discernment	7
3. Making the gathering hospitable	9
4. A simple form for many occasions	11
5. Refuge, precepts and words of goodwill	13
6. Before a child arrives	15
7. Welcoming and naming a child	17
8. Adoption, fostering and a household changing shape	19
9. Birthdays and anniversaries of being alive	21
10. Childhood, learning and coming of age	23
11. Names, identity and belonging	25
12. Friendship, single life and chosen family	27
13. Preparing for partnership and marriage	29
14. A ceremony of mutual commitment	31

15. Anniversaries and renewing promises	34
16. Separation, endings and making repair	36
17. Home, work, travel and new responsibilities	38
18. Reading the festival year	40
19. Wesak and remembering the Buddha	42
20. Uposatha, quiet days and renewed training	44
21. Rains residence, Pavāraṇā and Kathina	46
22. New Year, family culture and celebration	48
23. Ancestors, Qing Ming, Ullambana and Obon	50
24. Devotion across Buddhist traditions	52
25. Gratitude, mixed-faith families and shared tables	54
26. Illness, disability and receiving care	56
27. Pregnancy loss, stillbirth and the death of a child	58
28. Ageing, retirement and changing dependence	60
29. Preparing for death without surrendering the present	62
30. At the bedside	64
31. Immediately after a death	66
32. A funeral or memorial service	68

33. Ashes, graves, anniversaries and dedication	71
34. Grief and the months after the gathering	73
35. Animals within the circle of care	75
36. The host's practical workbook	77
37. Questions families often ask	79
38. A canonical reading of goodwill	82
39. Sources, scope and editorial notes	85

1. A book for the whole of a life

1.1

A life is marked by arrivals and departures: a child welcomed, a name spoken, a birthday shared, a promise made, an elder cared for, a body finally laid to rest. Buddhist practice can accompany these moments with attention, generosity and the wish that suffering may lessen. A ceremony gives that care a form which people can see, hear and remember.

1.2

This book offers a broad practical companion for households, friends and communities. It includes celebrations as well as losses, and people whose lives do not follow a conventional sequence of marriage, children and retirement. No one must complete these milestones to live a worthwhile Buddhist life. A quiet life of care may contain few ceremonies and much Dhamma.

1.3

Buddhist rites differ across countries, schools, families and temples. There is no single universal sequence of birth, marriage and funeral ceremonies. Here the ethical foundations are distinguished from inherited customs and from newly written ceremonies. The latter are optional contemporary forms, offered for adaptation; they are not words of the Buddha or an assertion of unanimous Buddhist practice.

1.4

The Three Jewels give this book its Buddhist orientation: the Buddha as awakened teacher; the Dhamma as teaching, practice and liberating truth; and the Saṅgha as the community of practice, with its meaning understood in context. Generosity, ethical conduct and cultivation of the mind give ceremony its continuing life. Beautiful words should lead towards truthful speech, care for others and less clinging.

1.5

Read the chapter you need today. For a gathering, choose one short reading, one meaningful action and a clear ending. A family may use English or another language it understands. A monastic or other recognised teacher may offer guidance according to their tradition. This book neither ordains officiants nor promises that a particular temple provides every ceremony described.

KP5 · Blessings

AN8.26 · With Jīvaka

SN47.19 · At Sedaka

The Buddhist Society · Buddhist Festivals & Ceremonies

2. Welcoming culture with discernment

2.1

A custom can carry memory, affection, artistic skill and connection to ancestors. It need not appear in an ancient text to have value. Equally, being old, familiar or expensive does not by itself make a practice beneficial. The question is what we are doing, why we are doing it, and what follows from it.

2.2

In AN 8.53, the Buddha gives Gotamī criteria pointing towards dispassion, release, contentment, energy and being unburdensome. MN 61 teaches reflection on whether an action harms oneself, another or both. These are foundations for discernment, not a licence to declare an entire culture acceptable or unacceptable in one sentence.

2.3

When considering a custom, ask: Does it involve killing, coercion, exploitation or humiliation? Does it depend on deception or a promised outcome no one can guarantee? Does it encourage generosity, gratitude and wise attention, or deepen fear and financial pressure? Can its participants understand and freely choose their part? What would a trusted, knowledgeable teacher say about its meaning within that tradition?

2.4

Where possible, preserve the kind intention and change a harmful method. Honour an ancestor through remembrance and generosity without requiring frightened relatives to purchase costly objects. Celebrate new life without demanding a particular sex or assigning spiritual inferiority to a child. A day chosen for family convenience can be meaningful without a claim that other dates bring disaster.

2.5

Buddhist traditions themselves differ about cosmology, devotional forms and ritual efficacy. Describe a particular teaching as belonging to its tradition rather than pretending all Buddhists interpret it alike. Disagreement can be handled with care. This book's ethical approach does not require ridicule of those who practise differently.

2.6

Ritual can support recollection and community. Its repetition is not a substitute for ethical action or understanding. The commitment after a ceremony matters: a promise kept, a debt honestly addressed, a person protected, a habit changed. Intention deserves attention, and the effects of action deserve attention too.

AN8.53 · Brief Advice to Gotamī

AN3.65 · With the Kālāmas of Kesamutta

MN61 · Advice to Rāhula at Ambalaṭṭhika

AN6.63 · Penetrative

3. Making the gathering hospitable

3.1

The default language in the new scripts is gender neutral: person, child, parent, caregiver, partner, elder and loved one. Use each person's own name, pronouns and family terms. Someone may prefer mother, father, wife or husband; inclusion leaves room for these words without requiring them of everyone. Do not disclose a person's identity, adoption history, health or relationship without permission.

3.2

The ceremonies are written to welcome people across gender identities and sexual orientations, including same-gender couples. This is an explicit contemporary editorial choice grounded in the wish to offer care without humiliation. It does not claim that all Buddhist institutions share one position on relationships or offer identical services. Confirm a proposed officiant's participation before announcing it.

3.3

Make places for single adults, childfree people, adoptive and foster families, blended households, bereaved partners, chosen family and people estranged from relatives. A person need not explain why a family member is absent. Gratitude towards parents need not require unsafe contact or deny a history of harm.

3.4

Offer chairs and step-free access where possible. Give the order of service in advance, with large-print or accessible digital text. Allow people to keep their eyes open, move, use ear protection, leave briefly or participate without speech. Quiet attention is participation. Standing, kneeling, eye contact, touching and public speaking should be invitations, not tests of respect.

3.5

Ask about food allergies and dietary requirements. Make smoke-free offerings available; avoid strong fragrance and unexpected loud sounds. Obtain consent for photographs and recordings, especially involving children, grief or personal vows. A small, comfortable gathering can serve people better than a performance which exhausts them.

3.6

Guests of another faith or none may listen respectfully without reciting Buddhist refuge or making a declaration they do not hold. Explain each action briefly. Consent is most convincing when declining an action has no social penalty.

KP9 · The Discourse on Love

DN31 · Advice to Sigālaka

4. A simple form for many occasions

4.1

OPTIONAL CONTEMPORARY CEREMONY · Around ten to twenty minutes. A lay host may lead this household form. When inviting clergy, agree the programme with them. The timings are suggestions, not religious requirements.

4.2

Prepare a clean, accessible space and water for guests. A Buddha image, flowers or a safe light may be used, but this ceremony does not depend on obtaining them. Choose the names to be spoken, the reading, and one act of generosity or practical care. Agree who will lead and who will support anyone needing a break.

4.3

HOST: We gather to mark this moment with care. Each of us may take part in the way that is comfortable and sincere. Let us settle for a few quiet moments and remember the intention to avoid harm, cultivate goodness and meet life with understanding.

4.4

Pause. Those who wish may pay respect to the Three Jewels and use the refuge and precept material in Chapter 5. Read a passage appropriate to the occasion. Chapter 38 supplies a complete goodwill reading; the companion prayer volume supplies longer recitations. Introduce a text by name rather than attributing a newly written blessing to the Buddha.

4.5

Invite the relevant promise, remembrance or blessing from the following chapters. Complete a modest action: offer a meal, thank a caregiver, exchange vows, share a memory, or name a concrete way to help. If there is no material gift, an honest commitment of time is enough.

4.6

HOST: May the good intention of this gathering continue in what we do. May those we have remembered be held in kindness. May we leave with greater willingness to listen, protect and help.

