

COMPASSION & RELIEF

# TZU CHI USA JOURNAL

## Hurricane Sandy Special Edition

Putting Compassion into Action



ISSUE 36 | SUMMER 2013



**DHARMA MASTER CHENG YEN**  
**FOUNDER OF**  
**TZU CHI FOUNDATION**

## **CONTEMPLATIVE WISDOM**

thoughts for meditation, contemplation, and reflection from Master Cheng Yen

### **The Benevolence of Water**

Water can adjust to the shape of its container,  
and benefit all things without conflict.

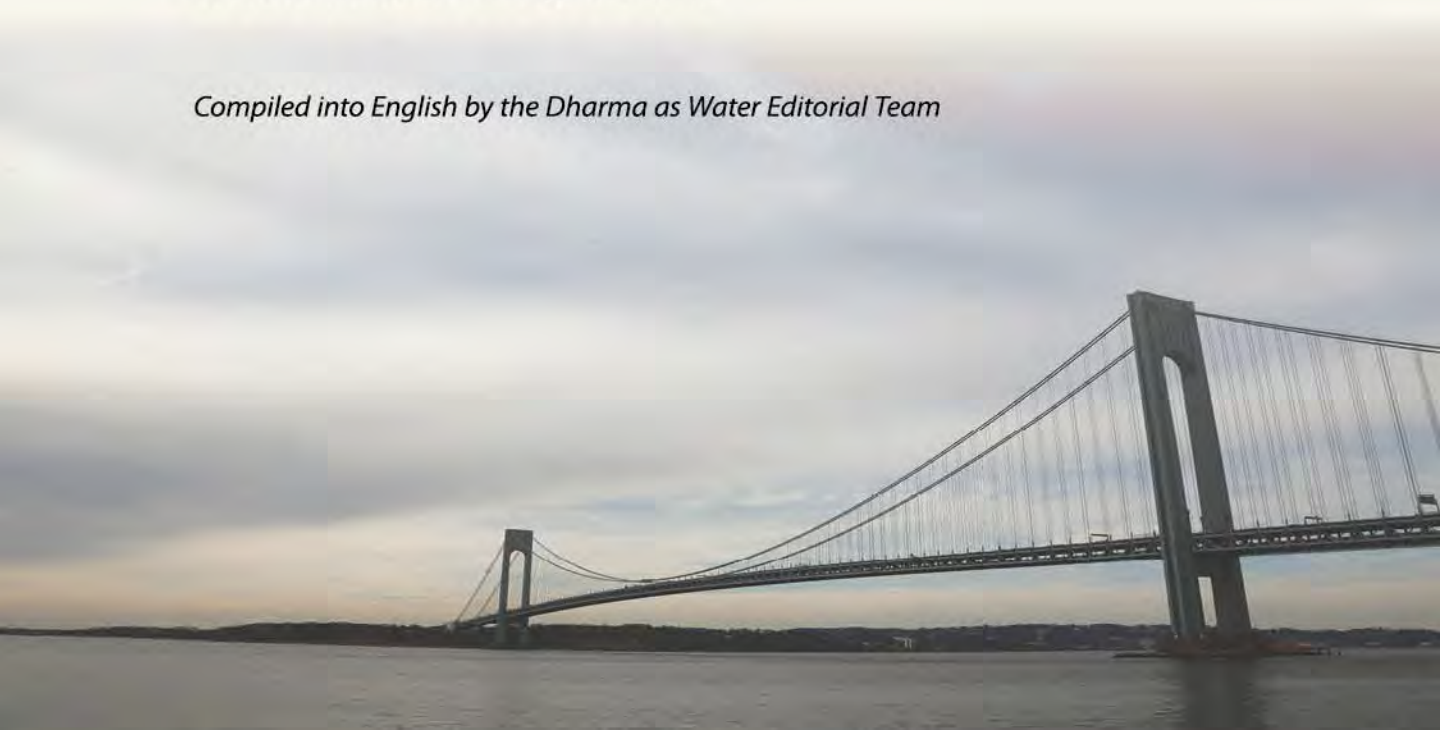
Dharma shares the benevolence of water; it responds to  
the needs of sentient beings without being exhausted.

With love, comfort and relieve the suffering of sentient beings  
just as pure water nurtures all things.

Aspire to practice and give unconditionally.

Let benevolence flow through the world.

*Compiled into English by the Dharma as Water Editorial Team*





# TZU CHI'S BAMBOO BANK SPIRIT

When Dharma Master Cheng Yen founded Tzu Chi in 1966, she fashioned coin banks from bamboo and asked her lay followers—thirty housewives—to save NT\$0.50 (about US\$0.02) from their grocery money every day to help the poor.

One follower asked, “Can’t I just donate NT\$15 each month?” But Master refused. She explained that though the amount was the same, it was important to give rise to a kind thought each and every day.

From these humble beginnings forty-seven years ago, Tzu Chi has grown into a global NGO with ten million volunteers and donors in over fifty countries, because it collects not only donations, but also kind hearts.



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*After the devastating storm and the major relief effort that followed, there is simply not enough space in these few pages to share every moving tale of compassion and relief. For all the victims who suffered so deeply, all the volunteers who served so selflessly, and all the donors who gave so generously, may the stories here serve as a small sample of the many more unspoken. Much gratitude is due to every individual who participated in the Hurricane Sandy relief effort, and to those who recorded, filmed, and photographed the relief mission to share with others.*



# The Challenges and Cultivation of a Bodhisattva

It's not easy to be a Bodhisattva; this is because it takes a lot of self-cultivation to nurture the spirit of the Four Immeasurables: loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity.

When we vow to walk on the Bodhisattva path and be a Bodhisattva, we vow to cultivate a heart of loving-kindness. What is loving-kindness? Loving-kindness is the spirit of working for the benefit and wellbeing of all humanity in this world. We learn to reach out to total strangers and help them in their need. We learn to pray for the wellbeing of all people and actively do good deeds. This is how we nurture loving-kindness. When challenges appear, we must strengthen our vow, always keep the welfare of living beings in our heart, and not get discouraged in the Bodhisattva work. This is the loving-kindness that we need to cultivate.


The second of the Four Immeasurables that we need to nurture is compassion. To cultivate compassion, we need to develop empathy and tolerance, and form good affinities with others. To help people in need, we should be able to feel whatever pain and suffering they are going through. When our loved ones fall ill or are in trouble, we will naturally try to do all we can to help them as we can feel their suffering and see their distress. Similarly, when we are helping

the poor, ill, or those in hardship, we should imagine them as our own family members, and feel their pain and suffering just as if they are our loved ones. By taking their pain and suffering into our heart, we develop empathy.

To carry out acts of compassion, we need to nurture tolerance. If we are to carry out the Bodhisattva work of helping people, we cannot do it alone; we need other people to join us to make this possible. Yet, people have all sorts of personalities and different views. Some are even difficult to work with. How are we supposed to work with them to accomplish the work? We need to develop tolerance. For example, when someone raises their voice in speaking to us, instead of getting mad, we should learn to be understanding and perceive things in a positive way: "He's speaking loudly to me because he's concerned that I might not catch what he's saying if he speaks too softly. It takes a lot of energy to talk, and he's willing to spend his energy talking to me, I should be grateful for this." By being understanding, we broaden our heart and become more accepting.

When someone has an attitude and is unfriendly to us, we need to be kinder to them. They seem unfriendly because they do not have a smile on their face. Do not hold this against them. Instead we should return them a smile so that we can form good affinities with them.





From Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Talks  
Compiled into English by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team

To help people in need, we need many people to join our effort. Therefore, we need to form good affinities with as many people as possible. Since we are aspiring to be Bodhisattvas, we should constantly remind ourselves to be loving and compassionate.

The third of the Four Immeasurables that we need to develop is joy. A Bodhisattva needs to nurture a heart of joy every day. We should not lose our Bodhisattva aspiration and get ourselves afflicted or angry due to the bad attitude or bad habits of one or two persons. We need to keep ourselves cheerful. To accomplish our Bodhisattva work, we need many people to happily join our cause. Thus, we need to learn to interact and deal with all kinds of people in a joyful way.

Moreover, in walking the Bodhisattva path, there are bound to be challenges. We should expect challenges and be ready to tackle them. Part of our cultivation is to overcome difficulties, so how to face them with joy is something we need to learn. Traveling this Bodhisattva path, everyone we encounter is like a living sutra for us to learn. Some people will give us an easy lesson while others will give us a hard one. No matter what kind of lessons they give us, they will help us grow in wisdom-life. So, let us accept challenges and difficulties

with joy. With joy in our heart, we will be less affected by worries and afflictions, and we can keep our mind at peace.

The last of the Four Immeasurables that we need to nurture is equanimity in serving people. We often talk about helping people unconditionally, without asking for anything in return. We do this for people who are poor, for those in suffering, and for those in need. We help people who are strangers to us, and we feel grateful to them for giving us the opportunity to serve and nurture our compassion. But, what about those who are close to us, such as our family members and our fellow Tzu Chi volunteers? We pay more attention and give more love to the people in need than our families and our fellow Tzu Chi volunteers. We need to reflect on the love we give to others and learn to treat everyone equally. To give with equanimity is to give our love equally and impartially to all, whether they are the poor, the suffering, our loved ones, or our friends.

As a Bodhisattva, the spirit of the Four Immeasurables—loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity—is something we need to cultivate in our heart every day of our life. If we can do this, we will be able to bring this spirit into our environment and to the people around us. 🌿



## Compassion in Action

Han Huang

In October 2012, Tzu Chi USA was faced with our greatest domestic disaster relief challenge yet: Hurricane Sandy. In the weeks after the storm, volunteers responded admirably by providing ten million dollars, nine thousand blankets, and sincere loving care to more than forty thousand people affected by the storm. I would like to take this opportunity to offer my gratitude to all those who dedicated their time and energy to make a difference.

First, I want to recognize all the volunteers on the front line. Many were personally affected. Their homes were damaged. They lost power and heating. They waited for hours just to fill their cars with gas. And yet, they always focused on others' needs before their own. Day after day, they spent hours in the wind and cold to deliver hot soup, warm blankets, and cash cards with respectful bows. Whatever obstacles they encountered, they persevered. They personally delivered cash cards to more than fifteen thousand affected families. This is a remarkable achievement. Thank you.


I also want to recognize everyone who supported from afar. In a hundred cities across the country, volunteers raised funds on the streets. Their task was not easy. As the media focused on the presidential election, many people were completely unaware of the storm's magnitude. Volunteers were faced not only with cold November weather, but also with ignorance and apathy. Yet they persevered. Thank you.

Volunteers in the United States were not alone. Across the globe, Tzu Chi volunteers in thirty-three countries and regions took to the streets to

raise funds. Just think about how many people are poor and suffering in Haiti, South Africa, and Myanmar. Yet people in each of those countries gave what they could to help those hurting in New York and New Jersey. Donations collected from countless individuals accumulated into the ten million dollars of emergency cash that helped so many. Thank you.

Finally, I want to thank everyone at Tzu Chi global headquarters in Hualien, and especially Dharma Master Cheng Yen. Tzu Chi is founded on Master Cheng Yen's wisdom and compassion, and it was her wise counsel and constant compassionate guidance that led us all through Hurricane Sandy and encouraged us to recognize this disaster as an opportunity to give and to inspire more people in our communities.

Hurricane Sandy is a reminder that the climate is changing all around us, and that this change leads to disaster. In 2011, we saw a devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan. In 2012, it was a superstorm in the United States. Who knows what 2013 still might bring. It is truly very frightening.

To mitigate these disasters, we need to recognize the impact of climate change and understand that its source is in our own minds. We want more than we need, so we use too many resources and too much energy. If we instead choose not to waste, to live simply and frugally, we can begin to make a positive impact on the earth. Just as the emergency cash cards were accumulated from so many small coins, so too can a better world accumulate from our many small actions. 





# Hurricane Sandy Special Edition

Putting Compassion into Action

Photo: Peter Lin



**Hurricane Sandy  
Special Edition**

# Responding to Disaster



*Photo: Peter Lin*





When Hurricane Sandy struck the Northeast on October 29, 2012, Tzu Chi volunteers wasted no time in helping their neighbors through the ordeal. Following Dharma Master Cheng Yen's call to put compassion into action, volunteers immediately started assessing damage, coordinating with local government and aid organizations, and delivering hot food, warm blankets, and other urgently needed items to hurricane victims in the hardest-hit areas of New York and New Jersey.





# Hurricane Sandy's Path of Destruction



Map Image by NASA. Accessed from <http://visibleearth.nasa.gov/>.  
Hurricane Image by NOAA.

Country	Fatalities	Damage (in USD)	Source
<b>United States</b>	159 (72 direct) <sup>1</sup>	at least \$62.3 billion <sup>2</sup>	"Tropical Cyclone Report: Hurricane Sandy"  National Hurricane Center  (all figures except US Damage)
<b>Haiti</b>	98 (54 direct)	\$750 million	
<b>Cuba</b>	11	\$2 billion	
<b>Others</b>	10	\$500 million	
<b>Total</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>more than \$65 billion</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Fatality figures include both direct and indirect fatalities. Indirect fatalities consist of deaths resulting from lengthy power outages (e.g., hypothermia and carbon monoxide poisoning) and storm cleanup efforts (e.g., falling trees and car accidents) in the United States, and a cholera outbreak in Haiti.

<sup>2</sup> US Damage figures drawn from late November press releases by New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and New Jersey Governor Chris Christie estimating recovery and repair costs in their states as \$32.8 billion and \$29.5 billion, respectively.





# Tzu Chi's Immediate Relief Effort

*One of many homes collapsed and destroyed in the wake of Sandy.  
Photo: Peter Lin*

Fay Chou | Translated by Adam Paiz  
*Fay Chou is a Tzu Chi Senior Editor*

Halloween is usually a night of fun and creativity: the opening chapter to a festive season of joyful holidays and warm family gatherings. But, as Hurricane Sandy washed ashore just before Halloween 2012, it swept away this joy and warmth from millions along the Atlantic Coast. For some, the storm took everything they had.

As Sandy approached the Northeast on October 28, halfway across the world Dharma Master Cheng Yen was closely following the storm's progress and urging everyone to pray and prepare. Tzu Chi Northeast Region immediately instituted its disaster response protocols, while volunteers across New York, Long Island, and Boston began gathering hygiene kits, blankets, instant rice meals, drinking water, and other relief supplies that would soon be needed. Volunteers in New York's Chinatown set aside twenty cases of bottled water, instant rice meals

for eight hundred, and white rice for three hundred more. When necessary, their central kitchen is able to prepare as many as one hundred instant rice meals in just half an hour. Across the country, Tzu Chi USA Headquarters in California also sprung into action, finding ways



*Power lines were downed even in Montville, New Jersey, thirty miles inland. Photo provided by Tzu Chi Mid-Atlantic Region*



to help with logistics, manpower, supplies, and other needed support.

At 5:30 PM on October 29, Sandy made landfall in New Jersey. In the dark of night, fifty miles of trees and telephone cables, and even some bridges, were swept away. Fierce winds and rains battered the shore as the storm surge flooded the land. Compounded by the high tide of a full moon, the water level rose by a foot an hour at one point. The waves reached a height of thirteen feet on the New Jersey coastline. In New York City, Battery Park saw a high tide of fourteen feet: a new record.

When Hurricane Irene hit a year earlier, many coastal residents had obeyed orders to evacuate, only to return later to homes free of storm damage but robbed clean by looters. This time, some chose to remain at home to protect their property. But these residents found themselves trapped by the swiftly rising surge of a much stronger storm. Some residents swam away; some were rescued by neighbors in boats; some, sadly, were not reached in time.

The neighborhood of Breezy Point, Queens, was not only flooded but also ravaged by a fire that destroyed more than one hundred homes. Across the region, more than eight million people were left without power, countless trees were downed, numerous roads were made impassable, and public transportation systems were left unusable. Because so many

homes and businesses lost power, food in refrigerators and freezers was spoiled. New York City's transportation systems were completely paralyzed, and schools were forced to close. The New York Stock Exchange ceased operations for two days: its longest weather-related closure since 1888. Flood waters rapidly submerged all the subway tunnels along the East River, handing the system its worst damage in 108 years of operation.

Not long after the storm, the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) each requested Tzu Chi's support in providing volunteers and relief supplies, and especially distribution of hot meals. Tzu Chi immediately dispatched seven hundred hot meals to a temporary shelter on Grand Street in downtown Manhattan.

Although Tzu Chi's Chinatown office was left without power, volunteers persevered. Flashlights lit the room as they cooked hot meals for disaster victims. The Flushing office also worked with the Salvation Army to meet the needs of disaster victims by delivering three hundred hot meals to Brooklyn.

On November 2, Tzu Chi Global Headquarters in Hualien shipped 250 boxes—more than three tons—of instant rice meals to New York to be distributed to affected areas. This first of seven shipments was transported on the first available flight across the Pacific.



*Long Island residents line up for a chance to obtain some fuel.  
Photo: Ted Lin*



Alongside power outages and road closures, the region also faced a gasoline shortage, so gasoline was strictly rationed. In response to pleas from the New York office, Tzu Chi volunteers from Washington DC and Boston transported badly-needed generators and gasoline to the disaster area. Aid from other regions also poured in, including blankets, generators, and dried food.

In New Jersey, seven thousand residents were living in shelters after the storm. Dharma Master Cheng Yen says that a major disaster is also an opportunity to inspire love, and volunteers indeed witnessed many acts of generosity in the midst of adversity. Many people provided food and household items to others in need, and relief stations were filled with goods. One pizza shop owner from Maine even drove five hours to the disaster area, carrying six hundred precooked pizzas that he then reheated out on the street. New York volunteers served from three large vats of hot egg drop soup on the street as well. During the cold weather, this soup warmed both stomachs and spirits.

As the storm struck, Tzu Chi USA Headquarters was already beginning to prepare its disaster response. Within four days, the first set of emergency cash cards—a total of \$100,000—was on its way to the disaster zone. With

“Tzu Chi volunteers held ninety-two distributions, providing hot meals, relief supplies, and nearly ten million dollars’ worth of emergency cash cards.”

deep compassion for disaster survivors, Dharma Master Cheng attended the daily disaster coordination video conference calls, reminding volunteers of the importance of helping those affected, no matter the scope, so that they would not have to suffer hunger and cold on top of weathering the storm itself. As nightly temperatures in the disaster zone fell below freezing, the National Weather Service even sent out hypothermia warnings.

After days of living in homes with broken windows and no electricity, many suffering families were forced to cover their doors and windows with blankets, hoping to prevent the cold air from entering their apartments. For those in shelters, there simply were not enough warm clothes to go around. Some said, “Getting out of bed in the morning is like freezing to death.”

Thankfully, government aid began to arrive in the form of sixty freight trucks, as Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) set up Disaster Recovery Centers in New York City, Staten Island, Rockaway Beach, and several other afflicted areas across New York and New Jersey. These FEMA centers provided disaster survivors with food, water, and warm clothing.

In New Jersey, a frequent visitor to Tzu



*Hoboken, New Jersey, remains flooded days after the storm*  
Photo: Sheila Wu





*On Long Island, volunteers deliver warm sustenance in the cold. Photo: Ted Lin*



*Volunteers cook in the dark in Manhattan to quickly deliver hot meals. Photo: Peter Lin*

Chi's vegetarian food pantry called to ask for assistance. He said that there were senior citizens at Cedar Ridge Senior Housing who needed help. Lacking power and functioning transportation, the seniors there were running out of food. Volunteers immediately went to a local supermarket to purchase bread. In those desperate times, customers were only allowed to purchase one loaf of bread apiece, but Tzu Chi volunteers explained that they were buying this bread on behalf of trapped seniors, so they were allowed to purchase twenty loaves. Along with the bread, they also delivered canned goods and fruits.

In New York, blood banks had to discard several thousand bags of spoiled blood because the refrigerated storage units had lost power during the storm. Since the Flushing office still had power, volunteers there organized their third blood drive of the year on November 4, successfully filling 157 bags of blood.

On November 5, a full week after the storm, one and a half million residents remained without power, while the storm's reported death toll had reached 180, including 111 in the United States, and even two in Canada. In New York City, more than thirty thousand residents still needed housing assistance, but there were not enough vacant rooms to go around. As many returned to their normal school and work routines, the subway system still operated at a reduced capacity, woefully insufficient for those who needed transportation.

Volunteers from Tzu Chi went out into the disaster zone every day from dawn to dusk, searching for victims, cooking hot food, and handing out relief supplies. But there were just not enough volunteers. So, volunteers with global disaster relief experience began to arrive in the disaster zone from across the country to assist with operations. For the first major relief distribution, forty-seven volunteers even traveled from Canada to offer their assistance.

Through Thanksgiving and Christmas, Tzu Chi volunteers held ninety-two distributions, providing hot meals, relief supplies, and nearly ten million dollars' worth of emergency cash cards. Through mid- and long-term relief plans, Tzu Chi will continue to help the weak and powerless, especially those unable to access government aid.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen has often said that disasters should awaken our awareness. After the initial chaos of the days after the storm, the intense demand for aid has eased and most people have returned to their everyday lives. Now it is time to look into our hearts and contemplate. After one of the greatest natural disasters ever suffered in the United States, to what awareness have we awakened? 🌱

The healthy should look after the sick;  
the untroubled should look after the  
suffering.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



# Awakening to Great Compassion

Stephen Huang | Translated by Colin Legerton

*Stephen Huang is Tzu Chi's Executive Director of Global Volunteers*

In late October 2012, as Hurricane Sandy devastated the islands of the Caribbean, Dharma Master Cheng Yen encouraged US Tzu Chi volunteers to pray, remain vigilant, and not underestimate the storm. In the days that followed, Sandy continued its northward journey and grew to more than one thousand miles wide. After making landfall in Atlantic City on October 29, it carved a wide swath of destruction across the coastal regions of New Jersey and New York, quickly becoming the second-costliest US hurricane in history. And yet, despite its enormous scale, Sandy struck when the whole country was occupied with the impending presidential election, so it was largely ignored.

I happened to be in Southern California at the time, so each day I joined in the daily

disaster relief coordination meetings that USA Headquarters held with Global Headquarters in Hualien and volunteers on the East Coast. From the very beginning, Master Cheng Yen expressed that she was fully behind our Hurricane Sandy relief work, would support us in any way necessary, and had very high expectations. She encouraged US Tzu Chi volunteers to approach the task courageously and carry it out fully. My heart jumped—she had given us a great mission!

I thought back to 1991. Eastern China had just suffered devastating floods, and Master had initiated a major disaster relief effort to support the survivors. The history of relations across the Taiwan Strait is very complicated and the political situation was especially contentious at that time, so a lot of people very vocally



*Volunteers deliver hot soup and beverages in Far Rockaway.  
Photo: William Yang*





*Without electricity, volunteers in Chinatown cook by flashlight to serve people in need of hot food. Photo: Peter Lin*

disapproved of Master's plan to conduct disaster relief in China. There seemed to be no end to their criticism and reproach. I lived in the United States then but happened to be back in Hualien at the time, so I personally accompanied Master on this project and could deeply feel the pressure that she was under. But, no matter what, Master persevered. She said, "If we don't do this now, we won't have an opportunity in the future." Through tenacity and courage, she overcame every difficulty to help flood victims in eastern China, and thus began Tzu Chi's great mission of international disaster relief.

I wondered then, why was Master so insistent on providing such timely support to these flood victims? Of course, from a humanitarian perspective, love should not discriminate by ethnicity, religion, or politics, but why then? Why China? Later, I began to understand: this was Master's prescience and foresight.

Many years ago, Master Cheng Yen said that if the world is to be peaceful and society harmonious, it cannot happen without China and the United States. So developing Tzu Chi in these two locations is a very important goal. In 1991, the eastern China floods sparked one major mission; now, twenty-one years later, another mission arose in the United States: Hurricane Sandy.

