

COMPASSION & RELIEF

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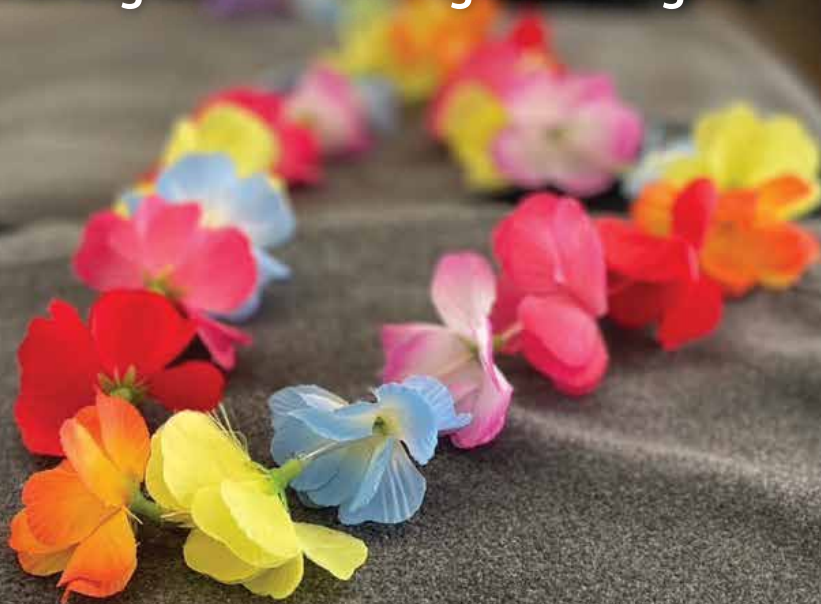
**TZU CHI**



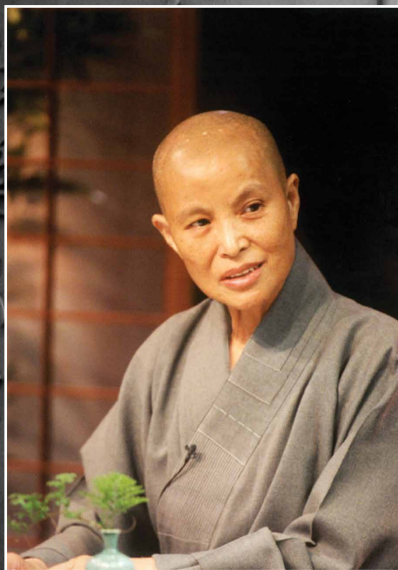
*USA Journal*

## Tzu Chi USA Launches Relief Following Maui Fires

Interfaith Dialogue in Chicago  
Sharing Master Cheng Yen's Light







# CONTEMPLATIVE WISDOM

Thoughts for meditation, contemplation,  
and reflection

**Dharma Master Cheng Yen**

*Founder of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation*

There is love in the world,  
and with good causes and conditions,  
we can bring hope to the world.  
With time, we can accomplish things  
and grow our blessings, virtues, and wisdom.



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**Cover:** Tzu Chi's second wildfire disaster relief distribution on the Hawaiian Island of Maui takes place on September 3, 2023.  
*Photo/Jason Yeh*

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As you read the stories about the activities of our volunteers in each issue of the Tzu Chi USA Journal, do you feel a calling?

## **VOLUNTEERISM IS THE HEARTBEAT OF TZU CHI WORLDWIDE.**


**We welcome your interest!**

The first step in your volunteer journey is simply to register at [tzuchi.us/volunteer](https://tzuchi.us/volunteer) so we can best match your fields of interest with Tzu Chi's current needs in your area.

Discover the joy of volunteering with us!






elcome to the 70th issue of the Tzu Chi USA Journal. Our cover story, “Tzu Chi Joins the 2023 Parliament of the World’s Religions,” takes us to Chicago, Illinois, to recap Tzu Chi’s participation in the 2023 Parliament of the World’s Religions (PoWR), considered to be the premier, oldest, largest, and most inclusive gathering of the global interfaith movement. Over 7,000 people from nearly 100 countries, representing over 200 spiritual traditions, attended the week-long program from August 14 to 18. Our story overviews Tzu Chi’s sessions and exhibition booths and recounts how the delegation joined the PoWR’s Plenaries and Assemblies, including the Closing Plenary, during which Dharma Master Cheng Yen made a special address via video.

To round out coverage of the PoWR, our feature, “On a Mission to Bring Dharma Master Cheng Yen’s Light to Chicago,” follows three Tzu Chi Dharma Masters from our Jing Si Adobe in Taiwan, who spoke on several panels and introduced Master Cheng Yen’s holistic philosophy through presentations touching on environment protection, vegetarianism, and international disaster relief. The Dharma Masters also held two Buddha Bathing Ceremony sessions, allowing PoWR attendees to experience the Buddhist ritual, which aims to symbolically purify the heart.

In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawaii, predominantly on the island of Maui, with Lahaina being one of the most severely affected areas. Tzu Chi Hawaii immediately jumped into action and began mobilizing an aid effort. In our second feature, “Help Heal Maui: Tzu Chi USA Launches Relief Following Devastating Fires,” discover how Tzu Chi quickly took steps to help the survivors in their time of great need, offering the first emergency cash card distribution on August 27, with others on consecutive weekends until September 17. Tzu Chi volunteers from across the United States flew to Hawaii to join the aid mission and be “a beacon of hope.”

Lastly, our portrait, “Symposium at Harvard Breaks New Ground,” reviews how several esteemed scholars and guests from nine countries came together for a gathering of minds at Harvard University, in Boston, to examine the philosophy and leadership of Tzu Chi’s founder, Dharma Master Cheng Yen. Explore how Tzu Chi’s maxim of *Compassion in Action* is one of the driving pillars for the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation and an extension of Master Cheng Yen’s teachings and heart.

As always, thank you, and enjoy reading! 

by *Anik Ghose*

# Seizing the Opportunities to Do Good

*"If an opportunity presents itself, even if our ability to contribute is limited, we should just do it. If we apply our abilities to every opportunity, eventually we can create boundless merits."*

*Dharma Master Cheng Yen*

A wise old gentleman named Mr. Xie lived a simple life in the township of Dalin. He and his wife were both over eighty years old. Nevertheless, they often helped out at Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital.

On one occasion, the volunteers in the hospital visited the couple in their old and rustic house. After they had chatted for a while, the man took out five bills to show them. Each was a ten-dollar bill of old Taiwanese currency. He asked the volunteers, "Do you know how much these fifty dollars are worth now?" One replied, "I wasn't even born when these bills were in circulation!"

The man said, "Back then, if you added another ten dollars to this, you could easily buy an acre of land. But at the time, I valued money more than anything else. I felt I needed to have money in my possession to

feel secure. So I saved more than ten thousand dollars. But a few years after the end of World War II, all of a sudden, forty thousand old Taiwan dollars were only worth one New Taiwan dollar. Alas! I would have bought more land if I had known it would turn out that way. I would be very rich by now."

Each person has their own perspective. Some people think very far ahead and believe things will remain unchanged in the long run. However, life is impermanent, and it would not always be the case that sixty dollars could purchase an acre of land. At the time, Mr. Xie believed that the more money he had, the more blessed he would be. Unfortunately, with time and political changes, he lost his wealth in an instant. He went from being a rich man to a poor tenant farmer and lived a tough life.



*Pexels Photo/Anastasia Shuraeva*

As Mr. Xie continued the conversation, he shared about how thirty years ago, he had already heard about Tzu Chi's slogan of "saving fifty cents\* a day to save lives." His life was difficult then, and he had six children to raise. Although he wanted to help, he simply did not have the money to spare. He had a strong desire to help but lacked the ability.

Fast forward to several years ago, Tzu Chi was about to build a hospital in Dalin. This couple no longer had any burden on their shoulders, as their children and grandchildren were all married and had settled down. They wanted to realize their long-held wish to help others. They were not rich, but they worked hard and saved enough money to buy an ambulance for Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital. This offered transportation to patients who did not have a car or had difficulty walking to the hospital.

Every day, Mr. Xie drove his wife to the hospital, where there were many volunteers to keep her company. Then, he would ride with the hospital staff throughout the countryside to visit villagers and provide hospital pick-up and drop-off services. He truly was a good man with a loving heart.

When karmic affinities arise, we must seize the opportunity to do good deeds. We must not wait. One does not have to be rich; as long as one has the heart and is willing to give, care for others, and dedicate oneself, these will act as the force that drives us forward. If everyone could contribute with the same mindset and make every effort, then this strength would be great enough to bring stability to our society.

*\*The equivalent of two cents in USD 🇺🇸*



# 2023 PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

Opening Plenary  
August 14, 2023



## Tzu Chi Joins the 2023 Parliament of the World's Religions

*Written by Ida Eva Zielinska*





On Monday, August 14, 2023, thousands of people from around the world join the Parliament of the World's Religions Opening Plenary. Photo/Dennis Lee

**F**or a week, from August 14-18, 2023, a large Tzu Chi delegation participated in the Parliament of the World's Religions (PoWR) in Chicago, Illinois, an event gathering civic, spiritual, and grassroots changemakers in the windy city. Held at the McCormick Place Lakeside Center, part of the McCormick Place campus, the largest convention center in North America, located on Chicago's lakefront, the PoWR brought together over 7,000 people from nearly 100 countries, representing over 200 spiritual traditions.

The PoWR, an international NGO affiliated with the United Nations Department of Public Information, aims to promote and cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities. It fosters their engagement with guiding institutions to address critical global issues and achieve a more *just, peaceful* and *sustainable* world. Tzu Chi offered a Buddhist perspective rooted in Ven. Dharma Master Cheng Yen's teachings.

The history of the PoWR dates back to its inaugural event in Chicago in 1893. Since then, its convenings, considered the premier, oldest, largest, and most inclusive gatherings of the global interfaith movement, have occurred eight times, assembling thousands of participants alongside luminaries. The PoWR has met in Chicago (1993), Cape Town (1999), Barcelona (2004), Melbourne (2009), Salt Lake City (2015), Toronto (2018), virtually online (2021), and in 2023, it returned to Chicago for its ninth convening. Coming home to the PoWR's founding city 130 years later felt momentous.

## The History of Tzu Chi at the Parliament of the World's Religions

Tzu Chi first participated in the PoWR in 2015, when it convened in Salt Lake City. When the PoWR met again in 2018, in Toronto, Canada, Tzu Chi's delegation included volunteers from the United States and Canada and two Dharma Masters from the Jing Si Abode in Hualien, Taiwan, for whom it was the first time they had ventured outside the monastery to present on an international stage. Master Cheng



The PoWR is a central force in the global interfaith movement. *Photo/Tzu Chi USA Video Team*

Yen appeared during the Opening Plenary through a pre-recorded video entitled "Love Beyond Religion."

When the PoWR convened online in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in her Opening Plenary address, Master Cheng Yen urged everyone to respond to the global health crisis however they could and stressed embracing lifestyle changes



Master Cheng Yen addresses the 2018 PoWR Opening Plenary. *Photo/Tzu Chi Toronto*





that promote sustainability and peace, such as adopting a plant-based diet, cultivating mindfulness, and calming our desirous and turbulent minds. And now, in 2023, Master Cheng Yen was again among the PoWR's featured luminaries, a diverse cohort of faith, spiritual, civic, and governmental leaders.

## Tzu Chi's 2023 Delegation

The Tzu Chi delegation in 2023 included over 100 attendees participating in various roles. A group arrived from Taiwan on August 12, including Dr. Rey-Sheng Her, Deputy CEO of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation, and three Dharma Masters – Ven. Shih De Yuan, Ven. Shih De Cheng, and Ven. Shih De Huang – from the Jing Si Abode in Hualien, where they reside alongside Ven. Dharma Master Cheng Yen.

Tzu Chi USA CEO Debra Boudreaux and Tzu Chi Global Partnership Affairs Department members flew in from Tzu Chi USA National Headquarters in California. Ting Fan, Director of the Culture and Communications Department, arrived from New York, her media production team from across the United States. Offering additional support, a group of students from Tzu Chi University in Taiwan landed the next day.

Nationally, some Tzu Chi volunteers came to Chicago from other cities to help, too. Locally, Chong Hsieh, Executive Director of Tzu Chi USA's Midwest Region, and over 50 Tzu Chi volunteers based in Chicago would also provide an array of assistance.

**We all feel very grateful and joyful to have this opportunity to participate in this interfaith event. We can let the world see Master Cheng Yen, Tzu Chi, and what Tzu Chi has been doing in loving and protecting our Earth. And we hope our work inspires more people to protect and love this world, too.**



**Chong Hsieh**  
*Executive Director  
Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region*

Moreover, the Chicago volunteers' preparations for the PoWR began months before, and they would be fundamental support during the week, helping with logistics, transportation, preparing daily lunch and dinner for the delegation, and more. And they were doing this with commitment and dedication. "All our volunteers have a full-time job. So we all took a vacation," Hsieh revealed.



It's all hands on deck to install Tzu Chi's on-site exhibits. Photos/Jennifer Chien

## Plenty of Pre-Parliament Preparations

Before the PoWR even opened, the team set up Tzu Chi's three booths in the exhibition areas. It was a flurry of activity, with other faith groups and organizations also setting up, an air of excited anticipation mounting as everyone knew that the enormous exhibition hall would be open to thousands of people the next day.

