

慈濟 Tzu Chi

Buddhism in Action



Making Masks, Protecting Lives

May 2020

Giving Love Amid the Pandemic

Translated by Teresa Chang



Tzu Chi volunteers in Hong Kong package face masks to be distributed to the underprivileged.

COURTESY OF TZU CHI HONG KONG

The COVID-19 pandemic has been constantly on my mind for the past few months. To contain the disease, many countries have imposed lockdowns and closed their borders. Citizens have been ordered to stay home, and businesses have shut down. Disadvantaged people are particularly vulnerable at a time like this. Many of them scrape together a living by doing odd jobs. For them, a day without work is a day without pay, meaning their whole families might have to go hungry. Sustaining a livelihood during this crisis has become very difficult indeed.

Wealthier people have the ability to stock up on food and other supplies during this time, but the poor are unable to buy the things they need. They need a hand to pull them through this difficult time. It's no wonder some poor people in Honduras burst into tears when they received rice that Tzu Chi sent from Taiwan. Such support meant a lot to them during this time.

Poverty, unemployment, and hunger can lead to social unrest. That concern prompted Tzu Chi volunteers in the Philippines to start distributing rice to help the needy weather the coronavirus crisis. Their goal was to help 80,000 households. Their work, however, was made difficult due to the government's lockdown measures. Everything from purchasing the rice, to its transportation, to its distribution became more complex. In addition, the government had forbidden citizens 60 and older from leaving their homes to protect them from the virus, but many of our more experienced volunteers are in that age bracket. How could they help with the distributions? Though housebound, they were determined to do what they could to help. They knew that many people were in dire need of Tzu Chi's aid. Instead of sitting idly by, they made phone calls to help organize the distributions, to procure resources and manpower, and to apply for movement permits for volunteers. With everyone's help, the first distribution was launched on April 5. Many more followed in the following weeks.

The relief operation was a huge undertaking, with so many households to serve. I asked the volunteers if they were tired. They said they were indeed, but their tiredness was nothing to them because many people needed the aid. I could only imagine how daunting it must have been for them to organize this

mission during this challenging time. Their dedication to helping the underserved deeply moved me.

Everyone at the distributions observed social distancing. The waiting lines were long but orderly—everyone took a step forward only when the person in front of them had done so. Each family received enough to last them for a month. Because the participants cooperated and followed instructions, our volunteers were able to successfully pull off one distribution after another. Kudos to both the aid recipients and the volunteers.

Our volunteers live in many countries around the world, but traveling abroad is challenging now. Thanks to online technology, they can still “visit” the spiritual home of all Tzu Chi volunteers—the Jing Si Abode in Taiwan. We can still connect via videoconferencing. Some days, I'm able to “meet” with volunteers from 20 countries.

Volunteers from Hong Kong shared with me in one conference that during a Tzu Chi distribution of face masks for the underserved, an older person said to them, “In a time like this, a gift of masks is better than one of gold or even a house.” People everywhere need masks to wear, especially first responders and frontline medical workers. However, many of them don't have the proper equipment to protect themselves as they work to protect others.

Seeing the need, Tzu Chi volunteers around the world have looked everywhere for medical supplies to buy and donate to the needy and to those on the front lines of COVID-19. Purchasing masks during the pandemic has been very challenging. Some of our volunteers even waited at production lines to ensure that they could get their supplies, and once they had obtained the goods, they immediately had them shipped out. This is just what our volunteers do after a disaster—they see a need and spring into action to address it.

I feel as if I was shouldering the sky every day to prevent it from collapsing. I'm truly worried about the world and I feel every bit of the burden. I hope everyone can contribute their strength, so we can shoulder the responsibility of the world together. Let us pray piously for blessings and do good to relieve suffering. If everyone could do that, it would be like drops of water converging into the sea, and we would be able to nourish the whole world. ❀

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Address: No. 2, Lide Road, Beitou District, Taipei City 11259, Taiwan.
Telephone: 886-2-2898-9000 ext 2001
Fax: 886-2-2898-9994
E-mail: chris_wu@tzuchi.org.tw

Tzu Chi Bimonthly

Publisher

Shih Cheng Yen

Managing Editor

Wu Hsiao-ting

Senior Editor

Douglas Shaw

Volunteer Editor

Steven Turner

Volunteer Translator

Teresa Chang

Designer

Chen Yu-ling

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A Stitch in Time

Making Masks to Protect Lives

By Li Shu-yun

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe

The first confirmed coronavirus case in Taiwan on January 21 was followed by a shortage of face masks. Seeing the need, Tzu Chi volunteers jumped in to help relieve the shortage. Their actions proved once again the truth of their maxim: "We'll be wherever we are needed."

The weather was clear without a cloud in the sky when I arrived at a face mask factory in Baihe, Tainan, southern Taiwan. Other than the factory itself, the area looked deserted. I had to follow a strict protocol when I entered, donning a clean room outfit before having dust blown off me. Only then was I allowed into the dust-free production area.

The production area was noisy. The machines produced incessant, high-pitched sounds that grated on my eardrums. However, the factory workers and Tzu Chi volunteers inside seemed completely unperturbed by the noise as they adroitly checked the quality of masks and packaged them. Like me, they all wore clean room caps, clothing, and masks. Unlike me, they had to be in those outfits for hours on end.

As an emergency measure against the spread of the novel coronavirus infection, the Taiwanese government began directing the operation of selected mask factories in Taiwan on January 31, 2020. The goal was to produce masks 24 hours a

day, seven days a week. Those efforts grew until the government was coordinating production at 66 factories across Taiwan. Taiwan's armed forces were mobilized to help. Tzu Chi volunteers were invited to join the factory I was visiting to render their voluntary services, too. They started there on February 10, working alongside soldiers and factory employees to help boost mask supply.

Blessed to give

"This is nothing difficult," said volunteer Yang Qiu-rong (楊秋絨). "I feel blessed to be able to participate in any volunteer work, so here I am." Yang is 68 years old, but looks a lot younger than her age. She received her Tzu Chi volunteer certification 25 years ago, in 1995. She told me with a smile that she used to be a hairdresser but now spends most of her time babysitting her grandchild. When she learned in early February that help was needed on face mask production lines, she jumped at the chance to come on board.

She had no idea when she volunteered where she would go to help or what kind of work she would be required to do. But that didn't matter to her. All she knew was that volunteers were needed, and that was enough for her to step forward. "I believed I'd be up to the job. Since I could make myself useful, I reached out. The only thing I knew for certain was that this would be a good chance for me to give to society."

A Tzu Chi volunteer puts masks in order at a face mask factory. Adhering to a strict protocol, volunteers must clean and sanitize their hands and wear appropriate clothing before entering the workspace.

Yang explained to me that her job was to inspect the quality of masks and pack them up. It was easy, she said. Factory employees were responsible for more complicated work, such as operating the machines, leaving simpler work to volunteers like her, who joined the production lines on a daily rotation basis. Simple jobs were best for the new people that came on board every day, since it didn't take much time to learn the ropes.

Though her work was quite repetitive, Yang didn't find it boring at all. She had never worked in a factory before, so this was a brand-new experience for her. She found it more interesting than she had imagined. She reflected and said, "Frankly speaking, if we hadn't been asked to help, we wouldn't have been able to come to the factory and contribute at a time like this. I really cherish this opportunity to be of service. Furthermore, helping others is itself a great source of joy."

Seeing how much she enjoyed giving of herself made me think of all the Tzu Chi volunteers doing what they could for the COVID-19 outbreak. Take those volunteers who are good at sewing. The high demand for face masks in Taiwan has provided the opportunity for them to make cloth masks and mask covers. People can slip medical masks into covers made by the volunteers to protect the masks and prolong their life. Both the cloth masks and mask covers have the added benefit of being environmentally friendly, since they can be washed and used repeatedly.

Tzu Chi has sewing workshops at some of its facilities across Taiwan. In normal times, volunteers at the workshops create handicrafts such as

Tzu Chi volunteers work a day shift at a face mask factory in Baihe, southern Taiwan, in an effort to ratchet up production to meet the shortfall.

bags out of recycled or donated fabrics. During this pandemic, they put their skills to good use by making cloth masks and mask covers. Volunteers first worked out the prototypes for the masks and covers with Master De Pei (德佩) at the Jing Si Abode, then went to work. Some garment manufacturers joined in the effort by generously lending out sewing machines and mobilizing professional seamstresses to help. From February 10 to March 15 alone, volunteers put in 9,100 shifts and turned out more than 87,000 masks and covers.

Spending time on benefiting mankind

I met Cai Yue-li (蔡月麗), 60, at one such workshop in Shanhua, southern Taiwan. She was responsible for teaching other volunteers at the workshop how to make cloth masks. She is outgoing, chipper, and likes to sew. She is one of the veterans at this workshop, having established it with other volunteers 12 years ago.

Cai used to help at her husband's roll-up door company. Back then, she would go to her husband's company at four in the afternoon and take care of things that needed her attention. Time outside of that was free for her, so she usually went shopping or had afternoon tea with her friends. After she semi-retired, she began spending most of her time teaching at the workshop.

She never imagined back then that she would end up at the workshop, let alone become a teacher, but she feels that her time is better spent at the workshop than on shopping or socializing. Volunteering is a fulfilling way to pass her time, and she is happy that she can use her sewing skills

Cai Yue-li demonstrates to other volunteers how to sew a mask at a Tzu Chi sewing workshop in Shanhua, southern Taiwan. Everyone wants to do what they can to help during the rampant COVID-19 pandemic.





Volunteers pose with masks they have made at a Tzu Chi office in Jiali, southern Taiwan.

in the fight against the pandemic. Though it is not hard to make a mask, she emphasized the importance of being mindful in the process, especially when it comes to teaching other volunteers how to make one. If she makes a mistake in how she teaches others, her error could be multiplied many times over.

Every volunteer at the workshop was good at sewing. “We help each other and learn from each other,” she remarked as she picked up a mask sample. “We worked together to streamline the process so that the end products would be consistent in quality.”

She said that most of the volunteers that came to the workshop no longer worked in the sewing trade, but their skills were still there—they just needed some refreshing. “We learn as we go,” she said. “The happiest things for me in the current stage of my life are learning and sharing.” Many people in the world live in hardship, she said. She felt that we shouldn’t think too much or dwell on our own miseries. Instead, we should strive to make the most out of our lives so that we won’t have any regrets when we get old.

Making oneself useful

I met volunteer Lai Ruizheng (賴瑞徵) at another sewing workshop in Sanchong, northern Taiwan. The 70-year-old comes from Wuxi, Jiangsu Province, China. She came to Taiwan right before Chinese New Year to be certified as a Tzu Chi Honorary Board member by Master Cheng Yen in Hualien, eastern Taiwan. After she received her certification, she decided to spend the New Year with the Master at the Jing Si Abode. She spent ten days at the Abode, where she made herself useful by sweeping the floor and picking through vegetables.

She had planned to return to China on February 9, but then the coronavirus epidemic hit. Her family in China advised her to extend her stay in Taiwan. Later, other volunteers enlisted her help in making cloth masks. She wasn’t good at sewing, but she thought there had to be other work she could do, so she pitched in.

Starting on February 10, she began reporting every day to the sewing workshop in the Tzu Chi Sanchong Complex. Their production process consisted of tracing the mask patterns onto fabric, cutting the pieces out, sewing them together, inspecting the completed products, and ironing them. Volunteers worked in a sort of relay effort to turn out mask after mask. Lai’s job was to take apart defective masks. “At first we’d work every



Cloth masks made by Tzu Chi volunteers. These masks were made with moisture-resistant fabrics provided by DA.AI Technology.

day until eight in the evening,” she said. “Then, when March rolled around and the demand for masks was no longer so high, we started leaving earlier.”

She explained that a lot of care was required in taking apart a mask so that the fabric wasn’t damaged. She was impatient with the process when she started, but Master Cheng Yen’s Dharma talks playing on the site helped calm her mind. She would tell herself how the Master always reminded her disciples to be mindful in their work, and that settled her down. Gradually she even began to enjoy her work.

Lai said that though she and her relatives and friends in China were temporarily apart, they met online every evening in a study group where they read works by Master Cheng Yen. She mentioned that the Master once said that the purpose of doing good deeds was not to garner fame, recognition, or spiritual merits. Instead, everyone should regard it their duty to give of themselves and serve others selflessly. Lai bore those words in her heart as she tried to contribute however she could.

Following the coronavirus outbreak, it became a common sight for people in Taiwan to stand in line at a pharmacy to purchase medical masks. Tzu Chi volunteers across the island took up mask-making to relieve the shortage so that more medical masks could be reserved for frontline medical workers and sick people. By contributing their time and strength, they hoped to help everyone pull through the COVID-19 crisis. ❀

Service With a Smile Cooking for Healthcare Professionals

By Li Shu-yun and Yang Shun-bin

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Tzu Chi volunteers derived immense pleasure by preparing boxed meals for hospital workers during the coronavirus outbreak. They put their heart and soul into cooking these meals. They hoped that they could spark joy in the hearts of the frontline medical workers the moment they opened their meal boxes.

