



## Special Place of Tranquility (SPOT)

### Introduction

The term "altar" may not be appropriate for our purposes. The word has different associations for different people. If the word "altar" is troublesome, the phrase "Special Place of Tranquility" (SPOT) can be substituted. It should be noted that the word "tranquility" does not refer to just a quiet serenity, but involves a notion of "quiet power" or "dynamic serenity." In any case, your altar or SPOT is not a place where something is worshipped or prayed to in the usual sense of those words.

Your SPOT does not need to have a fixed "religious" central point of focus. If such a symbol is desired, traditional Buddhist icons can be used and/or items with personal meaning can be included. The intention here is to provide a universal motif that can be individually customized.

Your SPOT can be a secular (ordinary) place that is made sacred (spiritual) through your attitude. Conversely, your SPOT can be a sacred or religious place that is intimately related to your secular or everyday life. In other words, your SPOT need not be labeled as a solely sacred or secular place. Our approach is the Way of Oneness. In the present context, this means that such dualistic terminology as sacred versus secular can be transcended.

### Setting up your SPOT

If you already have a Buddhist altar, fine-- by all means, use it.

Our basic SPOT items include: bell, candle, flowers, incense burner, and *ojuzu* (meditation beads). The incense burner is usually put in a middle position, with the candle on the right side (as you face the incense burner) and the flowers on the left side. The bell can be put at any convenient place.

### Using your SPOT

Traditional usage involves lighting a candle and incense, ringing a bell, doing Gassho, and optionally, chanting a sutra and/or doing a reading. Minimal usage would be simply to ring the bell and to put one's hands together in Gassho. This procedure is fine and is in no way inferior to more involved rituals. In fact, it may be advisable to routinely use only the minimal procedure-- and to add other aspects only when your mood or need motivates you. You should not consider there to be an absolutely right way of doing things. Thus, incense need not be lit routinely if you are sensitive to the fragrance or allergic to the smoke. Flowers are beautiful but often may not be easily obtainable. However, it is nice to have a flower vase, incense and burner on hand so that when you do want a more extended or formal service, everything will be ready for use.

Flexibility is the key when setting up and using your SPOT. Any suggested traditional guideline is simply a convenience, in the sense of having a standard to work from. The most essential thing is your respectful attitude.

As part of our 21-Day Program, a Harmony Gassho and Gratitude Gassho is done daily at one's SPOT. (See the Everyday Gassho sheet for information on how to do Gassho.) The SPOT can also be used for home religious services (see sheet on Home Religious Services).