**At first, I was a bit scared because this site is huge. Getting everything over from the far end, where we unpack the cars and over here to our booth, seemed like a little bit of a challenge, but with so many people helping out, everything worked out well.**

“

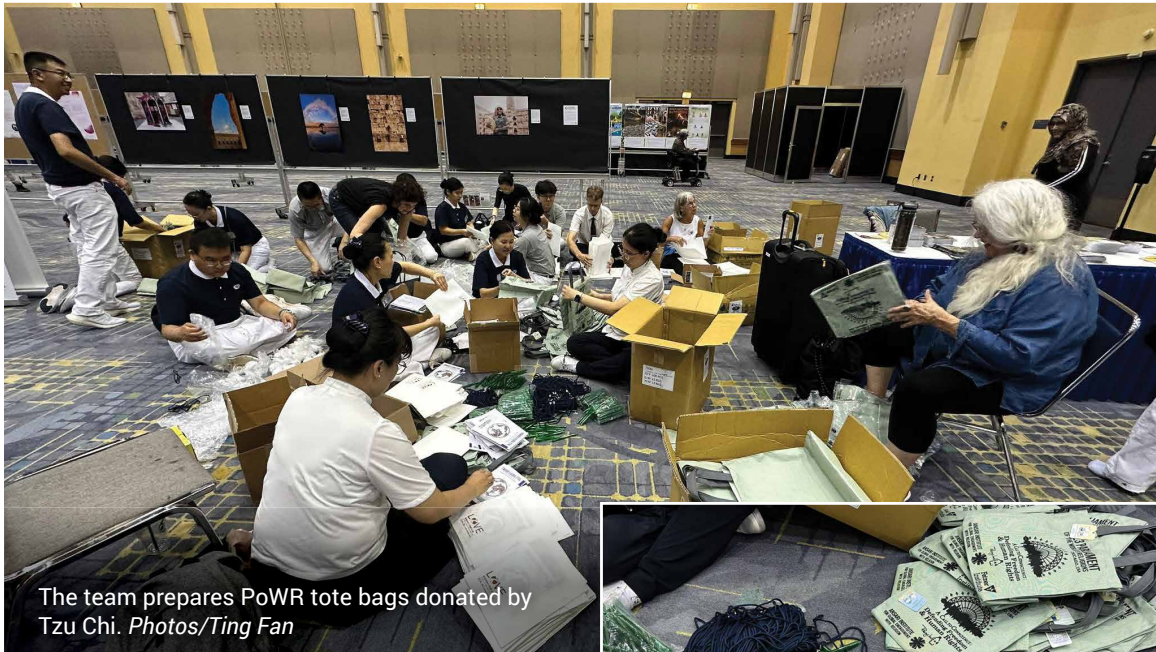
**Johan Alwall**

*Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation  
Global Partnership Affairs Department*



Another group set up a Buddhist Prayer Room to serve as a serene space where PoWR attendees, regardless of their faith background, could engage in quiet reflection, meditation, or mindfulness practices and learn about Buddhism's fundamental teachings. Others prepared the PoWR tote bags that Tzu Chi had donated, made from recycled polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic bottles. Attached was a name tag with a Jing Si Aphorism from Master Cheng Yen, and inside the bag, apart from the PoWR program, Tzu Chi added a pen and folder made from PET plastic bottles.





The team prepares PoWR tote bags donated by Tzu Chi. Photos/Ting Fan

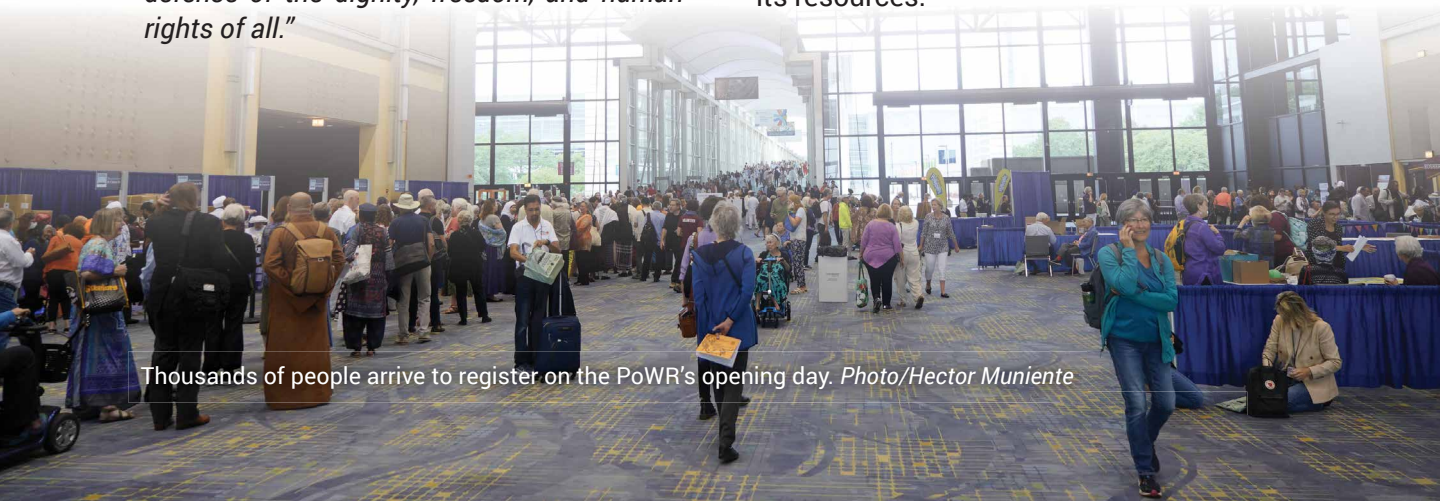


## The Opening Plenary Calls for Solidarity in Conscience

The theme of the 2023 convening of the PoWR was “A Call to Conscience: Defending Freedom & Human Rights.” The Program Chair, Rev. HPs. Phyllis Currott, in her pre-PoWR address, had issued the call, stating:

*“Every faith has, at its core, a summoning to ease the suffering of others and to contribute to a just, peaceful, and sustainable world. Today, the Parliament of the World’s Religions issues its Call to Conscience to people of faith and spirit, to the people of Chicago, to all people of conscience, to stand together in defense of the dignity, freedom, and human rights of all.”*

And on Monday, August 14, people of faith and conscience from Chicago and around the globe showed up. A long line snaked along the edges of the massive reception area of the McCormick Place Lakeside Center to register. When each PoWR attendee did, they received that mint green conference tote bag donated by Tzu Chi. Thus, Master Cheng Yen silently connected with each person, aiming to awaken love for the Earth and an appreciation and respect for its resources.



Thousands of people arrive to register on the PoWR's opening day. Photo/Hector Muniente



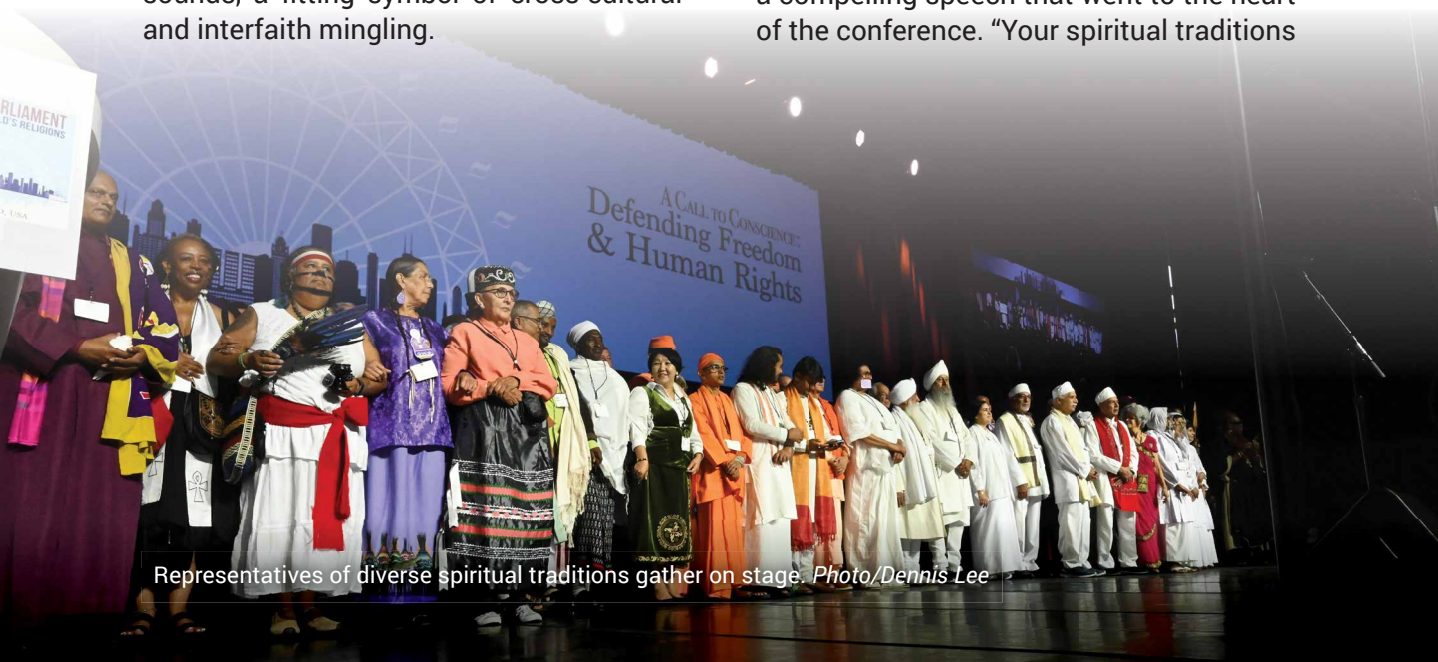


Dr. Rey-Sheng Her and Tzu Chi's three Dharma Masters are part of the opening festivities.  
Photo/Hector Muniente

The Opening Plenary welcomed a procession of representatives of many religions and indigenous peoples who paraded into the main hall and then assembled on stage. A Dragon Dance followed at their heels, the long train of dancers weaving through the aisles as cymbals and drums echoed loudly, creating a powerful energy in the space. A procession of men in traditional Scottish garb marched in at the other end of the hall, their bagpipes joining in a novel chorus of sounds, a fitting symbol of cross-cultural and interfaith mingling.

"In Chinese tradition, the lion and dragon represent prosperity, fortune, and peace," Dr. Rey-Sheng Her, Deputy CEO of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation, shared on stage. Those wishes resonated in the opening addresses by representatives of Indigenous Peoples, spiritual traditions, international and faith-based organizations, dignitaries, and others.

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson delivered a compelling speech that went to the heart of the conference. "Your spiritual traditions



Representatives of diverse spiritual traditions gather on stage. Photo/Dennis Lee

have the power to guide people to a path of peace and nurture a spirit of mutual respect and collaboration,” he said.

**The urgency at this moment requires us to not just simply rely upon the recitation of scriptures and our sacred books, but it requires us to demonstrate the most incredible act and power known to humankind, and that is the act of love.**

“

**Brandon Johnson**  
*Mayor of Chicago*

## Celebrating the Global Ethic

A core component of the PoWR’s work is promoting the Global Ethic (GE), “a statement of basic ethical commitments shared by people throughout the globe, religious or not,” completed in 1993. The principles of the GE are rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948 and include

five commitments, namely, to a culture of Non-violence and Respect for Life; Solidarity and a Just Economic Order; Tolerance and a Life of Truthfulness; Equal Rights and Partnership Between Men and Women; and, Sustainability and Care for the Earth.

The PoWR was celebrating the 30th anniversary of the document in 2023, and at the Global Ethic Assembly that was first on the PoWR’s program, attendees came on stage to sign. Shih De Yuan, representing Tzu Chi, was among them.

**Signing the Global Ethic is a way of saying, ‘I see the things that motivate me to be a better human, a better person of my faith tradition reflected in this document.’ It can help us figure out what still unites us and allows us to collaborate across religious divides. And if people walk away from the Parliament with more courage to do that than before, that’s a success.**

“

**Kaleb Nyquist**  
*Board of Trustees  
Parliament of the World’s Religions*



Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson addresses the Opening Plenary. Photo/Dennis Lee



Shih De Yuan signs the PoWR's Global Ethic. Photo/Dennis Lee





Steve Chiu speaks on the "Climate Change at the UN: Outcomes of COP27" panel on August 15. Photo/Hector Muniente

**This is the first time Tzu Chi endorsed the Global Ethic document. What it entails for us is not only an alignment to the values and ethics espoused but a commitment to continue working hand-in-hand with the Parliament of the World's Religions to ensure that interfaith collaboration, dialogue, and connection continue to create a better world.**

“

**Steve Chiu**

*Tzu Chi Representative to the UN*

## A Call for Climate Action

That afternoon, a Climate Action Assembly offered a comprehensive discussion of the biggest threats facing our planet today, with clear and impactful ways for one to take action to help save the Earth. As part of the assembly, the Tzu Chi delegation came on stage to lead a Buddhist prayer. In the background, a video illustrated Tzu



Chi volunteers in action offering charity relief, especially after disasters worldwide. It was a moving call to action since natural disasters are increasing and related to climate change.

## An Impressive Program of Panels and Workshops

Next began an intense week with members of the Tzu Chi delegation hosting or participating in 16 parallel sessions, which were panels or workshops on a broad spectrum of topics, including climate change and action, disaster relief and resilience, the global ethic, environmental and gender justice, interfaith understanding, the ordination of women, the greening of congregations, the next generation, food systems, and health systems. The sessions offered opportunities to share in the interfaith discourse, present Master Cheng Yen's Buddhist perspectives, and introduce Tzu Chi's spirit and philosophy.





The Tzu Chi delegation leads a Buddhist prayer during the Climate Action Assembly. Photo/Ting Fan

It was an opportunity for everybody to have special dialogues, conversations. No matter what, whether it's human rights, women and gender equality, care for our Mother Earth, economic justice, or climate justice, it was a great lesson learned for everyone. As a team, we can make the world better for our young generation of future global citizens.

“

**Debra Boudreaux**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Tzu Chi USA

In different religions, we're seeking the same goal, how to solve major human problems. Through dialogue, we can find each other's common ground, find a solution to our common problems, which is compassionate altruism, and we can work together no matter what religion we belong to. Common action is important.