4.7

Close clearly. Tell guests what follows, where refreshments are and whom to approach for assistance. The host should not turn a vulnerable moment into a surprise fundraising appeal or request for public testimony.

[KP5 · Blessings](#)

[KP9 · The Discourse on Love](#)

[Companion narrative and prayer volume](#)

5. Refuge, precepts and words of goodwill

5.1

Refuge is a personal religious commitment. It should not be treated as an admission fee to a family celebration. Children and visitors can listen without being asked to declare what they do not yet understand. Formal refuge, a Dhamma name, bodhisattva vows and monastic ordination have different meanings and procedures; one short household ceremony does not confer them all.

5.2

TRADITIONAL PĀLI REFUGE FORMULA · One round, with a plain English rendering prepared for this edition. Many communities recite three rounds. For the full source text and established recitation order, use Khuddakapāṭha 1 or the companion prayer volume.

5.3

Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.
Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.
Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.

5.4

I go to the Buddha for refuge.
I go to the Dhamma for refuge.
I go to the Saṅgha for refuge.

5.5

The five lay precepts are training in refraining from taking life, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, false speech and intoxicants associated with heedlessness. They are not the eight-precept observance or the monastic discipline. For this book's contemporary application, care in relationships includes consent, honesty, fidelity to freely made commitments and freedom from coercion. That application is not presented as a verbatim ancient formulation.

5.6

OPTIONAL ENGLISH UNDERTAKING · I undertake to protect life; to respect what has not been given; to act responsibly and without exploitation in intimate relationships; to speak truthfully; and to refrain from intoxicants that lead to heedlessness. When I fall short, may I acknowledge the harm, make appropriate repair and renew the training.

5.7

ORIGINAL GOODWILL VERSE

May beings be safe from deliberate harm.

May those in distress receive care.

May those who are glad share their gladness.

May we meet one another with patience.

May wisdom guide the good we wish to do.

KP1 · The Three Refuges

AN8.26 · With Jīvaka

AN8.39 · Overflowing Merit

KP9 · The Discourse on Love

6. Before a child arrives

6.1

Pregnancy, preparations for adoption, fostering and other routes into caregiving can bring hope alongside uncertainty. A blessing should welcome the people involved without predicting a child's health, personality or future. Avoid comparisons about whose route to parenthood is more natural, complete or worthy. No ceremony can promise an uncomplicated pregnancy or replace professional care.

6.2

Ask the expectant parent or caregivers what they would actually welcome: a short visit, a meal, help with transport or a quiet day without guests. Do not organise a surprise gathering or disclose pregnancy news without consent. Relatives' joy should leave room for the privacy and wishes of the people most affected.

6.3

OPTIONAL GATHERING · Use the opening in Chapter 4, then invite each supporter to name one achievable act of help. Rather than predicting a glorious future, make commitments within your own control. A person can promise to cook a meal or listen without judgement; they cannot promise that suffering will never occur.

6.4

HOST: We welcome the care already being given. May the child, the parent and all who carry responsibility be supported. May uncertainty be met with patience, and may help arrive in forms that are truly helpful.

6.5

SUPPORTERS: We will ask before advising, listen before assuming, and share the work where we can. May this household receive time to rest as well as reasons to rejoice.

6.6

When pregnancy or a planned placement ends, do not reuse the celebration script as though nothing changed. Ask how the person names the experience, respect their privacy, and turn to the loss chapter if they wish. Their grief does not need to defend itself to the gathering.

KP9 · The Discourse on Love

DN31 · Advice to Sigālaka

7. Welcoming and naming a child

7.1

A welcome can be held when the child and caregivers are ready. This book prescribes no compulsory seventh, thirtieth or hundredth day, no auspicious hour, and no fee. Families may retain a meaningful cultural date where it does not create harm or pressure. The welcome expresses adults' responsibilities; it does not make a child promise lifelong belief.

7.2

Prepare the child's agreed name and pronunciation. Ask who may hold or approach the child. Keep the gathering short and comfortable. A flower, a bowl of water or an unlit symbolic lamp can represent care without being placed on the child. Do not require incense, handling, loud chanting or substances to be given to the child.

7.3

HOST: We welcome [name] into a circle of care. This child is a person to be known, not a future to be controlled. May we provide safety, nourishment, patience and room to grow.

7.4

CAREGIVERS: We will try to protect you from harm, listen as you learn to speak for yourself, and teach through example as well as words. We will seek help when we need it. Your worth will not depend on fulfilling our ambitions.

7.5

SUPPORTERS: May this family receive companionship and practical help. May our affection respect the child's needs and the caregivers' boundaries.

7.6

Read a short passage of goodwill and close. If a Dhamma name is offered by a teacher, explain its significance and distinguish it from a civil name. Registration and other formal responsibilities are separate processes. Photographs and public announcements should follow the caregivers' consent and the child's future privacy interests.

[KP9 · The Discourse on Love](#)

[MN61 · Advice to Rāhula at Ambalaṭṭhika](#)

8. Adoption, fostering and a household changing shape

8.1

Belonging grows through dependable care. A welcome for an adopted child, foster child, stepchild or newly joined household should not require the child to perform gratitude. Previous family connections and losses can remain meaningful. Celebration and grief may be present together, and the child need not choose one feeling for everyone else's comfort.

8.2

Discuss the ceremony with the people involved, in language the child can understand. Ask which names, family terms and memories they want included. Avoid public retelling of abandonment, trauma or legal history. A photograph, keepsake or connection with an earlier caregiver may be honoured privately if the child wishes and the circumstances permit.

8.3

HOST: Today we recognise a household taking new shape. We honour the lives and relationships that have brought each person here, including those we do not speak about publicly. May this home make room for truth, patience and the time belonging may take.

8.4

CAREGIVERS: We offer care without asking you to erase your history. We will learn what helps you feel safe. We will listen when your experience differs from our expectations, and seek support when the work is difficult.

8.5

A foster placement may be temporary, uncertain or part of a return to another household. Promise responsible care in the present rather than permanence you cannot guarantee. A celebration can mark welcome without declaring a legal or emotional outcome beyond the family's control.

8.6

End with an ordinary shared activity chosen with the child: a meal, a walk, making a small place for their belongings. The everyday welcome after the guests leave is the more enduring part of the rite.

[DN31 · Advice to Sigālaka](#)

[KP9 · The Discourse on Love](#)

9. Birthdays and anniversaries of being alive

9.1

A birthday can hold gratitude for life, remembrance of care received, and a realistic intention for the coming year. Joy belongs here. Reflection on impermanence need not turn the occasion into a lecture about decline. Ask whether the person wants a gathering; some prefer privacy, especially during illness or bereavement.

9.2

A family may celebrate a Gregorian birthday, a lunar birthday or another culturally meaningful date. This edition assigns no superior spiritual value to one calendar. Gifts, cake, a shared meal, chanting and generosity can be combined thoughtfully. Avoid creating debt, compulsory donations or a competition in lavishness.

9.3

OPTIONAL ORDER · Welcome the person by their chosen name; invite one memory of kindness or growth; read a short goodwill passage; offer the blessing below; let the person name an intention if they wish; share food or complete a chosen act of giving.

9.4

ORIGINAL BIRTHDAY BLESSING

For the years already lived, may there be understanding.
 For the care received, may there be gratitude.
 For what has been difficult, may there be tenderness.
 For the days still possible, may there be wise intention.
 May your life have friendship, meaningful effort and rest.

9.5

PERSON CELEBRATING, OPTIONAL: In the coming year I hope to cultivate [quality or practice]. I will begin with [one realistic action]. I welcome encouragement without pressure to make my life resemble anyone else's.

9.6

Milestone birthdays can include thanks to teachers, friends and caregivers. Remember that not everyone has living or safe relationships with parents. The person may choose whom to acknowledge. A missed birthday or quiet celebration does not diminish the value of the life being marked.

[KP5 · Blessings](#)

[AN5.57 · Subjects for Regular Reviewing](#)

10. Childhood, learning and coming of age

10.1

School entry, graduation, a first job, a new responsibility or the transition into adulthood can become occasions to recognise growth. A child should not be promised success because a ceremony was performed. Praise effort, honesty, curiosity and kindness alongside achievement. A person who studies differently or needs support belongs fully in the celebration.

10.2

MN 61 presents the Buddha teaching Rāhula to examine actions before, during and after doing them, and to acknowledge harmful conduct. This offers a foundation for a coming-of-age rite centred on responsibility. The modern ceremony below is an application of that teaching, not an ancient initiation ritual.