“Knowing that the world is in constant flux, what should we—as US Tzu Chi volunteers—do?”

I have heard some people say that the eighteenth century belonged to France, the nineteenth to England, and the twentieth to the United States. Many predict that the twenty-first century will now be China's century. But I do not think it matters whose century it is. What's important is that this is now the digital age: a time of impermanence and rapid change. Knowing that the world is in constant flux, what should we—as US Tzu Chi volunteers—do?

After the events of September 11, 2001, Master said that disasters should serve to awaken our awareness, and she encouraged everyone to join the "one person, one good deed" movement aiming to free the world of disasters. Disciples at the Jing Si Abode

began to sincerely pray each day before lunch for a world free of disasters, a practice they have continued to this day.

Eleven years later, in September 2012, Master sincerely and earnestly told US Tzu Chi volunteers, "If the United States does not awaken, the world cannot awaken." Hearing this, we searched within ourselves. Had the United States awakened after 9/11? Had Hurricane Katrina led the United States to awaken? Has Sandy? After years of natural and man-made disasters occurring one after the other, would disasters keep happening like this? Looking out at the world, we see an ever-tense situation in the Middle East, shadows of nuclear weapons in Iran and North Korea, and a contentious dispute in the South China Sea: any of these could be the fuse of a devastating war, and the United States could be drawn into each of them.

"If the United States does not awaken, the world cannot awaken." With such a great responsibility for US Tzu Chi volunteers to bear, how should we undertake this great mission that Master Cheng Yen has given? For twenty-one years, Master has never ceased her warnings to be vigilant and committed.



Over the past decade she has also frequently warned that “time is running out,” calling on us to “exert self-control, restore courtesy, instill discipline, and revive common decency,” to find happiness through peace and tranquility. But how many people have truly heard Master’s warning? How many have answered her call, or awakened to it? Have Master’s disciples—especially those disciples living in the United States—answered her call? Have they practiced environmental protection through recycling, taken on a vegetarian diet, conserved energy, and reduced carbon emissions, doing what they can to protect hearts and minds, as well as our Mother Earth? If we do not begin with ourselves and grow steadily from one to a hundred to a thousand, how can the United States truly awaken?

Master Cheng Yen brings together the compassion and the wisdom of the Buddha to show us how to put Buddhism into action. After Hurricane Sandy, just as after Japan’s earthquake and tsunami last year, many people criticized Tzu Chi’s efforts. People said, “Japan is rich! The United States is rich! They don’t need our help.” But Master is rooted in the great compassion of a religious practitioner, so she deeply understands the physical and spiritual pain of a disaster survivor. She expects Tzu Chi volunteers to strip away the pain of those who are suffering, and replace it with joy; not just any joy, the joy of the Dharma.

How does one reach this kind of “great compassion”? Only through great wisdom. Master repeatedly called on Tzu Chi volunteers to get involved in this disaster relief: not only volunteers on the East Coast, but all across the country. She encouraged them to give support both widely and deeply, to lead recipients to experience Tzu Chi’s sincerity through practical cash assistance. Master understood clearly that fundraising would not be easy. She knew that Tzu Chi USA Headquarters had just completed its major annual fundraiser weeks before and that most Americans had their attention fully focused on the presidential election. So she resolutely picked up the slack, calling on volunteers all over the world to raise funds and inspire love: to achieve an enormous relief effort together. From the hot meals served the day after the hurricane to the emergency debit cards distributed to more than fifteen thousand families, the aid that Tzu Chi volunteers provided was always timely and practical.



*Volunteers prepare blankets in anticipation of another relief distribution.*  
Photo: Wankang Wang





*In the first days after the storm, volunteers compassionately served hot meals to thousands of displaced storm survivors.  
Photo: Peter Lin*

When Haiti, the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, suffered a major earthquake in 2010, US Tzu Chi volunteers put all their strength into the relief effort. After immediate relief was complete, they mobilized local volunteers to deliver compassionate care to their communities, and even started rebuilding several schools. And yet, the amount spent on Hurricane Sandy relief is already greater than what has been spent in Haiti. It is a new disaster relief record in the twenty-three year history of Tzu Chi in the United States.

In her compassion and wisdom, Master Cheng Yen hopes that Tzu Chi volunteers in the United States can take advantage of the opportunity provided by Hurricane Sandy to strengthen their own vigilance and awareness, and increase Tzu Chi's visibility in the United States in order to recruit more local volunteers. When Sandy's destruction was ignored by most of the country, Tzu Chi volunteers were among the first to arrive, and they will remain until the very end. Their mindful support has attracted the attention of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, the New York City government, the New Jersey state government, police and fire departments in several cities, and the mainstream media. In

addition, Tzu Chi volunteers plan to report on this major relief achievement at the next annual meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Only in hindsight can we truly appreciate Master Cheng Yen's prescience and foresight. Leading Tzu Chi across the Taiwan Strait twenty-one years ago set the stage for Tzu Chi's footprints to spread across more than seventy countries and regions around the globe. In the United States today, Tzu Chi volunteers transcend the artificial boundaries of ethnicity and religion to warm the hearts of aid recipients through the spirit of gratitude, respect, and love. It is a spirit that transcends time and space and brings people together, joining hearts as one. The means are innumerable, but the goal is one: a world where minds are purified, society is peaceful, and there are no more disasters. 🌿

To purify hearts, one must give with a loving heart, guide with wisdom, and accompany with patience.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



# Enlightenment on Staten Island

Martin Kuo | Translated by Jacob Rawson

*Martin Kuo is a Tzu Chi volunteer in Southern California*

On November 7, 2012, before I set off to New York to assist with disaster relief efforts, my wife said to me, "This time there shouldn't be much to worry about, right?" In the past few years, after major earthquakes had hit Haiti, Chile, and China, I had always ventured into the disaster areas. In order to prepare for these trips, I had to get cholera and tetanus shots. Each time I left, my family worried about me. This time it was the East Coast that had suffered a hurricane, and I was quite surprised to see Master Cheng Yen involved in the daily video conference calls, just as she had

been for Haiti. I wondered how this disaster could be thought of in the same terms as the Haiti earthquake. I thought, "This is New York; the wreckage couldn't be so bad, could it?"

The day I left, a blizzard had just hit New York, so my flight was redirected to Detroit. From there I called George Chang, head of the New York office. He said, "Staten Island needs relief workers. You're going, alright?"

The next day I flew to New York and immediately headed to Staten Island where I



Photo: Peter Lin



saw a sight that I could hardly believe. I could not help but blurt out, "Is this America?" During that period, all the media attention was focused on the presidential election, so I had no idea that the disaster in New York was so serious.

Over the next few days I met with many local work groups and organizations, but no one could tell me how many Staten Island families were affected. They only knew that those affected were spread across six zip codes—at least six thousand families, maybe as many as nineteen thousand.

On November 9, I spoke with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Red Cross workers who were very happy to see us because we could help in ways that they could not. FEMA would grant affected households a stipend of up to \$31,400 dollars after they passed the qualification process, and the Red Cross would provide food rations and long-term aid. But both of these plans would take time. I saw many victims in evacuation tents crying—they needed help immediately, but did not know whom to ask.

I began to understand why Master Cheng Yen is always calling on us to inspire more people to serve as volunteers.

On November 10, we began distributing aid materials and cash cards at the tables outside FEMA's Disaster Recovery Center in New Dorp. "Cash cards for us? No strings attached?" people asked. Many were suspicious.

There were not many recipients—65 that day, 110 the next. On the day after, we did not go there to hand out cards as we were preparing a much larger distribution for one thousand families over the weekend. Unexpectedly, a FEMA agent called me frantically, saying, "You must come. There are a thousand people lined up. They heard that the government is giving out money. They could riot soon!" Three other volunteers rushed over with me so we could explain that it was Tzu Chi giving out the cash cards, not the government. I assured them that we were planning a larger distribution, and asked that they give us a few more days. But they were still very emotional. In order to reassure them, and against the standard practice of Tzu Chi, I handed out my business card and told them to contact me at any time. Others also jotted down my phone number.



*Volunteers serve storm survivors outside FEMA's Disaster Recovery Center on November 11.  
Photo: Shu'an Li*





*Volunteers hold a relief distribution at Oakwood Heights Community Church on November 16. Photo: Peter Lin*



*The author (center) helps energize the waiting care recipients. Photo: Youren Hong*

My instructions were to distribute aid materials to one thousand families over the weekend. In fact, I felt sad that I could only help one thousand families when so many Staten Island residents had been affected. I understood, however, that that Brooklyn, Long Island, and Rockaway all needed aid support as well, and that we just did not have enough manpower to serve them all. I secretly prayed to the Buddha to give me the power to help more storm victims. The Buddha must have heard my prayers, because on November 13, Tzu Chi's Executive Director of Global Volunteers Stephen Huang arrived in New York. He asked if I could organize aid distribution for five thousand families to take place over a three-day period.

I was grateful to have the chance to help more storm victims—and very thankful for the Canadian volunteer group that was coming to provide extra manpower—but I wondered how I could possibly make contact with five thousand families in just two days. At that time, there was not even a list of names to work from. Once again, the Buddha heard me. That day my phone did not stop ringing. The callers were all the people who had copied my phone number or taken my business card. Based on their phone numbers, I could tell immediately that they lived in the disaster area.

I received around one hundred phone calls, and each time I asked if the caller could help us. This confused the callers because they were calling to receive help, not give it. I asked each caller to make three phone calls to storm victims

in their vicinity who had been hit especially hard. If an area still had power, I asked the caller to post news of the Tzu Chi aid distribution plan on local websites. Finally, I asked each caller to help out as a volunteer when time came to distribute aid materials.

At the same time, I went to the main disaster area with other Tzu Chi volunteers to distribute notices about the aid distribution. We asked each person we met to go spread the information house to house. After having to find these creative solutions to deal with our shortage of manpower, I began to understand why Master Cheng Yen is always calling on us to inspire more people to serve as volunteers.

A couple months before, I had heard Master Cheng Yen say, "If the United States does not awaken, the world cannot awaken." At that time I did not understand what she meant. America will sometimes suffer a natural disaster, I thought, but everything would be all right in the end. We all know who we are, and was this not enlightenment? Only after participating in the Staten Island relief effort did I realize the wisdom of Master's words.

If America is to awaken, it should certainly start with its preeminent city. During the days I spent in New York, the average temperature was just a few degrees above freezing, so storm victims had to line up outdoors for many hours in this bitter cold to receive a cash card and a blanket. One young man named Mike remarked that he had only ever seen people lining up for





Photo: Peter Lin

aid on television. He never thought that he too would one day be in line. "This really opened my eyes," he told me.

Master Cheng Yen often reminds us that in this world of impermanence, we never know if we will live to see tomorrow. So why was it so hard to imagine that these unfortunate circumstances could befall Staten Island? Truly we do need to awaken our understanding.

Other volunteers and I did our best to stay outside and chat with everyone waiting in line. We introduced them to Tzu Chi and told them about how we operate. Once they heard that this group of strangers from places like California, Chicago, and Canada had paid their own way to come here, they were shocked. They said, "You don't know us. Why did you want to come help us?" I always responded very respectfully that we are all members of one big family, and that in the future they could help others as well. This is the cycle of love. These words seemed to warm their hearts and melt away their concerns. Many of them cried and embraced us. On Staten Island, we truly witnessed the planting of the seeds of love.

Master Cheng Yen wants us to recruit more volunteers—more living Bodhisattvas—because when natural disasters occur, we need more hands to help. More volunteers not only give more power to help in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, they also give more strength to make the world a better place. I was very blessed to be able to help more than five thousand families in the days before Thanksgiving, in a series of distributions that truly embodied the spirit of the holiday. After hearing the bamboo bank story, these thousands of families were also inspired to share their love with others and launch a new cycle of good deeds. When we embraced each other, I felt the power of love burst forth, and a great peace spread over the world. 🌿

One who has love and works together with others with one heart and one mind never walks alone.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



# Lessons From Disaster

Austin Tsao | Translated by Mei-li Hamilton  
Austin Tsao is Tzu Chi's Director of Charity Development

On November 9, 2012, I flew to New York City from Los Angeles to support the Hurricane Sandy relief effort. This was the second time I had traveled to New York for a disaster relief mission.

The first mission was eleven years ago. A few days after the 9/11 attacks, Jean Hsu and I left Los Angeles for New York. At the time, she was Charity Director of Tzu Chi USA and I was CEO, and we were on our way to start planning a disaster relief program. We had two connections along the way because there were no nonstop flights at the time. At each stop, the airport was quiet and cold. Travelers were sitting silently, as though they did not dare to speak. Soldiers carrying weapons guarded the entrances and exits.

We came this second time because the East Coast had been devastated by Hurricane Sandy, and the atmosphere was completely different. Travelers were relaxed and calm, probably because the presidential election was just around the corner and the media had largely ignored the disaster. In fact, I did not see



*More than simple cash relief, volunteers were able to kindle the love in others' hearts. Photo: Peter Lin*

any signs of the devastation until I arrived in the immediate disaster area.

Normally, we compile a name list before a disaster relief mission to confirm the identities of victims and ensure that they are qualified to receive aid. This time, the disaster area did not have electricity, gas, or internet connectivity, and local governments had not yet recovered. Therefore, it was nearly impossible to collect the victims' names.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen tells us to serve with the combination of compassion and wisdom. Compassion is giving without delay. She often says, "Bodhisattvas arise to relieve suffering people." After Hurricane Sandy, I heard for the first time, "Bodhisattvas arise to relieve suffering in time." When there is great suffering, we must take action immediately. So we were building a name list, assisting victims, and distributing necessities all at the same time. It was truly a great challenge.



Alongside compassion, there must also be wisdom, which means inspiring and guiding the suffering. Dharma Master Cheng Yen wants us to pass our love to the people we help. So we always emphasize the story of the bamboo bank: how saving just a little money each day can help us do great things. We also explain that Tzu Chi volunteers pay their own expenses and donate their time freely, and donations this time came from all over the United States and thirty-two other countries and regions around the world. Each donation may be small, but the amount builds up with each gift.

I hope that the victims we help can understand this spirit and be inspired by it to give their love to others who might need help even more than they do.

### **Witnessing the Cycle of Love**

On the morning of November 15, we saw a gentleman at the front door of Tzu Chi's New York office. He was a retired plumber and a volunteer fireman. Hurricane Sandy had severely damaged his town, so he and his neighbors had received cash cards from Tzu Chi's disaster relief team. He asked us whether the cash card was transferable. I explained to him that anyone could use the card, since it did not have a name on it.

I also asked him why he had come all the way down to the office just to ask this question. He told me that he had heard the story of the bamboo bank, about how thirty housewives started Tzu Chi by saving just a fraction of their daily grocery money. He was touched when he heard that Tzu Chi volunteers encouraged everyone to do their best to spread love to others. He thought about an eighty-two-year-old woman and her severely handicapped son whose home was badly damaged, and who had not received notification about the distribution because they were temporarily living in another area. He felt that they needed money more than he did, so he wanted to give his cash card to them.

I comforted him and said, "Keep your cash card. Please tell me their address, and we will deliver cash cards to them." He said that he would spread Tzu Chi's message of love. I saw tears in his eyes as he spoke.

The biggest reward of this disaster relief mission was seeing people inspired by compassion and the cycle of love. Many people took bamboo banks home with them or filled out volunteer application forms. I believe that Americans have warm and loving hearts. Hurricane Sandy hurt them badly and they were deeply touched that Tzu Chi could offer financial assistance so quickly.

### **Strengthening Preparations for Relief**

This disaster caused third-world-like chaos, and it also caused a great deal of stress for the Tzu Chi New York office. We realized that we need to have power generators, walkie-talkies, and other equipment in stock. New York and New Jersey were without power for a long time, so generators would have helped us be more effective. We need to take better advantage of computer technology to help us check victims' qualifications faster and more efficiently. We can also improve the way we handle cash cards. Right now, the value of our cash cards is fixed. It would be better if we could be more flexible in setting the value of cards.

Disasters can occur at any time, so we need to have adequate materials at all times. Although Tzu Chi's disaster relief teams have a lot of experience, we still need to train more volunteers. And we need to increase our collaboration with outside organizations.

Overall, we can still do more to improve our preparation, including designing a comprehensive plan to cover the three major areas: preparedness, disaster response, and recovery. We hope that there will be no more disasters and that our preparation will not be needed, but we know that we need to do our best to be prepared for anything that might happen. 🌿

If everyone exercises the love in their heart, then goodness and blessings will accumulate, creating a cycle of kindness.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



# Caring for Yourself to Care for Others

Medical Corner



Lina Lee

*Lina Lee is Tzu Chi's Supervisor of Social Services & a California-Licensed Marriage Family Therapist*



*In disaster relief, volunteers should remember to not only care for disaster survivors, but also take good care of themselves. Photo: Peter Lin*

As Tzu Chi volunteers, we dedicate ourselves to helping those in distress by bringing them happiness and relieving their suffering. Tzu Chi volunteers serve the world with the belief that "when others are hurting, we feel their pain; when others suffer, we feel their sorrow."

In our role as witnesses to the suffering of others, we often identify closely with those we offer help to, and sometimes even begin to share their emotions. Hence, "vicarious traumatization"—in which volunteers and relief workers personally experience the trauma of disaster survivors—becomes common, especially when providing relief to disaster survivors.

Frontline volunteers are repeatedly exposed to powerful emotions by the survivors they encounter. They hear stories of loss and grief after a crisis, and sometimes even fear, anxiety, and insecurity during one.

**T**zu Chi volunteers strongly believe in our mission to help the poor and educate the rich by reverently accepting Buddha's teaching to express great kindness to all sentient beings, and take their suffering as our own. We constantly remind ourselves of Venerable Master Yin Shun's instruction to Master Cheng Yen to "be committed to Buddhism and to all living beings."

Disaster relief can also be difficult and exhausting physically. Many volunteers have shared that the physical demands of tasks in the early stages of disaster relief often lead to sleeplessness and chronic fatigue.



These volunteers face a variety of role stresses, including a perceived inability to ever do "enough." The demands of the situations they encounter often far exceed their ability to help. At the end of the day, many volunteers feel they simply have not done enough, no matter how many people they have helped, or how much they have accomplished. Unfortunately, many frontline volunteers are also confronted with the anger, complaints, and apparent lack of gratitude of some survivors.

All of these factors can lead to a feeling of "burnout" among volunteers. Common symptoms may include:

- Excessive tiredness
- Loss of spirit
- Inability to concentrate
- Somatic symptoms (e.g., headaches, nausea, gastrointestinal disturbances)
- Difficulty sleeping

There are several potential coping strategies for disaster relief volunteers encountering such a problem:

- If you feel overwhelmed by the situation or your duties, try focusing on simple and routine tasks, even just for a short time.
- Remember to take a break when you need one.
- Talk to your team leader or supervisor so that they know how you feel. Remember to be

patient with yourself.

- Remind yourself that some reactions are normal and cannot be avoided when working in difficult circumstances.
- Take care of your own body and mind.
- Get enough rest and sleep. If you have sleep difficulties or feel anxious, avoid caffeine, especially before bedtime.
- Exercise to relieve tension; take deep breaths.
- Drink fluids regularly and keep regular meal times.

I offer my most sincere gratitude to all Tzu Chi volunteers who waste no time in offering love and support to disaster survivors in the United States and throughout the world. It is a wonderful thing to dedicate your time and energy in the service of others. Always remember to take good care of yourself, too. Only if you keep yourself healthy and alert will you have the strength to carry out the missions of Tzu Chi and make a positive impact on others.



A healthy mental attitude is vital to good health, which in turn leads to a happy and fulfilling life.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, world-renowned advocate of nonviolence and Engaged Buddhism, visited Jing Si Books & Café in 2011 to deliver a workshop for Da Ai Television. During his remarks, he explained that volunteers must care for themselves before they can care for others:

*"If you cannot be compassionate to yourself—if you do not know how to take care of yourself—how can you effectively take care of another person? That is why the Buddha's teaching on love, on compassion, has to be directed to yourself first. And if you have some progress in yourself, it's time for you to reach out and help other people. That is why social workers, volunteers, have to take good care of themselves, have to learn how to release the tension, how to listen to the suffering, how to reconcile with their beloved one, in order for their work to have a meaning."*





Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation  
[www.us.tzuchi.org](http://www.us.tzuchi.org)

# The 80/20 Lifestyle

**Be healthy:** Reduce your meal portions to 80%

**Be generous:** Use your 20% savings to help the poor

Improve your health by reducing meal portions to 80% of your normal consumption. With the 20% you save on food, you can help the needy.







Students put compassion into action through generous donations for storm victims.  
Photo: Tina Chen

# “Stars of Compassion” Shine for Students

**Penny Hsu**

*Penny Hsu is a volunteer teacher in Southern California*

For volunteers in the Education Foundation, we not only participated in fundraising at shopping centers and outside of grocery stores, we decided that we could do even more by educating students about the impact of the hurricane and explaining what a child can do to help. As educators, we regularly teach our students important character education lessons, such as giving and compassion, and there was no better time to teach compassion than in the days just after the hurricane, when so many Americans were in need of our help.

The Research and Development (R&D) Team in San Dimas first developed a multimedia presentation and a lesson plan for an assembly. Principals at Lytle Creek Elementary, Charles Lee Elementary, Los Angeles Tzu Chi Academy, and Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool and Kindergarten all quickly responded by declaring their support for such an assembly. This assembly was rightfully named “Stars of Compassion.”

As members of the R&D Team read many stories of devastation and even more stories of compassionate acts carried out by Tzu Chi volunteers and other kind-hearted people, we kept updating and revising our lesson plans. Character Education Specialist Corina Hsueh saw the event as an important “teachable moment”: an event that is not made up, that is real, and where the students can see that if they

**A**s Hurricane Sandy swept through the East Coast in October 2012, tens of thousands of homes were destroyed and many people suddenly found themselves without power, water, gas, or, even worse, a place to call home. The wind was so strong, the rain so harsh, the damage so pervasive, that Hurricane Sandy quickly took on a new name: “Superstorm” Sandy. With great compassion for storm victims, Tzu Chi volunteers from coast to coast immediately mobilized to help victims in New York and New Jersey by donating hot food, drinking water, clothing, blankets, and cash cards.

While the temperature in New York hovered in the thirties, Southern California was enjoying beautiful sunshine and balmy weather in the eighties. But the pain of the Hurricane Sandy victims did not go unnoticed. Tzu Chi volunteers in Southern California felt blessed to have such good weather but also had tremendous empathy for all the storm victims. We all felt compelled to do something to help.





lend a helping hand, they will make a difference in other people's lives." Corina, along with the R&D Team, spent countless hours writing and rewriting an outline and lesson plan. Even Corina's husband was so inspired by the effort that he devoted many evenings to compiling news clips and photographs into slide shows for the assemblies. Education Coordinator Kathy Chen prepared teaching materials for all the students at all the different schools, and even cut out a total of 2,200 stars for our "Stars of Compassion" posters.

On November 29, 2012, Principal Hector Alegria of Charles Lee Elementary invited the Tzu Chi R&D Team to present the highlights of the assembly to all the teachers at his school. Our meeting with these teachers enhanced their understanding of Tzu Chi's missions and the spirit of compassion and giving that lies behind Tzu Chi's character education. All of the teachers were supportive and expressed their eagerness to help with fundraising.

Between November and December 2012, twelve assemblies were held in various schools in Southern California, New York, and Dallas. New York volunteer Judy Wang reported that the two "Stars of Compassion" assemblies that they presented to P.S. 201 Elementary were very well received by all the students. She was especially impressed by how the older students paid such close attention to the assembly and really took the message of compassion to heart.

At Charles Lee Elementary, one of the teachers came up to me after the assembly and said that even adults like her need to be reminded sometimes to always have a compassionate heart and to never turn a blind eye to the pain and suffering endured by other human beings.

Another R&D teacher, Vivian Wang, recalled that she was most impressed with the answers that students gave at the assemblies she taught.