“

**Dr. Rey-Sheng Her**  
Deputy Chief Executive Officer  
Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation



Dr. Rey-Sheng Her is part of a Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue on climate change on August 16. Photo/Hector Muniente



A volunteer shares about Tzu Chi at one of the booths. Photo/Jennifer Chien



Debra Boudreaux talks about the Tzu Chi School of Buddhism with Bourke Carus – whose grandfather, Paul Carus, helped keep the spirit of the first PoWR alive. Photo/Allen Chung

## Exhibits and More

Tzu Chi’s three Dharma Masters were an integral part of the program. Apart from being speakers on several panels, they led Buddha Bathing Ceremony sessions in the PoWR’s Buddhist Prayer Room, and more. [Read about all the Dharma Masters’ activities at the PoWR in our feature story on page 36.]

Concurrently, Tzu Chi volunteers and the Tzu Chi University students from Taiwan were also busy. During the five-day conference, they were stationed at Tzu Chi’s three booths to guide and engage with visitors.

Tzu Chi had one large booth in the general exhibition zone. It introduced Ven. Dharma Master Cheng Yen and the Tzu Chi School of Buddhism; the Buddha’s life and sacred Buddhist sites; the Buddha’s original intent and teachings, and how Tzu Chi’s missions and humanitarian efforts embody them; the Tzu Chi bamboo bank spirit; and, Tzu Chi’s interfaith work.

One visitor remarked that she thought Buddhism focused only on meditation and was surprised to learn about other aspects of the teachings.

**I didn’t realize that there were different elements to inspire people and motivate them to action.**



**Kaitlyn Daly**  
School of Nursing Ph.D. Student  
Duke University

A booth in the Climate Village showcased Tzu Chi’s disaster relief, which responds to catastrophes related to climate change and promotes environmental awareness. It featured products created from recycled



Ting Fan (right) shows the Dharma Masters the booth about Tzu Chi’s disaster relief, showcasing multi-functional furniture, eco-blankets, and a pop-up tent. Photo/Jennifer Chien



he Great Enlightened  
 depiction of the Buddha  
 sign is to convey the spi  
 how the Buddha is, in  
 world. He grew up, will  
 spiritual practice, and all  
 this world. Although he f  
 attachments and awaken  
 universe, he could not  
 fly, so he returned to the  
 modern sentient beings.  
 universe represents the  
 rough this depiction, we  
 the Buddha within all of us  
 be of others.

PET plastic bottles, using DA.AI Technology Inc. (DA.AI means “Great Love” in Chinese). Master Cheng Yen’s teachings inspired the company’s founders, whose mission is to “Turn trash into gold, gold into love, love into a purifying stream, and surround the globe with it.” DA.AI Technology created the PoWR tote bags.

Finally, a booth for children encouraged environmental awareness and vegetarianism. All week, the team organized activities, such as transforming plastic trash into artwork and ornaments, taking kids through the lifecycle of plastics, and drawing attention to plastic-related challenges.

**So much that I get from stores is wrapped in plastic in some shape or form. It kind of stresses me out. So it’s really inspiring to see somebody taking action about that.**



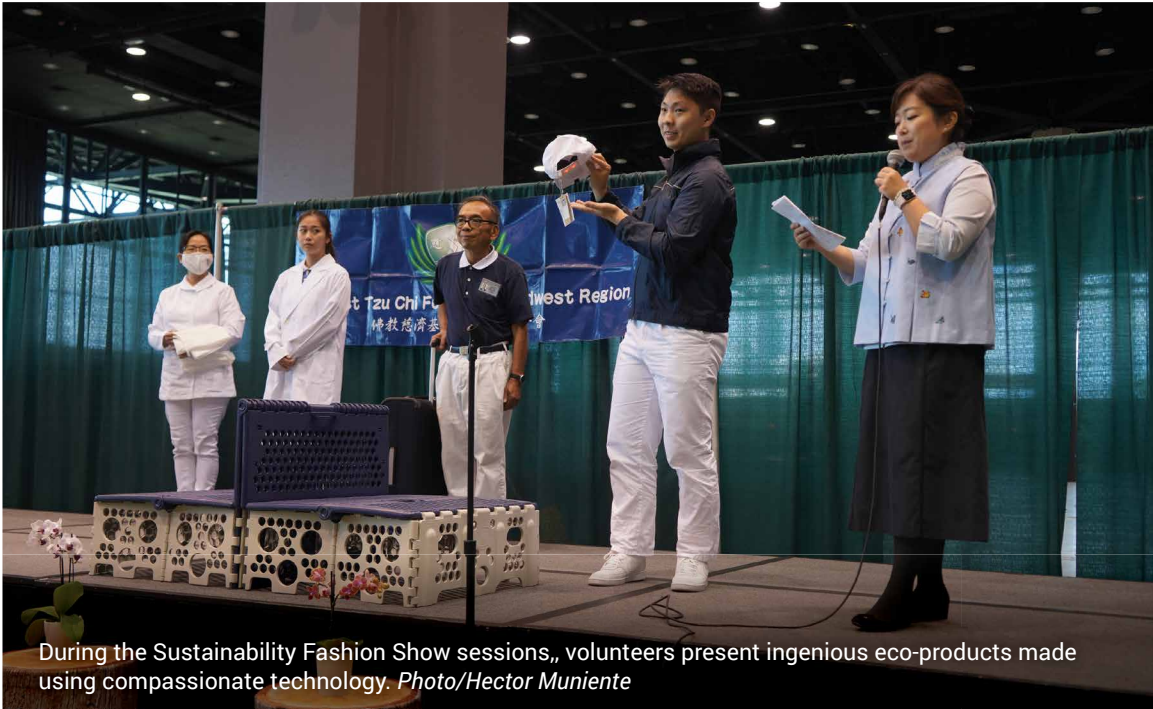
**Ashley Pelli**  
*The Dances of Universal Peace, North America*

The volunteers also held a Sustainability Fashion Show twice during the week, featuring Tzu Chi uniforms, various clothing, and ingenious products used during disaster relief, all produced by DA.AI Technology from recycled PET plastic bottles. The goal was to introduce Tzu Chi inspired “compassionate technology,” help people understand the reason behind eco-design, and encourage them to consider changing their lifestyle to be more climate-friendly.

The shows presented Tzu Chi’s expansive recycling mission, which started in 1990 after Master Cheng Yen saw a street full of garbage and called for individual action. Today, Tzu Chi has over 200,000 recycling volunteers and 10,000 recycling stations in Taiwan. By recycling, we reflect on our consumer habits and “gradually reduce our desires and consumption for the sake of the world.”



Activities at Tzu Chi’s children’s booth engage and inspire. Photos/Daniel Ferrara



During the Sustainability Fashion Show sessions,, volunteers present ingenious eco-products made using compassionate technology. Photo/Hector Muniente

**A sustainable lifestyle is something we want to advocate for all generations. By choosing to reduce, reuse, and recycle, you're not just living sustainably; you're shaping a more mindful and responsible world that values both our environment and our future.**

**Annie Chow**

*Tzu Chi Volunteer  
Sustainability Fashion Show MC*



**This is the kind of mentality that we need to share in the world. It's holistic. I was very impressed.**

**Rev. Manohara Ferretti**  
*Interfaith Minister*



Finally, on the last day of the PoWR, 20 Tzu Chi volunteers and 11 Tzu Chi University students from Taiwan gave a sign language performance of the song "Give Love." The

sign language tradition at Tzu Chi began when Master Cheng Yen was doing home visits and met many deaf individuals. She realized that it's essential for volunteers to learn a little sign language to communicate with them. Today, the tradition offers even more:

**Sign language actually gives us an opportunity to break down different language barriers, trying to connect with all as one big family.**

**Dennis Lee**

*Tzu Chi Volunteer*



Volunteers express the song "Give Love" in sign language during a performance on the closing day of the 2023 PoWR. Photo/Hector Muniente





Nitin Ajmera, Chair of the PoWR Board of Trustees, addresses the Closing Plenary with other Board members, including Debra Boudreaux, on stage behind him. *Photo/Jennifer Chien*

## The Parliament Draws to a Close

On Friday, August 18, during the 2023 PoWR Closing Plenary, through speeches, performances, and prayers, the global interfaith movement recommitted to a shared vision for the future and tangible actions needed to achieve it.

**In the last five days, we've all come together celebrating humanity, celebrating each other, trying to understand the perspective, the positions, the viewpoint. We've looked into each other's eyes and said, 'Yes, together we can do it.' But it doesn't end today. It is about what we carry back and tell our communities.**

***Nitin Ajmera***

*Chair of the Board of Trustees  
Parliament of the World's Religions*



## Master Cheng Yen's Address

After an introduction by Shih De Yuan, Master Cheng Yen shared her message with all assembled in a video, "Purifying Minds for a Peaceful World," recorded at the Jing Si Abode in Hualien, Taiwan. Her statement highlighted how erratic climate conditions have harmed Mother Nature, saying our ever-increasing greed causes

this. She encouraged everyone to adopt a plant-based diet. She also spoke about the disasters worldwide and poverty, which leave people needing assistance. She then presented examples of how a spirit of giving back, or paying the help received forward, transforms lives.

**The core essence of all religions is love. With love, we can inspire the materially poor to become spiritually wealthy. The purpose of each and every religion is to purify minds and bring peace to the world. When every one of us shares the same heart, we can head in the same direction and accomplish what we aspire to do. Let us seize our time in this life and work together to cleanse people's minds: This is the path we can walk together.**



*Ven. Dharma Master Cheng Yen*



Shih De Yuan introduces Master Cheng Yen.  
Photo/Hector Muniente

Looking back at Tzu Chi's presence at the 2023 Parliament of the World's Religions, Debra Boudreaux, Tzu Chi USA CEO, reflected, "It's been a long five days, but five in Chinese means 'good karma.' We need to tell our communities what we achieved. No matter whether Buddhist, Christian, Muslim... everyone has a common message: 'Be the change.'" 🌱







Master Cheng Yen's video message addresses the 2023 PoWR Closing Plenary. *Photo/Jennifer Chien*



The Closing Plenary audience reveals the many spiritual traditions represented at the 2023 PoWR. *Photo/Hector Muniente*



# HELP HEAL MAUI

Tzu Chi USA Launches Relief  
Following Devastating Fires

*Written by Adriana DiBenedetto*





White gloves protecting his hands, Joseph Texeira took an appreciative moment's rest outside Tzu Chi's emergency relief distribution on the Hawaiian island of Maui.

"I was home that day," recalled Joseph, his wife, Brenda, close at his side. "In the beginning, I thought I was sitting home safe, then all of a sudden, I decided I've got to go." Smoke had begun to thicken the air, and the smoke alarms inside his home activated. Peering outside revealed the grass had caught fire nearby. "I saw the fire in the building in front of our building was raging, and I thought, 'Man, I got to get out of here.'"

Joseph had rushed to his car with precious little time to spare. It was not long, however, before he had to leave his vehicle behind, too, when road conditions necessitated evacuating on foot. "When I was running, my hands were burning, and I was thinking, 'Man, I'm not going to make it.' But I kept running and thinking of the kids and the family, and that I can live yet, if I run." And live, he did.



An aerial view reveals the terrible devastation sustained in this disaster. *Photo/Jaime Puerta*

Tzu Chi volunteers in Honolulu's Chinatown launch an urgent street fundraising campaign to support Maui wildfire relief. *Photo/Edgar Wu*



Brenda Texeira had been on Oahu visiting her son, and became concerned when she didn't receive Joseph's daily phone call. Learning about the fire, she'd worried all night, but did her best to remain hopeful while waiting for news. Joseph's phone had burned in the car, but luckily, he knew Brenda's phone number by heart, and let her know that while he had sustained burns, he was safe, and staying at a shelter for the time.

The retired couple had lost much, but what they did still have was worth far more:

**Our home is with us. When we're together, we're home.**

*Brenda Texeira*

Joseph Texeira's story is one of many after wildfires erupted on Maui on August 8, 2023, the tragic cascade of events commencing with powerful winds and dry conditions that drove flames through communities, consuming hundreds of homes in mere moments.

The most central wildfire on Maui devastated much of the community of Lahaina, where more than 2,200 structures were damaged or destroyed. Of the burned structures, 96% were residential, and the Lahaina Historic District suffered extensive fire damage. The Lahaina fire has now claimed over one hundred lives, and is currently on record as the fifth deadliest wildfire in United States history.

## Help Heal Maui Hand-in-Hand

As courageous first responders raced to contain the fires, volunteers of Tzu Chi USA's Pacific Islands Region readied for disaster response to help those affected.

Stateside, too, Tzu Chi was closely monitoring the situation as it unfolded, and mobilizing support.

Nationwide, Tzu Chi volunteers soon launched a "Help Heal Maui" disaster relief fundraiser to aid survivors. And, thanks to an anonymous donor's incredible generosity, Tzu Chi USA's fundraising effort for Maui wildfire relief was able to match all contributions to "Help Heal Maui" up to \$1 million until September 30, 2023, effectively doubling the love and support people can give to this urgent cause.

On August 13, 2023, Tzu Chi volunteers initiated a street fundraiser in Honolulu's Chinatown to call upon communities to support the "Help Heal Maui" aid mission. Just days later, on Wednesday, August 16, Tzu Chi volunteers from Hawaii traveled to Maui to learn about the current relief operations carried out by the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army, and began synchronizing efforts.



Mobilizing swiftly in the face of devastating wildfires on the Hawaiian island of Maui, Tzu Chi volunteers take to the streets to raise both awareness and funds. *Photo/Edgar Wu*



Nearly 20 days after the fires' onset, residents struggled to find solace. In the town of Lahaina, helping hands abound from across the community, all while processing their own grief. Local resident Laura Baxter, who flew back from vacation just after the fires began, shared her story with Tzu Chi volunteers:

**We were vacationing in Oregon. I was with my daughter, and immediately, as soon as we could we kind of wrapped up the stuff that we were doing there and came over. And you know, from the minute we touched ground, traumatic pain filled the stories, and I mean, we really couldn't stop crying.**

“

**Laura Baxter**  
*Local Volunteer*

Preparing for their first emergency relief distribution, where impacted households would receive cash cards, Renee Chao, Deputy Director of Tzu Chi USA's Charity Development Department, made it clear that, "We visited the DRC [Disaster Recovery Center] because we want our volunteers to be on duty in the DRC every day. We are

going to maximize our capacity to support the families impacted by these wildfires." Tzu Chi's emergency cash aid is delivered directly into the hands of individuals and families whom this ongoing catastrophe has impacted.