10.3

HOST: We recognise the responsibilities you are learning to carry. Maturity includes the ability to ask questions, admit mistakes and seek help. No one becomes wise by pretending never to need another person.

10.4

YOUNG PERSON, OPTIONAL: I will try to consider how my actions affect myself and others. I will practise honesty, respect boundaries and seek help when I am uncertain. I hope to use what I learn in ways that reduce harm.

10.5

ADULT SUPPORTERS: We will offer guidance without humiliation. We will listen seriously, explain our decisions and allow appropriate room to learn. We will not use this ceremony to demand silence, obedience to harm or a predetermined career.

10.6

A gift may be a book, a letter or time with a trusted mentor. Let the young person choose whether to speak publicly. The ending can include a shared practical commitment: regular study support, a skill learned together, or an agreed way to ask for help.

MN61 · Advice to Rāhula at Ambalaṭṭhika

KP5 · Blessings

DN31 · Advice to Sigālaka

11. Names, identity and belonging

11.1

Sometimes the milestone is being known more truthfully: using a chosen name, sharing an identity, returning to community after exclusion, or finding words for an experience once hidden. This chapter offers an optional affirmation of care. No person must disclose a private identity or hold a ceremony to deserve respect.

11.2

Ask what can be said, who may attend, what can be recorded and whether any information must remain private. Do not describe a name or identity as a defect to be purified. Equally, do not make a person into a symbol for the group's generosity. Let their actual wishes shape the event.

11.3

HOST: We are here to listen and to recognise [name] with respect. May the words we use help this person live without unnecessary fear. May belonging be expressed through daily conduct, including when they are not in the room.

11.4

SUPPORTERS: We will use the name and terms you ask us to use. We will protect what you share in confidence. When we make a mistake, we will correct it without asking you to comfort us.

11.5

The person may speak, offer a reading or remain silent. A brief blessing and a meal may be enough. Where relationships are strained, participation must remain voluntary; a ceremony is not a demand for immediate reconciliation or a guarantee of safety.

11.6

This script is this edition's contemporary inclusive practice. Its presence does not imply that a named temple has adopted a particular policy or that doctrinal disagreements across Buddhist communities have disappeared.

[KP9 · The Discourse on Love](#)

[AN4.32 · Inclusion](#)

12. Friendship, single life and chosen family

12.1

Not every life includes partnership or children. Friendship, celibacy, service, study, creativity and care can form a rich household or a life lived alone. A book of rites should leave space for these lives without treating them as a waiting room for marriage.

12.2

A friendship or chosen-family gathering may mark years of companionship, a reunion or a commitment to mutual care. Agree what is being promised. Warm words should not disguise an unlimited obligation to provide money, housing or care beyond one's capacity.

12.3

HOST: We recognise the companionship that has helped these lives flourish. May affection become reliable attention, and may each person retain room to grow.

12.4

PARTICIPANTS: We will try to speak honestly and kindly, celebrate one another's good fortune, and offer help within our capacities. We will respect privacy and boundaries. When circumstances change, may we discuss them with care rather than disappear into assumption.

12.5

A person marking a season of single life may instead say: I honour the life I am living now. May I cultivate friendship, wisdom and worthwhile work without measuring my worth against another person's timetable.

12.6

Choose a practical expression: exchanging emergency contact information with consent, planning regular meals together, or thanking someone whose care has been steady. These actions do not by themselves establish legal authority for healthcare, inheritance or other decisions; obtain relevant advice separately when needed.

[SN45.2 · Half the Spiritual Life](#)

[AN4.32 · Inclusion](#)

[KP5 · Blessings](#)

13. Preparing for partnership and marriage

13.1

Before choosing flowers or readings, discuss the life the ceremony will recognise. What do the partners mean by commitment? How will they approach money, household work, caregiving, privacy, intimate boundaries, faith, children if wanted, and conflict? A beautiful service cannot answer these questions on their behalf.

13.2

AN 4.55 describes a wife and husband wishing to remain together and emphasises shared faith, ethical conduct, generosity and wisdom. DN 31 addresses reciprocal duties within the social categories of its time. This book draws contemporary, gender-neutral commitments from themes of care and responsibility. It does not silently rewrite those texts as though they used modern relationship terminology.

13.3

The optional script in Chapter 14 may be adapted for different-gender or same-gender partners. Either partner may use spouse, wife, husband or partner according to their preference. Both give the same quality of commitment. No participant is transferred as property or required to promise submission.

13.4

Discuss the programme with the proposed officiant and venue. Religious blessings and civil formalities are distinct. This book does not establish a marriage's legal status or assert recognition in any jurisdiction. Those seeking legal marriage should confirm current requirements with the relevant authority; a commitment blessing must not be advertised as achieving a legal status it does not confer.

13.5

In an interfaith couple, decide which declarations each person can sincerely make. A guest or partner may witness Buddhist refuge without reciting it. If including another tradition's prayer, ask its participants to select appropriate wording and identify it accurately. Respectful presence does not require a merged creed.

13.6

Avoid public vows made under family pressure. Agree what photographs may be shared and which relatives or friends will be acknowledged. An intimate ceremony, a large gathering and a private blessing can each express sincere commitment when freely chosen.

[AN4.55 · Equality \(1st\)](#)

[DN31 · Advice to Sigālaka](#)

14. A ceremony of mutual commitment

14.1

OPTIONAL CONTEMPORARY SCRIPT · Around twenty to thirty minutes. This is a religious or personal commitment ceremony, not a civil registration script. Agree the wording, participants and institutional arrangements in advance. Replace bracketed names only with the partners' agreed names.

14.2

HOST: We gather with [name] and [name] to witness promises freely made. May this commitment be sustained by care, truthful speech, generosity and wisdom. All present may participate sincerely or listen quietly.

14.3

After a pause, Buddhists who wish may pay respect to the Three Jewels. Read AN 4.55 in a credited translation or summarise its four qualities. Explain that the vows which follow are newly written mutual commitments. Each partner should hear and accept the wording before the ceremony.

14.4

HOST TO EACH PARTNER: Do you enter this commitment freely, and do you wish to make these promises to [name]?

14.5

EACH PARTNER: I do. I offer this commitment freely.

14.6

EACH PARTNER, IN TURN: I choose to share this part of life's journey with you. I will try to meet you with kindness and truth; to respect your body, conscience and boundaries; to honour the commitments we freely make; and to share responsibility fairly. I will seek to understand before I accuse, make repair when I cause harm, and welcome help when we need it. I will support your growth without claiming ownership of your life.

14.7

RINGS OR OTHER TOKENS, OPTIONAL: I offer this as a reminder of my intention. May its meaning be renewed through the care I show you.

14.8

HOST TO SUPPORTERS: Will you support this relationship with respect for both people, without encouraging secrecy, coercion or harm?

14.9

SUPPORTERS: We will offer friendship, honest counsel and practical help within our capacities. We will respect their privacy and listen when either person needs support.

14.10

ORIGINAL BLESSING

May affection be accompanied by understanding.

May disagreement leave room for respect.

May the shared home shelter both lives.

May generosity reach beyond its doors.

May these promises be remembered in ordinary hours.

14.11

HOST: We have witnessed these promises. May the goodwill expressed here continue in action. Let us share a moment of quiet and wish well-being to all who have helped these lives grow.

14.12

Close with a meal or another agreed celebration. A tea ceremony, flowers, cultural dress or family music may be included by consent. Adapt gestures of respect so neither partner is assigned a lesser place. No vow here obliges anyone to remain in danger or give up access to help.

[AN4.55 · Equality \(1st\)](#)

[DN31 · Advice to Sigālaka](#)

[KP9 · The Discourse on Love](#)

15. Anniversaries and renewing promises

15.1

An anniversary can celebrate what has endured while acknowledging what has changed. Partners need not repeat promises that no longer describe their lives. A renewal may recognise recovery after conflict, a new caregiving responsibility, a quieter stage of life or gratitude for everyday companionship.

15.2

Before a public gathering, speak privately about whether renewal is wanted. A ceremony should not be used to conceal unresolved harm or pressure someone into forgiveness. If both wish to proceed, choose a truthful memory, a quality to appreciate and one practical intention for the year ahead.