These young children clearly understood the problems that the hurricane victims were facing. They wisely suggested that we donate something to eat, something to drink, and something to wear. Vivian also shared that her students watched the videos very attentively and comprehended the situation better through the powerful images they saw.

Over all, about 1,550 students participated in the "Stars of Compassion" assemblies, and over \$2,400 was raised to help Hurricane Sandy victims. Even after the assemblies were complete and the bamboo banks had all been collected, their impact still remained strong. When Kathy Chen walked into Lee Elementary a month and a half later, children ran up to her shouting, "Compassion!" As she walked around campus, she was greeted by even more children who used the "compassion" gesture taught at the assembly. Kathy thought to herself, "Wow! We did something good. And it was not just for one child; it was for many, many children."

The R&D Team will continue on its mission to develop other meaningful and impactful character education assemblies. R&D Director Elaine Lin explains, "We were able to put together and deliver these assemblies because of everyone's contribution. It was teamwork at its best when all the R&D members listened to each other and strove to create the best lesson plan through many discussions and revisions. Assemblies are a great way for us to reach a large number of students and teachers and share the Master's message of gratitude, respect, and love." 🌱

In this world, everyone is family and everywhere the place for spiritual growth.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*





**Hurricane Sandy  
Special Edition**

# Reaching People in Need



*Photo: Peter Lin*





Following Tzu Chi's five principles of disaster relief—directness, priority, respect, timeliness, and practicality—volunteers worked closely with local government and aid organizations to hold a number of major distributions throughout the states of New Jersey and New York. By the end of 2012, more than 15,000 affected families had received aid from Tzu Chi, including nearly \$10 million in emergency cash cards, and both volunteers and recipients found their lives changed forever.



# TZU CHI'S FIVE PRINCIPLES OF DISASTER RELIEF

## **1. DIRECTNESS**

In disaster relief, Tzu Chi volunteers always deliver aid personally, even paying their own way to travel where they are needed. Direct giving ensures that relief goods reach the intended recipients and gives an opportunity for people to connect. Volunteers have an opportunity to give, and recipients feel the warmth of another's care.

## **2. PRIORITY**

In order to ensure that limited resources reach those in greatest need, Tzu Chi always focuses aid on the hardest-hit areas first. Through collaboration with FEMA and local governments and organizations, Tzu Chi volunteers assessed and identified the areas affected most severely by Hurricane Sandy.

## **3. RESPECT**

Volunteers always respect recipients' dignity and customs. This respect is expressed in the deep bow with which volunteers deliver relief goods; this spirit allows volunteers to collaborate closely and harmoniously with various religious entities and diverse local communities.

## **4. TIMELINESS**

Tzu Chi volunteers always aim to meet urgent needs quickly. Volunteers began delivering blankets and serving hot food, beverages, and soups on October 30: the day after Hurricane Sandy struck. In the weeks that followed, they delivered cash aid before other organizations were able.

## **5. PRACTICALITY**

Tzu Chi aims to provide whatever aid is most useful in the particular circumstances of each disaster. As Hurricane Sandy left many without electricity in the winter cold, volunteers first offered blankets and hot meals, soups, and beverages. Later, volunteers provided debit cards for recipients to buy whatever they needed most urgently.





# 37 Days of Unconditional Compassion

**Shirley Tseng & Fang Yuan Chou | Translated by John Ueng**

*Shirley Tseng is Tzu Chi's Editing Division Supervisor*

*Fang Yuan Chou is Tzu Chi's Northeast Region Administrative Assistant*

As Hurricane Sandy wreaked havoc in the Caribbean, Tzu Chi volunteers in New York were finishing preparations for the sign language musical Sutra of Filial Piety (aka Sutra of Profound Gratitude toward Parents) scheduled to be performed on October 27, 2012. The production is the largest event of the year for the regional chapter, and consists of some two hundred volunteers performing onstage, plus considerably more working backstage. As Hurricane Sandy approached the Atlantic coast, everyone worried that the performance might be canceled at the last minute, but they breathed a sigh of relief when the weather that day turned out to be sunny and clear. Little did they know, it was the calm before the storm.

As Sandy neared, many organizations and government agencies sent out alerts, reminding people to be prepared for the bad weather approaching. On October 28, Tzu Chi Northeastern Regional Director George Chang assembled a team of volunteers at the regional office in Flushing, Queens, to take inventory of disaster relief supplies. They also held a conference call with Tzu Chi USA Headquarters to discuss the possibility of forming a command center for emergency response and relief coordination. By the time George left the chapter to head home late in the afternoon, the worsening weather was palpable as the powerful hurricane drew near.



*Tzu Chi New York Regional Director George Chang and New York City Comptroller John C. Liu inspect the Hamilton Beach relief distribution. Photo: Peter Chu*





*One of the volunteers' first tasks was delivering hot meals. Photo: Peter Lin*

On October 29, George was awakened in the middle of the night by a phone call from Tzu Chi Global Headquarters in Hualien. Volunteers there had been monitoring the hurricane closely, and had learned that the devastation was severe. He noticed that the rain and wind outside his window were now very strong. The entire residential area was already without power. Early the next morning, he rushed to the office at first light and found that the area around the office had not been impacted by the hurricane at all. Scott Huang and Austin Chu had already arrived, so they immediately called David Chao of the disaster relief group.

George first held an internal conference call with local volunteers, and then joined another that the New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) had arranged for local Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) member organizations to better understand the latest developments. Reports

quickly came in from volunteers throughout the city, indicating that fallen trees had blocked roads across most of the city. George also learned that Tzu Chi's offices in Long Island and Manhattan had both lost power.

On October 30, many Tzu Chi volunteers called one another to ensure everyone was alright. They learned that thankfully only a few had lost power or internet, and that damages suffered were mostly minor. Those with working transportation gathered at the chapter office to offer their assistance. George asked the disaster survey team to begin spreading out to various areas to assess where help was needed, then convened a meeting with the heads of the various Tzu Chi offices in the region to work out several disaster relief options. They decided to focus first on information gathering and providing hot meals to impacted areas.

Volunteers in Flushing and Chinatown quickly began cooking hot meals and Jing Si Instant Rice, which was specially designed for disaster relief. Undeterred by the blackout, volunteers in Chinatown diligently cooked meals under the limited lighting of flashlights and headlamps. They soon delivered their first batch of steaming hot meals to lower Manhattan, the most accessible disaster area at that time.

Calls for help began pouring in, some from regular Tzu Chi partners like the Salvation Army and the Red Cross. A Mr. Chen called from Staten Island to say, "The devastation is very serious here, please hurry and come help us!" So, early on the morning of November 1, the volunteers divided into three teams: a Staten Island team headed by Freeman Su, a Rockaway team led by Kathy Chao, and a Lower Manhattan team under Henry Tuan. These teams not only assessed the needs of those affected by the disaster, they also delivered hot meals directly into their hands. Everyone in all three groups was stunned by the breadth and severity of the devastation.

More and more volunteers began arriving at the office. Without any instructions, only an unspoken understanding, everyone began



putting on rain boots and disaster relief gear, assigning their transportation into different groups, and working in teams to move supplies. The volunteers in the kitchen were like magicians: surprising everyone with enough delicious hot meals and beverages in no time.

Volunteers Johnson Liu and San San Chiang not only visited emergency shelters, but also witnessed first-hand the devastation on especially hard-hit Beach 94th Street on the Rockaway Peninsula. When they related back to the New York chapter what they had seen and heard, it was decided that tents would be deployed to set up a disaster relief station, where hot meals would be provided every afternoon. George explained, "Hot meals were not only for hurricane victims, but also for the police officers working on the frontlines, as well as the clean-up crews. After several days of decreasing temperatures and no electricity, it's not hard to understand that people would be feeling very helpless and eager for hot food to warm their stomachs."

George could easily empathize, because he too had to live without power and heating at home. "Every night when I drove home from

the office, as I got closer to home, it felt like I was leaving the light and entering the darkness." For a few days, temperatures even fell below freezing. He had no choice but to spend his nights at a friend's home.

He knew he was lucky to have that option of a warm place to stay. One day, after distributing blankets in Far Rockaway, he visited the aging mother of a volunteer English teacher in Tzu Chi's community education program. "This ninety-year-old woman was living on the tenth floor of an apartment building, and because she had no power or heat, she had wrapped herself in all the warm clothes and gloves and socks she owned. She was all bundled up in thick layers that looked very heavy. She just sat there by the kitchen, afraid to move and unable to get down to the ground floor... I can't imagine how it was when the temperatures got even colder at night. Just think what it was like to be without power for two or three weeks, not only for her, but for so many people with mobility problems or small children."

Though many places lacked power and fuel, the work of disaster assessment and relief could not be delayed. Therefore, George reached out



Volunteers serve police officers in Brooklyn.  
Photo: Fang Yuan Chou





*George Chang (left) leads a coordination meeting with Boston volunteers. Photo: Peter Chu*

to Tzu Chi volunteers in Washington DC and Boston, asking them to provide generators and load up on extra fuel on their way to New York, so that they could keep the generators running and fuel the cars to be used in disaster relief.

Ever since the disaster relief effort began, George Chang, Austin Chu, and others had been going to the city's disaster response center at City Hall. There they received the latest information on disaster rescue and relief efforts, and also coordinated mutual assistance with other organizations. They also learned that several coastal communities suffered severe damage from water surging in from all directions, and that practically every home within those communities was damaged.

"The devastation this time was one entire town after another. Once we surveyed a town and learned that it was completely devastated,

we made use of modern technology to learn how many households were on each street, and sometimes even the names of the heads of household, from which we built lists and estimated the amount of relief supplies required." As for distributing fliers to publicize relief distributions, this was carried out with the help of local community groups. "It was very different from how we usually work: waiting for government agencies to give us lists of disaster victims."

The disaster zones were spread across a large region, but there are only a limited number of Tzu Chi volunteers in New York, most of whom still had to go to work every day. With no time to waste, George reached out to Tzu Chi USA Headquarters for help. Immediately, overwhelming support came from all across the nation. Tzu Chi volunteers with hands-on international disaster relief experience flew in



from several states. They included Martin Kuo from Southern California, Chong Hsieh from Ohio, Yuanliang Ling from Texas, JinJang Lee from Washington DC, Austin Tsao from Northern California, and Vict Ying from Boston. As these seasoned disaster relief veterans arrived in New York one after another, large-scale relief distributions quickly came to fruition against all odds.

At these relief distribution events, George saw countless disaster victims waiting patiently in line for five or six hours in the bitter cold. Many were from low-income households. Others were clearly middle class or higher, but with their homes completely destroyed, they too had urgent needs. It hit him profoundly, "No matter what you once had or how rich you were, when you're struck by a major disaster, everyone is the same. We must be vigilant and reverent, cherish every moment, and apply the wisdom taught by Master Cheng Yen in our everyday lives. This disaster is a great wake up call for all Tzu Chi volunteers and all people whether directly impacted or not. I hope that people will really be awakened after this."

Through providing disaster relief, Tzu Chi volunteers had an opportunity to get to know many people of various ethnicities, faiths, organizations, and government offices. George adds, "We still have many things in the future that we must collaborate on together. I hope that through this experience more Americans will learn about Tzu Chi and become Tzu Chi volunteers, so that they can provide a foundation of peace and harmony for their communities and the broader society. Only in this way can Tzu Chi grow in the United States."

During several weeks of immediate disaster relief, George Chang left home early each day and returned only late at night. He constantly coped with and overcame all kinds of challenges.



Volunteers serve on Coney Island in mid-December. Photo: Peter Chu

But the question he always had the hardest time answering was the one posed by his own ninety-seven-year-old mother in each of their transatlantic telephone calls: "When are you coming back to visit?"

George could easily empathize, because he too had to live without power and heating at home.

At last, the first stage of Sandy relief was completed in early December. With the blessing of Dharma Master Cheng Yen, George asked other volunteers in New York and Long Island to help carry on the work of mid- and long-term relief planning, allowing him to finally visit his aging mother. Martin Kuo, with whom he worked closely throughout the relief effort, also happened to be accompanying a group of Honduran Tzu Chi volunteers in Hualien at the same time. When the two met in Taipei, Martin noticed a new air of peace and serenity on George's face: the peace and serenity earned by thirty-seven days of unconditional compassion.



Have the courage and fortitude to do what is right and persevere until the end.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



# The Rough Road to Disaster Relief

Debbie Chen | Translated by An Ning

*Debbie Chen is Tzu Chi's Mid-Atlantic Regional Director*

For Tzu Chi volunteers in New Jersey, Hurricane Sandy immediately hit home. It knocked down the Tzu Chi office sign and toppled several trees around the parking lot. When power went out over the entire region, the office generator also failed to provide relief, leaving us in the dark for several days.

Fortunately, the community I live in was not heavily impacted by the hurricane, so my home became a temporary coordination center. I collected the damage assessment information that volunteers across the state of New Jersey gathered in their local communities, compiled it, and sent it to the disaster relief coordination centers in Hualien and California for their reference in planning out relief strategies.

Since Hurricane Sandy ravaged such vast regions of New Jersey, disaster assessment was exceedingly difficult. Though it usually takes just an hour to drive from North Jersey, where the regional office is located, to Central Jersey, where many volunteers live, power outages and the gasoline shortage made travel unfeasible after the hurricane. For the first week, we felt dejected. The disaster had struck so close to home, but we had a hard time connecting with victims, even though we attempted to make contact through many avenues.

For days, we brainstormed for ideas on how to help those affected, and visited several emergency shelters. Thanks to the ceaseless hard work of many volunteers, we were able to hold our first major distributions on the weekend of November 10 and 11. These first three—in Atlantic City, South Toms River, and Keansburg—were an “ice-breaking journey” of facing difficulties and finding solutions.

Prior to a relief distribution, it is important to have a name list in order to confirm a person's

status as a disaster victim. At the time, 2.6 million homes in New Jersey were without power. Many victims could not be contacted either because their home phones were down or because they had temporarily relocated elsewhere. For the three distributions planned for that first Saturday, we had not received lists of names on Wednesday, or even on Thursday. That made us very nervous. Our volunteers at each location relentlessly chased after these name lists, but the local governments were facing their own difficulties. Subsequently, we made a decision to accommodate towns that were unable to provide name lists, but only if a local authority—whether from the police, local government, or Office of Emergency Management (OEM)—was present at the distribution site to assist. These authorities would serve as “gatekeepers” by confirming that those who walked in were truly local residents.

When we arrived in Atlantic City for a distribution on the afternoon of November 10, we saw many people already lined up outside, and were surprised that most were speaking Spanish. We came to learn that they lived in impoverished areas around the city, and had come early to line up once they had heard that Tzu Chi would be holding a distribution. For this distribution, we were accompanied by a local policewoman who helped explain to these disaster survivors that, since there were not enough supplies, only those already on the list could be served that day. She asked everyone not to line up any longer, but many could not bring themselves to leave. It was painful to watch this, but we simply had to disappoint them this time.

The same day, South Toms River hosted a distribution. South Toms River Mayor Joseph Champagne helped Tzu Chi with coordination, and also communicated Tzu Chi's offer of



help to mayors of several neighboring towns. Subsequently we began receiving phone calls from the mayors and police chiefs of these towns proactively seeking assistance, thus making possible the many relief distributions that followed.

It was very touching to see several of these mayors lovingly stand beside their constituents for entire distribution sessions, from morning to evening. Some even stood waiting at the exit, ready with hugs for each and every resident as they left. One of these was Keansburg Mayor George Hoff. When he learned that Tzu Chi was giving six-hundred-dollar cash cards, he immediately teared up. Keansburg had been hit hard by the storm: even though nearly two weeks had passed, eighty percent of Keansburg residences still remained flooded and without power. Before the distribution began, Mayor Hoff asked all the residents in attendance to stand and bow to the Tzu Chi volunteers in a moving display of gratitude. He said that the memory of that day would forever live on in their hearts, and that he hoped to have more opportunities to work together with Tzu Chi.



*Alongside Stephen Huang (L) and Jackson Chen (R), the author surveys the Berkeley Township distribution site. Photo provided by Tzu Chi Mid-Atlantic Region*

Because more than one hundred eligible Keansburg residents did not attend the relief distribution, we returned the following day, when we also visited Mayor Hoff's home. Though Mayor Hoff had not personally taken a



*Volunteers visit Mayor George Hoff's storm-damaged home in Keansburg. Photo: Felicia Hsu*



cash card, we saw that he too had been deeply affected by the storm: the walls of his home had been knocked down, and chunks of wall and piles of furniture filled his front yard. Yet he remained more concerned about all his constituents first getting the help they needed.

Mayor Hoff also alerted us to the greater destruction that had befallen neighboring Union Beach. In a borough of only two thousand households, three hundred homes had been completely destroyed, while ninety percent of the borough had been flooded. Volunteers visited Union Beach Borough Administrator Jennifer Maier, who explained that they had sufficient supplies, but cash cards would be a great help. Despite the difficulties, she was able to quickly supply a list of disaster-affected households.



*A deep connection is forged in Union Beach.  
Photo: Wei Tang*

The following weekend, volunteers held a joint distribution for residents of Keansburg and Union Beach, while also holding separate distributions to serve residents of both Little Ferry in the north and Berkeley Township in the south.

When we arrived in Little Ferry at six in the morning, there were already twenty or thirty affected residents lined up in the freezing weather. In this cold coastal area, we knew that these residents would not have been willing to stand outside for hours if they did not truly need the emergency cash cards. Since the distribution was held at a senior center next to a fire station, the fire department was gracious enough to open their heated garage for those waiting in line to temporarily escape the cold. The Red Cross also arrived with hot coffee and hot tea to deliver some warmth.

In Little Ferry, we noticed many fish on the road outside the distribution area, some more than a foot long, which had been washed up when the river overflowed. Many locals said



*The distribution site in Union Beach is filled with relief goods. Photo: Chen Lee*



that their cars had been flooded; some even found fish inside their cars. By this time, when they spoke of the disaster they did so matter-of-factly; we were the ones getting choked up.

There was a young man in Berkeley Township who could not hold back his tears as he read the part of Master Cheng Yen's condolence letter referring to "the loss of loved ones." He shared that last year his good friend had evacuated prior to Hurricane Irene. As a result, his home was burglarized. This time, he refused to leave in spite of the warnings. He and his twin sons all drowned in their basement.

We also met an older woman who had lost her husband to cancer only a few months prior. She had also recently been diagnosed with cancer. Not long after, Hurricane Sandy came along and washed away her house and car. Truly every person is a story. No wonder Master Cheng Yen urges us to seek a profound understanding of suffering, and asks us to learn from suffering.

After the first two weekends of distributions, Toms River and Ocean Township also requested assistance, so on the third weekend (November 24-25), we held distributions for these towns, as well as Seaside Heights. Very soon, we were able to see that we were making a difference in the community and pushing forward the cycle of love. A week after the distribution in Ocean Township, the mayor sent us a bamboo bank filled to the brim, along with a note requesting a replacement bamboo bank to fill up again. On another occasion, a volunteer from Wuhan, China, planned to meet at my house early one morning to carpool to a distribution site. But he got lost. He asked a policeman for help and happened to mention that he was a Tzu Chi volunteer. He was quite surprised when the policeman personally led him to my house.

For a full six weeks after the storm, volunteers coordinated, communicated, and packed supplies from Monday to Friday each week, then held distributions each weekend. We held eleven relief distributions and made connections with seventeen towns and boroughs. By the end of those six weeks, Federal



*The author and Mayor Hoff deliver warm hugs in Keansburg. Photo: Stan Kao*

Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and insurance companies were beginning to distribute compensation to storm victims, so Tzu Chi moved into the next stage of relief. I am very grateful to all the volunteers across the United States who raised funds and to Global Headquarters and USA Headquarters for their full support that allowed us to serve.

The plan going forward is for Tzu Chi volunteers to draw even closer to the community. Over 280 community members in New Jersey filled out volunteer applications throughout the distribution period, including five mayors and many police officers. Dharma Master Cheng Yen encourages us to spread our roots in the community and inspire local volunteers to truly commit to volunteerism. It is the responsibility of Tzu Chi volunteers to guide and nurture these new volunteers. Even if only a small fraction of those who filled out volunteer applications continue their commitment to volunteerism, these will be the seeds of goodness making a great difference in their communities. 🌱

Look at adversity as a stepping stone,  
not a hindrance in life.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



# Hurricane Sandy Relief in New Jersey

**Min-Chin Hsiao**

*Min-Chin Hsiao is a Tzu Chi volunteer in New Jersey*

**A**s one of the biggest storms to hit the northeastern United States in the last half-century, Hurricane Sandy presented a unique disaster relief challenge for Tzu Chi volunteers. Although many parts of New Jersey were badly damaged, thankfully most Tzu Chi volunteers in the state suffered only minor damage and inconvenience due to power outages.

Tzu Chi Mid-Atlantic Region quickly mobilized its Emergency Response Team to contact all team members and send surveyors to visit areas identified in radio and news reports as being the hardest-hit.

One of the first areas that the team visited was the town of Little Ferry. Tzu Chi Vice-President Jackson Chen recounted the day: "City officials were at a loss as to how to handle a disaster of this magnitude. When they heard that we were there to help, they told us to just drop off whatever supplies we wanted to donate with them. It was hard to explain to them, when they had so many other things on their minds, that this was not how Tzu Chi does disaster relief."

It was not surprising that city officials were skeptical about a volunteer group they had

never heard of wanting to do a large-scale distribution. Even though Tzu Chi is a member of New Jersey VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster) and volunteers have been trained to respond to disasters, Tzu Chi remains a little-known organization to the general public, so volunteers received very little help in the beginning.

Faced with cold shoulders and distrust, the members of the survey teams stayed open-hearted and maintained a pure mind. Firmly trusting that they were doing something noble with pure intentions, nothing could weaken their desire to make a disaster distribution a reality. Understanding others' reservations with empathy, the volunteers felt neither upset nor deterred.

One of the directives given by Master Cheng Yen was to provide emergency cash relief to help the most desperate families cover their immediate needs. To achieve this goal and direct funds to those most in need, it was very important to have a reliable list of families affected. However, it was next to impossible to obtain such a list. Not only were most local town officials unfamiliar with and wary of Tzu Chi, power was still out in most local government offices. One exception was South Toms River.



*In Keansburg, volunteers and care recipients pray for a world free from disasters. Photo: Stan Kao*



Mayor Joseph Champagne of South Toms River was no stranger to Tzu Chi, having participated in a Tzu Chi performance just days earlier. Almost immediately after the hurricane, Tzu Chi and Mayor Champagne were connected and planning for relief. Since the mayor's offices share a building with the local Office of Emergency Management (OEM), they received power from OEM generators. Assisted by local police and fire departments, Mayor Champagne's staff quickly provided Tzu Chi with a reliable list of affected families.

South Toms River used one of its elementary schools, which still had power, as the first disaster distribution point. On the day of the distribution, Mayor Champagne wisely invited mayors, police chiefs, and officials from neighboring towns to come and see how Tzu Chi conducts relief distribution. From that point on, the barriers we faced as an "unknown group" were gone. Many hard-hit towns even started to approach Tzu Chi directly. After hearing about what Tzu Chi had been able to do for the residents of South Toms River, these town officials were very cooperative and provided Tzu Chi with all the materials needed.

Thinking back weeks later, Steven Wu felt that the Buddhist belief of "dependent arising" was expressed fully in this incident. Dependent arising, or dependent origination, is the belief that everything happens in this world through a combination of causes and conditions. The

conditions under which Mayor Champagne came to know Tzu Chi, and the way the distribution in his town opened channels for further distributions, was a clear demonstration of this law in action. With this realization, Steven Wu was able

to let go of the regret and sadness he felt when he was not able to make a relief distribution happen in one of the towns he approached. He realized that even though the distribution did not work out, it just meant that the right conditions were not present.