More than 400 coronavirus cases had been diagnosed in Taiwan by late April 2020. Many more people, over 100,000, have been or are currently under home quarantine. Though Taiwan has fared better than most other countries in the containment of COVID-19, the disease still looms large for people on the island. The virus is like an invisible enemy, creating not just physical and social distance between people, but also emotional distance. The disease has brought suspicion and wariness and driven wedges between people. This tense atmosphere was exemplified in early March when some eating establishments refused to deliver orders to hospitals for fear of infection. Though anxiety about the coronavirus was understandable, such actions were a blow to the morale of the medical professionals who had been working hard to save lives ever since the disease broke out.

How it started

The kitchen at the Tzu Chi Nei Hu Campus, Taipei, was busier than usual on the morning of March 26. Volunteers began arriving around six,

one after another, until there were nearly 50 of them busy at one job or another. Xu Li-xun (許麗薰) signed in her fellow volunteers as they arrived and sanitized their hands. They dove into work, some picking through and washing vegetables, some chopping ingredients, and some disinfecting lunch boxes with scalding hot water. They worked efficiently together like a well-trained and coordinated army.

When Chen Mei-yue (陳美月), a senior volunteer who lives in the Nei Hu District of Taipei City, saw news of restaurants refusing to accept delivery orders from hospitals, she thought, "It'd be great if we could provide [the medical workers] with boxed meals to warm their stomachs and hearts." Tri-Service General Hospital, located near the Tzu Chi Nei Hu Campus, came naturally to her mind. The hospital was a major medical

A volunteer places boxed meals into a Styrofoam box to keep them warm for delivery to medical workers. Tzu Chi volunteers prepared lunches for medical workers during the COVID-19 pandemic to offer them support and cheer them on. HUANG XIAO-ZHE





facility. During a time like the coronavirus outbreak, she knew medical professionals there must be working extra hard to safeguard people's lives.

Chen knew that some of her fellow volunteers in the Datong District had initiated a meal delivery program for the medical staff at the Zhongxing branch of Taipei City Hospital earlier during the outbreak. Inspired by their action, she decided to contact Tri-Service General Hospital and ask if they'd like Tzu Chi to prepare vegetarian lunches for them. Much to her pleasant surprise, the response was very enthusiastic. A daily average of more than 600 people signed up for the week-long meal service. That number covered nearly one-third of all workers at the Tri-Service hospital during the day.

"We're cooking for 800 people today," said Wu Sun (吳笋), who has served as a culinary volunteer for more than ten years. "For that number, we'll need to stir-fry two large woks of edamame

Nearly 50 Tzu Chi volunteers were mobilized every day for the one-week meal service for healthcare professionals at Tri-Service General Hospital in the Neihu District, Taipei. Volunteers took care of everything from preparing ingredients and cooking them, to packing up and delivering the meals, to cleaning up.

HSIAO YIU-HWA

beans." She poured some pre-boiled beans into a wok, dexterously added in pepper, sesame oil, and other seasoning, then stir-fried the ingredients over high heat. The aroma of the dish instantly permeated the air.

Working alongside Wu was Yu Zhen-hao (余真好), also a veteran culinary volunteer. Wu and Yu have worked together for a long time and have developed remarkable chemistry. Working with Chen Mei-yue, they created the menus for the Tri-

Service General Hospital meal service. The trio made sure each meal was nutritionally balanced, appetizing, and attractive, and that no dish was repeated during the course of the week.

Wu explained that every meal contained two main dishes. On this day, there were Smoked Gluten Rolls and Three-Cup Mushrooms. These main dishes were accompanied by edamame beans, bok choy, and pickled leaf mustard. The mushrooms contained polysaccharides, and the edamame beans were rich in protein. In addition to being nutritious, the food was appetizing and displayed an enticing combination of colors.

To ensure that the boxed meals would arrive at the hospital by 11 a.m., more than 20 volunteers started a little after 9 a.m. portioning out food into lunch boxes. After they had prepared 650 boxes of food, they packed the meals into 22 containers and loaded them onto a sterilized truck to be delivered to Tri-Service General Hospital. Deputy Superintendent Cheng Shu-meng (鄭書孟) was

there to greet the volunteers when they arrived with the food. The hospital is a military hospital, so Political Warfare Director He Zhong-nan (何中南) was also on hand to greet the volunteers.

The deputy superintendent and director said that due to COVID-19, their hospital had instituted measures to avoid crowd-gathering during lunch hours, which made having lunch more of an inconvenience for

hospital employees. The meals provided by Tzu Chi thus saved some trouble for the employees, especially for those working in the isolation ward. They thanked Tzu Chi profusely for their service.

The meals were delivered to the hospital by 11 a.m., and at two p.m. volunteers visited the hospital again to collect empty meal boxes. As the volunteers were getting ready to leave, a hospital worker, Ms. Li, came out to thank them. She said that she had once enjoyed a Tzu Chi boxed meal while attending a meeting at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, and she had been impressed by how delicious it was. She said that the boxed meals

this time were just as tasty as the one she had eaten at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. Many of her colleagues were just as impressed. "It was just like a home-cooked meal, except that there was no meat in it," some remarked. Obviously, the food had gone down well even with non-vegetarians.

A lot of care

The empty lunch boxes were properly washed at the hospital, but to guarantee the safety of volunteers and those who would use the boxes next, the containers were given another thorough wash when they were delivered back to the Neihu campus. A dozen volunteers put on raincoats, face masks, and gloves before breaking into three groups for the task. They first disinfected the boxes with alcohol, then washed them with detergent and water. The boxes were heat-dried in the final step. A lot of care was used in the process.

It took the volunteers nearly three hours to process the 600-plus meal boxes. It wasn't an easy job. They were on their feet when they first started, but they eventually had to sit down to relieve their aching lower backs. And because everyone was wearing a raincoat, they became very sweaty too. Despite the physical challenges, no one complained. Instead, they were happy for the chance to give.

Volunteers contributed more than their time, energy, and strength for this meal service. They contributed their money too, as they divided the cost for all the vegetables and other ingredients among themselves.

Chen Mei-yue said that many Tzu Chi events had been cancelled on account of the coronavirus, and the Neihu campus was thus a lot quieter than normal. She was glad that the meal program had brought some liveliness back to the campus and had offered volunteers a chance to give during the outbreak. She hoped to spread love to more hospitals via more meal programs during this difficult time.

Tzu Chi hot meal service

In the 54 years since Tzu Chi was established, Taiwan has experienced countless natural disasters. After every disaster, Tzu Chi volunteers are on-site to provide support to first responders and survivors. Sometimes the love of the volunteers is manifested in one serving of hot food after another, which warms not just people's stomachs but also their hearts.





Tzu Chi meals delivered to Tri-Service General Hospital are distributed to hospital workers.

HSIAO YIU-HWA

For the purpose of providing meals in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, almost all Tzu Chi Jing Si Halls around Taiwan are equipped with cooking facilities. The Tzu Chi Neihsu Campus was the first Tzu Chi facility in northern Taiwan to boast a central kitchen. The kitchen has played a vital role in the foundation's disaster relief work in Taiwan, including the September 21 Earthquake in 1999, Typhoon Xangsane in 2000, Typhoon Nari in 2001, the SARS epidemic in 2003, and even the TransAsia Airways Flight GE235 crash five years ago.

Chen Mei-yue recalled that 21 years ago, after the September 21 Earthquake, she and her husband, Qin Ji-xiong (秦基雄), rushed to a col-

lapsed 12-story building in Songshan, Taipei, to determine what assistance Tzu Chi could render. As soon as they arrived, they saw rescue workers there having breakfast. The couple asked the first responders if they had their lunches lined up, and they said no. After inquiry, Chen found that they would need to fix about a thousand boxed meals for the people on-site. She quickly contacted other volunteers to help purchase ingredients and prepare the lunches. By noon, a thousand meals had been delivered to the disaster site.

Master Cheng Yen was impressed when she learned what Chen and the other volunteers had accomplished. "You managed to prepare so much

Volunteers deliver boxed meals to the Zhongxing branch of Taipei City Hospital.

HUANG XIAO-ZHE



food with such a small kitchen!” she exclaimed. The cooking facilities they had back then weren’t as good as they are now, but that wasn’t a problem for the volunteers. “Nothing is difficult if you have the will to do it” has always been their motto.

The volunteers have better facilities today, so cooking for large numbers of people is even less of a challenge for them. Though the pandemic required them to take extra precautions when preparing the meals, they didn’t hesitate to step forward—they had confidence they would be able to pull it off.

Thank-you notes

Volunteers in the Taipei districts of Datong, Zhongshan, and Bade were the first volunteers in northern Taiwan to initiate a meal delivery service for hospital workers during COVID-19. On

weekdays from March 16 to 31, volunteers in the three districts took turns providing lunches to workers at the Zhongxing branch of Taipei City Hospital.

March 26 was the last day volunteers in the Datong District were responsible for organizing the meal service. Everyone went all out. More than 1,300 people had signed up for lunches on this day. Aside from more than 400 hospital workers, lunch recipients included police officers, fire fighters, government workers, school staffers and students, and community residents in the local area. In fact, Tzu Chi provided vegetarian food to anyone who signed up for the program to promote vegetarianism during the pandemic. The foundation has for a long time now urged people to eat vegetarian in order to nurture compassion, protect the Earth, and help dispel disasters. A cri-

sis like the pandemic has especially called for people to amass blessings by eating vegetarian and preventing animals from being killed.

On the morning of March 26, the kitchen area in the Jing Si Hall in the Datong District was all astir. The kitchen itself was small and only a few people could work in there at the same time, so most volunteers had to work outside. Right outside the kitchen a group of volunteers were preparing food ingredients. Off to another side, more volunteers were washing vegetables at a row of kitchen sinks.

Volunteer Zhang Gui-yan (張貴燕), who oversaw cooking here, explained that the most important thing in planning a menu was to avoid the repetition of dishes. Another guideline was using in-season vegetables or vegetables rich in protein. Ingredients needed to be varied in color too

so that the completed dishes would look appealing.

Zhang said that though the bottom of her feet hurt from standing too long every day during the meal service program, she wasn’t bothered at all. She and the other volunteers involved in the program had received a lot of warm, uplifting feedback from program participants, and that was enough to make her forget her fatigue. She was

Volunteers collect empty meal boxes, disinfect them with alcohol, give them a thorough wash, and then sterilize them with high heat. A lot of care was used in the process to ensure the safety of volunteers and people who signed up for the meal service.



HUANG XIAO-ZHE



HSIAO YIU-HWA



HSIAO YIU-HWA



HUANG XIAO-ZHE



also happy to see volunteers developing closer bonds by participating in the meal service.

Wang Yi-zhen (王憶偵) started volunteering for the service on March 24. She said that every time the empty meal boxes were delivered back to them, they had to sterilize them with alcohol before giving them a good wash and then disinfecting them with steam. The sun would be high in the sky when they started working, but would have sunk below the horizon by the time they finished. After washing for five hours straight—there were about 1,300 meal boxes to wash each time—everyone's back hurt and their faces were covered in sweat. "We've washed a year's worth of lunch boxes," some would say, exhausted.

However, washing the containers wasn't all drudgery. Wang took out a thank-you note she had discovered in an empty meal box. The piece of paper read, "This was a precious boxed meal, more delicious than what's offered at the most sumptuous banquet." Besides notes like this discovered in returned meal boxes, lunch recipients sent their thanks via a group chat too. Wang said that these encouraging words were very important to her and her fellow volunteers. They made her forget her tiredness, filled her with renewed energy, and made her more eager to serve the next day.

"Our hospital has more than a thousand employees," said Chen Jing-lin (陳靜琳), director of the administrative center at the Zhongxing branch of Taipei City Hospital. "We were really surprised when we learned that Tzu Chi imposed no limit on the number of meals we could order. They said they would give us as many as we wanted." According to the director, some employees at first hesitated to sign up because they felt they had done nothing to deserve such kindness, but they changed their minds after hearing about Tzu Chi's effort to promote vegetarianism. Some signed up later during the program when they heard their colleagues praise how delicious the food was.

Volunteer Wang Yi-zhen says that though it was hard work washing over a thousand lunch boxes every day with other volunteers, the heart-warming feedback from hospital workers made her forget her fatigue. The note from a recipient in the meal box reads: "This was a precious boxed meal, more delicious than what's offered at the most sumptuous banquet."

HUANG XIAO-ZHE

Chen also shared that when the September 21 Earthquake hit in 1999, many medical workers from her hospital went to the disaster areas in central Taiwan to help. An orthopedist on that mission told her that except for their first meals, all their other meals during their stay in the disaster areas were provided by Tzu Chi. "I might have dropped dead of hunger midway through our mission if not for Tzu Chi," the orthopedist even said, half jokingly.