**We're here to help with a little bit of monetary donations, and helping them, but I think it goes beyond that. It really has to do with the community giving them hope, light at the end of the tunnel that we will rebuild Maui stronger.**

“

**Nicholas Longpre**  
*Tzu Chi Hawaii Volunteer*

These funds can be used for essentials such as food, clothing, gas, prescription medications, diapers, lodging, and more. Aside from monetary support, Tzu Chi also provides much-needed spiritual and emotional comfort to survivors, ensuring they know they're not alone in this.

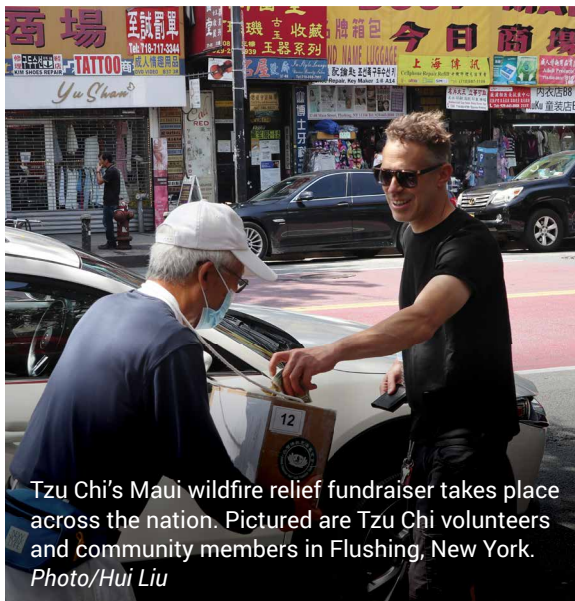
**It's been an amazing operation. It hasn't always been smooth, but the volunteers that keep showing up, I mean, are just pouring their hearts out, and it's emotional.**

“

**Laura Baxter**  
*Local Volunteer*

## Expressions of Aloha: A New Day Dawns

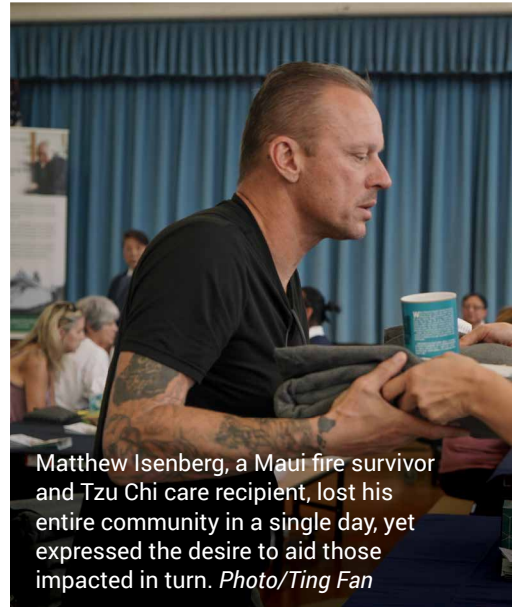
On Saturday, August 26, 2023, Tzu Chi volunteers split into several groups: one, to help pack food and supplies at Lahaina's largest distribution center, while a second team prepared the venue ahead of time for Tzu Chi's emergency cash card distribution. This would be the first of several distributions, taking place over four consecutive Sundays.



Tzu Chi's Maui wildfire relief fundraiser takes place across the nation. Pictured are Tzu Chi volunteers and community members in Flushing, New York.  
*Photo/Hui Liu*



Maui fire survivor Joseph Texeira (seated, center) sustained burns to his hands as he escaped the flames, treading water up to his neck for hours when continuing by car was no longer safe. Seated (right) is his wife, Brenda. Photo/Ting Fan

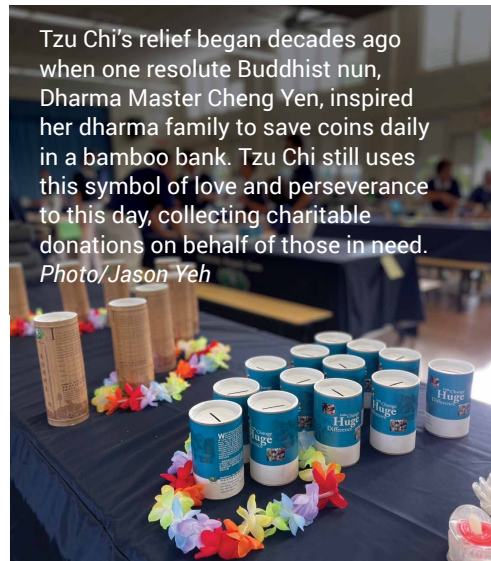


Matthew Isenberg, a Maui fire survivor and Tzu Chi care recipient, lost his entire community in a single day, yet expressed the desire to aid those impacted in turn. Photo/Ting Fan

Both efforts are intended to help those who've lost their homes to the recent wildfires on Maui, where local volunteers, like Linda, explained that it's an all-hands-on-deck situation: "Everybody's coming up and doing what they can to help. It's, to me, it's like the beacon of hope. It's like the light in the darkness of all this."

Renee Chao also shared that this is just the beginning for Tzu Chi's relief in Hawaii: "Joining the community is a good starting [point] to do long-term recovery, because that's real. When we say we are here, we are *really* here."

As residents continue to come together in the face of this monumental recovery effort, Tzu Chi USA's Pacific Islands Region hosted its first emergency cash card distribution on August 27, benefiting 281 affected households. The relief event took place in Lahaina, the effort uniting nearly 50 Tzu Chi volunteers from across the nation, and especially from across the Hawaiian Islands.



Tzu Chi's relief began decades ago when one resolute Buddhist nun, Dharma Master Cheng Yen, inspired her dharma family to save coins daily in a bamboo bank. Tzu Chi still uses this symbol of love and perseverance to this day, collecting charitable donations on behalf of those in need. Photo/Jason Yeh



Just one week later, at Tzu Chi's wildfire relief distribution hosted over Labor Day weekend, Tzu Chi's relief reached 302 affected households. Here, care recipients and volunteers alike reflected on the recent wildfires.

A local named Rowena Baraoidan reminisced about her family home at the September 3 event. With her grandchildren close by her side, she looked back on a lifetime of fond memories, recalling, "Our son





Tzu Chi events abound with moments of deep connections, the caring atmosphere volunteers create lifting spirits. Photo/Tzu Chi Pacific Islands Region



Louisa Collier, the coordinator for Tzu Chi's first Maui wildfire relief distribution on August 27, 2023, is joined by her whole family to aid in the relief efforts. Pictured are Laura (top right), her husband (top left), their two children (bottom left and right), and her sister (bottom center). Photo/Ting Fan

was two years old when we moved in, so we've been in the house for 30-plus years." Her story is one of many on Maui in the days after this catastrophe. "We're probably in the same boat as everybody else," Rowena shared, "needing help during this difficult time."

Having never been in such a tough position, and recognizing the challenging road ahead, she expressed, "All the help you can get, we will receive gladly and with open arms."

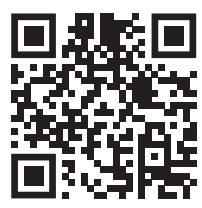
And indeed, further disaster relief was already on its way, with another distribution on September 10 that aided 521 households, a distribution on September 17, and Tzu Chi's aid in Maui still ongoing.

**You know, it's a community. It takes a village. It takes everybody, you know, to show love and *aloha*. That's what we're all about, right?**



**Shiulina Wu**  
*Tzu Chi Hawaii Volunteer*

This heartbreaking tragedy has shattered lives and cherished homes, destroyed historic Lahaina Town landmarks, and left thousands without power. By joining forces with Tzu Chi, you can help offer urgent support to the people of Maui. Please help today: [donate.tzuchi.us/mauirelief](https://donate.tzuchi.us/mauirelief) 🌿



# Symposium at Harvard Breaks New Ground

*Written by Dilber Shatursun*





Followers of the Venerable Dharma Master Cheng Yen (the founder of Tzu Chi), including Tzu Chi volunteers and supporters around the world, have long known and embraced her message of compassion in action, reaped its spiritual benefits, and witnessed its profound impacts. Yet, while she has received global recognition for her work, including being named as one of TIME Magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2011 and, more recently, BBC's 100 inspiring and influential women of 2022 (among many other accolades), never-before has Ven. Cheng Yen's leadership style, as well as its impact and implications for leadership in the 21st century, been put under a scholarly microscope—until now.

From September 3rd to 4th, 2023, twelve world-renowned scholars and guests from nine countries came together for a landmark event: the "Symposium on the Venerable Cheng Yen's Philosophy and Leadership." It took place at the Geological Lecture Hall at the prestigious Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, marking a historic collaboration between co-hosts the Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation and the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences Chinese Art Media Lab (or Harvard FAS CAMLab), as well as support from Tzu Chi USA. It is also the ninth official Tzu Chi Global Symposium for Common Goodness, a platform intended to foster a holistic understanding of Ven. Cheng Yen's teachings and exploration of the possibilities for Tzu Chi's movement to inspire 'compassion in action.'



Attendees gather for the ninth Tzu Chi Global Symposium for Common Goodness at Harvard University. Photo/Hui Liu





Guests arrive for the Symposium on the Venerable Cheng Yen's Philosophy and Leadership at the historic Harvard campus in Cambridge, MA. *Photo/Hui Liu*

Divided into two days, academics presented twelve scholarly papers, collectively examining different categories across three sessions. They included Ven. Cheng Yen's social impact, her philosophy, and her life and work in a historical context. The event also included two grand discussions on Buddhism and interreligious engagement and Tzu Chi's global charity, as well as a signing ceremony, presentations of certificates. A vegetarian banquet, too, was prepared by volunteers from the Tzu Chi USA Boston Service Center at the finale of day two for all guests. These were the Symposium's main takeaways.



Panelists during session two examine Ven. Cheng Yen in a Historical Context. *Photo/Hui Liu*

## The Importance of Scholarly Inquiry

As the first day of the Symposium began, the need for a scholarly examination of Ven. Cheng Yen's life and work was made clear. Because both her humanitarian efforts and her role as the founder of Tzu Chi are of global significance, coupled with the fact that because spiritual and religious leaders are often revered without a critical analysis of their contributions to society, it was made evident that a bridge was necessary between spiritual reverence and academic inquiry. Many scholars in attendance agreed, like Caroline Reeves, a Research Associate at the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard University:





and they've created a post-gendered kind of compassionate giving."

At the same time, fellow scholar Stefania Travagnin, a Reader in Chinese Buddhism at the SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies) University of London, offered another reason why scholarly examination was important. Presenting the paper, "Thus Has She Spoken: Master Cheng Yen's Words as a New Buddhavacana," Travagnin recalled how she first heard about Ven. Cheng Yen while preparing a dissertation on Buddhist nuns in Taiwan back in 1998. She found the way Ven. Cheng Yen transmitted the teachings of Buddhism, including theatrical performances that interpreted them, fascinating:

“

**Something... that's interesting is how she talks about Buddhism without talking about Buddhism, and so being able to attract people who are not Buddhist.**

“

**It's just a great opportunity for scholars, practitioners, volunteers to come together and talk about all the important things that Tzu Chi does and to discuss them in a scholarly way.**

Presenting the paper, "Tzu Chi and Dharma Master Cheng Yen: Towards an Understanding of Post-Gendered Giving," Reeves elaborated that an academic inquiry into Ven. Cheng Yen was crucial in learning how one can create profound social impact, regardless of gender. "Talking about this topic, it's exciting... because Master Cheng Yen themselves really doesn't see themselves as a gendered individual," she explained; "they've taken the best parts of giving, male and female,



Caroline Reeves offers reflections on gendered language in relation to charity and philanthropy. Photo/Hui Liu



With the help of a translator, Ven. De Chen delivers a message from the Jing Si Abode. Photo/Jack Huang

Yet, by being able to create broad appeal and reach others unfamiliar with ancient scriptures, particularly those as rich and as complex as the Lotus Sutra, Ven. Cheng Yen was creating a new school of Buddhism, all her own.

## The Tzu Chi School of Buddhism

By placing heavy emphasis on core principles such as compassion, kindness, and altruism, the Symposium illuminated the distinctness of Ven. Cheng Yen's teachings as the "Tzu Chi School of Buddhism." To put it simply, Dr. Rey-Sheng Her, Associate Professor of Religion and Humanities at Tzu Chi University, said that unlike Zen, a popular school of Mahayana Buddhism which traditionally focuses on meditation, Tzu Chi's school regards altruistic action as the main pathway to achieve "the ultimate enlightenment."

Doing so, Ven. Cheng Yen "puts a strong emphasis on doing in explaining the Bodhisattva path and Bodhisattva precepts," further elaborates Pei-Ying Lin. She's an Assistant Professor at the Center for Buddhist Philosophy at National Chengchi University. Presenting the paper "The Bodhisattva Path of Venerable Cheng Yen in Contemporary Taiwan," Lin also made clear that focusing on 'doing' does not mean neglecting study and understanding of Buddhist doctrines. At the podium, she clarified:

“

**[Ven. Cheng Yen] affirms that understanding the correct meaning of Buddhism is very important.**

For those who put the Tzu Chi School of Buddhism into practice, including many Tzu Chi volunteers, disconnects may still occur. Rosalie Chen, a Tzu Chi volunteer who flew in from Taiwan to help with



translation to and from Chinese, highlighted the Symposium's importance for those who put Tzu Chi's missions of charity, medicine, education, humanistic culture, environmental protection, and more into motion: "[It] helps us as Tzu Chi volunteers to really think about the philosophy behind what we are doing. So, often we are actually just busy doing the work, but we're not thinking about the significance, the deeper meaning behind it."