Jackson Chen recalled the difficulty of finding suitable places for distributions. As many towns were flooded and lacking electricity, it was often difficult to find venues large enough to accommodate the events. At the same time, many people eligible for cash cards had been displaced from their homes and were therefore difficult to reach. This in turn made effective planning of manpower and coordination of relief supplies a seemingly impossible task. Tzu Chi coordinators began calling city officials daily, well in advance of events, to assess local situations.



*The cash cards delivered gave Ocean Township residents a joyful Thanksgiving. Photo: ShiJie Woo.*







South Toms River Mayor

Joseph Champagne

Photo: Yao Hu

Despite everyone's best efforts, it was inevitable that some events were overstaffed with volunteers and others understaffed. The scale of the disaster also brought many unexpected volunteers to the events. Some volunteers were completely new to Tzu Chi and others had not participated for a long time. Jackson Chen believed that it was a blessing to be overstaffed, because it gave more volunteers a chance to participate and contribute.

Since these distributions included money, there were additional challenges not usually faced. The safety of volunteers and distribution sites was the first priority. After the disaster, many towns had called upon police officers and firefighters to work overtime, so some towns had already exceeded their overtime budgets and could not provide sufficient police protection at Tzu Chi distributions. In one such town, it was necessary to make alternative arrangements. However, no matter what obstacles arose, the volunteers were determined to fulfill their promise to help others in need.

As word spread about the money being given out, it was unavoidable that distributions would also attract some opportunistic people, so it was necessary to employ several layers of verification to prevent fraud. Computer systems were employed as part of the verification process. As deficiencies were identified, volunteers continued to improve the workflow and computer systems to address the problems identified. Without certified data from government agencies, it was unavoidable that there would be opportunities for those determined to commit fraud. Volunteers were able to learn from the experience and focus on preventing fraud and improving workflow. However, they also learned not to dwell on shortcomings and greed. Instead, they realized the importance of learning from these situations, then letting them go.

After the first month of emergency relief, Tzu Chi USA headquarters gave a directive to alter the relief approach. Since a month had already passed, many affected families had received some assistance from FEMA or their insurance companies. Therefore, Tzu Chi volunteers needed to start focusing on those who were underserved, whether because of financial situation or immigration status. To do this, it was necessary to tighten qualifications: individuals who had received government assistance would no longer qualify. Without access to official records, the only way to do this was to rely on recipients' honesty. It was certainly not easy. Many who came to distributions knew others who had previously received assistance without the same restrictions. Volunteers had to patiently explain that funds were limited and that priority was being given to those who could not receive other assistance. Some were reluctant to accept this change and complained loudly. Facing people who demanded the money as if Tzu Chi owed it to them was difficult, but also provided a wonderful opportunity for volunteers to practice tolerance and compassion.

Two months of disaster relief provided unlimited opportunities for volunteers to put into practice the Buddhist principles that Master Cheng Yen teaches us daily. Study of the Water Repentance text over the last year has helped volunteers recognize truth in life, and the aftermath of Sandy reflected many of the concepts described in the Water Repentance. While participating in relief events, volunteers had a chance to learn and grow and then apply lessons learned. We became more aware of our emotions and found the best ways to deal with them. Sandy caused a great deal of destruction and suffering, but it also provided a spiritual learning experience of unimaginable value. 🌿

The Buddha's teachings are not only to be studied but realized through actual practice and compassionate acts of giving.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



# Hurricane Sandy Special Edition

Reaching People in Need

## Two Months of Relief

In the final months of 2012, volunteers held dozens of major relief distributions to serve Hurricane Sandy disaster victims. These distributions included:

- \$9,000,000+ emergency cash aid
- 15,792 cash card recipients
- 9,056 eco-friendly blankets
- 8,125 hot meals and soups
- 7,241 eco-friendly scarves
- 3,686 Jing Si Instant Rice packs
- 2,509 hygiene kits

In addition, 7,745 bamboo banks were requested by care recipients in order to pass on their love to others.

\*All figures as of 12/31/2012

Key:

 Relief Distribution Location

 Tzu Chi Office



# "Simply Serving" in the Aftermath

**Gary V. Simpson**

*The Reverend Dr. Simpson is Senior Pastor of Concord Baptist Church of Christ, Brooklyn*

**F**or the past twenty-two years, I have served as the senior pastor of a historic African-American church founded in 1847 and now located in central Brooklyn—the Concord Baptist Church of Christ.

Since October 2011, our church has been focused on service, and I have been preaching and teaching that for people of faith, serving means being holy agents of grace in the world. As people of faith, we are not known by what we profess but by what good and noble acts we live out because of our beliefs.

New York needs agents of grace. It is a city of blessings and challenges. Perhaps there is no rival city in the world where so many people of differing world cultures live side by side. It seems the whole world lives here, though not always "together" as we should. More often than not our cultures clash and we experience inhospitality, even in our own communities.

And the disparity in our city is evident in the sharp contrasts of affluence

and poverty, in the ever-widening chasm between rich and poor.

Having lived in New York City for nearly thirty years, I was confident we were so far up north that hurricanes generally lose most of their power by the time they reach our city. So, when Hurricane Sandy was reported to be heading our way, like many New Yorkers I thought this storm might drop heavy rains, and maybe we would experience power outages, but otherwise it would be just another "near miss." Of course, that was not how it happened.

October 28, 2012, was a Sunday like most other Sundays. Our congregation gathered for worship at 10 AM and we spent the afternoon honoring the service of the official boards of our church's ministry. The next few days, however, were anything but business as usual as we learned of the storm's profound impact on our neighboring communities. Scaled down to a lesser Category 1 hurricane, Sandy was still a "superstorm" of some thousand miles wide. New Yorkers could not have imagined and were unprepared for the havoc it unleashed.

Sandy came and literally shut New York City down.



*Thanksgiving 2012 was a day of service and fellowship at Concord Baptist Church. Photo: Peter Lin*



Manhattan below midtown was left without electricity. Transportation was nearly impossible. In images that appeared more like scenes from an apocalyptic Hollywood movie, made all the worse by the gasoline shortages that ensued, people were cut off from resources, food, and communication. We even saw subways and tunnels filled with floodwaters.

This catastrophe was a powerful reminder that much of New York City is an island, made vulnerable by the disaster that exposed the weaknesses in our infrastructure. Even more powerful, however, was the painful realization that many of our neighbors in Coney Island, Red Hook, Far Rockaway, and along the shore communities were even more vulnerable. They were cut off from help and, because the city was unprepared for this disaster, in desperate need of holy agents of grace and service.

Slowly, as communities were assessed, disaster relief efforts began to take shape. Our church organized itself to collect and transport supplies to these hard-hit communities. Each neighborhood had its own particular challenge and pain in the storm's wake. By the time I was introduced to the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation on November 18, almost three weeks had passed. But the pains and challenges of these communities were still profound. Stephen Huang, George Chang, and Austin Chu spoke with me about the possibility of helping distribute direct relief to these areas. I jumped at the opportunity even though I had no idea how we would do it! My congregation's immediate neighborhood did not suffer major damage, so we saw this as a call to help our neighboring communities. We mobilized a team of volunteers to go directly to these communities to pre-screen families for their eligibility for support from the foundation, and each day we worked to give some encouragement to those in need. The first day we reached three hundred people in Red Hook. The next day we went to Canarsie to register another three hundred.

On Thanksgiving morning, we began by conducting our annual worship service with a sister church in our community. In the afternoon, volunteers from our church and Tzu Chi worked together tirelessly as holy agents of service and grace. We welcomed over six hundred families in an amazing witness of human kindness. After an interfaith service of prayer and music, we served these families with joy.

When all had been served, the members of our church and the Tzu Chi Foundation enjoyed a time of sharing and fellowship. The day closed with hugs and tears of joy and hope. Our working together turned the teachings on service into real flesh and blood. Pervasive and widespread suffering calls for all of us to work together across all of the boundaries that may divide us. Good and gracious acts are done by human beings of every faith identity. I desire to always be counted in that number.

I sat down with my family to share Thanksgiving dinner on Friday—a day late, but grateful for what we had all experienced. We were blessed to be of service. New York still has a long way to go in its recovery. Some of the destruction will last forever, and lives have been permanently changed. But with this opportunity comes the hunger to be used by God to help and we are making ourselves ready for whatever comes next. 🍀



*The author speaks with volunteers after the Thanksgiving distribution.  
Photo: Peter Lin*

“As people of faith, we are not known by what we profess but by what good and noble acts we live out because of our beliefs.”



# The Path of Love through Service

**Joseph Makhandal Champagne, Jr.**

*Joseph Champagne is Mayor of South Toms River, New Jersey*



**I**n a time of turbulence for mankind and nature, what must be done to restore peace on earth is to serve. To serve in this context means to answer the needs of each other and the environment with love and care. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., once said, "You don't have to have a college degree to serve.... You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love." Verily, this time dictates service. I recognize that.

As a private and public servant, I recognize the need to expand the chambers of my heart to serve humanity indiscriminately. It is that expanded heart that put me on the path of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation.

I was introduced to Tzu Chi by an old friend, Kalimah Priforce, a former volunteer anchor for *US Tzu Chi 360°*. He introduced me to Ginger Chang, the host of that show, who was interested in interviewing me about my childhood and upbringing in Haiti as part of the show's coverage on Tzu Chi's long-term humanitarian work there.

Through the interview, I learned about the enormous amount of work that Tzu Chi has done in Haiti, and Ms. Chang learned that I used to

engage in live theater through an organization called Coalition des Artistes Haitiens a New York. Several weeks later, I received another invitation from Ms. Chang, this time not for an interview, but to participate in a stage performance of the Sutra of Filial Piety (aka Sutra of Profound Gratitude toward Parents).

So, on October 27, 2012, I found myself on stage at Queens College in New York, performing as Ananda in a Buddhist play. This beloved character is highly respected and revered in Buddhism. He is the chief disciple and most trusted helper of Buddha. The auditorium was filled to capacity. My family and friends came for support and encouragement. The performance was brilliant and the audience loved it!

From the rehearsal to the performance, the hospitality of Tzu Chi volunteers was simply wonderful. Tzu Chi members received my family and me in their circle with open arms. They treated us with so much love and care that I felt that we were being carried around throughout the whole experience. Although we came from different races, this warm atmosphere made us feel a part of Tzu Chi and they a part of us. In the process, we formed new bonds of friendship and new bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood. All in all, it was one of the most memorable moments of my life. We said our goodbyes that night not knowing when we would cross each other's path again. As I drove back home to South Toms River, New Jersey, nearly two hours away, I reminisced with my family about the many wonders of the experience.

Just a couple days later, Hurricane Sandy took center stage in our lives. The ferocious, nearly thousand-mile-wide, superstorm system hit New Jersey and New York, leaving in its path death, destruction, and disruption. South Toms River experienced widespread



power outages and flooding on two of our streets. Within twenty-four hours, I received a call from a representative of Tzu Chi offering their help and assistance to my residents affected by Sandy. Upon conferring with our local leadership, including our local Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Coordinator Kevin McCormack, our Chief of Police Andy Izatt, and several members of the council, including Marvin Sykes, we quickly accepted this generous offer. The next day, Steven Wu and the Tzu Chi media crew met with our leadership at Borough Hall. Accompanied by Kevin McCormack, we toured the most-affected areas in South Toms River and then ventured out to visit other surrounding towns, such as Beachwood, Toms River, Pelican Island, Seaside Heights, and Bayville in Berkeley Township. We met with several mayors and police chiefs in those towns to introduce Tzu Chi's assistance to their affected residents.

On Saturday, November 10—just days after Hurricane Sandy hit—Tzu Chi, under the leadership of Dharma Master Cheng Yen, planted in South Toms River the seeds of love and care for Ocean County, New Jersey. More

than one hundred Tzu Chi volunteers from New Jersey, Philadelphia, Washington DC, and even Pittsburgh flooded our elementary school with an immeasurable amount of compassion and discipline that brought tears of joy to many eyes. They distributed much-needed blankets, food, and cash cards to residents. They performed a beautiful sign language play that included Principal Holzapfel, myself, and several volunteers.

At the end of the distribution and performance, I addressed those hundred volunteers, the “blue angels.” On behalf of South Toms River, “The Little Town with a Big Heart,” I expressed my deepest gratitude to Master Cheng Yen and Tzu Chi. I reminded them of the immense importance of their work in this world. I concluded that their performance of compassion and relief in South Toms River had permanently created a landmark in our hearts.

I was so overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude for the work Tzu Chi did in South Toms River that I did not hesitate to offer my time as a volunteer for distributions in other towns throughout Ocean County and the State of New Jersey.

On November 17, 2012, I went together with Tzu Chi volunteers to serve affected residents in the boroughs of Union Beach and Keansburg, forty miles to the north. I met with Mayor George Hoff of Keansburg and Mayor Paul J. Smith of Union Beach, along with their family members. Both mayors and the residents of their towns received compassionate relief, food, funds, and many warm hugs, all under the same roof. We served about seven hundred affected families in just five hours. It was wonderful to see the boundaries between those towns lifted as

*Many people were inspired to volunteer, including the author's young daughters. Photo: Chen Lee*







*The mayors of Waretown and South Toms River, together with their families. Photo: Carla Kearney*

they became one during the distribution. The joyful tears, the laughs, the smiles, and the hugs were in abundance at Union Beach as people connected soul-to-soul. Some of the residents and council members were so moved that they joined Tzu Chi as volunteers that very day in order to participate in this compassionate relief effort.

The next day, November 18, 2012, we travelled back to Ocean County where we connected with Mayor Carmen Amato of Berkeley Township, several members of the township council, and Police Chief Karin DiMichele. Together, we served over three hundred residents at the Central Regional High School. These residents were blessed with funds and hugs throughout the day. The love was truly heartfelt.

Speaking of love, on that day I was accompanied by my wife and my children, who also participated in the distribution efforts. It was heartwarming to see my young daughters handing bags filled with necessities to those residents. Chief DiMichele's daughters also participated in the distribution. Dharma Master Cheng Yen would have loved to see the impact of her love and care on those affected by Sandy in the United States of America.

The following week, on November 24, 2012, several South Toms River council members

and I volunteered in Toms River High School to serve residents of many towns, including Ocean Gate, Toms River, and our own South Toms River. It was indeed another beautiful day filled with hope and renewed belief in the humanity of people to help one another regardless of race, class, creed, culture, or color.

There were many more distributions that we attended, including Waretown in Ocean Township. After visiting so many towns; meeting so many mayors, council members, and chiefs of police; and touching the hearts of so many wonderful residents; I feel honored and privileged that the residents of South Toms River and I were able to share with others that same love and care that we experienced.

“ I feel honored and privileged that the residents of South Toms River and I were able to share with others that same love and care that we experienced. ”

Sandy may have caused severe damage, but Sandy is gone and we will rebuild. What will remain is the spirit of compassionate relief displayed by Tzu Chi and Dharma Master Cheng Yen during their crusade of love and care. That spirit has

taken up permanent residence in the hearts of the people of Ocean County and the State of New Jersey.

To give is to live and to live is to love. On behalf of the mayors and officials of Ocean County and the State of New Jersey, I thank you, Tzu Chi and Dharma Master Cheng Yen, for your gifts, for your lively spirit, and for your love for humanity in such a time of trouble. 🌿

Unity of hearts enables limitless accomplishments.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



# Stories from Staten Island

## Martin Kuo

*Martin Kuo is a Tzu Chi volunteer in Southern California*

In mid-November, I was blessed to work with local Tzu Chi volunteers to serve five thousand families on one weekend in Staten Island, an area that was hit especially hard by the storm. Throughout the relief effort, but on that weekend especially, there were many people that made a deep impact on me. Among all of these, Joe and Vanessa are forever stamped on my mind.

## Joe

November 16 was our first major distribution in Staten Island. When we started to serve that morning, I spent most of my time outside the gate where people were waiting, to make sure that things went smoothly. One of the volunteers brought this guy to me, saying, "Brother Martin, can you take care of him? He doesn't have what it takes to get inside the church to get that card."

To ensure that aid was reaching the right people, we needed two out of three to qualify: photo ID or FEMA case number or a mailing envelope showing a current address, enough to prove that he lived in the disaster area. He did not have any of these, only an insurance card with his picture—no address, no nothing—but

he kept telling me he needed that money.

I felt bad, because he had been waiting since 3:30 AM, but I had no choice but to send him away. I told him to come back at four in the afternoon. I assumed that by four it would not be that busy, so I could take care of him as a separate case. He walked away, but he did not show up at four.

That day, we served almost fifteen hundred families, but we wanted to serve even more the next day, so we got there early. Instead of starting at 9:30, we were there at 6:30, and there were already four or five hundred people lined up.

Somebody told me, "This gentleman at the front was here first, at 1:30 in the morning." I asked where, and the people all pointed a finger to the corner. He was shrunk down there, freezing cold.



*Photo: Peter Chu*



*Photo: Peter Lin*





I couldn't take it, so I helped him up and walked him into the church auditorium. We had him sit down, served him hot coffee, and rubbed him to get the blood flowing. He was really freezing cold.

“Sir, to you it's six hundred dollars. To me, it's the whole world.”

I just couldn't take it, that he had suffered so much for just six hundred dollars. I was emotional. I asked him, "Why did you suffer for this? You lined up so early for just six hundred dollars...?" And he told me, "Sir, to you it's six hundred dollars. To me, it's the whole world. To me, that's all I need to keep my life going."

I learned that he had spent all his life savings on a house, but had no insurance. And now his house was red-tagged. I finally recognized that this was the gentleman who had showed up the day before, who I could not help. So I asked him for his forgiveness for making him suffer. And he hugged me and said he'd never forget me.

## Vanessa

During the same distribution, I was just walking around to make sure everything was in order, and I saw a mother arguing with her pregnant daughter. I went over and said, "Can I help you? What's the problem?" The mother explained to me that her daughter, Vanessa, wanted to give her cash card back because she thought that other people needed it more. But her mother said, "No, you actually suffered, you need this money. Don't give it away."

But Vanessa had been moved by the bamboo bank story. Knowing that the donations were coming from so many different people, and even people who had so little of their own, Vanessa wanted

to give the money to somebody else who really needed it. She felt bad keeping it. But her mother insisted, "You should keep it to buy things for your baby" and so on. She said that she felt guilty talking her out of a donation, but that she knew Vanessa could really use this money, especially with a baby on the way.

I told Vanessa, "We will have more love and donations coming in from all over the world, so please keep it and take care of yourself." She answered, "We talk about heaven; we talk about our beliefs," she pointed back to the church and said, "I saw heaven in there, when all you lovely people coming from all over the world served with hugs and respect. I saw heaven." In that moment, I learned so much from her. She patted her belly and said, "Martin, I hope my child can grow up with a beautiful heart to help people, regardless of what he or she believes."



There is a kind heart in each of us. If inspired, the love in us will be kindled.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



*The author addresses care recipients in Oakwood Heights Community Church. Photo: Peter Lin*



# When Great Love Prevails

**Chen-Hua Lee**

*Chen-Hua Lee is a Tzu Chi volunteer in New York*

Outside our Bayside home, the usually bustling street had long turned dead silent. Only the siren of an occasional police car rushed through. Howling winds flung garbage barrels into the sky as trees and lampposts swung at the mercy of the pounding rain and ever-increasing gusts and gales. It was October 30, just a few short days after the successful musical presentation of the Sutra of Filial Piety (aka Sutra of Profound Gratitude toward Parents) in New York. My wife and I longed to relish the memorable occasion, but instead our focus was overtaken by a storm of historic proportions.

Frantic phone calls and news reports brought much bad news: power outages across the region had triggered malfunctioning traffic lights, gasoline shortages, unprecedented subway flooding, unstable phone signals, and more. Thankfully, volunteers across Long Island and New York City, even those living in storm-battered areas, quickly launched a grassroots effort to deliver emergency supplies to those in need.

My wife and I were soon cooking hot meals in the pitch-black Tzu Chi office in the middle of pitch-black lower Manhattan. All twelve of us counted on a handful of flashlights and miner-style headlamps: items that had never before



*The author serves in Brooklyn.  
Photo: Peter Lin*

been so significant or inspiring. With our constantly ringing cell phones, we stayed abreast of the latest information: Manhattan traffic updates and road blockages, grocery purchases, and meal deliveries.

Later, we lined up to serve vegetarian meals and soup to busloads of storm victims, many of them grasping their household belongings. Deep bows, hugs, and tears filled the air with warmth. As they left, we had no idea how they could brace themselves against the freezing cold, but we hoped Tzu Chi's tender loving care would warm them through the night.

More than a week later, on November 10, Tzu Chi launched a major relief distribution in close coordination with the police chief and mayor's office of Lindenhurst, Long Island. As the solemn commencement ceremony got

*The success of Tzu Chi's relief distributions relied on the assistance of police officers and local volunteers. Photo: Peter Lin*





underway with "God Bless America," I could see many of those waiting for help become visibly emotional. Over the course of the day that followed, I grew to fully understand their emotional response as my wife and I heard countless stories of houses totaled, belongings lost, and homes still without heat and power.

Quite a few people told me they had no idea what to make of the invitation letter they had received the day before. They did not know how to pronounce "Tzu Chi," nor did they have any idea what to expect of a "Buddhist Foundation." And they were particularly leery of the "cash card joke." While turnout was surprisingly low early in the day, we saw quite a few people rush to the distribution site later in the afternoon after their neighbors, with cash cards in hand, told them, "Tzu Chi is real!"

One middle-aged lady we met owned a sign shop that had been washed away. Despite our insistence otherwise, she handed us a \$100 check as a personal donation as she received her card. "I know your organization can better use this for those in desperate need," she told

I simply could not have been more touched by this simple but admirable exhibition of the best in human nature—everyday people serving with compassion.

us. "It is just my little token of appreciation. God bless you all."

When we offered her a receipt for her generous donation, she refused, thinking it somehow insulting, but we explained that it was a formality mandated by Tzu

Chi policy. Accepting the receipt, she broke into tears, gave a big hug to volunteer Joan Wang, and bade us farewell.

As the day progressed, I heard more and more touching stories, the kinds of stories I thought I would only see in movies. We returned home, our bodies exhausted but our hearts pounding with life. Affected by the scenes of destruction and sad, appreciative, lost faces passing through my memory at high speed, I found precious little sleep that night.

A week later, we returned to respond to the still-desperate outcry for help and to serve those victims who had stayed home, wary of an offer that sounded too good to be true from a group they had never heard of. Even then, more than two weeks after the storm, many families were still suffering in the freezing winter weather



Volunteers serve in El Centro del Inmigrante. Photo: Peter Lin



from a shortage of power and water. These recipients were extremely moved by the generosity of Tzu Chi and the many local officials and residents who generously extended their helping hands by volunteering alongside Tzu Chi to help their neighbors.

Through such actions, we saw their community come together after the disaster. Master Cheng Yen's wisdom came to my mind: "Treat the world as our classroom, where each person is a teacher and each encounter a lesson." I, too, was able to learn from the actions of many local residents. As I drove to relief events and visited care recipients at their homes, I often saw roadside stands in both Long Island and Staten Island where residents had gathered and set out food and bottles of spring water for others to take. As a beholder, I simply could not have been more touched by this simple but admirable exhibition of the best in human nature—everyday people serving with compassion.

As time went on, I was fortunate to be able to use my Spanish language skills in the course of a Tzu Chi distribution. The December 21

distribution in Staten Island's Hispanic community resonates in my heart to this day.



*Photo: Stephanie Wang*

Working closely with local charity El Centro del Inmigrante, we invited sixty-one eligible households to come receive Tzu Chi relief. Surprisingly, only twenty-one appeared. The center's director, Mr. Mercado, spoke passionately to everyone in attendance, encouraging them to tell their neighbors to come. He told them that he knew Tzu Chi well through Tzu Chi's work in his home county, Chile, and that Tzu Chi is sincere and willing to help. He encouraged them to tell their undocumented friends not to stay away due to fears about their legal status.