Salute frontline healthcare workers

"Every Tzu Chi volunteer carries a sense of social responsibility," said volunteer Chen Shun-chi (陳順池) of the Datong District. He observed that everyone, like him, was grateful for the chance to serve and cheer on frontline healthcare professionals during the pandemic. It was just like during the SARS epidemic. Instead of holding back, volunteers seized every chance to give.

Since the outbreak started, the Tzu Chi headquarters in Taiwan has endeavored to provide the best support for the Taiwanese government. In addition to meal services for hospitals and other institutions, the foundation has provided more than 40,000 gift packs for people under home quarantine. Tzu Chi has also donated medical masks, rubber gloves, safety goggles, protective gowns, alcohol for disinfection, and other anti-coronavirus supplies to first responders, the National Immigration Agency, and detention centers for illegal immigrants.

Faced with a virus for which no cure has been discovered yet, Master Cheng Yen says that the best way to respond is to eat vegetarian to protect life, pray piously for the welfare of the world, do things that benefit all living creatures, respect one another, and love life. She hopes more people can join to do good and allow more kindness and love to converge to help carry people through the pandemic in peace. (Part of the information of the article was provided by Lu Qiao-mei.)

Respect and Love

Even More of a Necessity During the Coronavirus

By Shu Min Park

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Panic and distrust are sometimes worse enemies than the virus itself during a disease outbreak. When you become a victim of discrimination, you appreciate even more the values of respect and love.

COVID-19 has spread around the world like wildfire, but South Korea was one of the hardest hit countries early in the pandemic. It seemed like all the eyes of the world were focused on the country during that time.

I'm from South Korea and am now, like my older sister, studying in Taiwan. My father, Dong Seob Park, is from South Korea, and my mother, Shu Ling Yen (嚴淑齡), is from Taiwan. Both are Tzu Chi volunteers in South Korea. Following in my parents' footsteps, my sister and I also became Tzu Chi volunteers. We received our volunteer certifications in October 2019.

In late January this year, my parents came to Taiwan to celebrate Chinese New Year at the Jing Si Abode, the Buddhist convent founded by Dharma Master Cheng Yen. By then, I'd heard that a contagious disease was spreading in Wuhan, China. I had noticed that there was a decrease in the number of visitors at the Abode, and that many were wearing face masks. There were even temperature checks at the entrance for visitors. I didn't think much about it at the time—I thought people were just being cautious. Only later, after we had left the Abode and learned from the news that Wuhan had been put on a lockdown, did I realize how grave the situation had become.

Back in 2003, when the SARS epidemic broke out in China, my mother, sister, and I were living in Qingdao, Shandong Province, eastern China. Because we were foreign nationals, we had

applied for and installed a satellite dish, and thus were able to watch TV programs from South Korea and other countries. And although the Internet at that time wasn't as prevalent as it is today, we could also go online. When Mom learned from the TV and Internet about the spread of an unidentified virus in southern China, she immediately requested leaves of absence for my sister and me from the school we were attending. She decided that my sister and I should stop going to school to be on the safe side.

It wasn't long before SARS began quickly spreading in China. As a result, my dad couldn't come to join us in Qingdao. Mom, my sister, and I were homebound for as long as six months.

That was an unforgettable period in my memory. I was a first grader back then, and it felt great not having to go to school. I spent a lot of happy time with Mom. After I had grown up, I'd sometimes hear Mom talking about that period. She said that in order to stay safe from the epidemic, she left home only once a week to go shopping. Except for that, she never ventured out of our home.

Each of her trips to the supermarket was carefully planned down to the last detail. First, she'd make a list of things she wanted to buy. Next, she would plan a route through the supermarket that would allow her to complete her shopping as quickly as possible. She wanted to reduce her chance of exposure by shopping as efficiently as she could. Then she'd put on a hat, a face mask,



and gloves—literally covering herself from head to toe—before rushing into the supermarket, snatching up the items on her list as she ran from one aisle to the next, then dashing to the counter to pay for her purchases. With her planning and preparation, she could make it in and out of the supermarket in no time.

Mom said that those six months were difficult for her. It was not easy taking care of two kids in a foreign country by herself, let alone having to live with the additional threat of the invisible yet severe epidemic looming over us. She often felt helpless and fearful, and the self-imposed isolation left her physically and emotionally exhausted. However, she also said the experience taught her the importance of staying alert and vigilant at all times. Constant vigilance and awareness of risks helps one stay safe and sound, and nothing is more of a blessing than being safe and sound.

Who was to know that 17 years later another unknown virus would appear, with no cure or vaccine in sight? When Mom saw the news of the coronavirus, she said, "Things aren't looking good. We need to begin taking precautions, and more importantly, get mentally prepared."

Shu Min Park, the author of this article, reports on the coronavirus situation in South Korea on February 22 while her father, Dong Seob Park, videotapes her. In the background is Cheongdo County's Daenam Hospital, where a mass outbreak of COVID-19 had occurred.

SHU LING YEN

The eruption

When we arrived back in South Korea from Taiwan on February 1, there were just a few confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the country. At Incheon Airport, Chinese passengers had to undergo screening in a dedicated area, while non-Chinese travelers could proceed directly through customs if they didn't have a fever. The Chinese people in the screening area all wore tense expressions, and people passing by, including me, couldn't help but look at them. Never in our wildest dreams did we imagine that the situation would be reversed just a few weeks later.

My family and I predicted early on that the epidemic would get much worse, so aside from Dad, who had to go out to work, we all stayed home as much as we could. During this period, we visited our grandma once. Our Korean rela-

tives thought we were making a mountain out of a molehill when they saw us wearing face masks and immediately washing our hands as soon as we entered the house. They told us not to be so nervous, that though confirmed cases were appearing in South Korea, the media had said that the disease had a high rate of recovery. Most Koreans, like our relatives, didn't yet have a sense of crisis at the time. Almost no one on the streets was wearing a mask.

The 31st confirmed coronavirus case appeared in South Korea on February 18. Just two days later, on the 20th, the total number of confirmed cases had spiked to 82. After that, it was like the fabled Pandora's Box had been opened—the situation rapidly spun out of control. Mayor Kwon Young-jin of Daegu, a southern city that was hit hard, had no choice but to publicly ask for help. He expressed concerns that the mounting infections in the city would soon overwhelm the local health infrastructure. He called for urgent assistance from the central government.

The 31st patient of the coronavirus was a member of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, based in Daegu. The patient sought treatment several times after showing symptoms of a fever, but

refused to be tested for COVID-19. She even attended several gatherings of church members during this time. By the time she eventually tested positive, more than a hundred people had come into contact with her. This regretful situation was further compounded when some members of the same church refused to comply with the government's anti-coronavirus measures. Because the efforts to contain the outbreak were thus hampered, the disease quickly spread in many southern communities.

Finding ways to give

I was eating breakfast early on the morning of February 22 when news broke about the explosion of confirmed coronavirus cases in Daegu and surrounding North Gyeongsang Province. The total number of infected persons at that time was 346.

Accompanied by their parents, Shu Min Park (second from right) and her older sister, Po Lin Park (second from left), received their volunteer certifications from Master Cheng Yen in Hualien, eastern Taiwan, on October 26, 2019.

CHEN YI-QIAN



Seeing how severe the situation had become, Mom and Dad felt that as Tzu Chi volunteers, we had to go check things out. Mom saw the worried, questioning look on my face, and knew I was concerned about visiting affected areas. She comforted me by saying: "We won't come in physical contact with others, and we won't go into a hospital. We'll take all necessary precautions. We're just going there to look and collect information to send back to Tzu Chi. We need to find out if there is anything we can do to help. Let's keep our thoughts positive."

I instantly felt ashamed of myself. I had become a certified Tzu Chi volunteer just last year, and yet when things happened, all I thought of was my own fear and safety. On the other hand, Mom and Dad focused on how they could help others in such a crisis. I really have a lot to learn from them.

Our nerves were taut as we took every possible precaution during our trip. We kept our masks on all through our visit to the regions hit by the epidemic. We washed our hands as often as we could and thoroughly sanitized our hands with alcohol every time we returned to our car to visit another area. We even avoided eating in the affected regions to prevent infection.

We arrived at Daenam Hospital in Cheongdo County, North Gyeongsang Province, after a four-hour car ride. A mass outbreak of COVID-19 had occurred at the hospital. Though the public had been forbidden to get close to it, we found a spot where we could videotape the exterior of the hospital from a distance. Dad served as the cameraman, Mom recorded the situation in writing, and I reported in front of the camera. As soon as we finished our documenting work, we hopped back into the car and moved on to the next destination.

Later that day, we added the latest coronavirus updates from the government to the information we had collected and transmitted it all back to Tzu Chi's Da Ai TV. We made the most of every second during our trip and did what we were there to do. Our trip had been a good and enriching one.

The number of infected cases in South Korea continued to rise sharply, and the prices of medical supplies and protective gear spiked along with it. The media began to criticize the authorities for missing the golden window to avert the epidemic. People started to panic. Long lines began to form in front of shops that sold face masks and other protective gear.

Despite that, the crisis this time allowed me to witness once again the strong cohesion and solidarity among South Koreans as a nation. Every

time a major disaster strikes, people in my country put their support behind the government and work together to pull our country through the challenge. Everyone donates generously to help out, from big enterprises to small businesses, from celebrities to ordinary folks. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the same spirit of cohesion and solidarity was again clearly evident.

Medical care workers, for example, have made laudable efforts. Many healthcare professionals volunteered to serve in the areas hit hard by the epidemic. Some even brought their own medical supplies and equipment with them to avoid using the precious medical resources in the affected areas. The government also offered enticing benefits to medical workers to encourage more people to join in the fight against the coronavirus.

The South Korean government has, through legislation, introduced many policies and measures to fight the disease. They are sparing no efforts to help our country overcome the outbreak. Though things are still difficult there, I believe that with everyone's combined efforts, South Korea will pull through again.

Warm care

One time, I unwittingly spoke Chinese when I was still back home in South Korea. As soon as the words had left my mouth, I received very unfriendly looks from people around me. My cousin Jin Gyu Baek experienced something similar. He was the first Korean to have graduated from the Department of Communication Studies at Tzu Chi University in Taiwan. Once he happened to be talking to a Taiwanese friend on the phone when he was dining in a restaurant in South Korea in the early days of the outbreak. When the woman sitting at the table next to my cousin's heard him speaking Chinese, she immediately rose from the table, grabbed her child by the hand, and left the restaurant.

In South Korea, we were afraid to speak Chinese when we were out and about. But when my sister and I returned to Taiwan to resume our studies after the winter break, the situation was reversed due to the escalating coronavirus situation in South Korea. We had to remember not to speak Korean. The epidemic has really taught me a lot, especially the importance of respect for others. I deeply regret having given unfriendly looks to the Chinese travelers at Incheon Airport back in South Korea.

Panic and distrust are sometimes worse enemies than the virus itself during a disease out-

break. When I became a victim of discrimination, I thought of how Master Cheng Yen had taught us to harbor “gratitude, respect, and love” for others. I also came to a deeper realization of the value of the Buddha’s teachings about how all lives are equal. These teachings of the Buddha and Master Cheng Yen have great significance—when one is discriminated against because of one’s race, nationality, skin color, or other factors, the psychological trauma inflicted can be tremendous.

Many things aren’t as simple as we think. Chinese people themselves don’t want to get the virus—they are victims too. Some foreigners think that all Chinese people eat bats and that’s why they got the virus, but that thinking is misguided. Are all South Koreans members of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus? Of course not!

One day my sister visited a shop in Taiwan after she had returned from South Korea. Hearing her accent, the shop owner asked her where she was from. My sister told me afterwards that that was the first time in her life she had ever felt nervous and insecure because she was South Korean.

Despite her apprehension, my sister honestly told the shop owner that she was a South Korean. Much to her surprise, the shop owner said to her, “Do you miss your family then? With what is now happening in South Korea, you probably won’t be able to return home anytime soon.” My sister was deeply touched at that moment. She had thought that she would probably be discriminated against again or receive another look of panic or fear, but instead, the shop owner had shown care and concern for her. Those kind words from the shop owner moved my sister in a profound way. When she told me of the exchange, I was moved too. We felt once again Taiwanese people’s friendliness and love.

The epidemic has driven home to me the real meaning of respect. When others are in distress, we can’t demonstrate true respect for them unless we put ourselves in their shoes and look at things from their perspective.

While the coronavirus outbreak has naturally led us to fear for ourselves, this might also be a good time for us to think of the rights of animals to live. In the same way we fear losing our lives to the coronavirus, animals fear losing theirs too when they are taken to a slaughterhouse to be killed. All lives are equal. Animals are as deserving of respect and empathy for their rights to live as are human beings.