15.3

PARTNER: I am grateful for [specific care or shared experience]. I recognise that our lives and needs change. In this next season I hope to practise [quality], beginning with [action]. I will keep listening to what you tell me about your experience.

15.4

HOST: May gratitude help these partners see one another clearly. May their commitments grow in honesty as well as affection. May they receive support through the changes they cannot plan.

15.5

A private version can be a meal and a letter. If one partner has died, the anniversary may become remembrance rather than renewal; a surviving partner need not continue a public ritual or stop observing it to satisfy other people's expectations.

AN4.55 · Equality (1st)

16. Separation, endings and making repair

16.1

A relationship can end while the ethical work continues. There may be grief, relief, conflict or unfinished responsibilities. This optional reflection does not decide disputes or require the people involved to meet. Use separate gatherings where contact is unwelcome or unsafe.

16.2

Reconciliation, forgiveness and renewed access are different things. A harmed person is not required to offer any of them at a ceremony. An apology should identify conduct and appropriate repair, not demand reassurance. When legal, financial, safeguarding or care arrangements are involved, use qualified support rather than asking ritual to settle them.

16.3

PRIVATE REFLECTION: I acknowledge that this relationship has changed. May I face my responsibilities honestly, protect those who depend on me, and refrain from deliberate harm. May I learn without turning the whole of another person's life, or my own, into one verdict.

16.4

SUPPORTER: We are here to offer steadiness, not to force an account of every detail. What practical help would be useful now? What would you prefer us not to discuss with others?

16.5

A shared closing, only if freely wanted, may thank one another for what was good and state arrangements already agreed. Do not include children as witnesses to blame or ask them to decide loyalties. Their need for safety and dependable care continues beyond the ceremony.

MN61 · Advice to Rāhula at Ambalaṭṭhika

SN47.19 · At Sedaka

17. Home, work, travel and new responsibilities

17.1

Moving home, opening a business, beginning study, retiring or leaving for a journey can be marked with a brief blessing. Let the intention be responsible use of the opportunity. A ritual does not guarantee profit, prevent accidents or make an exploitative activity wholesome.

17.2

A home gathering can include tidying together, a reading, goodwill for neighbours and an agreed act of generosity. Offer hospitality within your means. If inviting monastics, ask about suitable timing, offerings and arrangements rather than assuming every tradition observes identical practices.

17.3

ORIGINAL HOME BLESSING: May this dwelling shelter truthful speech, considerate conduct and needed rest. May those who enter be treated with dignity. May those who live here care for their neighbours and the wider world.

17.4

ORIGINAL WORK BLESSING: May our livelihood avoid deliberate harm and deception. May those who work here receive fair treatment. May our skill serve real needs, and may success leave room for generosity and rest.

17.5

ORIGINAL TRAVEL BLESSING: May we prepare carefully, travel attentively and treat the people we meet with respect. May those who remain at home receive the care and information they need. May our return, when it comes, bring gratitude rather than entitlement.

17.6

A retirement gathering may recognise service without implying that a person's worth ends with paid employment. Invite their own hopes for the coming years. A written message, an unhurried meal and a realistic offer of continued companionship can carry more meaning than a grand prediction.

[KP5 · Blessings](#)

[AN5.177 · Trades](#)

[DN31 · Advice to Sigālaka](#)

18. Reading the festival year

18.1

Festivals turn the year into opportunities to remember, practise and give. Their dates and meanings vary. Use the current calendar of the community hosting an event; a lunar date, a national holiday and the date chosen for a local celebration may differ. This book is a guide to participation rather than an annual dates calendar.

18.2

Wesak or Vesak, often associated with the Buddha's birth, awakening and final passing in Theravāda communities, is discussed in Chapter 19. Other communities commemorate these events separately. Sōtō Zen's published calendar, for example, includes the April 8 Flower Festival and equinox and Obon observances. A difference in date does not require a competition over sincerity.

18.3

Upasatha observances recur through the lunar month. The rains residence, its closing and Kathina belong to a particular monastic context; see Chapters 20 and 21. New Year celebrations can combine religious practice with regional culture. Ancestor remembrance takes different forms, including Qing Ming, Ullambana and Obon, discussed in Chapter 23.

18.4

East Asian communities may observe days associated with particular Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Tibetan and Himalayan communities have their own calendars and practice traditions, including Losar and Saga Dawa. This introductory guide does not prescribe lineage rituals or substitute one community's service book for another's.

18.5

For an unfamiliar occasion, ask four practical questions: What is being commemorated? Which actions are expected and which are optional? What should guests know about clothing, food, access and timing? Where can we read the community's own explanation? A simple invitation that answers these questions helps newcomers participate with confidence.

[The Buddhist Society · Buddhist Festivals & Ceremonies](#)

[Sōtō Zen · Annual Event Calendar](#)

[Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery · Major Events](#)

[FPMT · Full Catalogue of Prayers and Practices](#)

[FPMT · Puja Fund Activities](#)

19. Wesak and remembering the Buddha

19.1

A household Wesak observance may combine gratitude to the Buddha, a teaching, ethical reflection, quiet attention and generosity. A temple may offer a different or longer programme. Follow its explanations and arrangements. Celebrating the Buddha includes considering how the teaching changes the way we live after the celebration.

19.2

OPTIONAL HOUSEHOLD ORDER · Settle quietly; pay respect to the Three Jewels if wished; read a short account of awakening or the first teaching; offer a light or flower safely; make an ethical intention; practise goodwill; carry out a chosen act of service.

19.3

ORIGINAL REFLECTION: We remember a teacher who investigated suffering and taught a path towards its ending. May gratitude for that teaching become patience in our speech, restraint in our actions and willingness to understand.

19.4

Light can represent clarity and flowers can prompt reflection on change. These are suggested meanings for this ceremony, not claims that an object automatically brings merit or removes difficulty. A battery light, a drawing or a spoken intention can serve someone for whom flames, fragrance or expense are unsuitable.

19.5

Where bathing a small Buddha image is part of the host community's practice, follow its instructions respectfully. Do not present the water as a medical treatment. Where giving is part of the day, choose transparent, appropriate support. Avoid purchasing animals for release as a spontaneous activity; protecting life requires attention to actual animal welfare and ecological consequences.

19.6

Close by choosing one practice to continue. A day of devotion has value in itself, and its influence can extend into an ordinary conversation, a fair decision or a kindness offered without recognition.

[KP5 · Blessings](#)

[SN56.11 · Rolling Forth the Wheel of Dhamma](#)

[DN16 · The Great Discourse on the Buddha's Extinguishment](#)

[The Buddhist Society · Buddhist Festivals & Ceremonies](#)

20. Uposatha, quiet days and renewed training

20.1

Uposatha offers a recurring occasion for recollection and training in many Buddhist communities. Lay observance may include the eight precepts; the monastic observance has its own procedures. Ask the relevant community about its calendar, teachings and programme rather than assuming a single worldwide schedule.

20.2

The eight-precept undertaking includes forms of restraint beyond the five lay precepts, including celibacy and restrictions concerning eating times, entertainment, adornment and luxurious resting places as traditionally formulated. It should be learned clearly from an appropriate teacher. A household should not label a partly changed set as the complete traditional eight precepts without explaining the adaptation.

20.3

A person who is not undertaking eight precepts can still make a sincere practice day: renew the five precepts, simplify distractions, read Dhamma, offer help and spend a manageable period in meditation or reflection. Provide appropriate alternatives for children and for people whose care needs do not suit a particular observance. Do not pressure anyone to disrupt necessary care.

20.4

OPTIONAL INTENTION: Today I will make room for the training. I will notice what leads towards harm and what supports clarity. I will practise within the commitments I have understood and freely undertaken.

20.5

At the day's end, ask what was learned. A difficulty can reveal where support is needed. The purpose of the reflection is honest renewal, not competitive endurance or public ranking of who observed most severely.

[AN8.41 · The Sabbath With Eight Factors, In Brief](#)

[AN8.39 · Overflowing Merit](#)

21. Rains residence, Pavāraṇā and Kathina

21.1

In the Pāli Vinaya, the rains residence, the invitation associated with its conclusion and the Kathina procedures belong to the monastic discipline. Lay support can be generous and meaningful, but a donation event does not become a valid formal Kathina merely because someone applies the name.

21.2

Before arranging an event, ask the resident Saṅgha what observance is appropriate and what support is needed. Confirm the timing, community and procedures with them. Do not attempt to reproduce the formal acts from this handbook. The ceremonial role of a lay organiser is distinct from the Saṅgha's own acts.

