

# Neighborhood Flamekeepers



# Join the Neighborhood Flamekeepers

## Who We Are

The Neighborhood Flamekeepers are a community of neighbors who serve their neighborhoods through the SF Contemplarium (creating space to honor the human journey in our neighborhoods), while honing skills of human connection and supporting each other.

As Neighborhood Flamekeepers, we are neighbors who generally share these orientations:

- We find ourselves yearning to better **support others** through life's challenges.
- We've **volunteered** to serve our community through human connection (e.g. as peer counselors, community mediators, hospice volunteers, companions to the elderly, teen mentors).
- Whether or not it's our primary career, we've felt a calling to grow our **skills of human connection** (e.g. we've seriously considered being a therapist or life coach at some point).
- We care deeply about being involved in our **neighborhood**.

We come together in order to:





- **Serve together.** We seek opportunities to serve our neighbors through human connection and emotional support, by "creating space to honor the human journey" through the SF Contemplarium.
- **Grow and learn.** We strive to develop our skills to grow as human beings in all parts of our lives.
- **Find belonging and support.** We seek likehearted individuals to share in growth, service, and mutual support.
- **Take part in an important cause.** We are doing our part to address our society's "crisis of connection" at a level we can make meaningful, tangible impact: our neighborhoods.

We are a diverse community of neighbors bridging across differences, but we share a belief in the **inherent and equal dignity of every person**, and seek to embody that conviction through our local, interpersonal practice of honoring our human journey among neighbors.

## What We Do

### Cohort Immersive

Because building a high-trust community is vital to our purpose, all Neighborhood Flamekeepers go through an **initial Cohort Immersive** to (1) build trust and connection with each other, (2) practice the Flamekeeping Skills, and (3) familiarize with the SF Contemplarium approach to Flamekeeping:

 SF Contemplarium Flamekeeping Skills		
 Presence	 Ritual	 Accompaniment
<b>Presence</b> is the practice of honoring a human experience by offering nonjudgmental and compassionate attention. It can take the form of self-awareness and active listening.	<b>Ritual</b> is the practice of honoring a human experience through symbolic words or actions that help evoke, acknowledge, or enact its deeper meaning and value.	<b>Accompaniment</b> is the practice of honoring a human experience through shoulder-to-shoulder navigation through that experience. It can take the form of curious exploration and moral deliberation

<i>Example:</i> Supporting a friend who is grieving by sitting with and listening to them.	<i>Example:</i> With your friend, burning a piece of paper with a list of attachments they want to let go of.	that takes one's conscience seriously.  <i>Example:</i> Talking your friend through a difficult conversation with a co-worker.
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The Cohort Immersive consists of an intensive weekend of hands-on, interactive exercises with 8–15 new cohortmates. The idea is to create a “lab” where we can practice, try things on for size, and learn and discover together:

- **Part 1:** 📖 **Stories of purpose and practicing presence**
- **Part 2:** 🕯️ **Honoring existential concerns through ritual**
- **Part 3:** 🌱 **Offering structures to grow into our values**
- **Part 4:** 🔥 **Flamekeeping the neighborhood together**

In the weeks following the Immersive, the Cohort works together to lead a **Seasonal Ingathering** for the neighborhood, in which the local public is invited to mark the turn of the season together. The Cohort also narrows down on a specific, achievable **joint project** for the coming season (3 months).

The Cohort Immersive sessions are led by [Seanan Fong](#), SF Contemplarium’s Founding Director, and designed with input from expert practitioner partners. But most importantly, they create the intentional structure to draw on the wisdom and experience you and cohortmates already have.

Dates for the Fall 2025 Founding Cohort Immersive:

- **2-Day Cohort Immersive:** Full-day Saturday and Sunday, November 1–2 (required)
- **Ingathering Prep & Workshop:** Sunday, November 9 (recommended)
- **Fall Ingathering:** Sunday, November 16 (required)

To apply to the next cohort, please submit your application here ([forthcoming](#)).

## Ongoing Community

After completing the Immersive Cohort, graduates are invited to join the ongoing Neighborhood Flamekeeper Community. As a community ...