Shu Min Park participates in a prayer event launched by Tzu Chi after the outbreak. COURTESY OF SHU MIN PARK

Protecting others by staying home

I returned to Taiwan on February 23 to continue my graduate studies at Tzu Chi University. At that time, people entering Taiwan from South Korea were not yet required to observe 14 days of home quarantine. All I needed to do was conduct a 14-day period of self-health management, meaning that I could still go out as long as I wore a surgical mask. Even so, I stocked up on food and stayed home as much as I could. In a time like this, staying home is the best way to protect ourselves and others.

Even at home, I could do many things I needed to do. One of my daily routines was participating in a prayer event launched by Tzu Chi. Every afternoon at 1:30, I got online and prayed with other Tzu Chi volunteers for blessings for the world. My parents and sister took part in the event too. Though we were in different places, my parents in South Korea and my sister and I in different places in Taiwan, we could still pray together via the event.

Three weeks after my sister and I had returned to Taiwan, the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in South Korea exceeded 8,000. After that, the disease continued to sweep across countries around the world, causing much alarm and panic. Let’s all take due precautions to protect ourselves and others in this global pandemic, eat vegetarian to show our respect for all lives, and pray piously to amass goodwill. May the outbreak come to an end soon and our world be free from all future disasters. ❀

Serving the Needy During the Outbreak

Text and photo by Bernard Ng Jia Han

Translated by Chong Sin Yin

How are the 700 needy households under the care of Tzu Chi Singapore coping with the COVID-19 outbreak? Read how volunteers launched the Outbreak Relief Program to serve them during the coronavirus crisis.

“I need to make sure that there are sufficient supplies of daily necessities for my mother, especially food and toilet paper,” said Xu, a Tzu Chi care recipient in Singapore. “I was a little worried when I heard about the panic buying because I’d never encountered such a situation before.”

For the last 11 years, Xu has been the sole caregiver for her mother, who suffers from dementia. Amid the COVID-19 outbreak, Xu must not only look after herself, but also ensure the safety and health of her mother. However, the escalation of the coronavirus situation and the shortage of face masks and hand sanitizer have posed great challenges to her.

“I am a caregiver, and I am worried.”

Tzu Chi volunteers have been caring for Xu for four years. On February 19, 2020, they arrived at her home with adult diapers and a gift pack, which included four face masks, a bottle of hand sanitizer, vitamin C, and a package of Tzu Chi instant rice. Also included in the gift pack was a handwritten blessing card for Xu and her mother.

To reduce face-to-face meetings during the coronavirus

outbreak, volunteers arranged for adult diapers for the month of March to be distributed a month earlier, in February. Xu was warmed by volunteers’ thoughtfulness and relieved to have the extra diapers on hand earlier than expected. “Adult diapers are a necessity for my mother,” Xu commented. “I never thought that I would be receiving the diapers earlier. I can now focus on taking care of my mother.”

Volunteers deliver gift bags to families during the Outbreak Relief Program.



Xu has cared for her mother for a long time, so long that she has suffered impairments of her own as a result. For example, her wrist ligament has been damaged from washing her mother and cleaning up the house. Despite the resulting discomfort, Xu, 64, dared not seek medical treatment at a hospital because she didn't have a face mask to wear. Although the Singaporean government distributed four face masks to each household in early February, it was not enough for her. Without a mask, she was worried about picking up the virus at the hospital and passing it on to her mother.

"Face masks are treasured items in a time like this," Xu said, referring to the shortage of face masks caused by the outbreak. "I tried my best to get some online, but couldn't find any." Just as she was wracking her brain about what else she could do, she received a call from a Tzu Chi brother informing her that Tzu Chi volunteers would be distributing face masks. She was very relieved to receive such good news.

"I'm very grateful to Tzu Chi," she added. "I need all the items in this gift pack." She explained that the vitamin C could help strengthen her immune system, the hand sanitizer could help her keep clean, and the instant rice could easily be made into porridge for her mother and save her time.

Calming their minds

Singapore once had the third highest number of confirmed coronavirus cases outside of China, after South Korea and Japan. The fast spreading disease sparked unrest in local communities there, leading to panic buying for stockpiling, as mentioned by Xu. In response to mounting public anxiety, and because disadvantaged families are often the most vulnerable in a crisis like this, Tzu Chi Singapore launched an Outbreak Relief Program on February 8 for more than 700 households receiving the foundation's long-term care.

To safeguard the health of both care recipients and volunteers, Tzu Chi Singapore cancelled most routine home visits for March. Instead, volunteers phoned care recipients to see how they were responding to the outbreak and to ask if they needed anything. They learned that some care recipients were still short of face masks and hand sanitizer, so volunteers delivered these essential

Khoo Jyh Hao, head of Tzu Chi Singapore's Charity Development Department, visits a needy family. Inside the gift pack Tzu Chi prepared for each underprivileged household were four face masks, a bottle of hand sanitizer, vitamin C, and a package of Tzu Chi instant rice.

LAI TONG HENG



items to the households themselves. Volunteers also discovered that some care recipients were receiving coronavirus prevention information from unreliable sources. This prompted volunteers to disseminate correct and positive messages to the care recipients via text.

Khoo Jyh Hao (邱志豪), head of Tzu Chi Singapore's Charity Development Department and coordinator of the Outbreak Relief Program, said that while the government has made great efforts in containing the outbreak, Tzu Chi Singapore is doing its part to calm the anxieties of its care recipients. He pointed out that although the government has distributed face masks to households, there could still be some who were left out, "especially those who are living alone or bedridden or those who hadn't received the information. There could also be families with sick members or those who need face masks urgently due to their occupations."

Hello, how are you doing?

More than a hundred volunteers were mobilized to phone care recipients and check on how they were doing. Guided by a questionnaire, volunteers learned about each family's current situation, including whether their life had been affected by the outbreak or whether any of their family members were under a Leave of Absence or Home Quarantine Order. This latter information was useful in helping volunteers assess the financial situation of the family. If it was necessary, Tzu Chi would arrange subsidies for such families.

Volunteers also asked about the sources that care recipients were relying on to get the latest updates on the coronavirus infection. Compared to the SARS epidemic in 2003, the overabundance and easy availability of information online has made it harder for people to determine what information is credible and trustworthy. To make that process easier, volunteers advised care recipients to subscribe to official channels established by the government so that they could get reliable updates on COVID-19.

Volunteers phoned a total of 521 families. In addition to assessing their needs, volunteers took note of those who preferred not to have visitors during this time. Though volunteers couldn't visit all families personally, they still reached out to them. "We can still—thanks to advances in technology—use our mobile phones to show our care for them," said Ong Hui Shen (王慧嫻), who has many years of experience in conducting home visits to the needy. "We can, for example, text

them at least once a week to ascertain if they are all doing well."

Different household reactions to the outbreak

Volunteers that conducted home visits during the Outbreak Relief Program were required to take special precautions. They had to wear a mask and sanitize their hands before and after a home visit. In addition, each visit was limited to under 30 minutes.

"The outbreak hasn't affected me much," said Mak Mis, an elderly care recipient. She has lived alone for a long time and is a typical example of an extreme optimist. Based on their experience, volunteers found it necessary to visit Mak Mis at her home instead of simply relying on phone calls. Upon their visit, they discovered that she had only three masks left and no hand sanitizer. The gift pack would come in handy for her.

The arrival of Tzu Chi volunteers made her day. "Thank you very much," she said cheerfully to the visitors. "Gan en [Chinese for 'thank you']."

Unlike Mak Mis, another care recipient, Liu, appeared more cautious faced with the threat of the coronavirus. She was a former police officer but had become handicapped as a result of a car accident. She was fully aware of the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, but didn't have enough face masks. She was especially worried about her husband, a taxi driver. He was required to wear a mask at work every day to reduce the risk of infection. Despite that precaution, she was still concerned about his safety.

Though Tzu Chi couldn't give her many masks, she was still very grateful. She said to the visiting volunteers, "When you called to ask what we needed, I knew that it was hard for you during this time to get enough supplies for us. And yet, you were still so willing to help. For that I'm very thankful."

Volunteers delivered gift packs to 487 households spread across Singapore under the Outbreak Relief Program, which couldn't have happened without the volunteers' selfless participation. Khoo thanked everyone for their help. He said about the home visits, "As long as we take adequate precautions to ensure the safety of both the care recipients and ourselves, we needn't be overly worried [about possible infection]."

The program allowed volunteers to send their heartfelt regards and deliver much needed supplies to the underprivileged during a challenging time. Behind the concerted effort was the dedication, love, and warmth of each participating volunteer.

Forming a Line of Protection

Tzu Chi Malaysia's Anti-Coronavirus Efforts



Tzu Chi volunteers in Malaysia swung into action to fight COVID-19 by making severely needed medical supplies, including face shields and protective gowns, for hospital workers. The volunteers' efforts helped ensure the safety of frontline medical workers as they worked to save lives.



Volunteers at the Tzu Chi Klang office in Malaysia make face shields for healthcare professionals. To maintain adequate physical distance between volunteers, only two persons were permitted at each table, and tables themselves were separated by cordons. All finished products had to pass inspection by members of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association before they could be donated. Volunteers in Malaysia have made over 160,000 face shields during the coronavirus outbreak.

LEE WEI KEAN

Making the Best Preparations

By Tang Jia Ruey

Compiled and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Several months have passed since the coronavirus disease first broke out in China. The virus has affected hundreds of countries and territories around the world and led to hundreds of thousands of deaths. The first confirmed coronavirus case in Malaysia was diagnosed on January 25, just a few days before the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a “public health emergency of international concern.” That first patient in Malaysia was from China. On February 3, the first Malaysian citizen tested positive for the infection. The number of reported cases remained relatively low until late February when infections began to increase sharply. By mid-April, close to 5,000 COVID-19 cases had been diagnosed in the nation.

Facing the rapidly spreading disease, hospitals across the country rushed to prepare for the worst. Ching Chen Hua (莊菟佳), deputy CEO of Tzu Chi Kedah, is a nephrology physician at Kedah General Hospital. After the outbreak emerged, she became a member of the anti-coronavirus team at the hospital. Her job was to ensure that the hospital had an adequate stockpile of medical supplies to cope with the outbreak. This was, as could be imagined, no easy mission.

Something even money can't buy

Hospitals generally maintain stockpiles of medical masks and gloves for the daily use of their medical workers. Face shields, however, are another matter. Since occasions calling for their use are rare, manufacturers don't usually mass-produce them.

In a pandemic like COVID-19, however, face shields are of critical importance for doctors and nurses. A face shield is usually worn along with a face mask and isolation gown to protect a medical professional's eyes, nose, or mouth from being

splattered by a patient's infected sputum or body fluids. This is especially needed when the professional is intubating or collecting respiratory samples from a patient. Because face shields help cut down on the chance of infection, it was a matter of course that the demand for them surged after the coronavirus began to spread.

Face shields, like other items of personal protective equipment, can only be used once. After the outbreak, manufacturers couldn't produce them fast enough for those who needed them, and as demand rose, so did the prices. A shield that previously sold for three Malaysian ringgit (US\$0.69) before the emergence of COVID-19 spiked at 16 or even 20 ringgit (US\$4.57).

The high demand for face shields and the resulting shortage had Dr. Ching wringing her hands. Hospital staffers took to making the protective gear themselves during their breaks at work, but the amount they could produce was far from enough to meet the demand. Seeing that, Ching turned to her fellow Tzu Chi volunteers for help. They pledged their full support.

The medical team at Kedah General Hospital was overjoyed when they heard the news that Tzu Chi could help. Dr. Ching first learned how to make a face shield herself, then discussed and collaborated with other Tzu Chi volunteers on how to improve the design. After they had worked out the prototype, Ching proposed making the shields at the Tzu Chi Jing Si Hall in Kedah. To protect volunteers from picking up the virus, the number of participants was kept at a minimum—ten each day. Thirteen hundred face shields could be produced every day with that number, which was enough to temporarily relieve the shortage at the Kedah hospital.

On March 18, the Malaysian government started a nationwide Movement Control Order to curb



the spread of the coronavirus. The order prohibited people from leaving their homes freely, which naturally also limited the movement of Tzu Chi volunteers. To keep the production of face shields up, Kedah's health authorities quickly issued movement permits to volunteers involved in making the face shields. In the end, Tzu Chi volunteers were allowed to continue going to the Jing Si Hall to assist in the production.

Tzu Chi volunteers' efforts in making face shields for Kedah General Hospital quickly spread. Though many government and private medical clinics were not among the facilities designated by the government to screen and treat COVID-19 patients, many medical workers there still feared for their safety. After all, workers at these sorts of facilities were still at risk of encountering asymptomatic carriers of the virus. A Tzu Chi volunteer working at a government health clinic asked Dr. Ching if Tzu Chi could provide three face shields for workers at her clinic. Ching took into consideration that the clinic was in a remote area and it took a long time to travel there, so she gave the clinic a hundred face shields.

In addition to this generous act of giving, Ching asked the volunteer to contact other government clinics and pass the word that Tzu Chi would provide them with as many face shields as they needed, regardless of the locations of their clinics.