21.3

A practical offering may be a robe or another appropriate necessity requested by the community. Ask about suitability before buying in quantity. People unable to contribute money can offer time or another form of help. Giving should remain free from competition, public shaming and claims that a donor can purchase guaranteed outcomes.

21.4

ORIGINAL LAY REFLECTION: May this offering support a life of training. May those who give and those who receive be guided by care and understanding. May the good of this gathering extend beyond the day on which it is held.

21.5

A household may mark the season with renewed study, reduced distractions or service. Describe that honestly as a household practice intention. Keep the formal monastic name for the observance whose conditions the participating Saṅgha confirms.

PLI-TV-KD3 · 1. The instruction to enter the rainy-season residence

PLI-TV-KD4 · 1. Being uncomfortable

PLI-TV-KD7 · 1. The allowance for a robe-making ceremony

22. New Year, family culture and celebration

22.1

A New Year can gather gratitude, hospitality, remembrance and a fresh intention. Families may celebrate more than one calendar: Gregorian, Chinese lunar, regional South or Southeast Asian calendars, Tibetan Losar or others important to their lives. This book offers an adaptable household reflection, not an explanation of every tradition's rites.

22.2

Choose practices that participants understand and want. Cultural dress, food, music, decorations, greetings and respectful visits can retain their particular character. Joining a meal does not require claiming that all the associated religious beliefs are one's own. Ask before reproducing sacred objects or ceremonies from another community.

22.3

OPTIONAL YEAR-TURNING GATHERING · Name one thing received with gratitude, one harmful habit to work on, one person or group to support, and one realistic intention. An elder, child or guest may choose to listen. Do not make public confession a condition of the gathering.

22.4

ORIGINAL NEW YEAR VERSE

May we remember what has sustained us.

May we make repair where repair is possible.

May we begin again without denying the past.

May our good wishes take the form of useful action.

May the coming days be met with courage and care.

22.5

If a family custom includes something a participant cannot sincerely do, discuss an alternative in advance. They might offer tea, a bow, a moment of silence or practical help instead. Preserve dignity on both sides of the conversation. Refusing one action need not become a public judgement of the whole family.

KP5 · Blessings

MN61 · Advice to Rāhula at Ambalaṭṭhika

AN4.32 · Inclusion

23. Ancestors, Qing Ming, Ullambana and Obon

23.1

Remembering ancestors can express gratitude for lives upon which ours depend. It can also carry complicated histories. A remembrance need not declare every past action good. Families may acknowledge gifts received while refusing to continue harmful patterns.

23.2

These observances are related through remembrance but are not interchangeable. Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery describes Qing Ming as a traditional Chinese occasion for honouring ancestors, and Ullambana in connection with gratitude and compassion. Sōtō Zen describes Obon as a remembrance involving ancestors and gratitude. Follow the specific community's explanation when joining its rite; do not collapse these into one universal Buddhist festival.

23.3

Khuddakapāṭha 7 presents giving for departed relatives within a traditional Buddhist cosmology. Some communities understand dedication as a benefit available to particular departed beings; others explain related rites differently. A host should identify the tradition being followed. This handbook does not claim knowledge of any named person's rebirth or promise that an amount paid secures a result.

23.4

OPTIONAL HOUSEHOLD REMEMBRANCE · Prepare agreed names or photographs. Clean a memorial place where appropriate. Read a chosen passage, speak one memory, and make a modest act of generosity. Dedicate the good with the wording in Chapter 33. Names may be remembered silently where privacy matters or family knowledge is incomplete.

23.5

For adopted people, people with unknown ancestry and those whose family history includes harm, remembrance can include caregivers, teachers and others whose kindness shaped their lives. No genealogical knowledge is required to cultivate gratitude.

23.6

Discuss offerings with the venue. Keep graves and shared spaces clean, avoid waste, and choose safe, lawful practices. A family can preserve remembrance while changing the materials used. No relative should be threatened with spiritual disaster for being unable to travel, spend or perform an action they cannot sincerely undertake.

[KP7 · Outside the Walls](#)

[Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery · Major Events](#)

[Sōtō Zen · Annual Event Calendar](#)

24. Devotion across Buddhist traditions

24.1

Buddhist devotion can involve recitation, recollection, offerings, repentance, aspiration, meditation and dedication. Communities may orient particular practices towards Śākyamuni Buddha, Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara or Guanyin, Kṣitigarbha, Medicine Buddha or other figures within their received traditions. These forms have distinct textual and doctrinal settings; their names are not interchangeable labels for a generic blessing.

24.2

Ask a practising community or qualified teacher for the meaning and appropriate participation in an unfamiliar rite. Some practices are openly shared, while others have instruction or transmission requirements. Do not assemble a new ceremony from fragments of restricted practice or describe this handbook's scripts as conferring initiation.

24.3

A host may introduce a devotional selection briefly: this is the text or practice used by this community, and guests may join where appropriate or listen. Preserve proper attribution and the community's preferred pronunciation guidance. Access to a text online is not automatically permission to republish a modern translation.

24.4

This volume draws much of its explicit ethical discussion from early Buddhist texts while welcoming the presence of other living Buddhist traditions. It does not claim to represent all their liturgies. Families wanting an established service should use their community's authorised or customary service book and seek guidance where needed.

24.5

The contemporary ceremonies here offer shared language of care without requiring traditions to lose their differences. A person may remain committed to their own lineage while extending hospitality to someone whose devotional language is different.

[Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery · Major Events](#)

[FPMT · Full Catalogue of Prayers and Practices](#)

[Sōtō Zen · Annual Event Calendar](#)

25. Gratitude, mixed-faith families and shared tables

25.1

A family occasion may include Buddhists, people of other religions and people without a religious identity. Begin by naming the occasion rather than assuming a shared creed. Explain which portions are Buddhist and offer space for other participants to contribute according to their own convictions.

25.2

A multi-faith gathering works best when each contribution is accurately identified and freely offered. Avoid instructing someone to chant a formula they regard as a declaration of faith. Silent goodwill, listening and hospitality can be substantial forms of participation.

25.3

For a meal, ask about dietary needs early and label food clearly. A vegetarian meal may make hospitality easier for some groups, but do not assume it meets every person's needs. Children and adults should be able to decline food without having to disclose health or religious details in public.

25.4

ORIGINAL MEAL REFLECTION: We remember the work and conditions through which this food has reached us. May we receive it with gratitude, share considerately and avoid needless waste. May those without enough receive practical help.

25.5

A gratitude ceremony can honour teachers, elders, volunteers or caregivers. Say what they did specifically. Offer rest and assistance alongside praise. Do not assign care work by gender or assume that one relative must carry an unlimited burden because tradition has usually placed it on them.

DN31 · Advice to Sigālaka

AN4.32 · Inclusion

KP5 · Blessings

26. Illness, disability and receiving care

26.1

A person who is ill or disabled remains a person with preferences, relationships and agency. A blessing should not turn them into a public lesson about suffering or assume that recovery is the only meaningful outcome. Ask what they want: company, chanting, silence, practical help or privacy.

26.2

SN 36.21 rejects the claim that everything a person experiences is caused by past deeds. It gives an ancient account of multiple causes; it is not a modern diagnostic guide. Do not tell someone that illness, disability or distress proves a moral failure. Care does not require knowing a cosmic explanation for their condition.

26.3

In the Vinaya narrative of a sick monk, the Buddha and Ānanda provide practical care. The example directs attention to what needs doing. Ask before touching, visiting, filming, bringing food or arranging a group chant. Agree the duration and stop when requested. Prayer can accompany professional care; it should not obstruct it.

26.4

OPTIONAL VISITING WORDS: Would you like conversation, a short reading, or quiet company? There is no need to look cheerful for us. What would make the next part of the day easier?

26.5

ORIGINAL BLESSING FOR CARE

May distress be met with skill and kindness.

May your wishes be heard.

May help arrive without taking away your dignity.

May those who care for you also receive support.

May there be moments of ease within this day.

26.6

For serious illness, palliative care addresses suffering and quality of life for the person and family, including psychosocial and spiritual concerns. Discuss needs with the care team. This chapter supplies optional spiritual companionship, not instructions for clinical treatment or decisions.