### (1) We serve the neighborhood through Neighborhood Offerings.

We create space for our neighbors to honor our human journey through SF Contemplarium’s Neighborhood Offerings open to the local public. Some examples on what different working groups can tackle:

💛 SF Contemplarium Neighborhood Offerings		
📅 Neighborhood Events	🕯️ Neighborhood Installations	🪑 Neighborhood Support
In-person gatherings that honor our neighbors’ collective and individual human journeys through inclusive, engaging rituals and activities.	Physical constructs that facilitate the honoring of our neighbors’ human journeys through self-guided rituals.	Direct Flamekeeper support in 1:1 or group settings to honor our neighbors’ human journey through

<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Reflection Jams</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Seasonal Ingatherings</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Wisdom Walks</a></li> <li>• <i>What else?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Cohered by:</i> <a href="#">The Common Year Calendar</a>, which takes cues from the local natural world to mark our own human journey</p>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Reflection Stands</a></li> <li>• Wall of Strengths</li> <li>• Community Table</li> <li>• Listening Stand</li> <li>• Labyrinth</li> <li>• Cards and ritual items</li> <li>• <i>What else?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>At:</i> Park pop-ups, installations in cafes or bookstores, entire storefront pop-up, permanent storefront</p>	<p>presence, ritual, and accompaniment.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cafe office hours</li> <li>• House visits</li> <li>• Support groups</li> <li>• Mediation or emotional support service</li> <li>• <i>What else?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>With:</i> In collaboration with other local “Flamekeeping” institutions and local communities and organizations</p>
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Because we see the work of serving our neighbors in this important way as a privilege, we hold ourselves to a standard of **conscientiousness** and **accountability** in co-creating these offerings with the SF Contemplarium’s institutional support.

## (2) We develop skills and learn together.

We engage in continuous learning in the three buckets of core Flamekeeping skills. Learning opportunities take the form of:

- Regular highly engaging, interactive Flamekeeping **labs and workshops** with local partners across different contexts (e.g. grief, conflict, mental health), continuing the Immersive Cohort experience.
- **Service-learning experiences** with local partners, e.g. a Night Walk with the SF Night Ministry.
- Learning **support and coaching** from each other as well as flamekeeping professionals.

## (3) We support each other.

We co-create how we support each other as a community of care, with some examples:

🌱 Flamekeeper Mutual Support		
🧑‍🤝🧑 Deepening & Care	🎉 Social Connection	🏛️ Shared Leadership
<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening Circles</li> <li>• Journey Groups</li> <li>• Support Groups</li> <li>• Service-Learning Buddies</li> <li>• <i>What else?</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movie Nights</li> <li>• Book Clubs</li> <li>• Potluck Dinners</li> <li>• <i>What else?</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership Committees and Shared Deliberative Governance</li> <li>• Member Forums</li> <li>• <a href="#">Dues &amp; Contributions</a>, and Fundraising</li> </ul>




## Neighborhood Focus








In order to concentrate our efforts, the Fall 2025 Founding Cohort will focus our neighborhood offerings on the **Hayes-Duboce area** (roughly the area encompassing Hayes Valley, Lower Haight, Duboce Park, and Alamo Square), serving the people who live, work, and otherwise spend time here.





## Sample Regular Programming

As a community, we'll work together iteratively to figure out what works for us. But to get us started for our beginning few seasons, here's a menu of options based on the SF Contemplarium's experiments over the past year. Flamekeepers will be able to hit the ground running by picking up programming that already has been tested and is supported by existing infrastructure (the heavy lifting is done, we just have to make it amazing).

Here's a menu of possibilities for what a regular schedule of programming could look like in any given season (period of 3 months):

Types of events	
	<b>Free Neighborhood Offerings.</b> Flamekeepers make these possible as part of their service to the neighborhood.
	<b>Flamekeeper-Only Events.</b> Private containers of trust for deeper learning and mutual support among Flamekeepers.
	<b>Ticketed Public Offerings.</b> Flamekeepers can attend for free as volunteers for these professionally-led paid events.

Weekly		
<b>Wisdom Walks</b>		Flamekeepers lead casual walks for neighbors through the neighborhood as they discuss thoughtful reflective prompts. (Like <a href="#">The Board Walks</a> , but neighborhood-based.)
<b>Journey Groups</b>		Small groups of Flamekeepers meet through the season (Flourishing, Encounter, Origins, and Becoming) to dive deeper on the season's theme through readings, reflections, ritual and discussion. (Like secular <a href="#">Small Group Ministry</a> .)
Bi-Weekly		
<b>Listening Circles</b>		Flamekeepers pass a talking piece to share what is on their heart, especially on their Flamekeeping journey, while others deeply listen. A powerful, time-tested format for Flamekeepers to offer and receive structured mutual support with likehearted people. (Like <a href="#">Heart Circles</a> .)
<b>Reflection Stand Pop-Ups</b>		Flamekeepers create pop-up installations in the park for a few hours that help their neighbors honor each others' human journey. (Per our successful <a href="#">Reflection Stands</a> ; we can build out more elements.)
Monthly		
<b>Reflection Jams</b>		Flamekeepers lead their neighbors on 2-hour facilitated journaling and sharing exercise to honor their last month and their intentions for the coming one. This is Contemplarium's flagship neighborhood ritual. (Per our successful, ongoing <a href="#">Reflection Jams</a> .)
<b>Flamekeeping Skills Workshops</b>		The SF Contemplarium offers professionally-facilitated workshops to develop skills of presence, ritual, and accompaniment. Includes both foundational skills and skills for specific contexts (e.g. conflict resolution, grief support). Tickets are paid. Flamekeepers can attend for free as volunteers. (More in-depth versions of the workshop portions of the Cohort Immersive and <a href="#">Flamekeeper Series</a> .)
<b>Insight Outings</b>		The SF Contemplarium offers professionally-led outings to learn from Flamekeeping institutions (e.g. SF Night Ministry) or local placemaking people (neighborhood