Many government clinic employees also made inquiries on how to make face shields on their own. In response, staffers at the Tzu Chi Kedah

Dr. Ching (first from right) works with Tzu Chi volunteers on improving a face shield prototype, using staplers, superglue, sponges, adhesive tape, and clear plastic films. In addition to Tzu Chi facilities, volunteers also gathered in open factory spaces provided by volunteers to make the face shields. Volunteers who lived close to each other also got together and, with each responsible for a specific task, formed mini-production lines to turn out face shields.

COURTESY OF TZU CHI KEDAH

office made an instructional video and made it available online to share the production techniques with more people.

News of the face shields continued to spread. Ching received phone calls from doctors of private medical and dental clinics telling her that they hadn't opened their practices for 14 days due to the outbreak, and that their employees were afraid to show up for work. They hoped that Tzu Chi could give them some face shields so that they could work at ease.

The doctors couldn't stop thanking the foundation for their help after receiving Tzu Chi's face shields. Ching was deeply moved by their responses. She said that Master Cheng Yen once said that if we wanted to help others, we had to go all the way and deliver enough help to make a difference. The physician sincerely hoped that the support from Tzu Chi could help keep healthcare professionals safe and enable them to work with fewer concerns during the pandemic.

One More Layer of Protection, More Peace of Mind

By Chong Yoon Ming and Lau Poh Ling

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting
Photo courtesy of Chong Yoon Ming

Late in the afternoon on March 25, Tzu Chi volunteer Liong Pei Chin (梁佩君) arrived at Kluang General Hospital to pick up a protective gown as a sample. While there, she saw nurses sewing protective gear, such as head and shoe covers. They were working on sewing machines they had brought from home. Her heart went out to them for their effort and dedication.

After obtaining the sample gown and materials provided by the hospital, volunteers in Kluang immediately set out to discuss and decide on the production procedure. The following day, volunteer Chee Kok Cheng (徐國貞) mobilized several employees from her garment factory to join the production team. Chee Kok Hin (徐國興), a tailor, said, “This is the first time I’ve had an opportunity to do something for my country. Such an opportunity is hard to come by. I hope the protective garments we make will provide an extra layer of protection for medical workers and bring them more peace of mind at work.”

Volunteers made 132 protective garments in eight hours. The first batch of clothing was shipped off to Kluang General Hospital less than a day after volunteers obtained the sample and materials. When they arrived, the garments definitely boosted the morale of medical workers at the hospital.



CHONG YOON MING

Delivering Materials

During the Movement Control Order

By Cecelia G. C. Ong

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Lim Choon Nyak

On March 29, volunteers gathered at a volunteer's factory in Bukit Mertajam, Seberang Perai, in the state of Penang. They used the equipment there to cut pieces of fabric for cloth masks. Their efforts were to help ensure that healthcare workers would have enough medical masks for their needs.

At 1:30 in the afternoon, everyone stopped what they were doing and joined a daily prayer event launched by Tzu Chi headquarters in Hualien, eastern Taiwan, to pray for the peace and well-being of the world.

Volunteer Quah Soo Chung (柯濟沅) helped coordinate the production of cloth masks and protective clothing by his fellow volunteers. He also delivered pre-cut pieces of fabric to volunteers' homes for sewing into masks and protective gowns. The photo below shows him being stopped by a police officer during one of his delivery trips. The officer was on duty enforcing the Movement Control Order. When he learned why the volunteer was out and about, he let him pass.



About the Movement Control Order

The Malaysian government initiated the order as a preventive measure in response to the coronavirus outbreak. The content of the order included:

- Prohibition of movement and mass assembly nationwide
- Individuals could leave their homes to purchase daily necessities or food or seek medical treatment but were not allowed to move beyond a radius of ten kilometers (six miles) from their residences. Only one person was allowed in a vehicle.
- Any person wishing to do charitable work must first obtain permission.





Delivering Food to Refugees to Help Them Through a Difficult Time

By Lim Li Tian

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting
Photos by Leong Chian Yee

Many refugees in Malaysia were forced out of work after the government's Movement Control Order went into effect. No work meant no food for many of them. After learning of the situation, Tzu Chi volunteers took action to help.

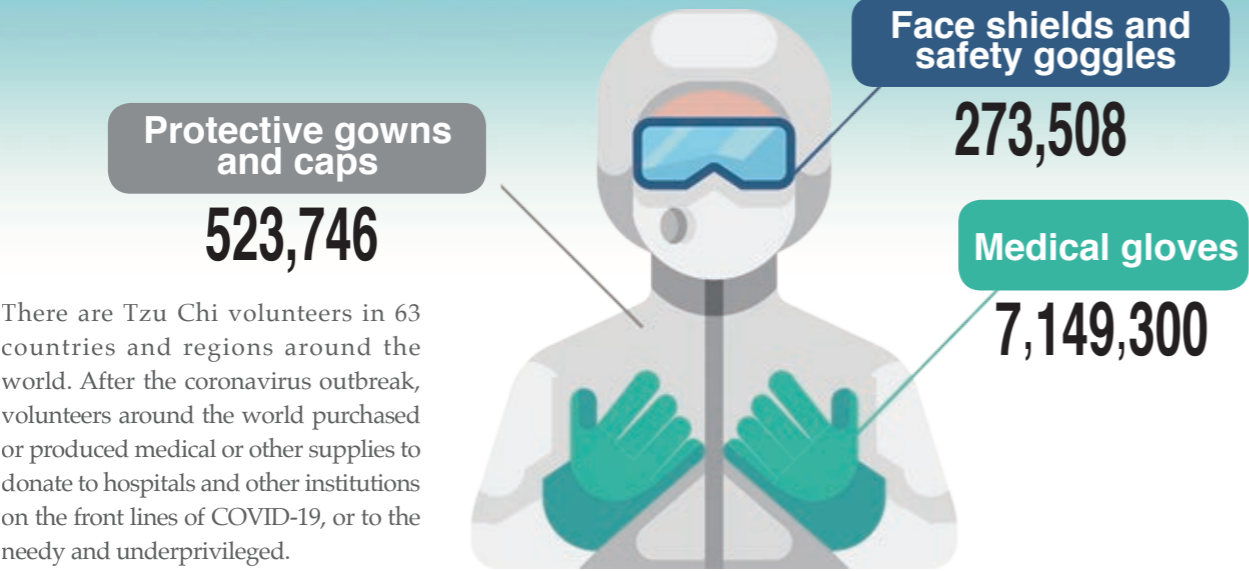
On March 25, volunteers delivered food to 40 families whose children were attending two refugee schools co-founded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Tzu Chi Kuala Lumpur and Selangor branch. Dr. Foo Seay Liang (符之良), UNHCR-Tzu Chi Project Coordinator of the Tzu Chi branch, said, "We received phone calls from students telling us that their families had run out of food. Some had even gone hungry for several days. We immediately launched an emergency distribution." After deciding on the amount and varieties of food to distribute, volunteers quickly arranged for the purchase and transportation of food to the 40 families. Each family received 12 kinds of food, enough for a month, including rice, flour, noodles, biscuits, eggs, and cooking oil. The supplies weighed nearly two tons before being parceled out.

Chan Bee Peng (曾美萍), a Tzu Chi employee who helped deliver the food, said, "There were road blocks on our delivery trips, and we encountered police officers on our way too. Fortunately, we had movement permits issued by the government; otherwise we wouldn't have been able to pull off the mission." To protect themselves and the recipient families from infection, volunteers were vigilant to maintain social distancing. Instead of delivering food into refugees' homes, they asked the refugees to come outdoors to receive the food items.

Dr. Foo believed that more refugees would be needing charitable and medical aid from Tzu Chi on account of the outbreak, and volunteers had started working on it. "We'll be sure to take precautionary measures when we reach out to help," Foo said. "In a time like this, we Tzu Chi volunteers must step forward and do what Master Cheng Yen wants us to do." ❀



As of May 7, 2020, the Tzu Chi Foundation had donated anti-coronavirus supplies in 51 countries and regions around the world.



Tzu Chi volunteers in Las Vegas, the United States, donated 1,000 surgical masks to Summerlin Hospital Medical Center on April 15.



From February 25 to April 17 alone, Tzu Chi donated 41,900 gift packs to 13 city and county governments in Taiwan for distribution to people under home quarantine. The gift packs included items such as multi-grain powder, instant rice, noodles, black tea, and a consolation letter from Master Cheng Yen.

Great Love in Germany

By Tu Xin-yi
Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting
Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

Pope Francis designated 2016 as the Jubilee Year of Mercy, and actively held talks with religious leaders to discuss matters such as cross-religion cooperation for humanitarian aid. The Tzu Chi Foundation was among those invited. Dharma Master Cheng Yen, the founder of Tzu Chi, was not able to personally attend, so she asked two Tzu Chi volunteers in Germany to go on her behalf.

The couple, Susan Chen (陳樹微) and her late husband Rudolf Pfaff, felt honored by Master Cheng Yen's request. They had been volunteering for Tzu Chi for just five years, so they were deeply touched by the trust behind the Master's request.

How had the couple come to join Tzu Chi? Chen said with a smile that it was all due to a misunderstanding. She still remembered it all so clearly, as though it just happened yesterday.

In 2011, a Tzu Chi volunteer from Los Angeles, USA, visited Munich, Germany, with her husband to seek treatment for her cancer. Sadly, she passed away while undergoing treatment in the country. Her husband contacted Tzu Chi volunteers in Germany to help him put things in order after her passing, but almost all the volunteers lived in Hamburg, about 800 kilometers (497 miles) from Munich, too far away to render immediate help. Nevertheless, one of the volunteers contacted a Taiwanese chamber of commerce in Germany to try and help the grieving husband. That was how Chen, a Taiwanese who had settled in Germany after she got married, became involved.

Living in a foreign country, Chen felt that anyone of Chinese ethnicity, even a stranger, was like a distant relative. Therefore, although it was close to midnight when she received the phone call asking for her help, she and her husband quickly hopped into their car and headed towards the hospital, 50 minutes away.

When the man from Los Angeles saw Chen, he thought she was a Tzu Chi volunteer, so he addressed her as "Sister" and broke down in tears. Seeing him cry like that, Chen didn't have the heart to correct him. Instead, she and her husband helped the man move his wife's body from the hospital to a funeral home.

After they had arrived at the funeral home, the man invited Chen to chant the Buddha's name with him for his wife. "I was frightened out of my wits," Chen recalled. "The funeral home was in the countryside, and it was late at night. It was already spooky enough. How was it possible for me to get up enough nerve to stay near a stranger's corpse?"

Despite her reluctance, Chen eventually mustered enough courage to enter the room containing the body. She posted herself near the door at first, trying to put as much distance as possible between her and the body. And yet strangely, the more she chanted, the closer she moved toward the body. She found that the deceased woman's face didn't look frightening at all. Instead, she looked like a Barbie doll, with a serene smile on her face.

Later, when things had come to a satisfactory conclusion, Chen heard the man say to his son, "Look how nice Tzu Chi volunteers are. Take this Tzu Chi sister for example. She helped us so selflessly. I hope you'll become a Tzu Chi volunteer in the future too."

As Chen recalled those words later, a thought popped into her head: "Maybe it would be nice to become a Tzu Chi volunteer."

A promise fulfilled

That same year, at the invitation of Tzu Chi volunteers in Germany, Chen went back to Taiwan to attend a Tzu Chi camp. Being the straightfor-



ward type, Chen said honestly that she didn't learn much during the camp. Suffering from jet lag, she couldn't stay awake in the comfortable air-conditioned classes and slept through many of them. "However, I did discover how nice Tzu Chi volunteers are," she said.

Two Tzu Chi sisters had come to the airport to pick Chen up when she arrived in Taiwan for the camp. As soon as they met, they handed over to Chen a plate of still hot stir-fried rice vermicelli, a popular Taiwanese food. The food stirred up her longings for her homeland and warmed her heart. Her heart was further touched by how cordially she was received throughout her stay in Taiwan. "The kindness of Tzu Chi volunteers really captured my heart," Chen observed.

While she was in Taiwan, she had a chance to go with others and meet with Master Cheng Yen. When they met the Master, they prostrated themselves before her to show their respect. "Only I remained on my feet, not sure what I should do," Chen remarked with a laugh, amused by the memory of that awkward scene.

She said that wasn't the most embarrassing part of the meeting. "I saw how everyone was making pledges to the Master about how they

Rudolf Pfaff (middle) and his wife, Susan Chen (left), meet with Pope Francis on behalf of Tzu Chi. The Holy See designated 2016 as the Jubilee Year of Mercy, and actively held talks with religious leaders to discuss matters such as cross-religion cooperation for humanitarian aid. The Tzu Chi Foundation was among those invited.