## Implications for Leadership in the 21st Century

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the Symposium was the recognition of the valuable contributions that Tzu Chi's organizational operations and core principles can offer to 21st century leadership across various fields. For scholars like Herman B. Leonard, Professor of Business Administration at the Harvard Business School, the 'case of Tzu Chi' is one that he requires his students to study, "because it has such powerful insights about the world, and about the world they will be trying to accomplish things in." He elaborates:

“

**It challenges our ordinary thinking, about how to make things happen in the world, about how to mobilize people, and how to take actions, how to figure out what to do, how to make progress in the world; it challenges our received understanding, our conventional wisdom about management and leadership.**



Stefania Travagnin demonstrates an example of Ven. Cheng Yen's value for storytelling.  
Photo/Hui Liu

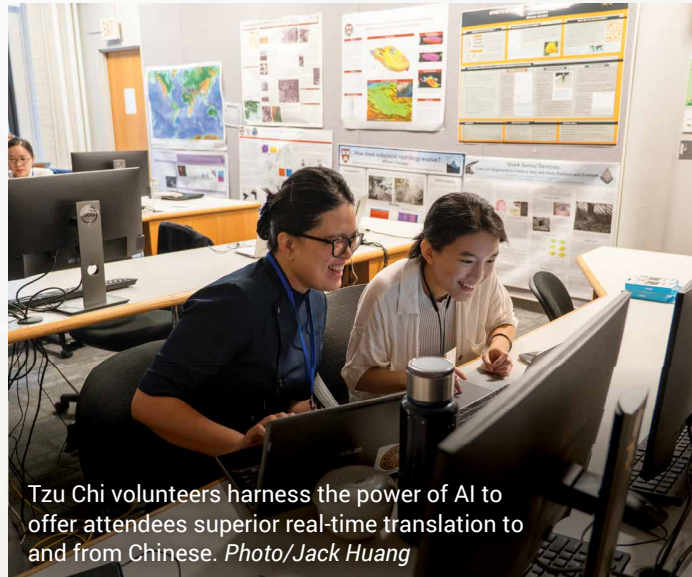


Herman B. Leonard (second from left) offers a gift symbolic of Tzu Chi's light to Po-Wen Yen. Photo/Jack Huang



For example, when responding to disasters around the world, Leonard illuminates that “Tzu Chi doesn’t have a strategic planning process for disaster relief. What it has, and this is an important concept, it has a strategically designed adaptive process for rapidly figuring [it] out.” This ability to assess situations, understand its most pressing needs, and offer solutions with accessible resources is a cornerstone of any relief project undertaken by Tzu Chi volunteers around the planet, be it a response to a flood, fire, earthquake, or any other catastrophe.

At the same time, Leonard also reflected on Tzu Chi’s dynamism during a disaster. “Operating in such an environment, you have to be nimble and adaptive,” he explains. As situations on the ground may be constantly changing, Leonard insists that one of Tzu Chi’s greatest assets derives from “its ability to adapt rapidly to situations—every one of which is different and no one ever saw this one before.” By doing so, he adds, Tzu Chi as an organization is both “effective and reliable,” offering valuable lessons for students across many disciplines.



Tzu Chi volunteers harness the power of AI to offer attendees superior real-time translation to and from Chinese. *Photo/Jack Huang*



Tzu Chi USA Boston volunteers provide guests with nutritious snacks, as well as fully vegetarian lunch and dinner throughout the event. *Photo/Jack Huang*



Audience members listen intently. *Photo/Jack Huang*





Guests from across Tzu Chi USA, including California and New York, attend the Symposium. Photo/Hui Liu

## A Milestone for Tzu Chi

Overall, the Symposium offered valuable and groundbreaking insight into Ven. Cheng Yen's leadership philosophy and compassionate leadership style. For those within Tzu Chi, like Ven. Dharma Master De Chen from the Jing Si Abode, opportunities like this only help to further Tzu Chi's mission of compassion in action. "If everyone can gain a better understanding and knowledge of how external experts and scholars view Tzu Chi, it will undoubtedly foster greater recognition and acceptance of Tzu Chi," she explains. Po-Wen Yen, the Chief Executive Officer of the Tzu Chi Charity Foundation, agrees:

“

**I believe that with the help of forums like this, and with continued promotion, Tzu Chi has the potential to become an influential religious and charitable organization.**

Still, beyond Tzu Chi's own projects, with a philosophy rooted in compassion, empathy, and ethical conduct, Ven. Cheng Yen acts as a model for leaders facing the complex challenges of our time. Whether they relate to climate change impacts around the world, social and economic inequalities, public health crises, and so much more. Ven. Cheng Yen's leadership style serves as a timeless example for leaders across the globe who seek to make a positive impact on their communities and the world at large. 🌱

A photograph of two Buddhist monks in blue robes on a stage. The monk on the right is speaking into a microphone and holding a lit candle in a glass holder. The monk on the left is also holding a lit candle. The background is a large screen displaying a white building. The lighting is dim, with a blue hue.

# On a Mission to Bring Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Light to Chicago

*Written by Ida Eva Zielinska*





Shih De Yuan (middle), Shih De Cheng (left), and Shih De Huang (right) lead a Buddhist prayer during the Parliament of the World's Religions Climate Action Assembly on August 14, 2023. *Photo/Ting Fan*

From the moment Ven. Shih De Yuan, Ven. Shih De Cheng, and Ven. Shih De Huang set foot in Chicago, Illinois, on August 12, 2023, the Tzu Chi family surrounded them with love and care. The three Dharma Masters flew in from Taiwan, where they live in the Jing Si Abode in Hualien alongside Ven. Dharma Master Cheng Yen. They had come to join the Tzu Chi delegation participating in the Parliament of the World's Religions (PoWR) that would run from August 14 to 18 at the McCormick Place Lakeside Center on Chicago's lakefront. [Read about Tzu Chi's presence at the 2023 PoWR in our cover story on page 6.]

Shortly after they landed, the Dharma Masters addressed everyone in the Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region office's main hall, expressing their aspirations for the upcoming week of interfaith dialogue. While they felt immediately at home, visiting what was akin to another petal of the global Tzu Chi family lotus, the hosts felt blessed by their presence as representatives of Master Cheng Yen, their revered and beloved teacher.



Chong Hsieh (right), Executive Director of the Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region, personally meets the Dharma Masters at Chicago O'Hare International Airport. *Photo/Dennis Lee*



The Dharma Masters speak to the Tzu Chi family assembled in Chicago at the Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region office. *Photo/Dennis Lee*

## Looking Toward the Week Ahead

For Shih De Yuan, this was her second time attending a convening of the PoWR, as she was a delegate in 2018. Tzu Chi's presence is important, "There are so many religions and faiths in this world that people may not understand what Tzu Chi is and has done. When we come out, they can have more direct contact with us," she explained, stressing the uniqueness of Tzu Chi's Buddhist practice approach of actively putting compassion into action to relieve suffering. "Sometimes we may know a lot of philosophy, but if we don't put it into action, we may not realize it or learn from it; wisdom will not come out from there." She also highlighted the need for interfaith dialogue and collaboration, which the PoWR would fulfill.

When people are practicing and going towards world peace, we should work together. Of course, there will be so many methods to practice. Just like in Buddhism, Buddha also said that we have 84,000 ways of practice; the only thing is to attain enlightenment. We should look at the similarities of faiths: This is a good way to communicate and then work together.

*Ven. Shih De Yuan*

Shih De Cheng and Shih De Huang had never participated in a PoWR gathering before. "Master Cheng Yen mentioned that she wanted to promote environment protection, vegetarianism, and international disaster relief," Shih De Cheng stated. And yet, she divulged feeling nervous about speaking at an international conference for the first time. "I feel like my abilities



aren't good enough. However, I realized that I'm presenting Master Cheng Yen and Tzu Chi to promote a very positive message, introducing concepts like Buddhist compassion to everyone. So I thought, 'Alright! Let's do it!'"

Pondering what lay ahead, Shih De Huang reflected, "In this era of high technology, I think everyone is maybe lost. The person, the ego, is very important. Master Cheng Yen wants us to [advocate] turning small love into great love – not only being concerned about a small family but caring for all beings."

Master Cheng Yen advised the monastics representing her: "Even if one person is listening to what you say, you must also tell them. Even one person, you don't care about how many people are listening," Shih De Yuan recounted. However, the 2023

PoWR would receive over 7,000 people from nearly 100 countries, representing over 200 spiritual traditions, so many would have a chance to hear what the three Dharma Masters had to say.

## Guiding Buddhist Ceremonies

During the week, Shih De Yuan, Shih De Cheng, and Shih De Huang, alongside Allan Chung, who is on the Dharma as Water team in charge of translating Master Cheng Yen's writings into English, led two Buddha Bathing Ceremony sessions in the PoWR's Buddhist Prayer Room. The ceremony is a symbolic act to purify the heart, helping to cleanse oneself of inner afflictions. From a Tzu Chi perspective, a purified heart is a prerequisite to serving those in need with compassion.



Shih De Yuan (right), Shih De Cheng (middle), and Shih De Huang (left) prepare to lead a simplified form of the Buddha Bathing Ceremony in the PoWR's Buddhist Prayer Room. *Photo/Dan Ferrara*



Shih De Huang explains the Buddha Bathing Ceremony to PoWR attendees. Photo/Dan Ferrara

We hold the Buddha Bathing Ceremony because we want to show gratitude to the Buddha, our parents, and all sentient beings. We need to pay lots of attention to the whole world instead of ourselves. No matter what religion, if we harbor the vast truth and love in our hearts, there are no boundaries.

*Ven. Shih De Cheng*

We want to share peace and harmony with everyone. When we're doing the ritual, we show respect and want to remind ourselves that we have our own intrinsic Buddha Nature as well.

*Ven. Shih De Huang*



Participants listen to "Love and Care for All" at the end of the ceremony. Photo/Jennifer Chien



"I was very touched by the amount of people coming in," Shih De Yuan noted as the prayer room filled beyond capacity. Without skipping a beat, the Tzu Chi team made room for everyone. Once Chung and the Dharma Masters explained the meaning of the ritual, Tzu Chi volunteers demonstrated how to take part, and the session attendees each had a turn. At the conclusion, participants held electric candles in lotus-shaped holders as they listened to a favorite Tzu Chi song, "Love and Care for All," which moved some to tears.

**I felt disconnected today, and this grounded and really touched my heart. It's exactly what I needed to remember, the point of being here and helping everyone in whatever way we can.**

**David Faber**  
*Indigenous Task Force*

## Showcasing Buddhism in Action

On August 15, Shih De Yuan was a panelist in the "Buddhism in Action: Turning Life Around in the Buddha's Homeland" session moderated by Johan Alwall from the Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation. She presented Tzu Chi's disaster relief and charity work in Nepal and India.

Shih De Yuan outlined Tzu Chi's first aid project in Nepal in 1993, building 1,800 houses following a severe flood, then disaster relief after the 2015 earthquake, a mission that helped more than a million people. In 2022, Tzu Chi returned to Nepal to relieve suffering, beginning in Lumbini, home to Lumbini Garden, the sacred Buddhist site where the Buddha was born. "Life inside



Shih De Yuan presents Tzu Chi's work near sacred Buddhist sites in Nepal and India. *Photo/Dan Ferrara*

and outside the Lumbini Garden is totally different. When we walk out of Lumbini Garden, we can see the life of poverty,” Shih De Yuan described.

Tzu Chi’s aid focuses on students, as the dropout rate due to family poverty is grave. In addition to distributions of supplies and the subsidy of nutritious lunches plus transportation fees, Tzu Chi volunteers launched a character education program based on Master Cheng Yen’s Jing Si Aphorisms. One of the students’ favorites, which has raised their confidence, is “Do not underestimate yourself; everyone has unlimited potential,” Shih De Yuan reported. Mid-term relief here will involve building a school and model homes.

In India, Tzu Chi provides aid in and around Bodhgaya, the sacred Buddhist site where the Buddha attained enlightenment. Shih De Yuan explained that in this region, “most children don’t go to school due to

the caste system. They become beggars to get by.” Tzu Chi volunteers conduct home visits, provide aid according to needs, and offer Buddhist guidance that inspires the villagers to give back. Some began putting aside a handful of rice daily to donate to others in need. A group of women received training about recycling and gained environmental awareness, which motivated them to mobilize the community to clean up their village.

Since Tzu Chi came, we learned that in addition to receiving aid, we can do our part to give; we can give in any way, not necessarily money.

Care Recipient

Turning life around in Buddha’s homeland will be a very long journey, but Tzu Chi volunteers made a vow to help the people there achieve it, no matter how long it takes.

Ven. Shih De Yuan



Ayyā Dhammadīpā speaks about Buddhist Global Relief’s work. Photo/Dennis Lee





Lopön Jigme Tingdzin joins the discussion via video message from Nepal. *Photo/Dennis Lee*

The other panelists also presented how the groups they were representing are helping in India and Nepal. Ven. Ayyā Dhammadīpā described the work of Buddhist Global Relief (BGR), a nonprofit founded by Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi. BGR raises funds and then partners with other organizations active in that part of the world. Starting with five projects in 2008, it has 60 partner projects today. “Not just Buddhists,” Dhammadīpā added, as BGR doesn’t focus on religious affiliation. Their primary goal is to combat hunger, hoping that with their nutritional needs met, people can actualize their fullest potential for goodness and meaning in their lives.

Ven. Lopön Jigme Tingdzin, a nun in the Drukpa Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, joined via video message from Nepal and shared the unique way of practice that she and her fellow monastics are engaged in that involves learning Kung Fu, which they

do for their protection. Among their activities, the nuns undertake grueling pilgrimages on foot or bicycle to raise environmental awareness, and they provide disaster relief, including dangerous search and rescue. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they collaborated with Tzu Chi to help provide medical supplies and train women to be public health educators.