[SN36.21 · With Sīvaka](#)

[PLI-TV-KD8 · 1. The account of Jīvaka](#)

[SN47.19 · At Sedaka](#)

[World Health Organization · Palliative care](#)

27. Pregnancy loss, stillbirth and the death of a child

27.1

A loss may be mourned publicly, privately or in changing ways over time. Use the words the person or family chooses. Do not demand a name, photograph or explanation. Avoid comments that minimise the loss, promise a replacement, or assign blame through karma. A short life or a hoped-for life need not be measured against another grief to deserve care.

27.2

Ask whether a remembrance would help and who should attend. People may wish to name the child, use a private word of affection, or leave the name unspoken. Do not infer another person's religious beliefs about conception, rebirth or the circumstances of the loss. This ceremony offers compassion without claiming to resolve those questions.

27.3

HOST: We gather because this life, and the love connected with it, matter to those who grieve. There is no correct speech required of them today. We offer remembrance and companionship.

27.4

FAMILY MEMBER, OPTIONAL: We remember you as [name, relationship or private remembrance]. The time we hoped for has changed. May the love we carry find expression in care, and may we receive the support we need.

27.5

Close with silence, a flower or another agreed symbol, and an act of care for the family. Ask about meals, transport, contact preferences and anniversaries. Keep offers specific and revisit them later. There is no required deadline for removing possessions, returning to celebrations or finding words for what happened.

27.6

For children attending, explain the occasion plainly in language suited to their understanding. Let caregivers decide what support they need, without forcing participation or asking them to comfort the adults.

[KP9 · The Discourse on Love](#)

[AN5.57 · Subjects for Regular Reviewing](#)

28. Ageing, retirement and changing dependence

28.1

Ageing may bring freedom, loss, delight, frustration and new forms of dependence. Honour the person rather than a stereotype of serenity. Do not assume that age removes their ability to choose, or that family affection authorises others to speak over them.

28.2

A retirement or elder-honouring ceremony can include stories they approve, gratitude for particular contributions, and an invitation to describe their hopes. Ask about accessibility, hearing, fatigue and preferred timing. A short gathering can still be dignified.

28.3

HOST: We honour the life and care that have helped others grow. We also recognise a person still living, choosing and changing. May gratitude include listening to what they want now.

28.4

SUPPORTERS: We will ask rather than assume. We will offer help with respect for independence, and seek guidance when needs change. May care be shared fairly and sustained without exhausting one person.

28.5

Discuss practical wishes privately, separate from ceremonial speeches: who should be contacted, what religious practices are welcome, and what help is needed. A family conversation or preference sheet is not a substitute for professional advice or legally effective documents where those are required.

[AN5.57 · Subjects for Regular Reviewing](#)

[SN48.41 · Old Age](#)

[DN31 · Advice to Sigālaka](#)

29. Preparing for death without surrendering the present

29.1

Reflection on death can help people identify what matters while they are alive. It should not become pressure to appear ready or to stop hoping. Ask permission before beginning the conversation. Someone may want practical planning today and religious discussion another day.

29.2

A spiritual preferences record can include the person's name and terms of address; people they want contacted; a teacher or community if any; desired readings or silence; objects they welcome; practices they do not want; wishes about privacy and recording; and who holds a copy. Mark the date and review it when preferences change.

29.3

Discuss medical, legal, financial and funeral arrangements through the appropriate professionals and authorities. This book does not determine decision-making authority, treatment choices, organ donation arrangements or legal validity of a document. Religious wishes should be discussed early enough for the care team to explain what can be accommodated.

29.4

ORIGINAL REFLECTION: My life depends on conditions I cannot wholly command. While I am able, may I express what matters, make appropriate repair, and care for those affected by my decisions. May preparation make more room for living attentively now.

29.5

Some traditions use detailed practices around dying and the period after death. Seek guidance from the person's own teacher where requested. Do not apply an unfamiliar rite merely because someone else considers it powerful. The person's convictions and current comfort should guide the companionship offered.

[AN5.57 · Subjects for Regular Reviewing](#)

[DN16 · The Great Discourse on the Buddha's Extinguishment](#)

[World Health Organization · Palliative care](#)

[FPMT · Full Catalogue of Prayers and Practices](#)

30. At the bedside

30.1

The person is not an audience obliged to receive a service. Ask whether they want a familiar chant, a short reading or quiet. Where communication is limited, use their known preferences and consult those responsible for their care. Keep visitors and sound at a level suited to the situation.

30.2

Coordinate with the care team. Necessary assessment, symptom relief and other agreed care should not be delayed to complete a ceremony. Do not place substances in the person's mouth or move their body as a ritual action without appropriate guidance and consent. This handbook gives no instruction to alter care.

30.3

OPTIONAL WORDS, WHEN WELCOME: We are here with you. Thank you for the care you have given. There is no need to perform a feeling for us. We will try to attend to what you need now.

30.4

A familiar refuge formula, Buddha-name recollection or goodwill passage may be used according to the person's tradition. A visitor of another faith can offer quiet companionship. Avoid introducing doctrinal arguments, demands for repentance or frightening claims about what a moment of distress will determine.

30.5

ORIGINAL BEDSIDE BLESSING

May you receive gentleness.

May what troubles you be heard with care.

May familiar kindness be near.

May we bring quiet where quiet helps,
and help where help is needed.

30.6

Crying, confusion or an inability to chant is not evidence that a person has failed spiritually. If a relative needs to step outside, arrange companionship rather than blame. After the visit, consider the needs of caregivers who may have been keeping watch for a long time.

[KP9 · The Discourse on Love](#)

[PLI-TV-KD8 · 1. The account of Jīvaka](#)

[DN16 · The Great Discourse on the Buddha's Extinguishment](#)

[World Health Organization · Palliative care](#)

31. Immediately after a death

31.1

Follow the instructions of the responsible care team, emergency services or relevant authorities for the circumstances. Death confirmation, necessary examination, documentation and care of the body are not tasks this religious handbook can replace. Do not assume that an expected ritual timetable overrides these processes.

31.2

Where circumstances permit, relatives may wish for quiet, familiar chanting or a short period of presence. Communicate these wishes respectfully and ask what is possible. Traditions differ concerning touching or moving the body and the period after death. This book prescribes no compulsory waiting period and makes no claim that necessary handling condemns the deceased to harm.

31.3

Choose one contact person to coordinate information with the family's consent. Avoid public announcements before those closest have been informed. Ask before taking photographs or sharing details of the death. The person's privacy continues to matter.

31.4

OPTIONAL WORDS: We acknowledge that [name] has died. We remember the life they lived and the relationships that remain with us. May those who are grieving receive care. May we carry out the next responsibilities with steadiness and respect.

31.5

A person may need silence rather than words. Offer water, a seat, transport or help contacting someone trusted. A disagreement over rites is better discussed away from the bedside, with attention to the deceased person's known wishes and the responsibilities of those involved.

DN16 · The Great Discourse on the Buddha's Extinguishment

World Health Organization · Palliative care

32. A funeral or memorial service

32.1

OPTIONAL CONTEMPORARY SCRIPT · Approximately twenty-five to forty minutes, adaptable for a funeral with the body present or a memorial without it. It does not prescribe the method of disposition. Confirm the venue's arrangements and any clergy-led elements separately.

32.2

Before the service, agree the name, pronunciation, chosen family terms, readings, speakers, access needs and whether recording is permitted. Clarify the distinction between a eulogy and a full biography. No one should be obliged to deny harm they experienced or disclose private conflict. Honest, restrained remembrance can avoid both cruelty and invention.

32.3

HOST: We gather to remember [name], who has died, and to accompany one another in the experience of parting. Some of us bring gratitude, some sorrow, some feelings not easily named. We make room for that difference without requiring anyone to speak.

32.4

Pause. Those who wish may pay respect to the Three Jewels. Explain any chant and invite guests to listen if its words are not their own commitment. Read a short passage on impermanence or goodwill, with its source named. Keep the reading proportionate to the needs of those present.

32.5

READER, ORIGINAL REFLECTION: A life reaches others in ways both visible and quiet. We remember moments of care, words that remain with us and work that helped the world around us. We also acknowledge that every life is unfinished in some way. May remembrance encourage honesty, gratitude where it is possible, and compassion for those who continue.

32.6

Invite agreed memories. A speaker may read a letter or ask another person to read it. Provide a chair and allow a speaker to stop. Do not require a mourner to offer public forgiveness or a statement about the deceased person's destination after death.