COURTESY OF TZU CHI HUALIEN HEADQUARTERS

would carry out Tzu Chi work in their countries. When it was my turn to speak—I don't know what struck me—I said to the Master that I'd volunteer for Tzu Chi to help her out."

The Master looked at her quietly for a while, then said, "Don't join Tzu Chi because of me, but because of yourself." Though Chen was a little embarrassed by the Master's response, she felt better when the Master continued: "Invite your husband along on your next trip back to Taiwan."

"Okay!" she replied reflexively. Then, as if suddenly recalling something, she added: "But my husband is pretty big. He weighs more than 100 kilograms [220 pounds]. The chairs here are all too small for him."

The Master gave a light laugh before she said, "Don't worry. I'll prepare a large chair for him."

When Chen went back to Germany, she related the incident to her husband. Though they didn't think any more about the Master's promise or whether it would be fulfilled one day, they were both interested in doing good and helping others, and so were unified in their desire to volunteer for Tzu Chi. "I didn't know Tzu Chi very well back then," Chen said. "I only knew that the foundation did good things and helped those in need." That was reason enough for them to join.

Soon after, Italy was hit by two strong earthquakes in quick succession. Many people were affected. Chen and her husband, along with some other volunteers in Germany and a few like-minded friends, went to Italy to assess damage and evaluate how the foundation could help.

"No one thought we would be able to achieve anything," Chen remarked. "Very few people in Europe knew about Tzu Chi. Why should they believe that we were really there to help them?"

Aside from the challenge of winning the trust of the local people, they had no money to allow them to carry out relief operations. Undaunted, they endeavored to find a way to help. When Chen learned that a Tzu Chi fundraising concert was to be held in Singapore, she obtained permission from the volunteers in charge to find a famous painter to paint on-site and then sell the works during the concert. The money raised would provide relief funds for quake victims in Italy. The artist ended up creating two paintings, which were sold for 50,000 euros (US\$54,500).

With that money in hand, and because Pfaff could speak fluent Italian, they succeeded in delivering aid into the hands of quake victims. Chen and other volunteers in Europe have maintained the relationships they established back then, and are still helping local people in need.

The couple put in a lot of effort to pull off that relief mission, and even though they didn't know much about Tzu Chi at the time, they did it all in the name of the foundation—all because they identified with Master Cheng Yen's philanthropic ideals and because of a strong desire to do good. When Chen Chiou Hwa (陳秋華), the head of Tzu

Chi Jordan, learned about what they had done, he commended them for their actions and urged them to become certified volunteers.

Chen, Pfaff, and other people in their team thus began training to become certified volunteers. When the training had concluded, they went back to Taiwan to receive their certifications from Master Cheng Yen.

"When the Master saw my husband, she immediately asked people to carry in a large chair for him," Chen recalled. A year had passed since her first meeting with the Master, but the Master had remembered. "Because of that chair, both my husband and I were deeply moved, my husband especially. After that, he became even more involved in Tzu Chi work."

Even cancer couldn't beat his determination

Pfaff was diagnosed with prostate cancer a year after he was certified, but he was so committed to Tzu Chi and to doing charity work that not even the disease could beat his determination to do good.

In late 2015, they decided to go to Serbia to distribute winter clothes to the large number of refugees that had flooded into the nation. However, it wasn't as simple as just going there and putting clothes in the hands of the refugees—they had to first obtain permission from Serbia's Commissariat for Refugees and Migration. Most of the NGOs reaching out to the refugees were famous around the world, but Tzu Chi was, by comparison, far less known. People in the Commissariat were thus very passive in response to Tzu Chi's application.



Susan Chen hugs a child at a refugee camp in Adaševci, Serbia. She and other volunteers in Europe have worked hard to help refugees in that nation.



It was only through the help of a restaurant owner that Chen, Pfaff, and other volunteers finally got to meet with the Commissioner for Refugees and Migration. Chen would always remember the commissioner's distrustful attitude toward them when they first met. He even said to them, "I know nothing about Tzu Chi. Why should I trust you?"

In response to that question, Pfaff took up his tablet computer and patiently, systematically introduced Tzu Chi to the official. Only then did they win his trust and obtain permission to distribute aid to refugees.

Pfaff had an appointment with his doctor for his cancer treatment when the distribution was kicked off, so his daughter drove him back to Germany for his appointment. Though he was feeling weak and feeble after the treatment, he was so concerned about the distribution that he drove 860 kilometers (535 miles)—over 13 hours—back to Serbia on his own to participate in the mission.

Chen's heart went out to him seeing him like that, but she knew how much he wanted to give of himself, so she let him be. By that time, the can-

Susan Chen and Rudolf Pfaff talk with Master Cheng Yen in Taiwan by means of videoconferencing on a cell phone. This was when they were in Serbia extending aid to refugees in that country in March 2016.

cer had metastasized to his bones. When he was feeling especially frail or when his legs ached when he walked, Chen let him stay at the hotel and handle paperwork. "When night fell and we had finished a day's work and gone back to the hotel," she said, "we'd discuss with him how to proceed the next day. This also gave him a sense of participation."

Their help for refugees in Serbia continued even after they had successfully carried off that aid operation. It became a routine for them to drive back and forth between Germany and Serbia to extend care and carry out more aid work at refugee camps. As long as his health allowed, Pfaff almost never missed a trip. One time, right before they were setting off, Pfaff's spine suddenly hurt so much that



he couldn't move. They usually set off at eight in the morning, but that time he asked Chen to wait for him a little longer. He said the pain might go away in a little while and allow him to go.

Anxious and feeling for him, Chen could do nothing but pray. Right at that moment, the phone rang. The call was from the Jing Si Abode, the convent founded by Master Cheng Yen. The nun on the other end of the line said to Chen, "The Master is worried about Brother Pfaff and wonders how he's feeling today. Is he feeling well enough to go to Serbia?"

Pfaff didn't make the trip that time, but he was profoundly touched by the Master's concern for him.

Despite being from a different country and speaking a different language from the Master, Pfaff felt the Master was like family to him. During important holidays or on her birthday, he was sure to make a video to wish the Master the best, then had the video translated and transmitted back to Taiwan.

Chen was just as dedicated to the Master and Tzu Chi as her husband. When she encountered

Susan Chen visits a refugee camp in Šid, Serbia.

difficulty while carrying out Tzu Chi work, she would recall a video of the Master that she once saw on TV. The footage was shot in 1984 at the ground-breaking ceremony for Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. After numerous challenges had been overcome, the hospital was finally to be built. Overcome with emotion, with tears welling up in her eyes and biting her lips, the Master stood beside Lin Yang-kang (林洋港), Taiwan's Minister of Interior at the time, as he gave a speech. Every time Chen recalled this scene, she was infused with renewed courage and strength to surmount whatever difficulty had been thrown her way.

Accompanied by his wife, Pfaff walked steadfastly on the Tzu Chi Path until he passed away in February 2020, at the age of 73. Though her husband has passed away, Chen is sure to stay firm and true to her Tzu Chi Path, fulfilling both her and her husband's commitment to relieving suffering in the world. ❀

Happy or Sad: It's Your Call

By Wang Tuan-cheng

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photo by Hsiao Yiu-hwa



A philosopher named Abdullah was known to have been cheerful all his life. No one had ever seen him unhappy. He was always smiling, always upbeat, as if joy was the only thing he knew.

Day after day, year after year, he lived like that.

Eventually he became very old. He grew weaker and weaker. It was obvious his days were numbered. Even on his deathbed, however, he didn't show any sorrow or sadness. He still smiled contentedly.

His behavior made his disciples curious. They asked him, "You're dying soon. We're all very sad for that, and yet you are still smiling. Why are you so happy? Why do you smile all the time? You have never looked sad. Even now, facing death, you look cheerful. How do you do it?"

Abdullah said to his disciples, "I asked my teacher the same question. I was 17 years old at the time, and I felt miserable every day. My teacher was 70. One day I saw him sitting alone under a tree, laughing jovially. Nothing seemed to have happened to elicit such glee from him, and yet there he was, roaring heartily with laughter. I asked him, 'What's the matter? Why are you laughing like this for no reason at all? Have you gone mad?' My teacher replied, 'My child, I once was unhappy and miserable like you. But then I realized that we can choose to be unhappy, or we can choose to be happy. Once I realized that, I decided to choose laughter and happiness. This is my life; I can decide how I want to live it.'"

Abdullah continued, "After that conversation, every morning when I woke up, I asked myself, 'Abdullah, what will you choose today? Misery? Joy?' Without fail, I chose the latter."

He went on, "Now I've told you the secret of my happiness, just like my teacher shared with me. How about you? What will you choose? It's all up to you."

Abdullah was right, and his story should give you some food for thought. Life is a stage, and you are your own playwright. You can write a tragedy or a comedy—it's your choice. So how will you write it? Will your story be one of happiness, misery, joy, or sorrow? The pen is poised in your hand. ❦



Celebrating With Service

Recycling Efforts Herald A New Year

By Huang Xiao-zhe and Cai Yu-xuan

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe

During this year's Chinese New Year holiday, my family and I, like many others, visited Luermen Shengmu Temple in Tainan, southern Taiwan. This famous temple is dedicated mainly to the worship of the sea goddess Mazu and boasts many devotees. People from all over throng to the temple during traditional Chinese festivals and holidays to pray for peace, safety, and blessings.

The temple draws the largest crowds during the Lunar New Year holiday, logging an average of more than 100,000 visits per day. With approval from the board of the temple, Tzu Chi volunteers set up and run a cluster of booths on the temple grounds every year during this time to promote environmental protection and share aphorisms by Dharma Master Cheng Yen. A rotating group of volunteers staff the booths for five days in a row. Other volunteers weave through the crowds on the temple grounds, picking up garbage or going through bags of trash to salvage recyclable items. What others see as worthless garbage is treasure to these volunteers. The more refuse they can save from ending up in a landfill or incinerator, the better. What matters to them most is not the money earned from recycling, but a cleaner and healthier Earth.

Though they could be celebrating the Lunar New Year holiday on their own, these volunteers willingly give up their precious personal time to come to the temple and sort through garbage. Their spirit of service is truly admirable. A volunteer said of their recycling efforts, "Though our actions make us tired, we feel a solid sense of fulfillment when we're done." Maybe recycling at the temple is for these volunteers the best way to celebrate a new year.



Another way to obtain blessings

Because of the recent COVID-19 outbreak, many devotees who visited the temple during this year's New Year holiday wore face masks to protect themselves. Having taken this precautionary measure, they burned incense and prayed piously to deities worshiped in the temple to bestow blessings on themselves and their family.

In one area of the temple, people stood in line to crawl under a palanquin housing a statue of Mazu. In addition to being a show of respect, this traditional ritual is believed to bring good fortune and protection from the ravages of illness or other misfortunes. While devotees took turns going under the palanquin, I saw a Tzu Chi volunteer working off to one side picking out reusable items from a large trash can. Watching people seek blessings by crawling under the palanquin and the volunteer salvage garbage, I remember Master Cheng Yen saying, "By reclaiming reusable resources, our recycling volunteers benefit not just the environment but humanity as well. Through their eco-friendly efforts, they are doing good and creating blessings for themselves."





Fun games that promote environmental protection

The temple is huge. As we strolled around, we came to a square with an area which seemed like a magnet for children. It turned out that Tzu Chi volunteers had set up a series of games there for children to play. There was, for example, “Eco-Friendly Golf,” which was played using recycled hollow paper cylinders, cardboard, and ping pong balls. Holding a bamboo pole, a player tried to push a ping pong ball into a hole. If they succeeded, they could go on to play the next game. These games were designed to educate participants about a healthy diet, the benefits of plant-based eating, how to conserve water, etc., and to encourage them to carry reusable food containers and utensils when they are eating out to reduce the amount of garbage they produce. Volunteer Wu Li-heng (吳麗姮) turned dry knowledge and information into entertainment by creating these games. The activities allowed kids to acquire knowledge in a fun way, which helps strengthen learning and build enduring memories.

Wu not only invented the games herself, but she was on-site helping visitors to understand the games. She believed that this was a great opportunity for her to interact with children and adults at the temple and promote worthy causes among them. She wants to make environmental protection and a healthy lifestyle a part of everyone’s life. She said she would keep participating in this meaningful event for years to come.





Persist at the right things

Volunteer Zhou Shu-ru (周淑茹), who lives near the temple, was the one who initiated Tzu Chi's recycling efforts there. One year, she noticed a surge in the amount of garbage at the temple after the Lantern Festival, so she started salvaging recyclables. It wasn't long before other volunteers joined her and began helping. In 2010, she and another volunteer, Huang Hui-zhu (黄惠珠), began inviting their fellow volunteers to visit the temple during the Chinese New Year holiday to collect garbage and reclaim reusable resources. They have made it an annual tradition since then.