Even with this passionate plea, turnout remained low. Deeply concerned about those who were not only devastated by the storm but even too scared to seek help, Tzu Chi New York volunteers asked me to serve in the Flushing office call center to assist Spanish-speaking callers. Unfortunately, I did not receive even one phone call in Spanish. Did these people have a joyful Thanksgiving and Christmas, a



*In Lindenhurst, Long Island, as in many other distribution locations, locals were inspired to serve. Photo: Gina Shih*





*On November 21, 2012, more than a hundred people wait out in the cold for a distribution on Coney Island. Photo: Peter Chu*

happy New Year? I will never know, but my heart forever goes with them.

Over years of service, I have learned through bitter experience that these immigrants too often constitute a muted and forgotten community stuck at the bottom of the society. Many of the people I have met over the years are shy, some from the language barrier or lack of education, but most are just fearful that at any moment the life they have—difficult as it might be—could be snatched away without warning. I hope that we have more

opportunities to deliver sustainable loving care to these underprivileged communities in the future.

I was saddened to see those who could not reach out for help because they were too trapped within fear, and I was also disturbed to see the naked greed, anger, and delusion of some others. The Buddha taught that greed is one of the three poisons that lead to evil and suffering. Similarly, in the New Testament the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy that "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil." All religions share this belief, and yet I still saw people trying to get cash cards when they did not truly need them and others using deceptive means to acquire two or three. I worried for those who could not get the money they needed because others had cheated, and I felt sorry for those people whose minds were in this unfortunate state of greed. But all I could do was let it go and remember all those others who had come together in the midst of tragedy, hopelessness, and uncertainty to take compassionate action.

I was also encouraged to see how far some people will go to help others. From across the country, and even Canada, Tzu Chi volunteers brought manpower and supplies when we needed them most. Sandy was devastating, but I know that there was something more that brought us all together; I believe it was our Tzu Chi kinship and shared humanistic values that carried them here from so far away.

In the aftermath of the superstorm, I find there is still so much to accomplish in Tzu Chi's missions. It is my sincere hope that all people will offer a lending hand to care for one another and the world that we share. 🌿

Accepting adversities in human relationships with a joyous heart creates positive affinities and generates good karma.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*





# Dharma as Water: Great Repentance

Deeply concerned about the state of our world today—a world facing the crises of climate change, environmental degradation, instability and unrest, and eroding of moral values—Dharma Master Cheng Yen has appealed to her followers to engage in the practice of repentance.

Though the collective problems of today's world seem beyond the control of ordinary individuals, the Master tells us that each of us in fact contributes to the problem in many different ways; that is why each of us needs to return to his or her own heart and mind, and deeply reflect.





# Repenting Obstructions from Afflictions: Part V of the Repentance Series

From Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Talks

Compiled into English by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team

**O**ur planet today is already in disequilibrium. Living in such circumstances, being vigilant and on guard is not enough; we need to be diligent in spiritual practice as well. What does it mean to be diligent? It means being wholeheartedly committed to the practice without letting distractions or inner impurities arise and without turning away from our practice. We need to carefully look after our heart, so that it stays very clean and pure. This is difficult to achieve, however, because we often give rise to afflictions. When this happens, our mind very quickly turns into a petty, mundane mind.

It is these afflictions which cause us to lose touch with our true mind, our Buddha-nature. In Buddhism, we say that the essence of the Buddha, living beings, and true mind are in fact of the same substance. We have the same capacity for enlightened understanding and insight as the Buddha, but with the arising of an unwholesome thought we have tainted our mind. Our work now is to return to this pure, untainted true mind of enlightened wisdom.

Yet, we find that it is not easy to return to a pure mind, for our afflictions have become very entrenched. Since beginningless time, we

have been engaging in wrong actions, which reinforce our greed and afflictions and cause them to grow. The impurities in our mind have been building up for an immeasurably long time. We say "beginningless time" because this duration of time is so long that it is incalculable. It is also hard to say when it began because for each person the starting point was different, for we each have different afflictions.

While we do not know when we began accumulating afflictions, we now have the opportunity to stop this pattern. We can do this by repenting from the bottom of our heart. It is not only the obvious wrongs that we must repent for; we also need to repent for even very subtle wrongs, such as the arising of an unwholesome thought.

For example, an unwholesome thought may have entered our mind the moment we saw someone. His or her actions may have caused anger to rise up in our heart even though outwardly no one could tell we were angry. Yet, because an angry thought has arisen, we must quickly catch ourselves and repent. We should not think that it does not matter because we did not act on it. We still need to have feelings of repentance. 🌿



# Examples of Things to Repent

From Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Talks

Compiled into English by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team

## ***Attachment and greed***

We need to repent for our attachments. We have greed and craving because of attachment. Our love of something has already created an attachment, so that we desire and crave it. Without it, we feel very unhappy. We cannot let go and are compelled to seek it. Over time, this becomes a habit for us. What we desire could be fame, profit, or power. Looking around our world, we can see that so many problems and man-made calamities originate from greed. People fight for power, profit, and fame. This is why society is full of turmoil and without peace.

Instead of understanding the true meaning of life, we run after fame, profit, and power. This is because we are ignorant about life and do not understand the law of karma. We need to repent for such ignorance so that we do not continue in delusion. In truth, when we are fighting for personal gain, we are not happy. We also do not realize that the best kind of life is one in a peaceful and stable society, which is only possible if we work for the common good instead of our own self-interest. So, we confuse what creates a good life. This is all due to ignorance. For this, we should sincerely repent.

## ***Doubt and worldly cleverness***

We need to repent for the five spiritual illnesses we have: greed, anger, ignorance,

arrogance, and doubt. When we have doubt, we will question the existence of the Buddha, whether such a person really existed. We also will not believe in what the sages and saints teach. Because we do not believe in their wise teachings, we become deluded about life's principles and wander down the wrong path in life. Hence, we have to be very careful.

When learning Buddhism, we must be mindful to be pure in heart and mind. If our heart and mind are not pure, we will misinterpret the teachings. Instead of gaining wisdom, we will slip into a worldly mind. Then, with our cleverness, we will make use of the teachings for our own ends, instead of truly learning the teachings and taking them to heart. For instance, we may preach to others while we ourselves do not follow the principles and instead skirt the rules in order to gain profit or fame. We need to look out for such a state of mind and be careful not to fall into it. If we find ourselves doing this, we must quickly repent.

## ***Stinginess***

Stinginess is something we need to repent. Sometimes in society we see people who are reluctant to donate to charity. They have the means to help others, but they do not do so. They have the capacity to do good, but instead of creating positive karma they create negative karma in their pursuit of self-interest. What a



pity this is. Such people will bring this negative karma into their future life and have to face its retribution.

### ***Indulgence in sensory pleasures***

Our indulgence in sensory pleasures is also something we need to repent. All around us, we see people pursuing and relishing pleasure and comfort. When we see this, we need to reflect on ourselves. Are we doing the same? If we are, we are wasting away our precious life as we indulge in pleasure.

### ***Inability to tolerate humiliation or defamation***

In life, we may have unpleasant encounters where people defame or humiliate us. When this happens, we need to look at it from the perspective of karma and realize that such negative circumstances are the result of our past negative karma. In such cases, we need to practice forbearance. If we react angrily, we will just create more negative karma. And, as we know, when people treat us badly and we retaliate, it does not help to resolve the situation. It only makes matters worse. If we can realize how karma works and learn to look at situations with such an understanding, we can develop the ability to tolerate humiliation and defamation.

### ***Not understanding karmic affinities***

Usually, when we encounter negative circumstances or have run-ins with people, we react by blaming others or feeling a lot of anger and resentment. We do not realize that our

current experiences come about as a result of our karmic affinities.

In the past, due to various aspects of our personality, we have offended or hurt others, thus forming negative karmic affinities with them. These negative karmic affinities are the cause of the unpleasant situations we find ourselves in today. Since we were the ones that formed the negative karmic affinities in the first place, what we really need to do is reflect on ourselves and repent. Instead of blaming others for our bad experiences or troubles, we should look inward and strive to change ourselves.

This is the way to create a better future for ourselves. The circumstances we encounter were created in the past. Nevertheless, at the present moment we have the chance to create new karma and gradually transform negative karmic affinities into positive ones. With this understanding, we can work on the parts of our personality that offend or hurt others, and by doing so we can begin to heal relations with others and create better ones.

This all begins with repenting for our negative personality traits and habits. It is when we self-reflect, feel remorse, and sincerely repent that we become motivated to change.

### ***Our attitude toward work***

In today's society, most people have come to equate "the good life" with leisure, comfort, enjoying oneself, and not having to work too hard. When I see this, it saddens me that people have lost touch with the true value of life. What gives our life meaning and value is being of service and making a positive contribution to our society.



When people work only because they must support their livelihood, they find work very tiring. But for those who work in the spirit of contributing something good for others, working is a very happy thing. They understand the value of work and it naturally gives them a sense of purpose and fulfillment. These people "live to work" while those who work only to earn a living "work to live."

Thanks to our body, we can do many things. This is very precious. We need to make the most of this and use our body for meaningful purposes. Work is really about doing something constructive with our lives. If we only work to earn a living, however, we will just drag ourselves through each and every day. We should really reflect and see whether our mindset is one of "working to live" or "living to work." With just a change in our attitude toward work, we can discover great happiness.

## ***Moved by the Eight Winds***

If we want to do the right things in life, we need to have a calm, collected mind in order to clearly perceive what is right. Yet, in life, there are eight winds that can blow away our calmness and influence our mind. The eight winds are: gain, loss, disgrace, honor, praise, ridicule, suffering, and joy. When these eight winds come, we need to remain calm and unswayed. Otherwise, we may end up doing wrong things.

## **Reflections**

In the course of our day-to-day life, we in fact do many wrong things, but if we can become aware of these and repent, there is great hope for us. We can start afresh and, in doing so, create a better life for ourselves.

Living in this world, we interact with people every day. In these interactions, we need to be very mindful of our manner, attitude, tone of voice, gestures, and actions. On the other hand, when we are on the receiving end of others' manners, attitudes, tones of voice, gestures, and actions, we must keep a positive mind and a heart of simple goodness. With such a heart and mind, we will interpret things in a wholesome way and not react negatively or badly. It is important that we not jump to conclusions or perceive things in a negative way.

When dealing with others, we also need to be tactful and considerate. We should try not to harm or hurt anyone in our dealings. All it takes to accomplish this is a change in our mindset.

We need to be very mindful in learning to repent for our unwholesome thoughts. To repent is to cleanse our heart, to clean away the impurities and leave only the essence behind. It is like extracting a diamond from diamond ore; we have to wash away the mud and other materials in the ore so that we can obtain the valuable diamond inside.

Similarly, we all have the Buddha-nature in our heart. This Buddha-nature is like the diamond in the rock. When we clean away our ignorance, the shiny, crystal clear Buddha-nature will appear. 🌿

The act of repentance is tantamount to the purification of the heart, like a clear stream flowing over the heart, cleansing away its defilements.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



# Repent the Obstruction of Affliction: One by One, I Repent All My Wrongdoings

懺 悔 煩 惱 障： 一 一 悉 懺 悔  
chàn huǐ fán nǎo zhàng: yī yī xī chàn huǐ

Lyrics: Sixi Wang 作詞：王思熙

Music: Shouquan Li 作曲：李壽全

Arrangement: Zhiyuan Chen 編曲：陳志遠

Translated into English by the Dharma as Water Editorial Team

Afflictions accumulate as thoughts arise

累 劫 煩 惱 因 意 起  
lěi jié fán nǎo yīn yì qǐ

I repent my impure attachments and my greed

懺 悔 耽 染 愛 著 起 貪 欲  
chàn huǐ dān rǎn ài zhuó qǐ tān yù

I repent anger, rage, maliciousness that lead to

懺 悔 瞋 恚 忿 怒 懷 害 心  
chàn huǐ chēn huǐ fèn nù huái hài xīn

I repent my stupidity, confusion, delusion, and

懺 悔 懵 懂 愚 癡 不 了 悟  
chàn huǐ měng dǒng yú chī bù liǎo wù

I repent my pride, conceit, and arrogance

懺 悔 貢 高 我 慢 生 狂 傲  
chàn huǐ gòng gāo wǒ màn shēng kuáng ào

For each and every one, I now repent

我 今 一 一 悉 懺 悔  
wǒ jīn yī yī xī chàn huǐ

The craving for fame, wealth, and power

貪 名 貪 財 貪 權 力  
tān míng tān cái tān quán lì

My hurting others out of habitual irritation

暴 躁 習 性 常 傷 人  
bào zào xí xìng cháng shāng rén

Ignorance of the Law of Cause and Effect

不 明 因 果 昧 罪 福  
bù míng yīn guǒ mèi zuì fú

In looking down on others

蔑 視 他 人 氣 識 高  
miè shì tā rén qì yàn gāo



I repent doubting sages and the true path

懺悔懷疑聖賢正西  
chàn huǐ huái yí shèng xián huò zhèng dào

I repent clinging to the illusory "self"

懺悔不識緣假者我相  
chàn huǐ bù shí yuán jiǎ zhuó wǒ xiàng

I repent being drawn to deviant ways and evil friends

懺悔狎近邪法親惡友  
chàn huǐ xiá jìn xié fǎ qīn è yǒu

I repent hoarding money, being stingy, and

懺悔惜守錢財心吝慳  
chàn huǐ xī shǒu qián cái xīn lìn qiān

I repent malice, nastiness, lack of gentleness

懺悔強悍鬻橫失柔和  
chàn huǐ qiáng hàn mán héng shī róu hé

I repent my burning jealousy, my dismissing others

懺悔妬火熾盛難容人  
chàn huǐ dù huǒ chì shèng nán róng rén

I repent my negligence of the Noble Truths<sup>2</sup>

懺悔乖悖聖諦任蹉跎  
chàn huǐ guāi bèi shèng dì rèn cuō tuó

I repent being ignorant since Beginningless Time

懺悔無始以來無明住  
chàn huǐ wú shǐ yǐ lái wú míng zhù

Doubting Right Faith leads to confusion

疑豫正信生顛倒  
yí yù zhèng xìn shēng diān dǎo

Ignorant of the Three Periods,<sup>1</sup> holding wrong views

迷於三世斷斷常  
mí yú sān shì zhí duàn cháng

In delusion, I become self-important

執惡迷妄還自珍  
zhí è mí wàng huán zì zhēn

Not creating good connections, ending in regret

不結善緣空遺憾  
bù jié shàn yuán kōng yí hàn

Being easily annoyed, hard to please, and vengeful

易忿難悅多含恨  
yì fèn nán yuè duō hán hèn

Going against the wind, throwing dirt in my own face

逆風揚塵傷自身  
nì fēng yáng chén shāng zì shēn

Floating adrift on the Sea of Life and Death

生死海中長飄泊  
shēng sǐ hǎi zhōng cháng piāo bó

Suffering in the cyclic existence of the Six Realms<sup>3</sup>

六趣輪迴受苦楚  
liù qù lún huí shòu kǔ chǔ

<sup>1</sup>Three Periods: past, present, future.

<sup>2</sup>Four Noble Truths: suffering, the arising of suffering, the cessation of suffering, the path to the cessation of suffering.

<sup>3</sup>Six Realms (of existence): hell, hungry ghost, animal, asura, human, heaven.





**Hurricane Sandy  
Special Edition**

# Support from Afar



*Tzu Chi Canada volunteers traveled for hours by bus or plane to help their American neighbors. Photo: Chenhua Yu*





While volunteers on the front lines worked tirelessly, they never worked alone. They served alongside members of their local communities who were inspired to contribute their time and talents. They were also supported by friends from afar: volunteers across North America who raised funds, traveled to assist, shipped relief materials, and answered hotline phones, as well as volunteers in thirty-three countries and regions worldwide who raised funds to support hurricane victims.



# Overcoming Challenges with Innovation

**Vict Ying | Translated by Colin Legerton**

*Vict Ying is Director of Tzu Chi Boston Service Center*



*Boston volunteers arrive in New York with gasoline and generators. Photo: Peter Chen*

Just a couple weeks after Hurricane Sandy, I traveled to New York on November 13 to offer my support. At the time, much of the area was still without power, and gasoline was in short supply, so Regional Director George Chang asked me to deliver two generators and gasoline from Boston. Before I left, I scoured both Massachusetts and New Hampshire, but all the stores had sold out of generators. Later, I finally located two in Connecticut, but when I got to the store I was not able to find any gasoline containers. Thankfully, I was able to collect some from friends and managed to gather fifteen gallons of gas to take to New York. After all that, I finally understood just how serious the situation was!

During my time in New York, I helped organize three distributions in Staten Island, and then accompanied the New York team for nine more. Those first three distributions were especially challenging: we needed to distribute cash cards to five thousand families over just three days and only had a couple days to prepare. Since the disaster area was so wide, ours was not even the only distribution event in New York that weekend: other volunteers were holding concurrent distributions in Babylon,

Long Island, and Gerritsen Beach, Brooklyn. This massive scope was well beyond what New York volunteers could handle on their own, so they needed outside assistance.

Thankfully, forty-seven volunteers traveled from Canada to support us—some rode a bus from Toronto, others flew from Vancouver. But planning was still a challenge. Since we only knew that they would arrive at the first distribution site at 8:30 on the morning of the distribution, we had no way to communicate details with them beforehand.

As volunteers arrived from all directions on the morning of the first distribution, we were finally able to hold an orientation and plot out our detailed plan for the day. We were serving about fifteen hundred families in a very small church, so insufficient space was just one of our many major challenges.

Since we were unable to obtain a name list of affected families before the distribution, we had seriously considered the possibility of compiling our own. We even went online and found some public records, including numbers of households by street, but there was no way we could put everything together for five thousand households in just two days. We considered several other options, but just did not have the time to do it.



*Photo: Chenhua Yu*



Finally, we came up with a solution: we would ask all the recipients to provide photo identification and a water or electricity bill to prove that they lived in the disaster area being served. Then they would write their addresses and sign their names. In the United States we can often rely on the honor system, but volunteers soon discovered that some addresses and names were reappearing in the afternoon that had already been recorded in the morning.

Our main purpose was passing on the love of Tzu Chi volunteers, so we certainly could not cancel the distribution just because a few people were not following the rules. Instead, we went back to the office that night and quickly built a database, and then a dozen volunteers worked until four o'clock in the morning to enter all the information provided by fifteen hundred recipients.

The next morning, Saturday, thirty-three volunteers arrived from Boston to help out—including many Tzu Ching and Tzu Ching Alumni. We had twelve computers in use at the distribution site to double-check recipients against the database we had created the night before. But we soon realized that the database could only catch people who had come the day before, not people who were coming twice in the same day. So, we quickly came up with a new system that could also check records within the same day and found that quite a few people had already received cash cards twice. We made an announcement to everyone waiting outside that we now had a computer system to check for repeat recipients, and that the police would be asked to deal with all offenders. After that announcement, repeat visitors were reduced significantly, but there were still some leaks. So we tweaked again, and had a much more complete system by the third day. Within a minute, we could now check an applicant against all previous recipients from the same day and before.



*With the new database, relief distributions ran more smoothly. Photo: Youren Hong*

On Sunday, we still had two thousand households to serve. With the support of the new computer system, we were able to prevent 175 attempts at taking a second card. We also had a case manager who would cancel these redundant applications and then ask the onsite police officer to escort the offending party out of the distribution.

Later, volunteers in both New York and New Jersey were able to mold our computerized verification system into a much more complete tool that was used in all following distributions. After twenty distributions, we compiled our New York distribution statistics and found that only a few dozen households—far less than one percent of the ten thousand served to that point—had received multiple cash cards. Thankfully, the system was a success.

During the distribution process, developing this computer program was just one of the ways we worked on developing volunteers' potential. We also emphasized being mindful and taking good care of our hearts and minds. When volunteers encountered afflictions, we helped them raise their awareness and broaden their horizons, so that their wisdom could grow and they could pass on Master Cheng Yen's compassion to disaster victims. When volunteers work joyfully, disaster victims can also feel joyful and everyone will be harmonious and united.





# Raising Funds around the World

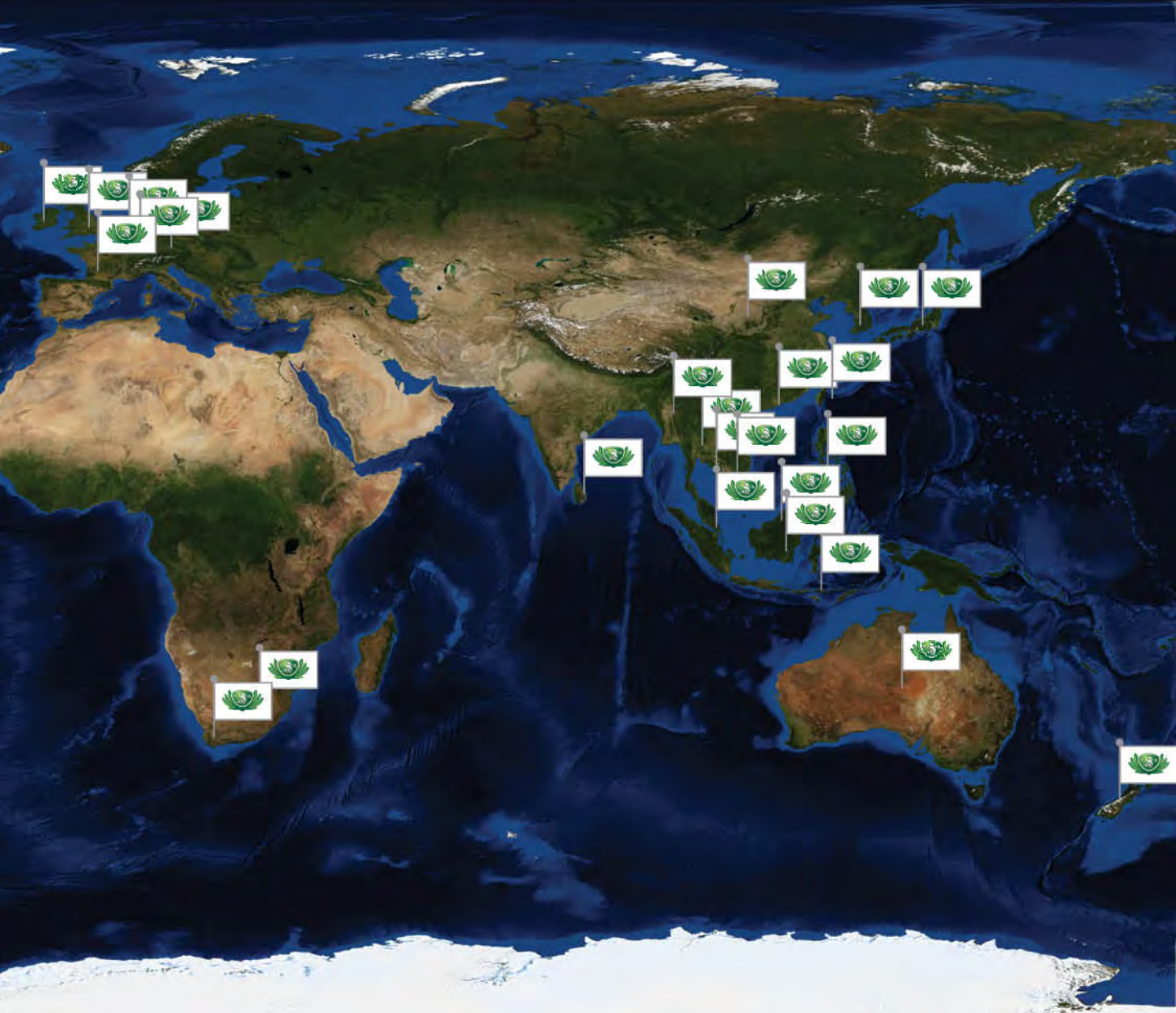
To support Hurricane Sandy victims, volunteers raised funds in thirty-three countries and regions around the world: fifteen in Asia, six in Europe, four each in North America and South America, and two each in Oceania and Africa. Within the United States, volunteers raised funds in roughly one hundred cities spread across twenty-four states and the District of Columbia.