Panelist Carrie Lee, a representative of the “Kung Fu Nuns,” as they’ve come to be known, and also President of Live to Love International, which provides humanitarian relief and education in the Himalayas, revealed the risks and discrimination the monastics face, from threats to burn down their nunnery to actual physical assault. “Many of us have heard the story; if you’re a well-behaved nun, you can come back in your next life to become a monk and then become enlightened,” Lee said. And yet, despite the dangers and the fact that they

come from places where people don't expect girls to do much outside of the kitchen or housework, the Kung Fu Nuns persist.

**Over the years, we learned that to really practice spirituality, we must be active, physically strong, and confident. So many people need help out there. The whole world is going through global warming problems, climate change problems, and the whole world is suffering. So, it's time for us to put our compassion in action and do something.**

*Ven. Lopön Jigme Tingdzin*

## Addressing Food Systems

At the PoWR, Tzu Chi held several sessions addressing food systems. The first, "Sowing the Seeds for Catalytic Transformations: Faith Consultation on Food Systems" on August 16, explored the role faith-based organizations and values play in creating sustainable food systems. Steve Chiu, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation's Representative to the UN, moderated, as panelists Shih De Cheng, Kelly Moltzen, co-convenor of the Interfaith Public Health Network, Asma Ahad, Director of Halal Market Development for the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America, and Maurice Bloem, Chief Sustainability and Impact Officer at Church World Service Inc., presented their perspectives.

For Shih De Cheng, it was her first time speaking at an international gathering. She touched on the hunger crisis, which includes food wastage, and gave examples of Master Cheng Yen's guidance, such as "Eat 80 percent full, and use the remaining 20 percent to help others." She then narrowed in on animal rights and the vegetarian solution to food system issues.



**In the Jing Si Abode, we eat plant-based food and cherish all the food on the table without waste. The perspective of Buddhism is that all creatures are equal. Every animal has the right to live freely and naturally, reminding everyone to consider whether meat is necessary in their lives, and you don't have to harm other lives due to your dietary desires.**

*Ven. Shih De Cheng*





Shih De Cheng reads a story at Tzu Chi's children's booth. Photo/Jennifer Chien

"We have such a platform to share, let everyone know that we're not alone and have cooperative partners. Everyone is working hard in this direction," Shih De Cheng announced joyfully after her session.

During a food systems workshop later that afternoon, speakers and session participants added their insights: "Animals and plants are all living beings." "Forests are

the lungs of the Earth, and they're being cut down for grazing land for cattle." "Seeing firsthand the forest cleared in the Amazon is simply heartbreaking."

Their cry for environmental awareness echoed as they sought spiritual action: "Our traditions teach us that the Earth and the food it provides is sacred." "All of us eat and are enmeshed in food systems,

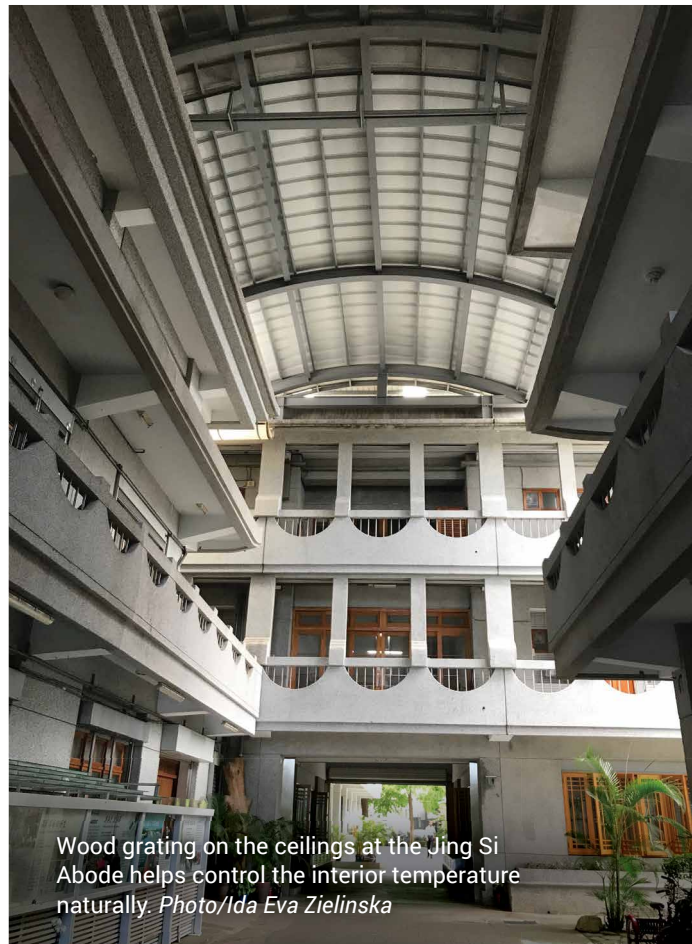




Shih De Cheng speaks on the “Greening of Congregations: The State of the Movement” panel.  
Photo/Daniel Ferrara

so all of us are responsible for changing things and making them more moral and equitable.”

During the week, in Tzu Chi’s children’s booth, which promotes vegetarianism, Shih De Cheng also read Master Cheng Yen’s storybook, *The Deer King Saves a Man*, touching on the theme of caring about animals and their right to life. “We can learn from the animals, their loving spirit,” she noted. The story introduced Buddhist ideas, namely that the animal world is pure, while the human realm can be vicious as people have mental afflictions that influence their thoughts and behavior. The lesson offered was that if we are mindful and constantly reflect on ourselves, we can return to our original purity and goodness and be compassionate to all sentient beings.



Wood grating on the ceilings at the Jing Si Abode helps control the interior temperature naturally. Photo/Ida Eva Zielinska



## Creating Environmental Sustainability

The “greening” of houses of worship of many faith traditions has become an international movement. The shift to environmental sustainability focuses on such practices as adopting renewable energy, energy conservation, diet and food production, reducing plastic, waste management, and plants and trees on land belonging to the congregation. It also includes education in the teachings of the community’s religion on the vision and values of our relation to the natural world and integrating these teachings into liturgy, prayer, and study.

In the “Greening of Congregations: The State of the Movement” session on August 17, moderated by Laurel Kearns, co-founder of the Green Seminary Initiative, Shih De Cheng introduced Master Cheng Yen’s

holistic environmental vision for the Jing Si Abode where she resides, which is also the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation’s global headquarters. Shih De Cheng announced that Tzu Chi joined the race to NET Zero by developing a plan to reduce its carbon emissions, hoping to reach the NET Zero goal by 2050.

However, before explaining the many greening aspects of the Jing Si Abode, she spoke of how Master Cheng Yen is a powerful example herself. “Apart from advocating for others to live an environmental lifestyle, she also lives a life of great simplicity,” Shih De Cheng revealed. She described how Master Cheng Yen uses one basin of water per day for all her needs, and uses the same sheet of paper four times, writing first with a pencil, then a blue pen, then red, and finally a brush. “She truly practices what she preaches, how to save resources in everyday life.”



The Jing Si Abode in Hualien, Taiwan. *Photo/Ida Eva Zielinska*



Rain catchment pools on the Jing Si Abode grounds. *Photo/Ida Eva Zielinska*

Master Cheng Yen's environmental vision is one of cherishing resources and material life. Shih De Cheng spoke about how the monastics at the Abode follow Master Cheng Yen's life principles: "We reduce, reuse, repair, and recycle. We eat only plant-based food and turn food waste into fertilizer and enzymes that go back into the field we use for food production, growing vegetables and plants. We use electricity sparingly and pass the hot summer without air conditioning except in the computer room, meeting room, and food factory. And if our clothing wears out, we patch it to minimize textile waste." The nuns repurpose objects, too; for instance, canisters that previously held cooking oil become dust pans.

Shih De Cheng presented how the buildings at the Jing Si Abode have multifunctional, eco-friendly, and energy-saving features that encompass the choice of materials and design aspects, such as strategic use of light and shadows and wood grating in ceilings to allow hot air to escape and cool air to enter, achieving energy savings and





carbon reduction. The Abode puts a lot of effort into using water as efficiently as possible, too, with modified dishwashing troths that reuse water over several rinses. The grounds also have a rain catchment and storage system, with ecological pools and a detention basin to allow rainwater to flow naturally, enabling flood protection and water security.

Shih De Cheng also spoke about Tzu Chi's vast recycling operations in Taiwan and revisited Master Cheng Yen's advocacy of adopting a plant-based diet since "By reducing demand for meat, we reduce the negative environmental impacts of livestock farming, a main driver in all three aspects of the planetary crisis, climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss." She ended by warning that the race to reach environmental sustainability is urgent.

**As of today, according to the Climate Clock, we just have five years and 339 days left to take action to prevent the worst effects of global warming from becoming irreversible. It is time to wake our inner conscience and turn green thoughts into action to protect the Earth.**

*Ven. Shih De Cheng*

The other speakers of different faith traditions shared about their congregations' greening initiatives and philosophies, creating an inspiring ensemble of approaches and solutions.

Rabbi Daniel Swartz, Executive Director of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, spoke of how we need to think of greening congregations as a set of concentric circles: "At the core, it's what you physically do to the building. But a congregation isn't just the building. You have a multiplier effect if everybody in the congregation is doing in their home what you're doing in the building. So, that second circle is all the people associated with the congregation. And the third circle is to be an advocate. You have a call to speak beyond your community."

Sarah Paulos, the Community Engagement and Programs Manager for Interfaith Power and Light (IPL), spoke about how it is helping green congregations across the United States. "IPL invites congregations to reduce the emissions from their worship facilities that contribute to climate change as an act of faith. There are approximately 400,000 houses of worship in the United States; this represents tremendous potential to contribute to carbon emissions reduction goals for our country. We can cut costs, care for our sacred earth, and care for our neighbors. It's a win-win-win situation."



The "Greening of Congregations" panel, moderated by Laurel Kearns (middle), consists of Rabbi Daniel Swartz (left), Sarah Paulos (second left), Shih De Cheng (second right), and Rev. Abby Mohaupt (right). Photo/Daniel Ferrara



The audience listens as the panelists speak about their congregations' greening activities and experience. *Photo/Jennifer Chien*

Rev. Abby Mohaupt, Director of Education and Training at GreenFaith, spoke about the nonprofit's evolving work, which now includes responding to climate and environmental injustices. "The original work of training congregations and people of faith to work in their communities shifted from more traditional greening congregations to system change and [creating] over 100 green faith circles [that] respond to how the fossil fuel industry [and] deforestation are affecting their communities, [and organizing] to determine responses to climate emergencies on the ground and in their work."

Mohaupt then donned her Presbyterian hat, as she is an ordained minister, and described how "The Presbyterian Church USA has always been embedded in caring for creation, which is how we as Christians

talk about the natural world. As a branch of Christianity, we've thought about our ecological commitments in the world. We talk about how worship needs to engage ecological issues, climate justice, and environmental justice." In conclusion, it was a powerful interfaith session that offered much to think about and apply.

## Upholding the Global Ethic

On August 17, during the "Women's Perspectives on the Global Ethic" session, it was Shih De Huang's turn to speak. Moderated by Sharan Kaur Singh, a Sikh and Trustee of the PoWR, four women from different faiths expressed their views on the PoWR's Global Ethic document, "a statement of basic ethical commitments shared by people throughout the globe, religious or not," and why gender equality is an



essential part of it. Singh stated, "The Sikh religion teaches us that we are all children of one God, and women possess an equal right to cultivate their spirituality with chances of achieving salvation equal to men."

Shih De Huang recounted that in the 1960s when Master Cheng Yen founded Tzu Chi, most people thought raising a family was the most significant asset for a woman. However, she believed women could contribute to the world's affairs outside of gender role expectations. She encouraged her first followers, who were female, to put compassion into action as Buddhist Dharma practitioners.

While Master Cheng Yen's first five monastic disciples took self-reliance as a principle of practice and were ready to sacrifice themselves and endure many hardships, her lay followers, 30 local homemakers,

helped fund the charity's work with daily donations, pennies a day saved from their grocery money. People learned of the mission to help relieve suffering and began contributing. "Among the first Tzu Chi committee members, women accounted for about 60% of the member body," Shih De Huang stated. Today, the top executive director roles in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the USA, the three largest Tzu Chi overseas chapters, are held by women.

In Master Cheng Yen's Tzu Chi School of Buddhism, everyone can do good and benefit the world. She created a system of pure practitioners – lay followers who devote themselves to the Tzu Chi mission with pure cultivation, dedicating their lives and taking on additional vows and precepts. They are the equivalent of monastics without the need to shave their head, take the Jing Si Abode as their spiritual home, and see all sentient beings as their family.



Shih De Huang recounts how after Master Cheng Yen became a monastic, her spiritual mentor, Ven. Master Yin Shun asked her to always work for Buddhism and all living beings. *Photo/Jennifer Chien*



Shih De Huang shares with Mary Doak (left) and Sharan Kaur Singh (right) beside her. *Photo/Jennifer Chien*

In Tzu Chi, volunteering is a form of spiritual practice as well. Shih De Huang shared that one female volunteer in Taiwan is 105 and still active, “safeguarding our environment through working at the recycling stations. She is just one of the thousands Master has empowered to enhance their life value and develop themselves.” During international relief work, Tzu Chi also uplifts female care recipients through education and vocational training, freeing low-status women from a cycle of poverty and helping them regain self-confidence, self-esteem, and empathy for others.

“Responsibility can inspire a person’s potential and awaken their conscience,” Shih De Huang said, bringing Master Cheng Yen’s wisdom to the fore. From Shih De Huang’s narrative, one could see how Master Cheng Yen didn’t wait for

permission; humbly, yet boldly, she stepped outside gender roles and forged a spiritual path, a school of Buddhism, and an international nonprofit organization that inspires and values the contributions of women and men equally.

