

Monthly Meditation Festivals Program Guidelines

The core purpose of the festival presentation is to receive and radiate spiritual energy. All of the elements of the festival are to prepare the group to receive that energy in meditation and extend it to humanity in service. The process is one of stepping the energy down into a form that can be easily used for positive and creative solutions to world needs. While all the elements are designed to compliment the meditation, they are also part of the meditation, as the entire event can be viewed as a meditation format. The festival is most effective when those fulfilling the roles below also participate fully in each other segment of the ceremony.

Greeters

Greeters are those who volunteer to greet people as they arrive at the festival. Their role is to offer a friendly welcome the participants and offer them a festival program. They can also be helpful in directing people to available seating if they are late and attending to any particular needs of the participants. Greeters will also ask people if they are on our mailing list. If yes, then they will look up the name and confirm the information including email and phone number.

Lighting

The lighting should be at about $\frac{3}{4}$ of full light throughout the following portions of the festival—Musical Prelude, Opening Words, Keynote, and Closing Words. They should be lowered to about $\frac{1}{4}$ during the Opening and Closing Rituals and Musical Interlude. They should be slightly lower than $\frac{1}{4}$ during the meditation.

Musical Prelude—10 minutes

The role of the Musical Prelude is to prepare the energy for the ceremony to follow. It is suggested this be done in a subtle and effective way without demanding too much attention since many people will still be arriving. If group participation is solicited during music it is better that it be done in the musical interlude following the keynote speaker rather than at this time. All the music of the event should have a calming and inspirational effect. The time allotted for this segment is 10 minutes.

Opening Ritual—7 minutes

The purpose of the Opening Ritual is to align the group with the group soul and begin the invocation of spiritual energy that will be transmitted through the meditation. This segment is led by a member of the Spiritual Unity Movement.

Welcoming Words—8 minutes

The Welcoming Words are offered by a member of the Spiritual Unity Movement. The purpose of the Welcoming Words is to greet the participants of the festival, to help them feel welcome and comfortable as well as describe the purpose of the event. It is helpful to project a relaxed mood and use humor to put people at ease and to set the stage for an enjoyable as well as focused meditation festival. To be included in this segment is the purpose of the festivals—why we meditate near the time of the full moon. It can be helpful to mention something about spiritual influences, thus stretching the group vertically in consciousness, and also to mention something about the community of servers or the need of humanity thus inspiring a horizontal alignment of consciousness. If the festival being offered is one of the Three Festivals of Spring, it could also

be mentioned that the three festivals are not three separate events, but are three parts of one festival. Also included here is the festival theme (and overall theme if it is one of the Three Festivals of Spring). The speaker can relate the theme to some need or issue in society that is relevant at the time of the festival. This segment is extremely important because it sets the mood for the festival, particularly for the music and the speaking roles to follow. Since the main speakers are often not members of the presenting committee, this is the time when the influence of the Spiritual Unity Movement can be exercised as a source of leadership and to some extent educator about the importance of this work and its principles.

Keynote—20 minutes

If the keynote is given by one person, the time allotted is 20 minutes. In the event of a panel discussion, the time can be longer and will be determined based on the subject matter and number of panelists. The purpose of this segment is to prepare the group mind for meditation. The ideal state of mind for meditation is one of focused receptivity. Therefore the talk should stimulate the mind to new ideas. While analytical discussion can be suitable, the talk is most effective when the ideas inspire and lead the group into higher intuitive levels of mind. If analytical ideas are presented, they are more effectively placed at the beginning of the presentation with a building toward higher more intuitive or inspirational concepts. It is also helpful for the talk to be relevant to the theme of the festival. Examples of personal experience are encouraged in the keynote.

Musical Interlude—15 minutes

The purpose of the Musical Interlude is to prepare the emotions of the group for meditation. It is helpful to have music that is not overly familiar to people so that they are inspired into a state that is different and preferably higher than their normal state or nostalgic states that are associated with specific songs. The music should calm the emotions and engage the participant's aspiration as much as possible. The ideal emotional state for the meditation is a feeling of vibrant aspiration and serenity.

Meditation—15 minutes

The purpose of the Meditation is to align the individual participants with the group soul and the available spiritual and cosmic energies and to receive or invoke and radiate that energy to humanity and the planet. The meditation leader is a member of the presenting committee. The meditation format is a non-sectarian format developed by the Spiritual Unity Movement. The meditation leader may improvise as they are moved by the moment. The meditation leader may choose, if he or she feels it is appropriate at the time, to allow people to stand and stretch before beginning the meditation. The silent portion of the meditation is held for the amount of time that the meditation leader senses is appropriate for the particular group at the particular time. The time is generally not less than 8 minutes and not more than 15 minutes. It does not necessarily have to end when a restlessness is perceived. Repeating the seed thought at the time of a noticed restlessness can be helpful in refocusing the group on the meditation.

Closing Words—7 minutes

The Closing Words are offered by the president of SUM or vice president if the president is not in attendance or taking on another role. This segment is designed to re-state the purpose of

the festival as that of a united meditation. It is important to emphasize the importance of radiation of the energy received during the festival through daily service and also of holding or containing the intent toward until the next festival. This segment also serves to thank people for their participation, invite them to the next festival, introduce the Spiritual Unity Group, and remind the participants about donating and filling out suggestion cards. Included should be the statement that if they fill out a card or sign the guest book, they can receive announcements of future festivals. It is helpful to ask for donations in a way that empowers the individual by indicating the importance of their contribution. It can also be explained how their donations will be used. The exact time of the full moon can also be announced at this time. This segment can also be used to mention other SUM related activities, introduce notable guests and ask for announcements from those attending.

Closing Ritual—5 minutes

The Closing Ritual is a final symbolic enactment of the radiation of the energy that has been invoked during the festival and particularly in the Meditation.