Zhou said that it hasn't always been smooth sailing over the years. They need a certain number of volunteers to help at the event, but Chinese New Year is a time for family reunions and many volunteers have to take part in family activities. She also worries about volunteers' safety as they travel back and forth to the temple, and that she is not a good enough event coordinator and organizer. For all those reasons combined, she used to feel very heavy at heart as Lunar New Year approached. The idea of canceling the event even crossed her mind.

One time when she was feeling particularly down, she prayed to the bodhisattvas for help. Then she happened to open a copy of *Jing Si Aphorisms*, a collection of short sayings from Master Cheng Yen, and she ran across this sentence: "No matter what field you are in, the only way for you to make it is to stick to your post and strive forward industriously." Those words were a timely reminder for her to stick to the path she had chosen. She decided right then to stop thinking about canceling the event and to forge ahead instead.

When it comes to the right thing, one should just do it. Zhou has persevered, her commitment unshaken. Unlike in the early years, she now has a team of volunteers at her side to help her organize the event. Whether it is designing games, setting up the venue, promoting environmental protection, or transporting collected recyclable items, there are volunteers in charge of each category of work. For that, Zhou is most happy and grateful. ☸



Rediscover Your True Self

By Cheah Lee Hwa

Translated by Rose Ting

Graphics by Su Fang-pei

It is said that three apples changed the world. One was the apple that Satan used to tempt Eve; the second was the apple that dropped on Isaac Newton's head; and the third was Steve Jobs's Apple.

As a cofounder of Apple Computer, Jobs lived a life that was the stuff of legends. Although his personal qualities and way of handling things might be controversial, many of his sayings are inspirational and worthy of exploration. Take his moving address at Stanford University in 2005, delivered about a year after he underwent a successful operation for pancreatic cancer. This was how he reflected on his own mortality:

Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything—all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure—these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart.

These words are thought-provoking. Many people live with a false version of themselves—they try so hard to fit other people's ideas of a nice person that they lose their true self. Constantly looking outward for approval makes them unable to listen to their inner voice. In the end they become a yes-man, someone who is so

busy doing what is expected of them that they never take time to be nice to themselves.

In my Tzu Chi Humanities class at the Tzu Chi University of Science and Technology, I make a point of asking my students to compare what they think others think of them vs. what they think of themselves. Interestingly, many students think they are nice persons in their friends' eyes, but they themselves don't like that version of themselves—the version that doesn't know how to say no to others. They think they care too much about how others see them. They care so much about others' feelings that they do everything they can to please other people. One student said, "I'd rather feel hurt or sad myself than cause my good friends or family to feel bad."

I later shared my thoughts with that student in her homework notebook. I told her that it is important to care for others, to show sympathy and compassion. When you care for others, you are considerate, respect their opinions, and take care not to hurt their feelings. However, if you care too much about others' opinions of yourself,



you'll just end up making life harder on yourself.

Making undue attempts to become "nice" in the eyes of others can result in you living constantly in fear. You live in fear lest you should fail to meet others' expectations for you. Even worse, it's easy to become angry or depressed if after you've worked hard to please your family and friends they still don't appreciate your efforts. It might further lead to self-doubt—doubt of the value of your existence. Over time, you might even grow distrustful of others.

I told my students that the word "care" has many meanings. But what they should care about most is whether they can live lives of value. Life and death are separated only by a breath. I reminded them to keep life's impermanence in mind when they ponder these questions: "What

matters to you most in your life? What are the things you most desire to do and accomplish?" I urged them to rediscover their true selves in a process of self-exploration and then, while they work to fulfill the potential of their lives, help others fulfill theirs too. In so doing, they will be able to live their lives to the full.

I liked one student's feedback after he finished my course. He said that he used to lack self-confidence and feel inferior to others. He thought he'd be able to win others' respect by adopting an air of arrogance. My class, however, made him realize how misguided his attitude was. He said that he had learned that "if one can be caring towards others, be quick to render a helping hand, and practice positive thinking, one is on the way to a happy life."



Delivering Healing and Peace

By Lim Li Tan

Abridged and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photo by Sam Pin Fook

When his mother fell ill, Ho Gwo Fuang suffered from much anxiety and fear. That experience led him to become a medical doctor. He knows firsthand what it feels like when family members become sick. “When patients and family members feel helpless, a doctor’s efforts in bringing them peace of mind are well spent,” said the physician.

A comfortable, neat room housed several single leather sofa chairs in the Department of Clinical Oncology at the University of Malaya Medical Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The patients in that room looked like they had regular IV drips running into their arms, but they were actually receiving chemotherapy. Dr. Ho Gwo Fuang (何國煌) entered the room and walked towards one of the patients. Once at her side, he greeted her and gently asked her how she was doing, and then scheduled the next round of treatment with her.

Not long after that, his cell phone rang. He was needed in the ward for an emergency, so he rushed directly there. One of his patients had just undergone a high-risk operation to have a tumor removed and he was scheduled to be discharged

from the hospital in two weeks. However, an emergency condition took his life. Ho sent a message to the patient’s wife from his cell phone, informing her of the situation, but the wife didn’t respond.

“I can understand how she’s feeling—at not being there when her husband passed,” he said, his eyes reddening with tears. His empathy for the patient’s family member was obvious.

Barely had he finished his words before a nurse handed him a document. He had no time to dwell on his sorrow. He didn’t believe that being sad helped things anyway. As a clinical oncologist, he had to quickly collect himself so that he would be ready to handle the next thing that needed his attention. He had to cultivate a calm and undivided presence of mind to cope with his busy day and his highly demanding work.

Experience as a patient’s family member

Ho is only 47, but he seems to have more grey hair than most people his age. His eyes shine when he talks about his work for cancer patients. He said that he had wanted to be a teacher growing up, until his mother took seriously ill when he was a tenth grader. She was at first diagnosed with cancer. After many tests, it was determined the initial diagnosis was a false alarm, but by the time they realized she had been misdiagnosed, the entire family had suffered through a lot of agony. That experience steered Ho to a career in medicine, with a focus on cancer.

“When my mother fell ill,” Ho remarked, “I realized how much anxiety a patient’s family goes through and what a tribulation the whole experience is for them. It’s especially hard when you

know nothing about the illness. You feel very apprehensive and helpless.”

One day at the door of the hospital, he ran into the doctor who had performed the medical imaging on his mother. He jumped at the opportunity to ask the doctor’s opinion about his mother’s condition.

After that short conversation with the physician—which couldn’t have lasted more than 20 seconds—Ho felt all his anxiety dissipate. “It made me realize how much a doctor can influence the moods of a patient and their family,” he recalled. “If, in the process of treatment, a doctor can spend a little effort on bringing stability and peace of mind to a patient and their family, especially when the latter are feeling helpless, such effort will be well spent.” The young Ho pledged

in his heart to become someone who could help others in this same way.

Ho was born in Beaufort, Sabah, in 1973, the sixth among eight children. His father was a school principal and his mother a homemaker. His family was poor when he was small. He performed well academically as a student, and he worked hard to become a medical doctor after his mother fell ill. After he graduated from high school, he went to the United Kingdom to study on a scholarship.

He graduated with a degree in Medical Science from the University of St Andrews, Scotland, in 1995. Then in 1998, he gained entrance into the Medical School of the University of Manchester to further his medical studies for a few years. He obtained a Certificate for Completion of Specialist Training in 2007. His area of expertise was oncology.

Renouncing a high-paying career in the UK, he returned to Malaysia and became a clinical oncologist and lecturer at the University of Malaya Medical Centre.

How Buddhism can benefit you

Ho decided to join a government hospital because he wanted to serve poorer patients and help train younger oncologists. Even though private hospitals have tried to lure him away with generous offers over the years, he isn't tempted at all. He knows full well that if he works at a private hospital, he won't be able to fulfill his wish of serving underprivileged patients.

His desire to help others led him to join the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA). Invited by Tzu Chi volunteer Angie Ng (黃淑瓊), Ho started taking part in TIMA free clinics in 2008. Some time later, he had a satellite dish installed at home and began watching Tzu Chi's Da Ai TV. That deepened his understanding of Tzu Chi and exposed him to Buddhism.

Ho said that there aren't that many free clinic events a year, so the number of patients he serves is limited. However, his volunteer work has had a major impact on him because it introduced him to Buddhism.

Ho used to have no religious faith, and he thought that Buddhism was just superstition. It was Master Cheng Yen's sermons that changed his thinking. If he returns home from work early enough, he generally turns on the TV at 9 p.m. and watches a rerun of "Wisdom at Dawn," a program that broadcasts Master Cheng Yen's Dharma talks.

"The Master's teachings are very applicable in life," Ho observed. "They're not esoteric. They're

all about fundamental life principles. She says that we should walk the Bodhisattva Path and go among people to help others. I believe that, because only then will we be able to make the most out of our lives."

The doctor is grateful to the Master for leading him to the path of Buddhism and helping him cultivate his wisdom-life. He said that she has taught him to live in the moment instead of dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. This has greatly helped reduce his worries.

Humility helps one grow in wisdom

The Chinese New Year holiday of 2018 was a challenging time for Ho. He learned just before the New Year that his father had lost his voice, so he took him to a doctor when he returned to his hometown for the holiday. The doctor diagnosed his father with esophageal cancer. Ho knew that this kind of cancer was difficult to treat, even more so because his father was already in his 70s and would have a hard time completing the course of treatment.

Chinese New Year was just two days away, and Ho's siblings were all returning home for the celebration. After some thought, he decided to keep the doctor's diagnosis a secret and wait until after the New Year to take his father to the University of Malaya Medical Centre for further examination.

During the New Year, he occasionally thought about his dad's illness, but he didn't let it bother him too much, and instead he was determined to have a great time with his family. "I could have kept thinking about it," he explained. "I could have obsessed over how my father's treatment would go. But none of that would have helped. It wouldn't have helped me, and it wouldn't have helped my father. If I had let the matter be known, it would have affected everyone's mood, and the New Year would have been a less happy time." He felt that it was best to put the matter temporarily aside.

Later, when his father underwent further examination, the whole matter turned out to be a false alarm. If Ho had let himself agonize about it earlier, all that worrying would have been for nothing.

"When you practice Buddhism, you're the first one to benefit," Ho pointed out. "You'll know better how to respond in challenging circumstances." Despite being highly educated, he knows how important it is to stay humble too. He knows that an arrogant, self-important person will never grow in wisdom. Wisdom can only be inspired in



Though his medical work keeps him busy, Dr. Ho Gwo Fuang volunteers whenever he can. TIA YEE LING



Ho Gwo Fuang serves as a culinary volunteer at an event during which TIMA members in Malaysia share Tzu Chi medical values and philosophies with medical students. CHAN TUCK MENG



a humble person. He compared growing in wisdom to filling a cup of water: “You need to pour some water out of a cup before it can take in any more, but it’s best to empty the cup completely.”

One’s homework in life

The Buddha’s teachings embody wisdom distilled from life’s experiences and universally hold true. Ho would be happy to share his understanding of the Enlightened One’s wisdom with his patients, but with so many patients to take care of, it is beyond him to do much in this respect.

He illustrated this point with an example. “A patient was diagnosed with stage-four nasopharyngeal cancer. I would have liked to guide and console him to help him feel better, but how could I have gotten my limited understanding of the Buddha’s teachings across to him in ten or 20 minutes? I think it’d be best if everyone could enrich themselves whenever they can and so be ready when life throws challenges their way.”

Four years ago, Dr. Eddie Chan Seng Hung (陳成亨), the convener of TIMA Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, invited Ho to train to become a certified Tzu Chi volunteer. Ho hesitated to say yes at first because he was worried he wouldn’t be able to set aside the time in his busy schedule. He only decided to go for it with the convener’s encouragement.

Ho recalled with a smile that he struggled every time a training class was coming up. “Should I go this time or not?” he’d wrestle with himself. His struggles notwithstanding, he admitted that he learned a lot and came to know many good people through those training sessions. He

Ho (far left) and several other members of TIMA Kuala Lumpur and Selangor visited Taiwan and received their volunteer certifications from Master Cheng Yen in November 2018.

COURTESY OF YAP PET YEE

successfully completed two years of training and received his certification in 2018.

The physician said that he still has a lot of personal improvements to make—his temper, especially. He feels that he should be more patient and avoid lashing out at others. He quoted Master Cheng Yen: “If you have a bad temper and speak rudely to others, then no matter how good your heart is, you are not a decent person.” Ho uses those words to constantly remind himself to be more pleasant and agreeable towards others.

“Our physical forms will disappear from this world one day,” Ho said. “But now that I’ve become the Master’s disciple and formed a karmic connection with her, I’m not worried about getting lost in my future life and not being able to find the path that will lead me to her.” He feels that the Master has made the Buddha’s teachings more accessible and pointed out a way that everyone can follow.

“When you truly realize the spirit and guiding principles of our group,” he observed, “you will not complain when things do not go your way. You can even influence people around you for the better and help decrease disputes. We become the Master’s disciples to create a beautiful world. We need more like-minded people to work together to reach that goal.”