**The meaning of life is not about how long we live; it’s about the depth of our life. The Buddha said the human form is rare to attain. As for this body we’ve attained, we don’t have permanent ownership but only the usage of our body as a vehicle. Our contributions might look trivial in the grand scale of things. Still, day by day, little by little, accumulating our efforts has influenced innumerable amounts of people who, in turn, extended their life and love to others.**

*Ven. Shih De Huang*



The other speakers brought their faith perspectives to the discussion. Sahar Alsahlani, a Muslim and co-chair of The Fellowship of Reconciliation, an interfaith organization, represented the Islamic view. "When I look at the Global Ethic, I wonder if it actually encompasses everything Islam has to offer women in their rights," she divulged, adding, "I find Islam a religion that liberates me and gives me a lot of moral agency with regards to how I live my life in a very protective way."

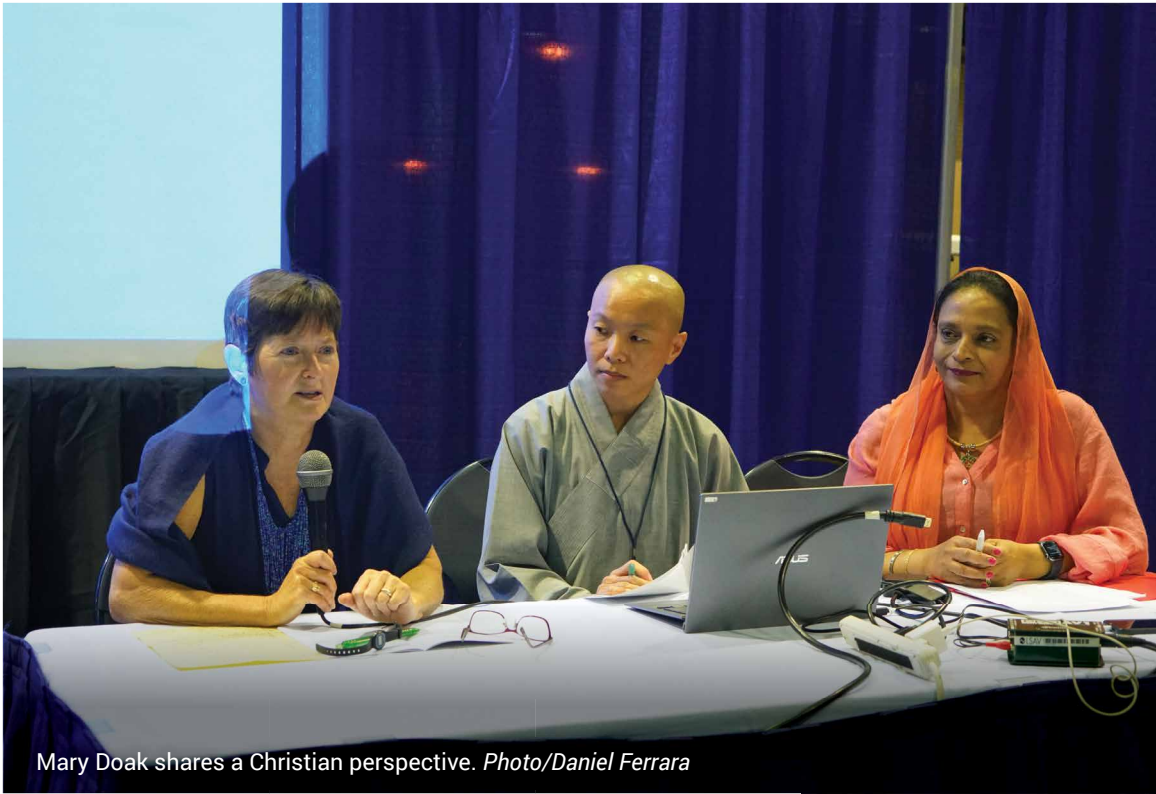
Mahrukh Motafram, a Zoroastrian and Co-Chair for the North American Zoroastrian Congress committee, shared that "Every religion and tradition has fundamental core values. Even in the most ancient of them, these fundamental principles already exist." She cited how, in 539 BCE, Cyrus the Great, a Zoroastrian who ruled the Persian Empire, issued a proclamation to preserve human rights in cities and regions under his rule.

As for PoWR's Global Ethic, "This document gives us a roadmap, a direction, a journey we can embark upon together, a way of life where we live in peace and harmony for the preservation of our surroundings on Earth, respectful and grateful for our existence and all living beings," Motafram said.

Mary Doak, a Roman Catholic and Christian theology professor at San Diego University, called out that the global ethic underscores the interdependence of human beings with the planet and each other, pointing us to restore and heal that connection. In this regard, women tend to "embrace interdependence and appreciate that interrelationality," she revealed. Doak spoke of hierarchical dualism or hierarchical binary thinking. "Everything is in relation, but things are separated into two categories, and one is valued over the other. Men over women, human over nature, white European over people of color, spirit over



Sahar Alsahlani shares her views, Mahrukh Motafram beside her. *Photo/Daniel Ferrara*



Mary Doak shares a Christian perspective. *Photo/Daniel Ferrara*

body, God over world. And one of the things that a lot of women have lifted as needing to be healed is hierarchical dualism,” Doak elaborated.

She cautioned that when we treat dominant perspectives as universal, the solutions to global crises don’t always fit everyone’s situation and needs. “There’s a call to remember differences and acknowledge the plurality. And the plurality diversity is a good and a strength that we need to foster as we seek to create a world that will work for all of us to heal the global crisis of economics, ecology, and politics,” Doak concluded.

The 2023 Parliament of the World’s Religions was a stimulating experience for attendees and participants alike, including Shih De Yuan, Shih De Cheng, and Shih De Huang. And, apart from their detailed presentations, the three Dharma



The three Dharma Masters are an ever-present inspiration to the Tzu Chi delegation during the 2023 PoWR. *Photo/Dennis Lee*





The audience applauds the panelists after having heard so many perspectives. *Photo/Daniel Ferrara*



Masters had also fulfilled Master Cheng Yen's heartfelt wish.

"Before we attended this conference, Master Cheng Yen met with us and said, 'Speaking very well is not the most important thing,' Shih De Cheng recounted. "The most important thing is to show our way. When we walk, when we eat, when we behave, from these several aspects we can show the spirit of Tzu Chi. That's the most important thing."

Indeed, as Shih De Yuan, Shih De Cheng, and Shih De Huang traversed the enormous PoWR venue daily, joined in activities, and engaged with the public, they surely maintained ever-vigilant mindfulness and virtuous grace, an inspiration to the whole Tzu Chi delegation and all along their path.



# A CLASSIC TOFU DISH

**M**apo tofu originated in Chengdu, a city in Sichuan, China, and quickly became a classic. It's a tofu dish accented with fiery flavors, and usually a good portion of ground meat. Using a plant-based meat substitute makes mapo tofu accessible to vegetarians.

The focus is, as it should be, the brightly seasoned tofu. Find frozen vegetarian ground pork in natural food stores, Asian markets, and supermarkets. Alternatively, use any other soy-meat or non-meat beef, such as Beyond Burger.



*Recipe and photo courtesy Tzu Chi Hawaii*

**SERVES 4**

## VEGETARIAN MAPO TOFU

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 (14-16-ounce) **carton soft tofu**
- 1 tablespoon **vegetable oil**
- Pinch minced **ginger**
- 1 tablespoon **spicy doubanjiang** (fermented spicy bean paste, sometimes spelled toban jiang, found in Asian aisles of supermarkets)
- 2 tablespoons **vegetarian ground pork**
- 1 tablespoon **soy sauce**
- 1 tablespoon **vegetarian stir-fry sauce**
- 1 cup **vegetarian broth**
- 1 1/2 teaspoons **potato flour** dissolved in 3 tablespoons water
- 1/2 teaspoon **chili pepper oil**
- 1/2 teaspoon **sesame oil**

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Bring a pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Dice tofu and blanch in water; drain and set aside.
2. Heat oil in the pot and stir-fry ginger until fragrant. Stir in doubanjiang. Add vegetarian pork, soy sauce, and stir-fry sauce. Stir evenly.
3. Add broth and diced tofu. Bring to boil, then simmer on low 2 minutes, to let tofu absorb the flavor of the sauce. Stir in potato flour slurry and let thicken.
4. Drizzle with chili pepper and sesame oils before serving.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving (based on 16 oz soft tofu and not including salt for salted water): 140 calories, 9 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 800 mg sodium, 5 g carbohydrate, 0 g fiber, 2 g sugar, 10 g protein. Nutritional analysis provided by Joannie Dobbs, Ph.D., C.N.S.



# 'SOUP-ER' FLAVORFUL

It takes a bit of effort to assemble these vegetarian dumplings, but in contrast, the soup is a simple matter. After cooking the wontons, just season the water lightly and toss in a few veggies for color.

Plant-based meat patties stand in for what would be ground pork in a typical wonton.



Recipe and photo courtesy Tzu Chi Hawaii

SERVES 4

## 'IMPOSSIBLE' WONTON SOUP

### INGREDIENTS:

- 35-40 dumpling wrappers
- 4 cups water
- Salt and white pepper, to taste
- Mushroom seasoning powder or vegetable bouillon, to taste
- 3-4 slices carrots
- 10 snow peas, trimmed
- Chili oil, optional
- Cilantro sprigs, for garnish


### INGREDIENTS FOR FILLING:

- 1 medium stalk celery, minced
- 10 ounces cabbage, chopped
- 12 ounces carrots, minced
- 2 (4-ounce) plant-based meat patties, such as Impossible Burger or Beyond Meat
- 1 tablespoon vegetarian stir-fry sauce
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil

### DIRECTIONS:

1. To make filling: Combine vegetables in a food processor; pulse. Add vegetarian meat patties and pulse, then add stir-fry sauce and sesame oil; mix well.
2. To assemble dumplings: Place a tablespoon of filling in center of a dumpling wrapper. Moisten edges with water. Fold in half, seal edges and form into desired shape. Continue to use up filling.
3. Bring water to boil. Cook wontons 3-5 minutes, until they float. Season water with salt, pepper and mushroom seasoning powder. Add sliced carrots and snow peas. Simmer briefly. Serve with a few drops of chili oil, if desired, and garnish with cilantro.

**NOTE:** For purposes of nutritional analysis, we can assume 1/2 teaspoon each of salt and mushroom powder.

Approximate nutrient analysis per serving (assumes 1/2 teaspoon each of salt and mushroom powder and not including optional chili oil): 450 calories, 15 g fat, 5 g saturated fat, 10 mg cholesterol, 1200 mg sodium, 61 g carbohydrate, 6 g fiber, 8 g sugar, 19 g protein. Nutritional analysis provided by Joannie Dobbs, Ph.D., C.N.S. 



# Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation Global Relief Efforts

by Adriana DiBenedetto



 Taiwan



The 9th World Vegan Organization Forum takes place at the Yuanpei University of Medical Technology in Hsinchu on August 26, inviting representatives from 130 countries worldwide committed to the “Net Zero Carbon by 2050” initiative. *Photo/Zhan Yi Ming*



 Poland



On July 29, Tzu Chi volunteers in Poland hold a graduation ceremony for Ukrainian refugees who completed Polish language courses, the graduation certificates accredited by the European Union. Beyond language instruction, the course provides warmth, advice, and guidance in seeking employment. *Photo/Sergii*





 Nepal



The Siddhartha Primary School in Lumbini holds a Rice Piggy Bank Reunion Day on August 6, inviting the community to engage in the spirit of giving by setting aside a handful of rice each day to help others in need of support. *Photo/Tzu Chi Nepal*



 Nepal



Inspired by the teachings of Dharma Master Cheng Yen, volunteers from the Teachers' Association in Lumbini convene on August 5, sharing the importance of recycling and how DA.AI Technology uses reclaimed plastic bottles to create eco-blankets for disaster survivors. *Photo/Tzu Chi Nepal*



 India

On July 4, students from the Sujata Bakrou Government School in western India receive unique, handwritten messages from Tzu Chi members and parent-child class students from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. *Photo/Yap Jin Hong*



 Chile

Tzu Chi volunteers visit the Hogar De Ancianos El Atardecer nursing home on July 8, bringing supplies and heartfelt gifts, and leading the engaging group activities they had designed for all to enjoy. *Photo/Liao Qing-ju* 🌱



# Tzu Chi USA Relief Efforts

by Adriana DiBenedetto

## Providing Ongoing Disaster Relief in Hawaii



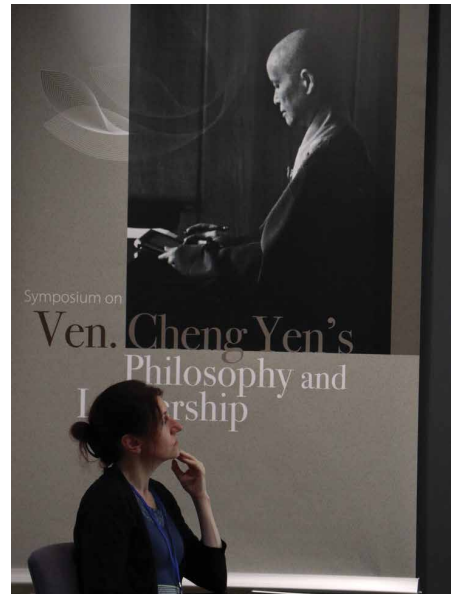
On September 3, Tzu Chi hosts its second wildfire relief distribution on Maui, providing much-needed monetary aid and a hand to hold, delivering genuine compassion and care to 301 households. *Photo/Dan Ferrara*



## Honoring Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Contributions



The “Symposium on Ven. Cheng Yen’s Philosophy and Leadership” at Harvard University on September 3-4, unites 30 Buddhist scholars from across the globe to explore the teachings and principles of Tzu Chi’s founder, Dharma Master Cheng Yen. *Photo/Jack Huang.*



## Supporting Community Mental Health



Tzu Chi USA is committed to boosting community health, including mental well-being. To help community residents, Tzu Chi USA collaborated with the California Mental Health Services Authority and Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health to host the “Resilience in Action Summit” on June 10 in California. *Photo/Shuli Lo* 🌱

# CHERISHING THIS BEAUTIFUL WORLD

*"A society is made up of many individuals; thus it is not enough for just one person to do good. To have a harmonious family and society, every one of its members must do good deeds and practice gratitude."*

*Master Cheng Yen's Teachings | Translated and Compiled by the Dharma as Water Team*

The world will never be free of sickness, suffering, disability, and disease. However, with harmony and love in people's hearts, we can have peace, be free from war, and care for all the poor, sick, and suffering.