		historians, indigenous wisdom holders, local naturalists). Tickets are paid (sometimes free). Flamekeeper can attend for free as volunteers. (Think a <a href="#">Street Retreat</a> or <a href="#">Night Walk</a> ).
<b>Member Forums</b>		Flamekeepers participate in informed, deliberative democracy for their shared life together and in partnership with the SF Contemplarium.
<b>Quarterly</b>		
<b>Equinox/Solstice Salons</b>		The SF Contemplarium offers a professionally-led panel conversation and hands-on workshop with experts on the season's theme. Tickets are paid. Flamekeeper can attend for free as volunteers. (Like our successful <a href="#">Fall Equinox Salon: Death as Part of Life</a> ).
<b>Seasonal Ingatherings</b>		Flamekeepers lead a neighborhood ritual to honor the turn from one season to the next, along with the symbolic transition in the human journey and life of the neighborhood – e.g. celebrate newcomers in spring, honor retirements in fall. (Like our successful <a href="#">Fall Ingathering</a> last year).
<b>As Needed</b>		
<b>Working Group Meetings</b>		Flamekeepers work together with the SF Contemplarium to deliver some piece of a service project together by the end of the season, or to maintain and improve an existing programs.
<b>Social Gatherings</b>		Flamekeepers gather to connect socially through various activities. (Like potlucks!)

## Seasonal Commitment

Again, we will figure out what works best for us together. As a starting point, we propose asking Flamekeepers to commit to a certain amount of volunteer effort before the start of each season (3 months) to allow us to plan and adjust programming. Each turn of the season will allow individuals to recalibrate and make an informed decision about their next 3 months. We'll iron out the specifics as we practice our community together. (Some [inspiration](#) about how to think about commitment.)

For the Fall 2025 Founding Cohort, the first seasonal commitment would run from ~Nov 15 to ~Feb 15.

## Afterspaces

We will have a community messaging platform for people to connect between our in-person gatherings. (And one day, if we build physical Contemplarium storefronts, the back or upstairs could be a Flamekeeper Common Room ... )

## Our Values

We continuously revisit and recommit to our community values, with these as a starting point:

### As a community of ...

1. **Learning**, we seek growth and curiosity in our experiences and each other.
2. **Support**, we show care and compassion through our words and actions.
3. **Service**, we earn the privilege to serve others through conscientious and sincere service.
4. **Openness**, we show up with truth and integrity even when it isn't easy.
5. **Shared Leadership**, we each contribute to our shared purpose.
6. **Right Relationship**, we respect each others' dignity as moral equals.

# Sustainability

We have fortunately secured some grant funding (yay!) to help launch the Neighborhood Flamekeepers program, so that will help cover much of the cost of our Founding Cohort. But for this community to be sustainable and [civically-aligned](#), we need **shared financial leadership** to keep our purpose alive long-term. We ask for every Neighborhood Flamekeeper to contribute to the cost of making a community of mutual support possible:

- **Initial Cohort Immersive:** \$150\* (Founding Cohort)
  - Your contribution will defray a small part of the venue and facilitator costs. Grant funding will cover the remainder of the venue and facilitator costs, administration costs, supplies, and coffee/snacks.
- **Flamekeeper Community Dues:** \$20/mo\* (or \$60/season) (Founding Cohort)
  - Your contribution will sustain Flamekeeper-only (🔥) events to enable mutual support as a community: regular meeting places, snacks, hosting materials, and a shared budget for regular learning and deepening opportunities.

\***Financial support** is available through the Flamekeeper Fund, which you can request at registration after acceptance into a cohort. This financial support is to help ensure that all Neighborhood Flamekeepers have the opportunity to participate in our full range of activities.

## Questions or Comments?

Please reach out to Seanan at [seanan@sfcontemplarium.org](mailto:seanan@sfcontemplarium.org) – happy to be in touch!