# Hurricane Sandy Special Edition

Support from Afar



Map Image by NASA. Accessed from <http://visibleearth.nasa.gov/>.



# Helping Hands Circle the Globe

## Tzu Chi Volunteers

In order to quickly provide practical cash assistance to the many Northeast residents affected by Hurricane Sandy devastation, Dharma Master Cheng Yen called on Tzu Chi volunteers worldwide to undertake a massive fundraising effort.

Heeding the call, US Tzu Chi volunteers in one hundred cities across twenty-four states and the District of Columbia began fundraising on the weekend of November 10 and 11. They held posters and donation boxes outside local supermarkets, bookstores, restaurants, and shopping centers, giving passersby a chance to make a difference in a disaster victim's life.

The fundraising effort was not always easy. Some volunteers had to persevere through cold and rain. Most were met with bewilderment or indifference: saturated with pre-election news, many people they encountered simply had no idea how severe Hurricane Sandy was. Regardless of the challenges encountered, volunteers faced them with a smile and carried on.

In Westminster, California, one woman shouted "I don't have any money!" as she walked by. A volunteer simply smiled and said, "That's OK. Bless you!" The woman suddenly turned around and dropped ten cents in the donation box. After the volunteer respectfully bowed ninety degrees, the woman turned again and dropped in two more dimes, then another. Seeing her complete change in attitude, the volunteer joyfully gave her a big hug.

In Cerritos, California, local volunteer Daniel Hickey went out of his way to involve people. When one woman wanted to donate ten dollars but only had a twenty-dollar bill, Daniel encouraged her to donate the twenty, then gave her ten back from his own pocket. As young children passed by, he would offer them some of his own change to put into the box, giving them an opportunity to experience giving.

Across the country, Washington DC volunteers split up to gather donations in both Virginia and Maryland. In North and South Carolina, where there are only a few volunteers, these volunteers recruited friends and neighbors to join them in street fundraising. In Raleigh, volunteers received a donation from a student who told them that she was from Sichuan, China, and that she had been very moved when she saw Tzu Chi volunteers serve in her hometown after the 2008 earthquake.

In Dallas, Texas, volunteers were joined by Tzu Chi Scholar Kelyn Carcamo. Grateful for the opportunity to continue her education with a Tzu Chi scholarship, she immediately signed up for the chance to give back to the community.

*In Cerritos, California, volunteer Daniel Hickey encourages others to give. Photo: Huiyi Zhou*







*Tzu Chi USA CEO Han Huang thanks relief concert performers in Cerritos, California. Photo: Fusan Ye*

They were also joined by Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy Principal Nakia Douglas, who brought along five of his students to encourage them to be more aware of the world around them.

In Las Vegas, Nevada, one shop owner set a donation box on her store counter four days before volunteers were scheduled to fundraise outside. She wrote on it: "Please donate your tips and loving-kindness. Everything will be given to hurricane victims." When volunteers arrived, she gave them the box's contents, as well as her own personal donation.

Street fundraising was not the only way money was raised for hurricane victims. Volunteers in Cerritos, California, held a charity concert on November 30, bringing in donations from 250 audience members. Further north, volunteers in San Francisco held their annual winter distribution for local homeless on the first weekend of November. During the distribution, they explained Tzu Chi's bamboo bank spirit and the ongoing relief effort on the East Coast. These volunteers had even prepared some

“Volunteers raised funds in thirty-three countries and regions around the world.”



*Volunteers collect donations at a night market in Photharam, Thailand. Photo: Yafeng Tang*

loose change so that their homeless guests could participate without having to contribute their own money. Yet, much to the volunteers' surprise, these homeless care recipients reached into their pockets and pulled out money to donate. As the volunteers were leaving, they were even chased down by one man on a bicycle. Putting his donation into the box, he explained: "I didn't have change on me just then." The volunteers were truly moved by this display.

Volunteers fundraising across the United States were far from alone. Globally, volunteers raised funds in thirty-three countries and regions across each of the six inhabited continents.

During the annual night market in Bloemfontein, South Africa, a group of volunteers in blue and white asked passersby to "please send love to the Americans for Hurricane Sandy." Some wondered, "Isn't America rich? Why do they need disaster relief?" Yet, seeing that Tzu Chi was not only raising money but also "raising love," they decided to contribute.





Volunteers in Maseru, Lesotho, prepare to raise funds. Photo provided by Tzu Chi Lesotho

Across Malaysia, volunteers incorporated Hurricane Sandy relief into all their projects, including medical services and educational programs. During street fundraising, they saw firsthand that true wealth is in the heart. One especially touching donation came from Korsion, a migrant worker from Bangladesh. Though he lives frugally and sends home most of his meager earnings, he generously gave to help victims of Hurricane Sandy.

One donating volunteer in Malaysia observed, "All this while I thought America is a rich country that should be able to cope with all these disasters without any need for external assistance. This hurricane has devastated America's financial center and even the rich ones were not spared their homes and cars. No matter what status and position one may hold, the consequence is the same when natural disaster strikes."

Even though residents of Haiti were deeply affected by the storm themselves, volunteers there also diligently raised funds to help their neighbors in the north. It was the same in several other Central and South American countries that US Tzu Chi volunteers have supported: people in Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic all gave generously.

In New Zealand, Hurricane Sandy provided a very visual learning experience for young Tzu Chi Academy students. After the students had each put their coins into the class bamboo bank, their teacher opened it up and let all the coins flood out. "Wow!" said a student, "I only put a



Night market customers donate in South Africa. Photo: Qiuling Huang

couple coins in there, how could so many come out?" The teacher explained, "This is what 'many grains of rice make a bushel, many drops of water makes a river' means." When accumulated, many small actions make an enormous impact.

During a particularly cold, rainy spell in Taichung, volunteers offered medical relief to local homeless people. As in San Francisco, the homeless care recipients were given an opportunity not only to receive free medical care, but also to extend their love by participating in fundraising. In Taipei, some volunteers questioned whether it was really necessary to help people in such a strong, wealthy nation, but Master Cheng Yen explained that this was also an opportunity to inspire disaster victims. Though they needed the help now, soon they would be back on their feet, inspired and able to help others.

The many touching examples of donations from around the world show that there truly is no hierarchy in giving. As Dharma Master Cheng Yen says, "Giving is not the privilege of the rich; it is the privilege of the sincere." Even the rich have times of need. Even the poor have something to give. What is important is for all people to spark the love and kindness in their hearts and help one another. 🌱

True wealth is the peace of mind attained from applying one's wealth to benefit humankind.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*





# A Blissful Day of Street Donation in Singapore

**Hau Kok Leong**

*Hau Kok Leong is a Tzu Chi volunteer in Singapore*

On a very special Sunday morning, November 25, 2012, more than thirty Tzu Chi volunteers gathered together at Jurong West market, dressed in full volunteer uniforms with donation boxes and posters neatly set up. A short briefing was given and all volunteers were positioned throughout the market and at the nearest metro station. This was our first day of street donation for Hurricane Sandy victims.

As the Sunday morning crowd started to fill in, smiling faces and friendly greetings from volunteers made the morning even warmer. This was indeed a special day.

People from all ages started to donate. In return, we gave a bow and a gentle “thank you” as a token of our appreciation and gratitude. Some passersby suggested that their donations did not warrant a bow, But a warm



Photo: Qinghua Chen





*Singapore Tzu Chi volunteers collect donations in Bukit Panjang. Photo: Douglas Lee*

Tzu Chi USA handed over the debit cards to hurricane survivors, it inspired these survivors to help others in need. As an exchange student in Japan in 2011, I saw broken hearts warmed and comforted by Tzu Chi's earthquake aid, so I know the impact these debit cards—filled with well-wishes and love gathered from all over the world—can have on people. I am sure these blessings will help survivors alleviate their current difficulties quickly, and that great love will shower into their broken hearts, as the cycle of love blossoms and continues.



voice always responded, "We are paying our respect for your sincere compassion in aiding the victims of the hurricane."

One of the scenes that deeply touched me, and which I will never forget, was an elderly volunteer who always maintained a warm smile despite standing for such long hours during the street donation event. Though she was in her sixties, she showed her humility by bowing deeply without any sign of discomfort or complaint. The smile on her lined face deeply touched and motivated me as a youngster to continue on the Tzu Chi volunteer path.

It was a morning filled with love. Some passersby even stopped to ask, "Are you people from Tzu Chi Foundation?" "Yes!" we replied. At that moment, I felt very grateful to be part of this big family. The passersby then flashed great smiles and replied, "Thank you so much."

Nevertheless, we received some negative feedback from people who wondered why we needed to help a wealthy and powerful country. These comments drew me back to Master Cheng Yen's teachings: aiding the poor and educating the rich are equally important. The sum of money may not mean much to the donors, but I am sure when our fellow volunteers from

It is amazing to know that people all around the world are so closely knitted together. Though I have been active in Tzu Chi as a teenager in Malaysia, and then again after the earthquake in Japan, this was my first street donation experience since I came to Singapore. I feel very grateful to everyone, both the volunteers who spent their weekends on the streets and the people who contributed their kindness. The joy of giving from a sincere heart is the greatest thing. 🌿

*\* Special thanks to Tzu Chi Singapore for editing and sharing this article.*

Tender loving care is found in all corners of the world. Everyone can be a Bodhisattva to help those in need.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



# Tzu Chi's Disaster Hotline

Michael Tseng, Austin Tsao, Freeman Su

*Michael Tseng is Tzu Chi's Associate Director of Charity Development*

*Austin Tsao is Tzu Chi's Director of Charity Development*

*Freeman Su is Director of Tzu Chi Long Island Branch*

One of Tzu Chi's five principles of disaster relief is directness. In times of disaster, Tzu Chi provides an opportunity for volunteers to directly interact with disaster survivors and connect with them on a personal level. But in the aftermath of a major disaster like Hurricane Sandy, the need is simply too great, the affected too many, and local volunteers too few, so it sometimes takes a cross-country phone connection to effectively reach all those in need of help.

In November, not long after Hurricane Sandy struck, Tzu Chi established a toll-free disaster hotline for victims to reach out for help. Through the hotline, volunteers at Tzu Chi USA Headquarters in California were able to serve as the initial contact and first line of screening for relief applicants, thus freeing their counterparts on the East Coast for their many other urgent responsibilities.

After the Tzu Chi toll-free number was publicized on local newspapers and television news programs—and especially after New York City Comptroller John C. Liu's major press conference on November 18—the response was overwhelming. By mid-December, the toll-free hotline had already received more than five thousand requests for help: including more than three thousand phone calls, one thousand voicemails, and sixteen hundred emails. Volunteers worked tirelessly to understand each caller's unique circumstances and conduct a preliminary screening to determine eligibility for cash support. On Thanksgiving Day, just



*Volunteers in Southern California speak with East Coast disaster victims. Photo: Michael Tseng*

four days after the New York press conference, twenty-four volunteers from all across Southern California—and even as far away as Las Vegas, Nevada—spent the holiday answering and returning calls and recording each caller's information. But it was still not enough. Soon the net of support was spread even wider, with a thousand requests sent up the coast to Northern California, and eight hundred more sent all the way up to Vancouver, Canada.

In all three locations, volunteers spoke at length with callers to understand how they had been personally affected by Hurricane Sandy. Since funds had been donated by so many kind-hearted individuals around the world, it was especially important to ensure this money was not squandered, but rather given wisely



to those who truly needed it. First, volunteers checked each caller's address to ensure that they truly lived within a disaster zone and asked whether the caller was also receiving Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or insurance company support. Then, volunteers inquired about actual damage to property. Often, apartments on the second floor or higher, even though still within disaster areas, were largely unaffected while many first-floor and basement residences were completely flooded.

Volunteers would then ask whether the property in question was owned or rented. If it was a rental property, then Tzu Chi considered the person physically living there to be the disaster victim. Property owners would be compensated through insurance, but residents were often in need of urgent financial support to get their lives back on track. Finally, volunteers checked that callers had not already received Tzu Chi's financial support.

Following the phone calls and further screening, eligible candidates were given confirmation numbers and referred to their local Tzu Chi offices in New York City, Long Island, and Cedar Grove, New Jersey. Visiting these local offices, they could meet in person with Tzu Chi volunteers and receive their debit cards.

In December, Tzu Chi shifted into a new phase of relief. At first, emergency funds were given to anyone who suffered damage from the storm. While many of these people were also eligible for greater compensation than the \$600 that Tzu Chi could offer, whether through FEMA or insurance, these other funds would come only after a lengthy processing time. Tzu Chi's donation was not meant to compensate for lost property, but rather to help disaster victims get through the difficult post-storm period, allowing them more flexibility to buy things that they urgently needed, whether food, medication, tools, appliances, or clothing. After the first month had passed, many of these people were already beginning to receive their compensation, so Tzu Chi's focus turned to helping those who had nowhere else to turn:

the uninsured, the undocumented, and people with special situations.

While answering phone calls from disaster victims, many volunteers were moved to tears, and some were moved to donate large sums of money. Speaking with a variety of people across the disaster-affected region, they learned more about the effects of the storm than they had ever imagined.

One call, answered personally by Charity Development Department Director Austin Tsao, came from a lady whose elderly father had passed away after the storm. Many of the deaths during Hurricane Sandy were caused by drowning or falling trees, but his happened later. Living on a higher floor of a senior center cut off from heat and electricity, the caller's father tried to escape the slow freezing death that awaited several other senior citizens in the region. With no electricity to power the elevator, he took the stairs. Unfortunately, he slipped and fell, and died alone in the stairwell. Unable to pay for her father's funeral, the daughter turned to Tzu Chi for help. Deeply moved, Austin referred her case to local volunteers.

Another case encountered by emergency hotline volunteers served as a heartwarming example of the power of the relay of love. In mid-December, volunteer Kit Ho answered a call from a family on Long Island. They had received their FEMA aid already, but it had been swindled away from them. With nowhere to turn, this family of four was spending their nights split between two cars, huddled for warmth in uncomfortable seats. Realizing the urgency of the situation, a call was placed right away to the Long Island office. Fortunately, three volunteers were already on the road, returning home from a damage assessment visit to three families in the hard-hit village of Lindenhurst on the island's southern shore. After checking their GPS, they realized that the family in question was very near, so they turned around and quickly arrived. The family was shocked to see these volunteers arrive in person just fifteen minutes after a cross-country phone call.





During the visit, they explained their situation. When the storm hit, water had gushed into their home, flooding eight feet high and ruining everything. Even six weeks later, the water damage was still visible at the top of their walls. FEMA had provided more than four thousand dollars to cover the damage, so they used the money to rent a motor home to live in as they continued to repair their still-unheated home. Including the rental fee and deposit, they spent the entire sum on the motor home. But once they drove it home, they discovered that its heating was broken. When they sent it back for repairs, the motor home and the rental company both vanished.

With no way to recover their money, they spent cramped, uncomfortable nights in their car. Worse yet, the father had taken time off work to repair their home. Their FEMA money was gone, and no income was coming in to replace it.

“ All people are connected, no matter where they live. ”

The Long Island volunteers provided this family with a six-hundred-dollar cash card to help them through their difficult time. The family was touched by the generous donation and Tzu Chi's bamboo bank story; they said they hoped to be able to give back to others soon, just as they had received.

Tzu Chi's disaster hotline showed that all people are connected, no matter where they live. With the power of a team working in harmony, a helping hand can stretch across the country in minutes. 🌿

When there are many good people, the power of blessings and kindness is great.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



# A Time to Give

**Benjamin Barnes**

*Benjamin Barnes is a Tzu Chi volunteer in Southern California*

**W**hy am I here? Where am I from? How did I learn about Tzu Chi?

These are the questions many staff and volunteers have asked me since I started volunteering at Tzu Chi Foundation. Here are all my answers.

Seven years ago I was a college student and full-time employee at a local nursing home. During my time there at the nursing home I met and spoke with many residents' family members. One of those was Diana Mu, a Tzu Chi volunteer.

I felt a sense of inspiration as she took the time to tell me about the organization: a nonprofit organization that assists people who have suffered devastation during natural disasters. She also explained to me the many different opportunities to help the community through various programs in education, recycling, art, administration, charity, and so on.

I know why she took the time to explain all these things to me. She could see something in me: a spark of goodwill that I have had ever since I was young. Throughout my life I have given time to various charities and volunteer groups: hospital, nursing home, animal shelter, garden, museum, food bank, nursery, church, clothing donation center, and special holiday events—many different places.

Even though I sometimes wish I could have given more time, the people who I have helped have always been so grateful. Feelings like these are what I miss the most. And after all that has happened to me in the past few years, I realize that now is the most important time to give my time for others.

This past year I have been through a lot

of difficulties. I have experienced emotional detachment from a woman I have cared for for many years, economic hardship through loss of employment, the inability to take care of myself financially, and the loss of my home. As recently as November I was sleeping and living out of my vehicle.

“I was led to Tzu Chi to discover something; no matter how much you lose in life, there are others out there who have lost so much more.”

I had no idea my life could fall on such harsh times. Really, when you have so much and you lose it all at once, it is such a shock. With no health coverage, I felt such tremendous stress and pressure that there would be nights I could not sleep. This led to dizziness and chest pain so bad that finally I humbly

asked my parents for their hospitality, and they gave me a place to stay. For many years I have been able to do many things by myself. I could live and support myself and successfully make it through any adversity on my own. But this time I could not.

After coming back home and searching everywhere for employment, I was still faced with a difficult economic climate. Jobs in this country are difficult to acquire and much more difficult to keep. My frustration ultimately led to the idea of escaping the country. But where would I go? What would I do? This burden was too much to bear by myself so I reached out to friends for advice. A very close friend of mine suggested that I volunteer somewhere.

After much consideration, I decided the only way to keep myself busy and not worry about my own personal hardship was to get out again in the community and volunteer. The first place I considered this time was the Tzu Chi Foundation. For the Tzu Chi Foundation had been on my mind for several years ever since my first encounter with Diana Mu. So now I was determined to meet her again and show that I was ready to give myself for Tzu Chi.



It was the day before Thanksgiving and I was determined to visit Tzu Chi USA Headquarters in San Dimas, California, to apply for a volunteer position. I was so excited that I lost track of time and remembered just in time that their offices close at six o'clock. I drove as fast as possible and made it five minutes before closing. I drove up and remembered how beautiful the place looked, for I had been there earlier in the year to participate in the New Year Blessing Ceremony.

Just about an hour after I turned in my volunteer application and returned home, a gentleman called and explained that he needed help the following day, Thanksgiving, to conduct over-the-phone screenings for Hurricane Sandy relief victims on the East Coast. I agreed to meet him on Thanksgiving morning, and I stayed throughout the day, answering the phone and interviewing people for relief assistance.

I had not realized just how many people within my own country are suffering. It really hit me that some people had truly lost everything: their homes, businesses, vehicles, life savings, even family members.

One month earlier, I thought that I had lost everything. But now I know I was led to Tzu Chi to discover something: no matter how much you lose in life, there are others out there who have lost so much more. We can stress and worry and be angry at ourselves and others, or we can take proactive positive steps to change ourselves and do good for others.

It does not take much. Sometimes it is as simple as picking up the phone and listening. When you are there for others, they can feel it. They feel it and they are overwhelmed with joy and happiness. I have seen it on our Da Ai TV network, on our *US Tzu Chi 360°* YouTube channel, on our international website. Most of all, I have felt it through the many staff and volunteers who give their time as best they can to help others, whether through financial contributions, answering the phone to



provide assistance, medical outreach, cooking food to share with others, or any of the many ways people help. I have felt their love and compassion. That is what brings me back to Tzu Chi.

I hope that all of us around the world can come together as one people and do what we can to help each others. I hope and pray that no matter where you are from or what you believe, that someday you can really learn to open your heart to others in your own unique way and give your love to those less fortunate than yourself.

Even though I have so little, if all I can give is my heart, someone out there will accept it and appreciate it. If you can open your heart to another person, there is no limit to the amount of love you can give. Love is a free gift, so let us all start to give it freely and bring hope back to our world! 🌱

**Make today count! It comes only once in a lifetime.**

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



On December 17, 2012, Tzu Chi volunteers in Manchester, England, conducted a winter relief distribution at the Cornerstone Day Centre to provide warm clothing and hot meals for the homeless. Here, Sister Lucy accepts relief goods on behalf of the residents.  
Photo: Youquan Zhang



On December 15, 2012, volunteers from France, the Netherlands, Austria, England, and Germany held Tzu Chi's first disaster relief distribution in Europe. They gave €100 supermarket gift cards to more than four hundred people in two northern Italian cities that were affected by May earthquakes which left twenty-seven dead and 45,000 homeless.  
Photo provided by Tzu Chi Foundation



On January 12-14, 2013, Tzu Chi volunteers in Jordan distributed winter clothing to more than 2,000 families who have fled the civil war in Syria. Tzu Chi Global Headquarters shipped more than 188,000 items of second-hand clothing and 6,300 eco-friendly blankets to Jordan to help refugees survive the harsh winter. Photo: Yaohua Xiao



Lesotho Tzu Chi volunteers conducted regular home visits in Maseru on December 15, 2012. In addition to the food and daily necessities that they provide regularly, volunteers also delivered special holiday gifts. Photo: Meijuan Chen





On December 9, 2012, Tzu Chi Australia organized a major free dental clinic in Blacktown, a suburb of Sydney. The clinic was a joint effort of Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) dentists, nurses, and volunteers from Sydney, Brisbane, and Perth. Photo: Mingguang Jiang



▲ Typhoon Bopha devastated southeast Mindanao, the second-largest island of the Philippines, in early December 2012. Tzu Chi volunteers from the Zamboanga Peninsula visited the disaster area to assess damage and hold a free clinic on December 15. Here, a volunteer applies ointment to a young boy. Photo: Leah A. Valle



▲ Many low-lying areas of Jakarta, Indonesia, suffered from heavy flooding in January 2013. Tzu Chi volunteers visited the village of Pantai Mutiara on January 18 to help locals evacuate. Photo: Anand Yahya



▲ On January 27, 2013, Tzu Chi volunteers in Vietnam donated twenty wheelchairs to a leprosy hospital in Binh Duong Province. Here, volunteers assemble the stainless steel wheelchairs. Photo: Yongzhong Qiu



▶ Starting on January 26, volunteers held Chinese New Year feasts and winter distributions for 17,000 underprivileged families from Kaohsiung to Taipei. Here, executives of Tzu Chi Medical Mission, Tzu Chi General Hospital, and Tzu Chi University humbly serve attendees at Jing Si Abode in Hualien on February 3.

Photo: Pohong Jiang



▶ Tzu Chi held a winter relief distribution in Guizhou Province, China, on January 11, 2013. Volunteers visited the locals in Muyin village to assess their needs and present them with warm clothing, food, and daily necessities.