The JING SI A Illustrated APHORISMS

The Buddha says:

If you keep thinking things like,
“They yelled at me... They hit me...
They destroyed my life... They violated my rights...,”
then you will always live in resentment.



People may criticize me, misunderstand me, or lie about me. I should be grateful and thank them for giving me the opportunity to cultivate myself.

If we always doubt other people, then we cannot love them, forgive them, or trust them.

If all people can get rid of their arrogance, attachments, and ignorance, then there will be no more friction among people.



One afternoon, several musicians visited the Jing Si Abode and performed five Buddhist songs that they had composed. The enchanting melodies won the praise of all present.

Master Cheng Yen said: “Confucius once said that if we want to predict the destiny of a country, all we have to do is to listen to their popular songs. If the music is provocatively intense and emphasizes deviant values, then the country must be in chaos. Therefore, we can see how much the cultural arts, such as music, drama, singing, and dancing, can affect people’s minds.”

Translated by E. E. Ho and W. L. Rathje; drawings by Tsai Chih-chung; coloring by May E. Gu

Tzu Chi Events Around the World



The United States

In mid-March 2020, Tzu Chi volunteers in Los Angeles, California, delivered food to the Institute of Popular Education of Southern California (IDEPSCA) for distribution to underprivileged families. IDEPSCA is a non-profit organization in Los Angeles that serves low-income households and immigrant workers.

Maegan Ortiz, CEO of IDEPSCA, thanked Tzu Chi volunteers profusely upon seeing the food. She said that Tzu Chi has always been there for them, since the first day they started working together. "Thank you so much!" she exclaimed.

The CEO explained that many of the families IDEPSCA serves had no savings or extra food to soften the blow once their earnings dwindled. Given the current coronavirus situation, Tzu Chi's assistance was critical.

The food prepared by Tzu Chi volunteers included fresh produce, canned fruits and vegeta-

Tzu Chi volunteers deliver food to the Institute of Popular Education of Southern California in Los Angeles to help needy families through the coronavirus outbreak.

RENEE CHAO

bles, and dry goods such as rice, corn, beans, and cereals. It was enough to last 50 families of four for at least a week.

Tzu Chi's assistance in helping the underserved is not limited to California. In many other places throughout the U.S., volunteers tried their best to carry out food distributions for the needy before the shelter-in-place orders went into effect. They wanted to help families weather this difficult time.

China

Applause erupted at 4:30 p.m. on March 10 at the site of a collapsed hotel in Fujian Province when a 24-year-old man from Zhejiang Province

was rescued from under the debris. By that time, the man had been trapped in the collapsed building for 69 hours. The successful rescue was a shot in the arms for the rescue workers who had been working for three days and nights at the disaster site.

Xinjia Express Hotel, a hotel being used as a coronavirus quarantine facility in Quanzhou City, Fujian Province, collapsed on the night of March 7, trapping more than 70 people under the rubble. First responders rushed immediately to the site of the collapse and, at risk to themselves, began to rescue people from under the debris. They were aided by heavy machinery that had been brought in to facilitate the rescue operation. Also on-site were personnel from the city's center for disease control—they were there 24 hours a day to disinfect the area.

Tzu Chi volunteers from Fujian Province set up a service station outside the cordoned area and provided hot food and other services around the clock for the first responders. Tzu Chi blankets and folding beds were rushed to the site for rescue workers to use. Liu, a rescue worker, said that when their rescue effort first started, they could only lie on the ground to rest. "It's much better now with the folding beds available for us to sleep on, and the blankets are very warm," he said appreciatively.

Through five days and four nights, Tzu Chi provided 560 servings of hot food, 246 folding

Tzu Chi volunteers provide support to rescue workers at a collapsed hotel in Quanzhou, Fujian Province. The hotel was being used as a COVID-19 quarantine facility.

HUANG DE XIN



Volunteers move relief goods for a distribution for flood victims in Jardim Pantanal, São Paulo, on March 8.

LIU RU-ZHU

beds, 760 blankets, and 3,035 reusable cups for the first responders. Volunteers were present on-site up to March 12, when the rescue work came to an end.

Brazil

Heavy rains pummeled São Paulo, Brazil's most populous city, on February 10. The downpours caused the Tietê River to overflow and badly flood Jardim Pantanal, a poor neighborhood on the east side of the city. Many families were gravely affected.

Tzu Chi volunteers visited the community and called on one household after another to compile a list of families that needed assistance. A distribution followed on March 8 during which food

baskets, cleaning agents and tools, mattresses, and school backpacks were given out. The event benefited 73 families, each of whom received a food basket that weighed 17 kilograms (37 pounds) and a set of cleaning supplies. Mattresses and backpacks were given to some of the households.

Volunteers also promoted vegetarianism during the event. Their messages obviously touched a chord in the audience. Seven people said they'd become vegetarians

for the rest of their lives; nine signed up to eat vegetarian for a year; and three said they'd do it for half a year.

Twenty-three volunteers worked together to pull off the event. They hoped that their efforts would ease the flood victims' financial burdens and bring warmth to their hearts.

Argentina

Tzu Chi volunteers typically distribute school supplies around March to students from impoverished families in Villa Lujan, Quilmes, Buenos Aires Province. As the country's dire economic situation continued to persist this year, volunteers decided to distribute school supplies in two more areas in the province to help underprivileged families.

To prepare for the distributions, volunteers considered the grade levels of the students, as students from different grade levels received different items. The supplies this year included schoolbags, drawing paper, colored pens, pens, pencils, scissors, glue, notebooks, erasers, rulers, and binders.

One of the distributions was held in the city of Glew on February 29. Participating families rushed forward to receive their goods when the distribution started, creating a little chaos, but volunteers quickly restored order by asking people to line up. Two volunteers checked the identities of recipients before they were guided by other volunteers to receive their supplies.

When volunteers helped the children put on their backpacks, the kids and their parents

couldn't help but smile—the kids because they had new book bags for school, and the parents because the financial burden of equipping their children for school had been eased. The event helped 186 students from 41 families.

The United Kingdom

The U.K. has been one of the countries hit hard by COVID-19. By early May, more than 178,000 confirmed cases had been diagnosed in the country, with the death toll exceeding 27,500.

Tzu Chi volunteer Wang Su-zhen (王素真) lives in Malvern, Worcestershire, England. Her mother had been a seamstress and Wang had learned good sewing skills from her when she was still alive. When Wang saw how the coronavirus pandemic had caused a shortage of face masks, she decided to put her skills to work making cloth masks for those who needed them. It was fortunate that her mother had left behind some scrap fabrics suitable for making into masks.

Wang posted a message on a community Facebook page about her project and was surprised to receive nearly 100 orders. People gave her very warm and positive feedback when they had received and used her masks. A resident in a neighboring town even phoned her to ask how to make masks. The caller indicated her desire to mobilize residents of her community to make masks for older people.

Wang was glad to have made many new friends through her project and to help them stay safer and more secure during the pandemic.



Children pose with school supplies and backpacks distributed by Tzu Chi in the city of Glew, Buenos Aires Province.

ZHONG GUI-MAN

Directory of Tzu Chi Offices Worldwide

TAIWAN

Hualien: Headquarters
Tel: 886-3-8266779
Fax: 886-3-8267776

Taipei: Tzu Chi Humanitarian Center
Tel: 886-2-28989000
Fax: 886-2-28989994

ARGENTINA

Tel: 54-11-48625770
Fax: 54-11-43140252

AUSTRALIA

Brisbane
Tel: 61-7-32727938
Fax: 61-7-32727283

Gold Coast
Tel: 61-7-55717706
Fax: 61-7-55717703

Melbourne
Tel: 61-3-98971668
Fax: 61-3-98974288

Perth
Tel/Fax: 61-8-92278228

Sydney
Tel: 61-2-98747666
Fax: 61-2-98747611

BRAZIL

Tel: 55-11-55394091
Fax: 55-11-55391683

BRUNEI

Tel/Fax: 673-3336779

CANADA

Edmonton
Tel: 1-780-4639788
Fax: 1-780-4621799

Montreal
Tel: 1-514-8442074
Fax: 1-514-2889152

Toronto
Tel: 1-416-8868886
1-905-9471182
Fax: 1-416-9002048

Vancouver
Tel: 1-604-2667699
Fax: 1-604-2667659

DOMINICAN REP.

Tel: 1-809-5300972

EL SALVADOR

Tel/Fax: 1-503-7293905

FRANCE

Tel: 33-1-45860312
Fax: 33-1-45862540

GERMANY

Tel: 49-40-388439
Cell: 0049-152-2951-9571

GREAT BRITAIN

Tel: 44-20-88699864
Fax: 44-20-89334262

GUATEMALA

Tel: 502-22327648
Fax: 502-23675872

HONG KONG

Tel: 852-28937166
Fax: 852-28937478

INDONESIA

Tel: 62-21-5055999
Fax: 62-21-5055699

JAPAN

Tel: 81-3-32035651
Fax: 81-3-32035674

JORDAN

Tel/Fax: 962-6-5817305

LESOTHO

Tel: 266-28312566
Fax: 266-22313897

MALAYSIA

Ipoh
Tel: 60-5-2551013
Fax: 60-5-2421013

Kedah
Tel: 60-4-7311013
Fax: 60-4-7321013

Kuala Lumpur
Tel: 60-3-62563800
Fax: 60-3-62563801

Melaka
Tel: 60-6-2810818
Fax: 60-6-2812796

Penang
Tel: 60-4-2281013
Fax: 60-4-2261013

MEXICO

Tel: 1-760-7688998
Fax: 1-760-7686631

MYANMAR

Tel: 95-1-541494/541496

NETHERLANDS

Tel: 31-629-577511

NEW ZEALAND

Tel: 64-9-2716976
Fax: 64-9-2724639

PARAGUAY

Tel: 595-21-333818
Fax: 595-21-310588

PHILIPPINES

Tel/Fax: 63-2-7320001

SINGAPORE

Tel: 65-65829958
Fax: 65-65829952

SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Town
Tel: 27-21-9130934
Fax: 27-21-9137057

Durban
Tel: 27-31-5615348
Fax: 27-31-5644438

Johannesburg
Tel: 27-11-4503365
Fax: 27-11-4502256

Ladysmith
Tel: 27-36-6341333
Fax: 27-36-6341261

SWEDEN

Tel/Fax: 46-31-227883

THAILAND

Tel: 66-2-3281161-3
Fax: 66-2-3281160

TURKEY

Tel: 90-212-4225802
Fax: 90-212-4225803

UNITED STATES

San Dimas
Tel: 1-909-4477799
Fax: 1-909-4477948

Atlanta
Tel: 1-770-4581000

Austin
Tel: 1-512-4910358
Fax: 1-512-9261373

Boston
Tel: 1-617-7620569
Fax: 1-617-4314484

Cerritos
Tel: 1-562-9266609
Fax: 1-562-9261603

Chicago
Tel: 1-630-9636601
Fax: 1-630-9609360

Cleveland
Tel/Fax: 1-440-6469292

Columbus
Tel: 1-614-4579215
Fax: 1-614-4579217

Dallas
Tel: 1-972-6808869
Fax: 1-972-6807732

Detroit
Tel/Fax: 1-586-7953491

Fresno
Tel/Fax: 1-559-2984894

Hawaii
Tel: 1-808-7378885
Fax: 1-808-7378889

Houston

Tel: 1-713-2709988
Fax: 1-713-9819008

Indianapolis

Tel: 1-317-5800979

Kansas

Tel: 1-913-3976517

Long Island

Tel: 1-516-8736888
Fax: 1-516-7460626

Madison

Tel: 1-608-2687692

Miami

Tel: 1-954-5381172
Fax: 1-317-6459907

New Jersey

Tel: 1-973-8578666
Fax: 1-973-8579555

New York

Tel: 1-718-8880866
Fax: 1-718-4602068

Los Angeles Northwest
Tel: 1-818-7277689
Fax: 1-818-7279272

Los Angeles West
Tel: 1-310-4735188
Fax: 1-310-4779518

Oakland

Tel: 1-510-8790971

Orlando

Tel/Fax: 1-407-2921146

Phoenix

Tel: 1-480-8386556
Fax: 1-480-7777665

Pittsburgh

Tel: 1-412-5318343
Fax: 1-412-5318341

San Diego

Tel: 1-858-5460578
Fax: 1-858-5460573

San Francisco

Tel: 1-415-6820566
Fax: 1-415-6820567

San Jose

Tel: 1-408-4576969
Fax: 1-408-9438420

Seattle

Tel: 1-425-8227678
Fax: 1-425-8226169

St. Louis

Tel/Fax: 1-314-9941999

Washington DC

Tel: 1-703-7078606
Fax: 1-703-7078607

VIETNAM

Tel: 84-28-38535001
Fax: 84-28-38535055



With love, one will enjoy harmonious relations; with harmonious relations, there will be peace.
—Dharma Master Cheng Yen

PHOTO BY HUANG XIAO-ZHE