32.7

HOST: We will keep a moment of silence. Each person may remember [name] in their own way, offer a prayer within their tradition, or simply remain with those who grieve.

32.8

If giving or dedication is included, explain it plainly. A family might support a suitable cause or offer to the Saṅgha through established arrangements. Do not attach a guaranteed spiritual outcome to the amount given.

32.9

ORIGINAL DEDICATION

May the good we do in remembrance become a cause of benefit.

May those who can rejoice in it rejoice.

May gratitude deepen our care for the living.

May beings who suffer encounter relief and wise support.

32.10

HOST: The ceremony is drawing to a close. Our care for those who grieve continues beyond it. May we meet the coming days with patience, seek help when needed, and carry forward what is worthy of being continued.

32.11

Explain the next practical step: departure, an agreed committal, refreshments or private time. At a graveside or crematorium, the host may add: We take leave of this body with respect. The responsibilities of care and remembrance remain with us. This wording is a new ceremonial reflection, not a declaration about a person's rebirth.

[AN5.57 · Subjects for Regular Reviewing](#)

[KP7 · Outside the Walls](#)

[KP9 · The Discourse on Love](#)

[DN16 · The Great Discourse on the Buddha's Extinguishment](#)

33. Ashes, graves, anniversaries and dedication

33.1

Families may visit a grave or columbarium, keep a memorial place, gather on an anniversary or remember privately. Choices about remains and their disposition must follow the relevant arrangements and requirements. This handbook does not treat one method as compulsory for every Buddhist.

33.2

Some communities observe particular days or sequences after a death. Ask the family's own temple about its practice. A seventh-day, forty-ninth-day or annual observance should be identified with the tradition in which it is used, not presented as a universal Buddhist rule. Inability to attend does not justify threatening or shaming a mourner.

33.3

A short memorial can include agreed names, a reading, a shared memory and an act of giving. Explain dedication in the terms of the tradition being followed. Kp 7 and AN 10.177 are relevant early Buddhist sources; their accounts should not be turned into a guarantee about a named deceased person's condition.

33.4

OPTIONAL DEDICATION: Remembering [name], we offer this act of goodness with gratitude and compassion. May any beings able to benefit rejoice in it. May our remembrance support wise action and care for those still living.

33.5

If someone does not share that understanding of dedication, they can express gratitude and goodwill without pretending agreement. A mixed-faith memorial can preserve each person's honest participation. A quiet act of care on an ordinary day can also be a meaningful remembrance.

[KP7 · Outside the Walls](#)

[AN10.177 · With Jānussoṇi](#)

[Sōtō Zen · Annual Event Calendar](#)

[Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery · Major Events](#)

34. Grief and the months after the gathering

34.1

When the ceremony ends, everyday absences can become more noticeable. Anniversaries, celebrations and ordinary routines may bring changing feelings. Buddhist reflection on impermanence need not be used to end a conversation before the bereaved person has been heard.

34.2

Offer specific, revisable help: a meal on an agreed day, transport, assistance with a task, or company for a walk. Ask before removing possessions or making public tributes. Someone may want to speak about the deceased today and prefer another subject tomorrow.

34.3

ORIGINAL WORDS OF COMPANIONSHIP: I remember that this loss is still part of your life. Would company or practical help be useful this week? You do not need to respond in a particular way to make my visit worthwhile.

34.4

A personal remembrance may be very small: say the name, light a safe lamp, read a verse, offer food to someone in need, or sit quietly. It may also be omitted. There is no ceremonial timetable in this book for returning to joy, entering another relationship or changing a memorial practice.

34.5

When grief or distress feels unmanageable, seek appropriate support from trusted people and qualified services. Spiritual community can offer companionship while recognising the limits of its role. No one should be expected to handle severe distress alone to prove strength or faith.

[DN16 · The Great Discourse on the Buddha's Extinguishment](#)

[AN5.57 · Subjects for Regular Reviewing](#)

[KP9 · The Discourse on Love](#)

35. Animals within the circle of care

35.1

Compassion extends beyond human relationships. A household may welcome an animal, mark its birthday or remember it after death. The purpose should be responsible care, not a performance that frightens or restrains the animal for photographs.

35.2

Keep any gathering brief and suited to the animal's welfare. Do not bring animals to a temple or other venue without explicit agreement. Do not release purchased animals as a spontaneous ritual or assume that a religious centre accepts unwanted animals. Ask appropriate animal-care professionals about welfare needs; a blessing is not veterinary treatment.

35.3

ORIGINAL WELCOME: May this living being receive safety, appropriate care and freedom from needless fear. May we learn its needs rather than expect it to fulfil every wish of ours. May our affection be expressed through responsible action.

35.4

ORIGINAL REMEMBRANCE: We remember the companionship of this life. May gratitude remain with us, and may it deepen our care for other living beings. May those who grieve receive kindness without being told their loss is too small to matter.

35.5

Children may wish to draw, speak a memory or remain quiet. Avoid promising that a particular animal will return in a particular form. The wish for well-being can be sincere without claiming knowledge that we do not have.

KP9 · The Discourse on Love

AN8.39 · Overflowing Merit

36. The host's practical workbook

36.1

Before writing the programme, agree the purpose in one sentence. Identify the people whose wishes matter most, the host and a practical support person. Ask about language, access, seating, sound, fragrance, food, privacy and recording. Confirm clergy involvement directly if desired. Choose a time and budget that do not turn participation into hardship.

36.2

Choose the components deliberately: welcome; optional religious opening; one reading; the occasion's words or action; silence; dedication or goodwill; a clear close. Put an approximate duration beside each part. A shorter programme is often easier to adapt than an overfilled one. Leave room for translation and unplanned pauses.

36.3

Mark the text accurately. Use “canonical reading” with a source and translator for an actual quotation, “traditional formula” for an established recitation, “custom of this community” for a local rite, and “original wording” for a new script. A modern adaptation of an ancient teaching should be called an adaptation.

36.4

Check promises. Remove claims of guaranteed health, wealth, fertility, reconciliation or rebirth. Replace vague unlimited commitments with actions a person can realistically undertake. Do not use blessings to market paid services through fear.

36.5

Give participants the words they will be invited to say beforehand. Offer alternatives to touch, kneeling and speaking. Keep an unobstructed exit and explain where guests can rest. Obtain consent for public names and images; a private preference sheet should remain private.

36.6

After the ceremony, complete the practical promises. Thank helpers, account transparently for any agreed donations, return borrowed items and check on those who may need support. Review what made participation comfortable and what should be changed next time.

36.7

PERSONAL PLANNING PROMPTS · What am I marking? Who do I want present? What language and name should be used? Which reading or tradition matters to me? What do I not want? What access or care arrangements are needed? Who may see this plan? When will I review it? These prompts record preferences and do not create a legal directive.

MN61 · Advice to Rāhula at Ambalaṭṭhika

KP5 · Blessings

37. Questions families often ask

37.1

Must every Buddhist have all these ceremonies? No. This book offers choices. Ethical conduct, generosity and cultivation of the mind remain meaningful whether a household holds elaborate rites, simple gatherings or none.

37.2

Must a monastic lead? The new household scripts here can be led by a willing lay host. Formal ordination, certain vows, lineage practices and monastic acts have their own requirements. Ask the appropriate community rather than presenting a lay gathering as conferring a status it does not confer.

37.3

Can we use several languages? Yes. Let people understand the meaning, and identify translations accurately. It is usually kinder to choose a short reading with explanation than a long text no one present understands. Preserve names and preferred terms carefully.

37.4

Can non-Buddhists join? They can be welcomed as guests without being required to take refuge, undertake precepts or affirm a belief. Discuss any multi-faith contribution with the people involved.

37.5

Can we change the wording? The original scripts are intended for thoughtful adaptation. Preserve attribution when quoting a source. Do not put altered wording in quotation marks as though it were an exact translation. Ask a community before changing its established liturgy and continuing to use its name for the result.

37.6

Is a lavish ceremony more meritorious? This book gives no scale equating expenditure with spiritual attainment. Consider intention, ethical conduct, appropriateness and actual benefit. Giving within one's means and caring attentively need not be spectacular.

37.7

Does gender-neutral language forbid familiar family words? No. People may use their preferred terms, including mother, father, wife and husband. The shared scripts avoid making those terms compulsory or assigning unequal duties on that basis.