Photo: Yide Huang



▲ On January 19, 2013, officers of Tzu Chi Collegiate Association (Tzu Ching) from sixteen colleges gathered in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for a cultivation retreat. After planning out their direction for the year, they went out on the streets to share Jing Si Aphorisms. Photo: Riquan Li



▲ On January 13, 2013, Tzu Chi Thailand held a Chinese New Year celebration and rice distribution in Samut Prakan. Here, a Tzu Ching college volunteer helps an older villager with her bag of rice. Photo: Lek





# US TZU CHI 360°

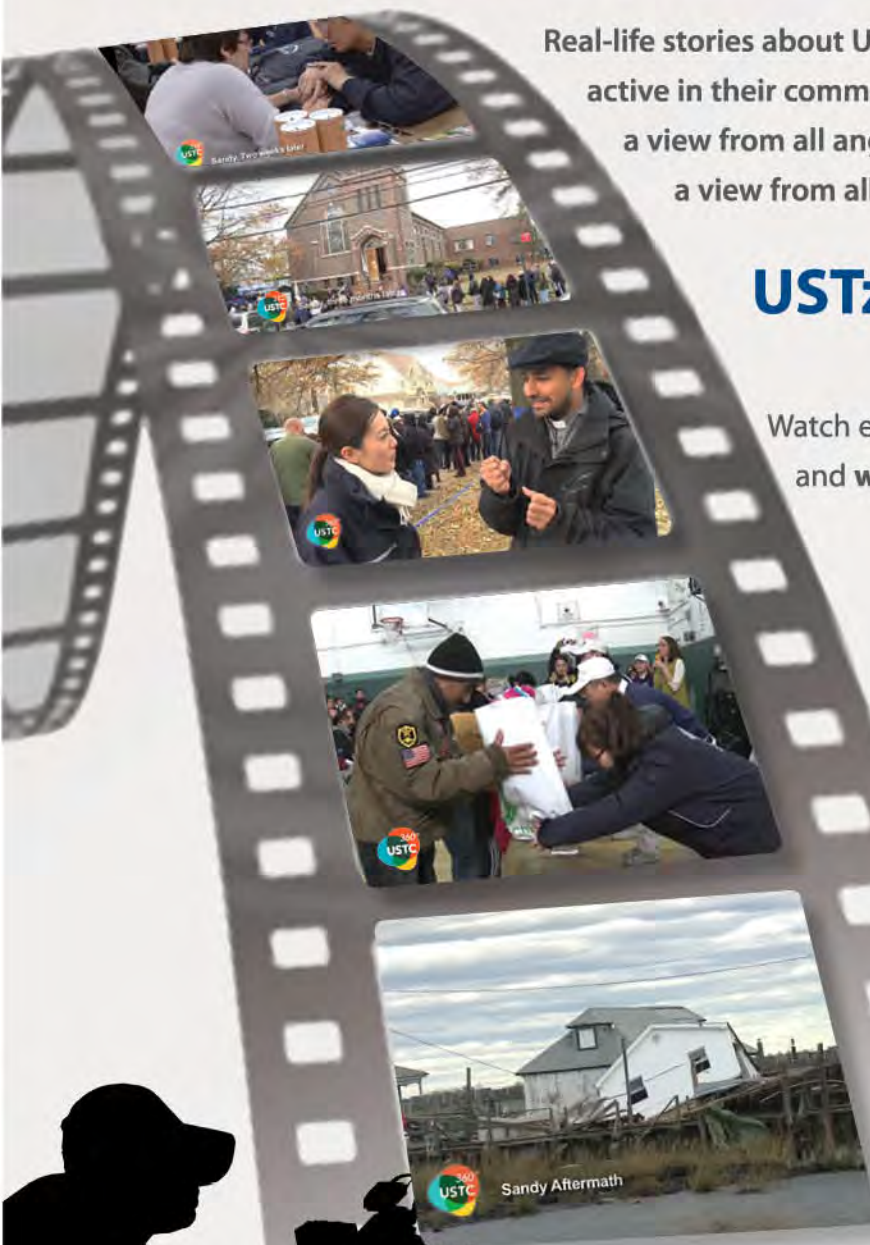
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Please go online to watch  
Episodes 70-73, 76 & 85  
about Hurricane Sandy  
Disaster Relief. More  
episodes will follow.





# Perseverance and Patience

Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Compiled into English by the Dharma as Water Editorial Team

**With perseverance and patience, we can accomplish great deeds.**

Patience is exercising tolerance.

We need to withstand things others cannot so our minds can be pure.

Then we will have the perseverance and endurance to practice this path.

The Buddha used the power of patience as the starting point of his practice. Patience is truly difficult to cultivate because we all try to avoid suffering and seek blessings. Who is willing to go to a place of deep suffering? Only Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are willing to keep returning to this world of suffering. This is only possible with patience, so patience is very powerful.

In the Sutra on the Wise and the Foolish, there is a story about the Buddha going to Hell as part of His spiritual practice. In Hell, as a young man, he saw an elderly, hunch-backed man dragging an iron cart heated red-hot by fire. Every step he took was a burden. The young man could not bear to see this suffering so he stepped up to take the old man's place. When the guard saw this, he angrily yelled, "Young man, this is none of your business! When he was alive, this man was cruel and treacherous. There was no evil he would not do. That is why he fell into Hell to be punished. He deserves this. If he does not pull this cart, he will not exhaust his karmic retribution."

The young man said, "Even though this is his karma, I cannot bear to watch this. I am willing to suffer in his place." When the ghosts and spirits administering the punishments heard him say this, they could not bear the sight either. In that moment, the fires in the Hell of Fiery Carts were extinguished, and the punishments

also halted. This is one story in the process of the Buddha's spiritual practice. There is a saying, "If I do not enter Hell, who will?" It is clear that great patience is required to teach and transform.

Practicing patience is not easy. The minds of ordinary people are easily tempted by external conditions, so we need the strength to withstand temptation. Without perseverance and patience, following rules or precepts will be difficult. If we can withstand all kinds of desires and temptations and abide by the precepts, we can develop our wisdom. If we lack patience, we may easily damage our virtue. With the power of patience, we can teach and transform others.

There are many Living Bodhisattvas in this world who inspire us with their patience. For example, in Nantou, there is an elderly Bodhisattva in her eighties named Yunian Hong. She lived her life with patience and perseverance. When she was a young wife, her family was poor. Porridge was the only thing they had to eat, so her children were malnourished and looked sallow and emaciated. Her husband was a carpenter and before he left for work, if he saw that the only thing to eat was porridge, he would yell at her. "Don't you know that I need to expend a lot of strength for my work? Why did you cook porridge again?" She did not have the heart to tell him that if she did not cook porridge for breakfast, there would be nothing to eat for lunch. So, she patiently endured his yelling.





## Storytelling by the Master



Even though they had very few financial resources, she vowed that no matter what it took, her children would get an education so they would not be manual laborers like their father. Her husband died at a young age, so she took on both parental roles and worked very hard. She gritted her teeth and focused on raising her children.

Now, all of her children are successful and remain very filial. One of them is even the superintendent of a hospital. She could easily live a life of luxury and comfort in her old age, but she never thought to just sit back and enjoy her blessings. After her children became successful, she joined Tzu Chi and became a commissioner. When she heard Tzu Chi's calls to engage in environmental protection, she was strongly motivated to take part. She felt it was about more than just protecting her own children and grandchildren; she wanted to care for all future generations.

After many schools collapsed in the 921 Earthquake in 1999, she heard me say, "Society's hope lies in children's education." Back when she was poor, she realized that education was her children's only hope. After she heard these words, she believed this even more deeply. So she began growing and selling vegetables to raise money for the Hope Project, which was rebuilding schools damaged in the quake. She sold her vegetables in a basket and after she finished selling them,

she used that same basket to collect recyclables. She has done this steadfastly up to the present day and has vowed to continue doing it in the future. Upholding this kind of vow requires perseverance.

Perseverance comes from patience. She patiently endured cold, heat, wind, and rain, and willingly gave up her time for sleep and relaxation. When she helps others, she also endures pain, hard work, filth, and bad odors. This eighty-year-old woman has the resolute perseverance to shoulder this tremendous burden because she feels a sense of mission. That is why she can give her all to benefit the Earth and future generations.

With perseverance and patience, we can accomplish great deeds in this world to benefit our society. Without these qualities we cannot bear the suffering and hard work required to maintain our resolve. So even if we have initially vowed to do good, without patience we may be easily influenced by external conditions and lose our resolve. Then we may violate the precepts and stray from the path. If we have the strong foundation of patience, we can diligently progress in our spiritual practice. 🌿

\* *Excerpted from Dharma as Water: A Commentary on the Compassionate Samadhi Water Repentance, Vol. 1 (available soon)*



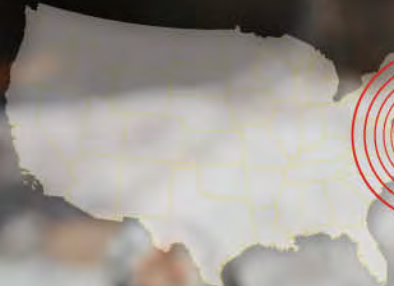
**Hurricane Sandy  
Special Edition**

# Lessons in Disaster



*Photo: Peter Lin*





The storm passed, homes will be rebuilt, and people will go on with their lives. But its lessons should not be forgotten. Dharma Master Cheng Yen says that “disasters serve to awaken people's awareness,” and many people indeed found new awareness through the storm and relief effort. Even in the wake of such a terrible tragedy, one can be grateful for the opportunity to reflect and grow



# Disaster is a Learning Experience

**Freeman Su | Translated by Colin Legerton**

*Freeman Su is Director of Tzu Chi Long Island Branch*

I had always thought that New York was the least likely place to be struck by a natural disaster. Even though I felt the might of Hurricane Sandy as it crashed against Long Island on the night of October 29, I never imagined that it could bring such devastation to so many people. Even our Long Island office, far from the coast, was cut off from electricity.

As soon as the storm had passed, Long Island disaster relief volunteers immediately went out to assess the damage, and found that the whole region was filled with untold pains. We approached several local communities to offer our help, but we kept getting turned down. Perhaps it was because we looked too foreign, or maybe people were unsure about this name, Tzu Chi, that they did not know. Whatever the reason, local residents and government organizations just politely told us, "Thank you, we can repair our own homes, we don't need outside help."

Though people were not receptive at first, we persevered. On November 3, we cooked corn soup and delivered two hundred piping hot bowls to disaster victims in Long Beach and Atlantic Beach, two seaside communities that had borne the brunt of Sandy's fury. We hoped that as the soup warmed their stomachs it could also warm their hearts.

The following day, we delivered a couple hundred more bowls of soup to workers repairing damaged electric lines. As volunteer Josephine Liao works in the police department, she introduced us to the commanding officer of the Suffolk County Police Department First Precinct, who then introduced us to the mayor

of Lindenhurst. Through these connections, we were able to organize our first major relief distribution for November 10.

At about eight o'clock on the morning of the distribution, there were already fifty or sixty people lined up outside. One sixty-year-old disaster victim told us that he had always believed that he would never have to rely on another person as long as he worked hard. He had never thought that there would be a day like today when he would have to extend his hand to receive money and supplies from someone else. On this day, he realized that there were many people in the community just like him: people who had always worked hard but still had no choice but to request help from another. He told us that he too wanted to become someone who would spread love to others.

Seeing Tzu Chi volunteers' modesty and compassion as we personally delivered needed comfort, many cash card recipients were moved to tears. I deeply felt the pain of those affected by the disaster. I often found it difficult to speak as I held back my tears.

Over the course of our disaster relief effort, it was inevitable that we would face some challenges. Volunteers often had differing opinions about where and for whom we should hold relief distributions, but we were all determined to keep the Dharma as our guide, so we were able to overcome these disagreements. In fact, throughout the disaster relief effort, we all had to consider and integrate many diverse ideas so that we could walk forward together. It was a test for all volunteers

“It was a test for all volunteers to see whether we could truly remain united in harmony with a common goal.”





*The author visits a disaster area for relief assessment. Photo: Josephine Liao*



*On November 7, the Village of Lindenhurst agreed to hold Tzu Chi's first major distribution on Long Island. Photo: Stephanie Wang*

to see whether we could truly remain united in harmony with a common goal. In the end, it was a valuable learning experience: when you give, you really do receive!

In the course of disaster relief, many volunteers were able to realize their own blessings by witnessing the hardships of others, and thus were able to cherish even more deeply what they already had. In addition, they grew to understand why Tzu Chi's disaster relief principles are timeliness, directness, priority, respect, and practicality. Only by personally participating could they see how appropriate these principles truly are. Only by doing this work ourselves could we deeply understand that we too should take on Dharma Master Cheng Yen's compassion and wisdom as our own.

Master Cheng Yen tells us that timely giving is wisdom. When others are in need, we should extend our hands and make a connection. Only by sowing these seeds can we mobilize the community to achieve purified minds and a

peaceful society together. We volunteers on Long Island are dedicated to recruit more volunteers—more living Bodhisattvas—by nurturing the seeds we sowed in this disaster relief effort.

When Hurricane Sandy arrived, it brought us a clear warning that global warming is growing more severe every day. Each of us has the responsibility to do our part. It is vital for the peace and harmony of the whole world that the United States awaken, and we Tzu Chi volunteers have been tasked with inspiring others and actively recruiting living Bodhisattvas. For those of us fortunate to live on Long Island, one of the richest areas of the United States, we should work even harder to take the lead. Working together, we can make a difference. 🌱

We learn by doing, and grow by giving of ourselves.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



# Seeing Emotion through a Lens

**Peter Lin**

*Peter Lin, Ph.D., is a Tzu Chi volunteer in New York & a Licensed Psychologist*

Since 2007, I have volunteered at a different international relief mission each year, including Haiti and South Africa. My task during the relief mission has varied each time. For example, during the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, I worked with children and helped

them to cope with their loss. In 2010, I was part of the medical team in Haiti and provided crisis intervention. This year, unexpectedly, Hurricane Sandy happened in my own backyard and I have been working mainly as a photojournalist. However, one common trait in all my relief





duties is the utilization of my mental health skills and psychological training.

In general, when a psychologist works in disaster relief, it is not a good idea to set up a desk in a corner with a sign: “psychologist

for anyone who needs psychotherapy.” The psychologist should have a task like all other relief workers do, and perform mental health intervention as needed. Often, it is not only survivors that need psychological intervention; relief workers are also a high risk population.

Working as a photojournalist during the Sandy relief mission gave me an opportunity to walk around and provide psychological intervention when required. For example, I met a young girl on Staten Island who came with her mother to receive our debit card. She had drawn a home with many rooms, including her own room, her brother’s room, her parents’ room, and a living room. When I asked what had happened to her room, she said that she does not have one, and now her whole family is squeezed into one room. I stayed with her while her mother was busy, and tried to help her process some of her pains and wishes.

Photography is not just a form of art or journalism; it can also be therapeutic. Therapeutic photography can help heal either the photographer or the audience. Whether taking the photos or viewing the photos, multiple layers of meaning begin to emerge if one is mindful of the process. During my Sandy relief missions, my goal was to capture moments that can be therapeutic—for my audience, as well as myself.

In general, whether I am practicing psychotherapy or taking photos, two value systems have greatly influenced my work: one is the existential approach in Western psychology; the other is my lifelong Zen Buddhist practice. When I click the shutter, I hope to create a photo that can tell a story, a story that can change our own narratives. Therapeutic photography is not based on skills and techniques of photography, but the ability to explore and reflect upon





oneself. The process is more important than the content.

Zen Master Dogen wrote the poem "Original Face" nearly nine centuries ago:

春は花 *Flowers in the spring*

夏ほととぎす *Cuckoo in the summer*

秋は月 *Moon in the autumn*

冬雪さえて すすしかりけり *Chilly snow in the winter*

My wish is to snap a photo that can allow viewers to be in touch with their "original face." What are our inner values, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations in life? More importantly, what are

the natures of these mental constructs? Dharma Master Cheng Yen has said that with a great disaster we should have a great awakening. What is this great awakening? When we start to know ourselves better, we begin to develop insight and wisdom. Knowing ourselves will allow us to know others better, which is the foundation of empathy and compassion. Therefore, I hope my photos can be the catalyst for self-transformation, a process of transforming our vexations into empathy and compassion.

Over the course of the Hurricane Sandy relief effort, I took several photos that are very meaningful to me. I hope they will be meaningful to you as well!





▼ Hurricane Sandy left much of Manhattan without electricity for several days. When Tzu Chi volunteers went to serve hundreds of hurricane victims in a Chinatown shelter on October 30, they had to do so in the dark. Still, they prepared seven hundred meals using only flashlights and headlamps for light. The Tzu Chi Foundation always promotes healthy living and environmentalism, so all the meals were vegetarian and they were all delivered to the shelter in a timely manner. This was my first experience in this relief mission, and the most memorable one. It was such an expression of goodness, and these volunteers helped me to find that goodness within myself.



▲ After visiting Chinatown, we went to assess property damage and provide hot soup on Staten Island. I did not know how damaging Sandy was until I arrived at "ground zero." In this photo, Joanne, a volunteer, stands in someone's dining room. The owner had been in Las Vegas during the hurricane. When he returned, this was all he had left. In Buddhism, we often talk about impermanence: that something we think will last forever can in fact be gone in an instant. But truly experiencing this impermanence is very different than just talking about it.



▲ This gentleman was our very first care recipient. Here he is thanking every Tzu Chi volunteer. He was the first person in line, waiting from very early in the morning. What struck me the most was that he was the only person who wore a suit. He needed help and dressed his best to receive it. I saw many layers of meaning behind this, and I suddenly felt very sad when I saw this scene.



▼ The spirit of the Tzu Chi Foundation is the spirit of gratitude, respect, and love. At the beginning of each major distribution, we have an opening ceremony to show respect toward all care recipients. Singing "God Bless America" was always part of this process. As one lady started to sing, her tears began to flow. As her tears flowed, I felt my own as well.











# in the Eye of the Storm

Ting Fan | Translated by Colin Legerton

Ting Fan is Producer of Tzu Chi USA Media Center



*The author interviews a local who is dedicating his time to clean Coney Island. Photo: Peter Lin*

On October 29, New York was battered by wind and rain from dusk to dawn. As soon as I got up the next morning, I immediately turned on the television and learned that the storm had had disastrous consequences for the coastal regions. Our media team office is inland in Queens, so thankfully it was unaffected: we never lost water or power.

After the storm, I thought it was important that we got to work immediately. Even though the subway system was closed that day and our team members are spread across Queens, Brooklyn, and New Jersey, I sent out a text message asking everyone to find a way to get to the office and to record the storm's aftermath along the way.

“ I truly believe that we were not just recording, but also actively making a difference. ”

Nils Aucante, one of our team members, came up with a clever method to report on his commute that morning: he recorded his voice with one smart phone while his friend filmed with another. In this way, he quickly put together

a report on the disaster situation in New Jersey.

On that first day after the storm, we sent two news reports back to Da Ai Television. One reported on volunteers cooking and delivering hundreds of hot meals in the dark, while the other was edited from the videos filmed during the morning commute.

After Sandy, our task was to record and report the aftermath of this historic storm, but we were immediately confronted with a major



obstacle—the gasoline shortage. In order to save gas, we hitched rides with the volunteers that we were filming, but we soon realized that this was far from ideal. Not only were we taking seats from other volunteers, we were also left with no control over our own schedule. Since we still had to edit news reports every night, this added a lot of pressure.

Ultimately, we decided to rent a car so that we could manage our own schedule and film at different locations on the same day. We also expected the rental car to be full of gas. We did not realize that rental car companies were only filling their tanks halfway because of the shortage. So, we had to carefully and efficiently plan each day's itinerary in order to avoid the lengthy delays at gas stations, which we had heard were lasting up to seven or eight hours. Thankfully, just as our rental car was about to run out of gas, volunteers from Boston brought more.

As we filmed, we were deeply moved by our fellow New Yorkers. One local volunteer in Staten Island said that she had always thought that New Yorkers did not care for one another, but their actions after Sandy had changed her mind. In Rockaway, many residents were left without power, hot water, and heating. They felt that they had been forgotten. One day, some residents aired their frustrations on Facebook. The very next day, many kind people took it upon themselves to deliver countless goods needed by local disaster victims.

On the day the subway was first back in service, a group of reporters rode into Manhattan to inspect the scene. They found that Manhattan had been split in two. Midtown and Upper Manhattan still had power, but Lower Manhattan was pitch-black. In the face of this challenge, one convenience store owner had set up a recharging station by the doorway, allowing locals to recharge their electronics and access the internet. We also reported on a community in New Jersey where the local



*Always racing to capture every story, media team members overcame long days and bad weather. Here, Niko Soo and Chih-Hsin Lee film in the rain and bitter cold. Photo: Ting Fan*



*The author interviews Concord Baptist Church of Christ Senior Pastor Gary V. Simpson. Photo: Peter Lin*

council put a recharging station in front of their building, inviting all the local residents to come and take turns recharging their electronics. Many locals there also organized themselves to provide more than a thousand meals for the whole community.

One of the first major relief distributions was in Hamilton Beach. In that community, the first floor of every home had been completely flooded. The situation here was truly dire: many families had lost everything below the second





*KwanJu Chen and Chih-Hsin Lee film in the midst of destruction. Photo: Peter Lin*

floor, and the water-damaged wood of their homes was beyond repair. On the day of the distribution, we saw a very lengthy line of people waiting to be served. Some had even lined up before dawn. Whenever we asked people, "Six hundred dollars isn't that much, can it really do much good?" we always heard, "It's a little, but it will be a huge help." After they had lost so much, six hundred dollars was a breath of fresh air.

We needed to send two or three news reports to Da Ai Television each day, so the entire media team was constantly on the run. Since we usually produce long, detailed features, we were not really comfortable producing daily news features, but this was the mission we were given, so we learned as we went along.

Each morning, we held a planning meeting to discuss the content and direction of that day's interviews. As we had to produce both daily news reports and weekly *US Tzu Chi 360°* programs, our work had basically doubled. Each day we returned home well after midnight. I could see the exhaustion on everyone's faces, but there was nothing to do but persevere and move forward.

Each day as we filmed, we had to quickly figure out what news to report immediately, and also gather and organize content for in-depth reports later. In the extreme time crunch, we often needed to finish a two-and-a-half-minute

news report within just an hour and a half, as well as a twenty-four-minute *US Tzu Chi 360°* episode every week. Facing this pressure, we were relieved when some team members came from California to help out.

Each day was a challenge, but through faith and perseverance, and support for one another, we made it through a month of this intense schedule. Each of us learned many new skills, and realized that there is nothing we cannot accomplish. It was a demanding time, but we only had that brief moment to record history before it was gone forever. I am very grateful to every member of the media team for taking this journey

together and learning so much in such a short time. I am so proud of them: we did it!

As we filmed, we saw many tears. These were often the tears of grown men: husbands, fathers, policemen, firemen. They had taken on heavy responsibilities for their families and communities, often working on the front lines of the disaster, and they did not know when they would finally be able to lead their wives and children back to a normal life, or even where that normal life would be.

During distributions, I would sometimes pat storm victims on the shoulder and ask, "Are you doing OK?" As soon as they heard these words, people would start tearing up. Seeing how they held in the pain, I too could not help but choke back my own tears. It was like an unspoken language between us.

I have been involved in many international disaster relief efforts in the past. Whether in Haiti, Chile, or Honduras, I have always felt deeply for the disaster victims. But, because of the language barrier, I was never able to fully understand the sadness behind their tears. This time, the disaster was right here in my backyard. Sandy's victims and I lived in the same city, maybe even took the same subway. We were served by the same water and power; the only difference was that mine still worked and theirs did not. I felt such a deep connection with them.



In addition to daily news clips, we broadcast disaster relief stories on *US Tzu Chi 360°*, from disaster assessments to relief distributions and all the stories between. These were posted on YouTube, so we saw from the viewer count that many people were following the relief effort closely. These viewers encouraged us to carry on.

As I returned home late every night, I would always ask myself, "What was significant about today's news report?" Before I fell asleep, I would pray that our daily report was powerful: that it would not only report news, but also move and help people. I prayed that the reports would inspire viewers to go out and help others.

Our team's task was to record the footprints of Tzu Chi volunteers in disaster relief. But I truly believe that we were not just recording, but also actively making a difference. We often reminded ourselves that we were not reporters there only for the interview; we were Tzu Chi volunteers together on the front lines. As volunteers, we could personally make a difference.

One day, we interviewed a shop owner in Brooklyn who had not been helped by either FEMA or Tzu Chi. After the episode was broadcast, he sent us an email saying that he was visited by someone who had seen him on YouTube. We forwarded his email to other volunteers and he was eventually able to receive an emergency cash card at the Manhattan Service Center.