37.8

Does inclusion mean every tradition must approve every ceremony? No. These are this edition's inclusive options. Communities retain their distinct teachings and procedures, and participation should be arranged honestly. No person's basic dignity depends on being offered a particular ceremony by a particular institution.

37.9

What if relatives disagree about customs? Identify the meaning each person is trying to preserve, consider the wishes of those most affected, and seek a form that avoids coercion and harm. A smaller ceremony or separate moments may be more workable than forcing one public declaration from everyone.

AN8.26 · With Jīvaka

AN8.39 · Overflowing Merit

38. A canonical reading of goodwill

38.1

The complete supplied English text of Khuddakapāṭha 9 follows.
Translation: Bhikkhu Sujato, via SuttaCentral, CC0 1.0. It may be read on its own or selected for one of the gatherings in this book. A host using only part should call it a selection. The text is distinct from the newly written blessings elsewhere in this volume.

38.2

Basic Passages 9
The Discourse on Love

CANONICAL EXCERPT · KP9 · Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

38.3

Those who are skilled in the meaning of scripture
should practice as follows to realize the state of peace.
Let them be capable and upright, very upright,
easy to speak to, gentle and humble;

CANONICAL EXCERPT · KP9 · Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

38.4

content and unburdensome,
unbusied, living lightly,
alert, with senses calmed,
courteous, not fawning on families.

CANONICAL EXCERPT · KP9 · Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

38.5

Let them not do the slightest thing
that others who are wise would blame.
May they be happy and safe!
May all beings be happy!

CANONICAL EXCERPT · KP9 · Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

38.6

Whatever living creatures there are
with not a one left out -
frail or firm, long or large,
medium, small, tiny or round,

CANONICAL EXCERPT · KP9 · Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

38.7

seen or unseen,
living far or near,
those who have been born and those about to be born -
may all beings be happy!

CANONICAL EXCERPT · KP9 · Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

38.8

Let none deceive another,
nor look down on anyone anywhere.
Though provoked or aggrieved,
let them not wish pain on each other.

CANONICAL EXCERPT · KP9 · Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

38.9

Even as a mother would protect with her life
her child, her only child,
so too for all creatures
unfold a boundless heart.

CANONICAL EXCERPT · KP9 · Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

38.10

With love for the whole world,
unfold a boundless heart:
above, below, all round,
unconstricted, without enmity or foe.

CANONICAL EXCERPT · KP9 · Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

38.11

When standing, walking, sitting,
or lying down while yet unweary,
keep this ever in mind;
for this, they say, is a divine meditation in this life.

CANONICAL EXCERPT · KP9 · Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

38.12

Avoiding harmful views,
virtuous, accomplished in insight,
with desire for sensual pleasures dispelled,
they never return to a womb again.

CANONICAL EXCERPT · KP9 · Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[KP9 · The Discourse on Love](#)

39. Sources, scope and editorial notes

This first edition is a broad household and community handbook, not an exhaustive inventory of every Buddhist culture. Its scope is life events, recurring celebrations, practical hosting, original inclusive scripts and a source reading. Formal monastic procedures, restricted practices and specialist legal or clinical decisions are referred to the appropriate people rather than recreated here.

Concept and commissioning brief: Rain Lee Lin Jun. Newly prepared text and ceremony scripts: Ti-Ratana Dhamma editorial project, with AI assistance.

Primary ethical sources include AN 8.53 on recognising the teaching's direction; MN 61 on examining actions; AN 8.39 on refuge and the five precepts; Kp 5 on blessings; Kp 9 on goodwill; DN 31 on relational responsibilities; AN 4.55 on shared qualities in a couple; and SN 47.19 on care for oneself and others. The book's inclusive applications are contemporary editorial choices, not claims that the ancient sources use identical categories.

For care and remembrance, SN 36.21 rejects an exclusively past-deeds explanation for experience; the sick-monk account in Vinaya Khandhaka 8 presents practical nursing; DN 16 supplies the final-journey narrative; Kp 7 and AN 10.177 discuss giving in relation to the departed within their doctrinal settings. The ancient medical vocabulary of SN 36.21 is not used as clinical guidance.

The Buddhist Society's overview supports the distinction between traditions' life-cycle rites. Sōtō Zen's official calendar and Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery's event descriptions provide examples of living observance. FPMT's practice catalogue is a route to that organisation's lineage-specific resources, not a claim that those resources are reproduced or that all Buddhists use them. The World Health Organization's palliative-care fact sheet supports the brief explanation of its purpose. These organisations have not endorsed this handbook.

English canonical material is credited to Bhikkhu Sujato; Vinaya source translations are by Bhikkhu Brahmāli; the Pāli source corpus is the Mahāsaṅgīti edition via SuttaCentral. The stored source files record CC0 1.0 and upstream revisions. Exact source-file checksums are retained in the structured edition. The three refuge lines are a traditional formula; the plain English rendering and the new precept undertaking are identified separately.

Original scripts and editorial arrangement were prepared for publication through Ti-Ratana Buddhist Society. Source material retains its stated rights; no exclusive rights are claimed over CC0 texts. The Society's publication policy applies to the new material, and branding is separate. This is not a claim that every script has been adopted as an official service at every branch.

First public edition: 28 September 2026, version 2026-09-28.1. Source and production checks have been performed. Independent Sangha, cultural, legal and clinical review has not been completed; no such approval is implied. Corrections may be sent to info@ti-ratana.org with the title, edition, chapter and passage reference.

AN8.53 · Brief Advice to Gotamī

MN61 · Advice to Rāhula at Ambalaṭṭhika

AN4.55 · Equality (1st)

[DN31 · Advice to Sigālaka](#)

[SN36.21 · With Sīvaka](#)

[KP7 · Outside the Walls](#)

[AN10.177 · With Jānussoṇi](#)

[AN10.177 · With Jānussoṇi](#)

[Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0](#)

[Read the primary source](#)

[AN3.65 · With the Kālāmas of Kesamutta](#)

[Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0](#)

[Read the primary source](#)

[AN4.32 · Inclusion](#)

[Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0](#)

[Read the primary source](#)

[AN4.55 · Equality \(1st\)](#)

[Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0](#)

[Read the primary source](#)

[AN5.177 · Trades](#)

[Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0](#)

[Read the primary source](#)

[AN5.57 · Subjects for Regular Reviewing](#)

[Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0](#)

[Read the primary source](#)

[AN6.63 · Penetrative](#)

[Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0](#)

[Read the primary source](#)

[AN8.26 · With Jīvaka](#)

[Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0](#)

[Read the primary source](#)

AN8.39 · Overflowing Merit

Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

AN8.41 · The Sabbath With Eight Factors, In Brief

Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

AN8.53 · Brief Advice to Gotamī

Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

DN16 · The Great Discourse on the Buddha's Extinguishment

Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

DN31 · Advice to Sigālaka

Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

KP1 · The Three Refuges

Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

KP5 · Blessings

Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

KP7 · Outside the Walls

Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

KP9 · The Discourse on Love

Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

MN61 · Advice to Rāhula at Ambalaṭṭhika
Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

PLI-TV-KD3 · 1. The instruction to enter the rainy-season
residence
Bhikkhu Brahmāli · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

PLI-TV-KD4 · 1. Being uncomfortable
Bhikkhu Brahmāli · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

PLI-TV-KD7 · 1. The allowance for a robe-making ceremony
Bhikkhu Brahmāli · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

PLI-TV-KD8 · 1. The account of Jīvaka
Bhikkhu Brahmāli · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

SN36.21 · With Sīvaka
Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

SN45.2 · Half the Spiritual Life
Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

SN47.19 · At Sedaka
Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

SN48.41 · Old Age
Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

SN56.11 · Rolling Forth the Wheel of Dhamma
Bhikkhu Sujato · CC0

[Read the primary source](#)

The Buddhist Society · Buddhist Festivals & Ceremonies ·
consulted 28 September 2026

[Read the source](#)

Sōtō Zen · Annual Event Calendar · consulted 28 September 2026

[Read the source](#)

Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery · Major Events ·
consulted 28 September 2026

[Read the source](#)

FPMT · Full Catalogue of Prayers and Practices · consulted 28
September 2026

[Read the source](#)

FPMT · Puja Fund Activities · consulted 28 September 2026

[Read the source](#)

World Health Organization · Palliative care · consulted 28
September 2026

[Read the source](#)