During Tzu Chi's first relief distribution at the Sea Gate community in Brooklyn, we encountered a woman who was tearfully asking for help. She explained that her daughter had just graduated from nursing school and had been living in her basement. She was desperate to replace all her daughter's nursing supplies that were destroyed in the flood. She had left a message with our disaster hotline, but because cell phone reception was still unreliable she had missed the return call. After the distribution, we went to inspect her house and found that the basement was totally destroyed. There were even exposed wires outside, so rebuilding clearly would not be easy. I passed her contact information to another volunteer who added her to the list. At Tzu Chi's second Sea Gate



*Through the relief effort, the author and her team conducted numerous interviews. Photo: Peter Lin*

distribution, she was so happy about receiving her cash card that she cried as soon as she saw us.

Three months after the storm, after Tzu Chi had already transitioned from emergency relief to mid- and long-term support, our media team also returned to Staten Island to follow up.

On that particular day, the temperature was a frigid five degrees Fahrenheit. Sadly, we discovered that very little had changed in the past three months. Many houses were still without power, heating, gas, and hot water. Residents were still repairing their waterlogged homes. But, as soon as we entered the neighborhood of New Dorp, we were warmed by the friendly greetings of all the residents who still recognized our Tzu Chi uniforms.

On that day, inside her parents' bare, unlivable home, Kelly emotionally recalled for us her mother's experience at a Tzu Chi distribution. "You guys went over to her, sat her down and gave her a cup of tea. You gave her the dignity that she thought she lost. Thank you so much. Thank you for that, for giving my parents a little bit more dignity." As she spoke, she began to cry. No more words were spoken. A warm embrace said everything that needed to be said. 🌿

In the face of adversity, be grateful, for such opportunities do not come by easily.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*

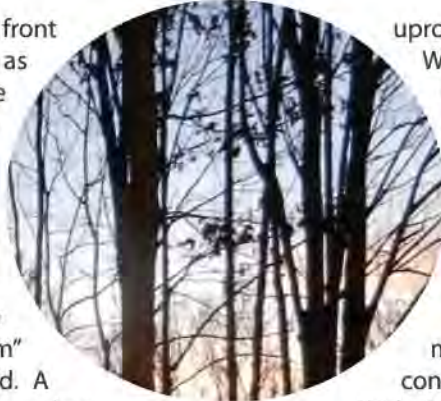


# Awakened to a *Simple Life*

Angela Chu

Angela Chu is a Tzu Chi volunteer in New Jersey

On October 29, I sat in front of the computer as Hurricane Sandy made landfall along the New Jersey coast. As time passed, gusting winds whipping through the woods started to worry me. In twenty-six peaceful years in New Jersey, we had never experienced anything quite like this. Suddenly a loud “boom” broke out from the side yard. A big tree had been knocked down, but luckily did not crush my neighbor’s house.



uprooted enormous evergreens. Worse yet, a couple of trees had collapsed on the roofs of homes. Although the scene was dreadful, none of our neighbors complained about the damage. Instead, we comforted and encouraged one another. As Master Cheng Yen says, “A moment of disaster does not constitute a lifetime of hardship. With faith, one can manifest one’s innate abilities and determination.”

“Boom! Boom!” A much louder sound abruptly broke out from the other side, causing the whole house to shudder. Blue, white, and green flashes completely illuminated the sky. It was a horrific scene, like the end of the world portrayed in movies.

The ringing phone brought me back to reality, and my next door neighbor asked whether I saw the pink flames behind our houses. “The house is on fire! Let’s run!” I said. But another voice echoed inside my mind, “Zen must take root in real life.” The local police officers had instructed everyone not to run out in the middle of the storm, so we stayed put. As more transmitters blew and more trees fell, the colorful lights and horrible sounds continued. I kept reminding myself not to let the environment influence my mind. I started reciting the name of the Buddha to stay calm and composed.

The next morning, my husband and I went outside to assess the damage. We were shocked to see uprooted trees and branches scattered all over the place, but we were so relieved that only the gutter along the garage was damaged. Concerned about our neighbors, we took a walk to check out the aftermath. No house was spared from Sandy, which had even

Going back inside, I found that cable television, internet, and cell service were all down. The next day, October 31, all the lights and the appliances abruptly shut down as well. The power company could not even tell us when power might be restored; they said it could take five days, or even ten. I felt angry and powerless. How could we live without heat in the cold winter? What would we eat without electricity to cook? We had no place to go since most of the roads in our area were closed. I started to wonder how we would survive.

As I thought about Master Cheng Yen’s words—“One cannot grasp the true meaning of joy without suffering; what’s important is knowing how to transform suffering into joy”—a light bulb went on in my head. Instead of being crippled without advanced technology, I could make good use of my time by cleaning the house, mopping and shining the floor, tidying up each of the rooms, and even decorating for the holidays. I could spend more time reading and reflecting.

Over the next few days, I alternated between chores, decorating, and reading. I felt productive and relaxed. Without heating, I sat in the sunlight for warmth and absorbed some vitamin D. The money I saved on heating bills I



decided to donate to help Sandy victims. I was even able to utilize some neglected items in my house. I brought out my old propane-powered hot pot to boil water for tea, coffee, Jing Si Instant Rice, and noodles. At night, the MP3 player became our companion. By candlelight, my husband and I listened to Water Repentance teachings, audio books, election news, and music. A battery-powered MP3 player during a power outage is truly a wonderful thing.

A simple life leads to happiness, and from October 30 to November 8 I truly enjoyed a simple life. I changed my mindset to help me transform my ordeal into a beautiful and pleasant experience. On November 8, our lights and appliances suddenly came back on. Power was back, and everyone in our neighborhood burst out in loud cheers. I was ecstatic to see my house in the light: clean, tidy, and filled with the holiday spirit. I was thrilled that I had more time for volunteering since I did not have to deal

with damage to the house. Most of all, I enjoyed spending time with my husband, taking the opportunity to discuss and share what we each read.

Living a simple life is a virtue. I will continue to lead a simple life by spending less time on the computer, and by keeping the house temperature lower to conserve energy. My temporary suffering from Sandy certainly inspired me to maintain a simple life with positive thinking so that I can create more blessings for myself and others. 🌿

There is great wealth in living a simple life. There is great willpower in giving selflessly without regrets.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



*Hurricane Sandy uprooted trees outside the author's home. Photo provided by Angela Chu*



# Addressing Our Changing Climate

Colin Legerton

*Colin Legerton is Editor-in-Chief of the Tzu Chi USA Journal*

On November 1, 2012, two days after Hurricane Sandy devastated the Northeast and one week before the presidential election, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg called for change by highlighting a startling historical fact: "In just fourteen months, two hurricanes have forced us to evacuate neighborhoods—something our city government had never done before. If this is a trend, it is simply not sustainable."

Deeply concerned about this new precedent set by the devastating damage caused by Hurricane Irene and Hurricane Sandy in quick succession, Mayor Bloomberg continued, "Our climate is changing. And while the increase in extreme weather we have experienced in New York City and around the world may or may not be the result of it, the risk that it might be—given this week's devastation—should compel all elected leaders to take immediate action."

While global warming has been such a deeply political issue in the United States, the mayor's message was unequivocal: for the good of all people, fixing this problem needs to transcend politics—all elected leaders must take action.

Studies by numerous scientific institutes show that the global climate is indeed warming

steadily, spurred along by our modern culture of mass consumption. While climate change does not cause disasters per se, the warming climate creates an atmosphere in which disasters are likely to be more destructive and more frequent.

According to the United States Global Change Research Program, the average temperature across the United States has risen by more than 2°F over the past fifty years. Over the same period, average precipitation has increased by five percent, sea levels have risen, and the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events—including hurricanes, heat waves, and droughts—have increased.

Just looking at recent history, it is clear that natural disasters in the United States are becoming ever more frequent and ever more destructive. The unprecedented outbreak of more than seventeen hundred tornadoes in 2011—including two hundred in a single day—caused an estimated 553 deaths in one year: as many as the entire previous decade, or either of the two decades before that. Far from an aberration, the 2011 tornado season seems a frightening harbinger of things to come. The very next year, the tornado season—which typically stretches roughly from March to August—began with an outbreak in late January and carried on past Christmas.





Recently, natural disasters have stretched beyond their typical bounds of not only time and intensity, but also geography. In 2011, Massachusetts saw its first tornado-related death in sixteen years, while the national capital experienced its strongest earthquake since World War II. The severe, ongoing drought that has stretched across more than half the country since 2010 has also led to severe heat waves and countless wildfires. Recent fires have even set records in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas as the largest or most destructive in state history.

Just as the hotter temperatures of the changing climate lead to drought, which in turn sets the stage for ever-larger wildfires, a United States Global Change Research Program study also demonstrates a direct correlation between ocean temperature rise and the intensity of hurricanes. The same study found that many parts of the United States' Atlantic coastline—including New York and New Jersey—have seen sea levels rise by more than eight inches over the past half-century. As hurricanes grow in intensity, the damage they cause is further increased by rising sea levels that lead to higher storm surge.

With waters higher than ever before, and warmer waters inspiring ever-stronger hurricanes, Hurricane Sandy's widespread devastation should have come as no surprise. In all, Hurricane Sandy caused over 250 deaths—more than half of them in the United States—as well as more than sixty billion dollars in damage, and left several million without power for days. As we face the specter of ever-increasing global warming, hurricanes like Sandy, and Katrina before, may become the rule rather than the exception.

Mayor Bloomberg's message was directed at elected officials, but his words should resonate with each of us. We should all take immediate action to mitigate global warming. We should address the causes of disasters rather

than simply dealing with their effects.

Though global warming is certainly too large a task for any of us to tackle alone, Dharma Master Cheng Yen often reminds us that “many drops of water come together to make a river,” and that “tiny droplets of love have the collective power to achieve great things.” She emphasizes that though “time is running out,” it has not yet passed us by completely.

To address the ills of global warming, we can start with small changes in our daily lives. To reduce carbon emissions directly, we can choose to walk, ride a bicycle, or take the bus instead of driving a car. To reduce the emissions and waste of the production sector that fuels our consumer culture, we can choose to use old items longer instead of frequently replacing them with new ones. We can choose to set our thermostats more responsibly, and use our household appliances as sparingly and efficiently as possible. We can choose a vegetarian diet to reduce the excess waste and emissions caused by meat production. We can use reusable utensils, containers, and shopping bags to decrease waste and reduce the manufacturing of disposal goods. We can opt out of junk mail, use energy-saving light bulbs, and install water-saving faucets. Each choice is a small action, but when many make the same choices, the impact can be enormous.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen advises us that disasters serve to awaken awareness, so we should see Hurricane Sandy as an opportunity to reevaluate the wastefulness in our lives. As we uncover and implement ways to reduce our impact on the environment, we can mitigate future disasters and create a safer world for future generations. 🌱

Protecting the environment begins with cultivating the mind.

*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



# Launching the Cycle of Love

Just after Christmas 2012, Tzu Chi's New York office received a phone call from the local post office: a package was waiting with postage due. A volunteer rushed to the post office to pay, and found the package was a bamboo bank filled to the brim with change.

The postal worker asked about this strange package, so the volunteer described Tzu Chi's disaster relief effort, and explained the bamboo bank spirit. Moved by what Tzu Chi volunteers had done for the community, the postal worker refused the postage due.

During the relief effort, many people throughout the disaster area and around the world were touched by the loving actions of Tzu Chi volunteers, and inspired to bring forth their



innate kindness. Over the holidays, countless care recipients sent words of gratitude through the mail and over the internet. Many expressed their intention to give back just as they had received.

*"Thank you for your kindness today in Broad Channel. Your blanket will warm our bodies but your generosity warms our hearts!" – Erin*

*"Thank you again for what you have done for not only my family but countless other families. We are looking forward to the day when we will be able to pay it forward. Bless you all!" – Vanesa*

*"You are the most gentle of souls I have ever met in my life. I hope you continue on your path of righteousness and good... Please continue to be angels who carry the broken." – Terie*

*"I want to thank you for your compassion, your kindness, and most of all your hearts! I was so touched by your generosity for my community! Peace and gratitude to you!" – Sandra*

*"Thank you Tzu Chi and all the wonderful people I met yesterday in Union Beach. What you are doing is amazing. You warmed my heart and my soul. The many hugs were much appreciated and very much needed. God Bless You!" – Lisa*

*"Thank you Tzu Chi. It's nice and refreshing to see there are still so many good people out here who are willing to help complete strangers." – Hally*

*"The East Williston, NY, group served hot corn soup by Long Beach City Hall the Saturday (Nov. 3) after Sandy hit. It was such a pleasure to be the recipient of such caring graciousness and warm, smiling faces. It was the first hot food I had since the storm. It was the manner in which it was served that provided warmth for body and soul. Thank you." – Anastasia*

*"I could not stop crying because I am so grateful to your organization and the volunteers and the people that work for it. You have been truly inspirational. I will forever be thankful to you." – Drlona*

*"It was touching and refreshing to see so many people volunteering their time to help others. Your foundation is extremely generous, and it really lifted my spirits to see the outpouring of kindness from your volunteers." – Debbie*





▲ Tzu Chi volunteers from Asunción, Paraguay, distributed food and daily necessities to needy families in the Santa Cruz neighborhood on February 17, 2013. Photo: Lili Xu



▲ On February 10, 2013, Tzu Chi Guatemala volunteers distributed school supplies, schoolbags, and stationery to village students in Palencia. Photo: Jialing Qiu



▲ Volunteers held their regular hot meal service for residents of downtown Los Angeles's Skid Row on January 12, 2013. Photo: Luca Ye



▲ On February 17, 2013, Tzu Chi volunteers in Brazil held a free clinic in Francisco Morato. Here, volunteer Shouyong Chen shares The 80/20 Lifestyle: eating only to 80% full, and using the 20% savings to help the poor. Photo: Shuhua Chen



▲ Tzu Chi Long Island Branch conducted its annual New Year Blessing Ceremony on January 26, 2013, to thank volunteers and community residents for their support. A family affected by Hurricane Sandy brought back their filled bamboo banks in honor of the bamboo bank spirit. Photo: Peter Lin





On December 23, 2012, Tzu Chi volunteers held a winter relief distribution in Stockton, California. Volunteers from Stockton Office have been serving meals at the Fr. Alan McCoy Dining Room for twelve years, including a monthly breakfast and an annual winter distribution. Photo: Carol Dunne

On December 21, 2012, Tzu Chi volunteers in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, held a free dental clinic and charity event at the ROCA school. The volunteers served a free vegetarian lunch for forty elderly attendees and provided facilities for them to bathe, change clothes, and wash their hair. Here, Dr. Gregory treats a patient with dental instruments from his own clinic. Photo provided by Tzu Chi Haiti



▲ Tzu Chi Indianapolis Service Center held its first Happy Campus Program distribution at Nora Elementary School in Indianapolis, Indiana, on December 19, 2012. Three days earlier, volunteers enlisted the help of Tzu Chi Academy students to fill weekend backpacks with food to be distributed to students from poor families. Photo: Tienai Lin





◀ *EcoVerse: Jing Si Books & Café held its grand opening in San Diego, California, on December 9, 2012. EcoVerse not only sells books, coffee, and environmental protection products, but also serves as an eco-community center. Through displays, do-it-yourself classes, and interactions with community groups, EcoVerse actively promotes environmental protection to the community. Photo: Ruiqin Tan*



◀ *On January 20, 2013, Tzu Chi Greater Washington DC Regional Office hosted its annual New Year Blessing Ceremony in Virginia. To save attendees the burden of interstate driving, and to promote carpooling as a way of reducing one's carbon footprint, Tzu Chi volunteers provided bus service for attendees from Maryland. Photo: Huijing Cai*



▲ *On December 20, 2012, Tzu Chi volunteers from Cherry Hill, New Jersey, distributed hot food and winter clothing to local homeless people at Camden Cathedral Kitchen. Photo: Wei Tang*



▲ *In late January, northwest Georgia was hit by a tornado that caused damage to many buildings and injured many people. On February 15, 2013, Tzu Chi volunteers from Atlanta went to the hard-hit city of Adairsville to distribute goods and provide care to the affected residents. Many residents donated in bamboo banks to return their kindness to others in need. Photo: Sue Lin*



# Curry Instant Rice

Recipe Provided by Fanny Wu

Years ago, during a winter relief distribution for poor families, an old lady gratefully received her bag of rice but was too weak to start a fire to cook it. Moved by the woman's plight, Master Cheng Yen commented that if only Tzu Chi had instant rice to offer the woman, she would have something to eat.

Acting on this simple thought, Master De Han, a disciple at the Jing Si Abode, developed Jing Si Instant Rice. These instant meals can be prepared by adding either hot or cold water, and have since become a staple of Tzu Chi's international relief work.



Jing Si Instant Rice is also a wise choice to keep at home in case of disaster. When electricity and gas are out, as they were for millions of residents after Hurricane Sandy, the rice meal can be conveniently steeped in room temperature water for about fifty minutes.

When gas and power are not an issue, Jing Si Instant Rice can serve as the basis of a wide variety of delicious meals, such as Curry Instant Rice. Whether in times of disaster or times of blessing, Jing Si Instant Rice offers a hearty vegetarian meal full of vitamins and nutrients.

## Ingredients:

- Golden Sweet Corn Instant Rice
- Milk
- Curry Powder (or Curry Chunks)
- Shredded Cheese
- Corn Starch

## Directions:

1. Soften Instant Rice with water.
2. Heat milk and curry powder in a sauce pan.
3. Mix corn starch with water. Slowly add to sauce for thickness.
4. Combine rice and sauce, then sprinkle shredded cheese over top.
5. Bake in preheated oven at 250°F for 15 minutes.

*For more on the innovative origins of Jing Si Instant Rice and other Jing Si products, please visit: [jsa.us.tzuchi.org](http://jsa.us.tzuchi.org).*

Vegetarianism means disciplining ourselves, cherishing our own lives and respecting all living beings.

*Jing Si Aphorism  
by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



*Photo: Chinghui Chen*





# Awakened to What's Important

Alex Ying

Alex Ying is an Emory University Tzu Ching alumnus

During one distribution, a bedraggled man came in to claim a cash card. The way his hair was disheveled, his clothes did not fit quite right, and bags outlined the bottom of his eyes, he looked like he had just stumbled out of bed after a sleepless night. Just like everyone else who had been hit by Hurricane Sandy, the stress was visible on his face.

"The money is just money. We can replace stuff like a stove and a refrigerator," he said. The next three words were the ones that weighed heavily on him. "It's the kids. We just want them to keep going about their lives as normal, and let their parents worry about all the adult stuff. But kids are too smart for that, you know?"

The source of his troubles had little to do with money. Certainly, being in a rough financial situation did not help. The look of relief when he received the cash cards made that much clear. However, what was occupying this man's mind—this man who was a husband and a father—was the state of his family: making sure the people that he loved could lead normal lives, even after their home had been torn apart by a hurricane.

One of his ideas for using the gift cards was to take his family out to dinner that night. Of course going out for dinner would not solve anything in the long run, but it could be a short escape. An hour or two to get away from the memories of the hurricane and act like a typical happy family again might have been just what everyone needed. After all, like he said, the material things and the money were just that: material things and money. Just as Hurricane Sandy had done material and

monetary damage, that man realized that those things were only temporary. They came and went.

What was more important was his family's health, both physical and mental. This man wanted to take care of his family first, but he wanted to take care of *them*, not their possessions. That was why replacing household appliances with the gift cards was the furthest thing from his mind, and all of his worries were with his children. Even though Hurricane Sandy had taken away so many material possessions away, including his home, it had awakened him to the most important thing in his life, which was the wellbeing of his family. 🌿

Life's abundance lies not in the material, but in the spiritual.

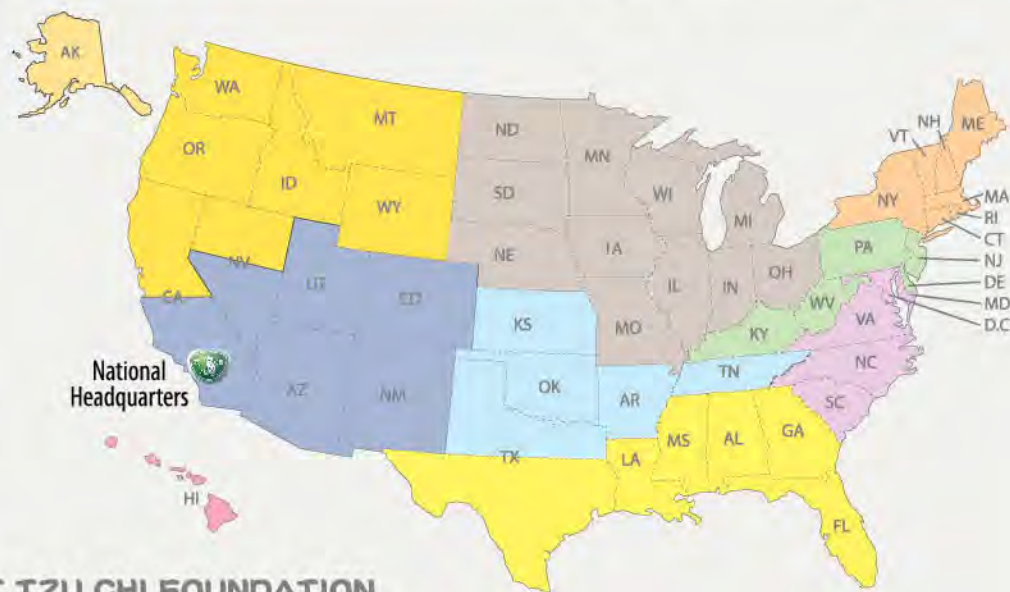
*Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



The author (seated right, second from front) speaks with care recipients in Gerritsen Beach, Brooklyn. Photo: Sean Kuo












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# TZU CHI

## A BRIEF HISTORY...

**O**n April 14, 1966, Dharma Master Cheng Yen founded the Tzu Chi Merits Society in Hualien with the support of thirty housewives who each put aside a couple cents of their grocery money every day to establish a charity fund. During the first five years, they helped a total of thirty-one elderly, ill, and poor people from fifteen families. As word spread, more people participated and the program gathered strength. It spread beyond Hualien: across the island and around the world.

Today, Tzu Chi is a nonprofit charitable organization with ten million volunteers and donors in more than fifty countries worldwide. Over the past forty-seven years, Tzu Chi's four missions—Charity, Medicine, Education, and Humanistic Culture—have grown from the seeds of gratitude, respect, and love, and Tzu Chi's activities have expanded to include international disaster relief, bone marrow donation, community volunteerism, and environmental conservation.

In the United States, Tzu Chi operates nine regional service areas with more than eighty offices nationwide. Volunteers give back to their local communities through family services, emergency disaster services, homeless services, school support programs, college scholarships, income tax reporting assistance, relief distributions, holiday care packs, free and low-cost medical clinics and outreaches, preventive health education, cancer support groups, character education curricula, community education classes, and production of positive, inspiring media.

Whenever disaster strikes at home or abroad, Tzu Chi volunteers deliver cash aid, hot meals, and emergency relief supplies directly into the hands of disaster survivors. Over the years, US Tzu Chi volunteers have actively provided relief after such major disasters as 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, the 2010 Haiti earthquake, and Hurricane Sandy.

In recent years, Tzu Chi volunteers' charitable work has been increasingly recognized by the global community. In 2010, Tzu Chi was granted special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. In 2011, Dharma Master Cheng Yen was recognized with the Roosevelt Institute's FDR Distinguished Public Service Award, and was named to the 2011 TIME 100 list of the world's most influential people.

SPREAD THE SEEDS OF LOVE







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佛教慈濟基金會

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When the  
unfortunate cannot  
find help, those who  
are blessed must go  
to them.

*Jing Si Aphorism by  
Dharma Master  
Cheng Yen*