I often think about my teacher. Sixty years ago, my teacher gave me six words: "for Buddha's teachings, for sentient beings." These words have guided me in the direction of my life and made me follow the right path and boundaries on my path as a monastic, not daring to deviate from the rules or take a wrong step.

The Buddha has also been my guiding teacher. A few hundred years after the Buddha entered Parinirvana, eminent monastics and sages compiled the Dharma in sections. All the sutras are invaluable, and every sentence teaches future generations how to break the habitual tendencies and desires of unenlightened beings. In my life, I have given commentary on several important sutras, including the Sutra of Forty-Two Chapters, the Sutra of the Buddha's Bequeathed Teachings, the Sutra of the Eight Realizations of Great Beings, the Lotus Sutra, the Medicine Buddha Sutra, and, most importantly, the Sutra of Infinite Meanings, which I will forever uphold.

Before becoming a monastic, I was at Ci Yun Temple in Taichung, and I heard one of Dharma master Xiu Dao's followers say that his neighbor had found a copy of the Lotus Sutra under the bed boards as he was renovating his house. The sutra

had been there for an unknown number of generations, and the neighbor was going to take it to a recycler. Hearing the name of the Lotus Sutra filled my heart with Dharma joy, so I quickly bought it from the person's neighbor.

I have been reading, transcribing, and teaching the Lotus Sutra, and I have never deviated from its path. The copy I got more than seventy years ago is falling apart, much like the handwritten copy of the Quran I had received from Mr. Faisal Hu of Türkiye in 2020. That copy of the Quran is 500 years old, and bugs have damaged the paper. As it is a very precious scripture, I wanted to preserve it, so we sent it to National Taiwan Library for restoration. In June of this year, the library returned to me the copy of the Quran that they had restored with great care. The delicate skill involved in the restoration work was breathtaking. I am very grateful for this affinity and that we can restore it with modern technology so that it can last for hundreds or thousands of years. It also gave me great confidence, so I entrusted this old copy of the Lotus Sutra to them so that they could also restore it and we could pass it down for generations on.

Being in this evil world of the Five Turbidities is like being in a dark tunnel, but the scriptures can help us to lead the way, and at the end of the tunnel, there is light. Although religions have different





names, the principles behind them are the same — all scripture is beneficial to people. As long as a religion's principles can be passed on, so that people with different capabilities can benefit from them, then this religion is worth promoting. Whether it is "great love," "benevolent love," or "love for humanity," all are related. As long as something benefits the world, regardless of the religion it derives from, we must promote these good things, opening the path and paving the road. These are blessings for the world.

The world can provide everyone with their living necessities, and the harmony of the four elements can allow society to thrive.

Everyone can be in harmony and help each other. When the weather, water, earth, and people are all in harmony, doesn't that create a heaven on earth, heaven in the human world? There is no reason why we should destroy each other in such a wonderful world.

Good words, good actions, and good thoughts can benefit the world; on the other hand, speaking evil words and sowing discord among people disrupts society and causes strife among nations. If people's hearts are not in unity, there will be no harmony.

With just a single thought of discord in the heart, people who shook hands and embraced one day could turn against each other the next. As a result, many people would be displaced by the scourge of war. The world will never be free from sickness and suffering, but it is possible to be safe, in peace, and free from war.

The intangible desires of the mind create karmic forces that we cannot stop, and these become the many worrisome things in the physical world. In particular, climate

change leads to storms, floods, and even forest fires; very often, a tiny spark could start a raging, unstoppable fire that burns down vast forests. The world's disasters are getting more powerful year by year, and countless people suffer from these disasters. Many people say that "humans can overcome the power of nature," but is that really true? We must not be arrogant; we must be humble and reverent.

What is the best way to express reverence? It is not by praying once a day, but by being reverent in body, speech, and mind at all times. May we be free from greed, always speak good words, be kind to others, and praise one another. I love the land we live on and hope we will all love and cherish it. I hope that if one country is in trouble, other countries can provide assistance with love and care without problems; I also hope that people can come and go freely and be free from any disputes or conflicts. May all the impoverished, suffering, ill, and disabled people in the world find comfort, love, and care.

It is impossible to ask the eight billion people in the world to share the same mind. However, all Tzu Chi volunteers can ask themselves to inspire people who have affinities with them. We have to create the right causes and conditions and share about Tzu Chi with everyone, say good words, make great vows, and do good deeds to provide wide relief to suffering.

My greatest concern is seeing that people in the world need help, but we cannot reach them or help them. They may have survived a disaster, but can they live on? When we think of their suffering and how many people are suffering and starving while we are safe and comfortable, we must recognize and cherish our blessings. We also need to sincerely invite more Bodhisattvas to go among people to create more blessings. So, everyone, please always be mindful! 🙏





# Illuminations

Dharma Master Cheng Yen responds to questions and comments from visitors, volunteers, staff, and disciples.

## WHAT CONSTITUTES AN AUSPICIOUS TIME

**Question:** *I failed to check for an auspicious time to marry my wife; does it matter?*

**Answer:** *When we are joyous at all times, then any time is auspicious.*

## DREAMING OF THE DEAD

**Question:** *I often dream of the dead. What should I do?*

**Answer:** *Birth is the beginning of death, and death is the beginning of birth. When you dream of death, it means that you are dreaming of birth. You will not have any worries if you can be understanding toward everything.*

## CHALLENGES ARE INEVITABLE IN LIFE

**Question:** *Why did I encounter so many misfortunes after becoming a Buddhist practitioner? Is this a test from Mara?*

**Answer:** *As we travel on our journey in life, we will inevitably encounter bumps on the road and challenges. When that happens, you should feel lucky that you encountered them after becoming a Buddhist because you now have a faith that can give you the courage and persistence to face adversities and overcome obstacles. As are the causes and conditions, so are the effects; all situations happen due to the laws of karma. 🌿*



State	Tzu Chi USA Offices	Address	Tel / Fax	State	Tzu Chi USA Offices	Address	Tel / Fax
AZ	Phoenix Service Center	2145 W. Elliot Rd. Chandler, AZ 85224	480-838-6556 F: 480-777-7665	KS	Kansas Office	9508 Shannon Way Circle Wichita, KS 67206	316-323-5798
S. CA	Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, US Headquarters Area	1100 S. Valley Center Ave. San Dimas, CA 91773	909-447-7799 F: 909-447-7948	LA	New Orleans Office	52 Driftwood Blvd. Kenner, LA 70065	504-782-5168 F: 504-832-2022
	Jing Si Books & Café, San Dimas		909-447-7799 x 6569	MD	Montgomery County Service Center		703-707-8606 F: 301-339-8872
	Tzu Chi Academy, San Dimas		909-447-7799 x 6551 F: 909-447-7944	MA	Boston Service Center	15 Summer St.	617-762-0569
	Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation	1008 S. Garfield Ave. Alhambra, CA 91801	626-427-9598 F: 626-788-2321		Tzu Chi Academy, Boston	Newton, MA 02464	617-431-4844 F: 617-431-4484
	Tzu Chi Medical Center, Alhambra		626-281-3383 F: 626-281-5303	MI	Lansing Office	3511 West Hiawatha Dr., Okemos, MI 48864	517-505-3388
	Tzu Chi Community Clinic, South El Monte	10414 Vacco St. South El Monte, CA 91733	626-636-8706 F: 626-671-8778		Detroit Service Center	2207 Dryden Rd. Troy, MI 48085	586-795-3491 F: 586-795-3491
	Buddhist Tzu Chi Education Foundation	1920 S. Brea Canyon Cutoff Rd. Walnut, CA 91789	909-895-2125 F: 909-345-7025	MN	Minneapolis Office	1485 Arden View Dr. Arden Hills, MN 55112	617-939-6965
	Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool & Kindergarten, Walnut		909-895-2126 F: 909-927-8336	MO	St. Louis Service Center	8515 Olive Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63132	314-994-1999 F: 314-994-1999
	Tzu Chi Elementary, Walnut		909-895-2125 x 3200 F: 909-345-7025		Reno Office	903 West Moana Lane Reno, NV 89509	775-827-6333 F: 775-770-1148
	Tzu Chi Academy, Walnut		909-895-2280	NV	Las Vegas Service Center/ Academy	2590 Lindell Rd. Las Vegas, NV 89146	702-880-5552 F: 702-880-5552
	Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool & Kindergarten, Monrovia	206 E. Palm Ave. Monrovia, CA 91016	626-305-1188 F: 626-599-8098		Mid-Atlantic Region/Jing Si Books & Café	150 Commerce Rd. Cedar Grove, NJ 07009	973-857-8666 F: 973-857-9555
	Tzu Chi Academy, Monrovia	220 E. Palm Ave. Monrovia, CA 91016	626-775-3675 F: 626-359-8199	NJ	Tzu Chi Academy, Northern New Jersey		
	West Los Angeles Service Center	11701 Wilshire Blvd. #15A Los Angeles, CA 90025	310-473-5188 F: 310-477-9518		Tzu Chi Academy, Central New Jersey	50 Woodrow Wilson Dr., Edison, NJ 08820	973-857-8666
	Torrance Service Center	1355 Broad Ave. Wilmington, CA 90744	310-684-4465 F: 310-684-4460		Central New Jersey Service Center		908-420-5218
	Tzu Chi Community Clinic, Wilmington		310-684-4466 F: 855-651-1717		Northeast Region/Academy	137-77 Northern Blvd. Flushing, NY 11354	718-888-0866 F: 718-460-2068
	Orange County Service Center	22911 Mill Creek Dr. Laguna Hills, CA 92653	949-916-4488 F: 949-916-5933		Jing Si Books & Café, New York		718-799-3000
	Tzu Chi Academy, Irvine	4321 Walnut Ave., Irvine, CA 92604	714-624-3026 F: 949-916-5933		Brooklyn Service Center	513 57th Street Brooklyn, NY 11220	917-909-0682
Cerritos Service Center	14618&14620 Carmenita Rd. Norwalk, CA 90650	562-926-6609 F: 562-926-1603		Long Island Branch/Academy	60 E Williston Ave. East Williston, NY 11596	516-873-6888 F: 516-746-0626	
Northridge Service Center	8963 Reseda Blvd. Northridge, CA 91324	818-727-7689 F: 818-727-9272		Manhattan Service Center	63 Canal Street New York, NY 10002	212-965-1151 F: 212-965-1152	
San Gabriel Valley Service Center	9620 Flair Dr. El Monte, CA 91731	626-416-4527 Warehouse: 626-416-4529		East Long Island Office	4 Milburn Rd. S. Setauket, NY 11720	631-964-3393	
Jing Si Books & Café, El Monte		626-448-1362		Tzu Chi Center, New York	229 E. 60th St. New York, NY 10022	212-660-9229 F: 646-864-0086	
San Diego Service Center	5754 Pacific Center Blvd. #202 San Diego, CA 92121	858-546-0578 F: 858-546-0573		Raleigh Service Center		919-322-8389	
N. CA	Northwest Region	2355 Oakland Rd. San Jose, CA 95131	408-457-6969 F: 408-943-8420	NC	Charlotte Office	4527 Dwight Evans Rd. Charlotte, NC 28217	704-281-8060 F: 704-943-1031
	Tzu Chi Academy, Tri-Valley		925-785-7413		Cincinnati Office	11228 Brookbridge Dr. Cincinnati, OH 45249	513-469-2161 F: 513-469-2161
	Jing Si Books & Café, San Jose		408-457-6981	OH	Columbus Service Center	2200 Henderson Rd. Columbus, OH 43220	614-457-9215 F: 614-457-9217
	San Francisco Branch	2901 Irving St. San Francisco, CA 94122	415-682-0566 F: 415-682-0567		Dayton Service Center	1459 E Dorothy Lane Dayton, OH 45429	937-701-7111
	Tzu Chi Academy, San Mateo	2675 Ralston Ave., Belmont, CA 94002	650-888-1582		Cleveland Service Center	1076 Ford Rd. Highland Heights, OH 44143	440-646-9292 F: 440-646-9292
	Tzu Chi Academy, San Francisco	350 Girard St. San Francisco, CA 94134	415-680-5225 F: 415-682-0567		Portland Service Center	3800 SW Cedar Hills Blvd #194 Beaverton, OR 97005	503-643-2130 F: 503-643-2130
	Modesto Service Center	1100 Carver Rd. #J Modesto, CA 95350	209-529-2625 F: 209-529-2625	OR	Tzu Chi Academy, Portland	3500 SW 104th Ave. Beaverton, OR 97005	503-643-2130
	Stockton Office	1212 W Robinhood Dr. #3D Stockton, CA 95207	209-957-7800 F: 209-957-7800		Philadelphia Office	107 North 9th Street Philadelphia, PA 19107	215-627-1915 F: 215-627-1916
	Tzu Chi Academy, Cupertino	1280 Johnson Ave San Jose, CA 95129	408-823-8799	PA	Pittsburgh Service Center/ Academy	1333 Banksville Rd. #201 Pittsburgh, PA 15216	412-531-8343 F: 412-531-8341
	Santa Rosa Office	2435 Professional Drive, Suite D Santa Rosa, CA 95403	707-546-1945		Southern Region/Academy	6200 Corporate Dr. Houston, TX 77036	713-270-9988 F: 713-981-9008
	Sacramento Service Center	1820 Tribute Rd. # J Sacramento, CA 95815	916-568-5800		Jing Si Books & Café, Houston		713-981-8966
	Ukiah Office	527 S State St. #B Ukiah, CA 95482	707-462-2911 F: 707-462-2911		Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool & Kindergarten, Houston		713-395-0303 F: 713-395-0305
	Oakland Service Center	620 International Blvd. Oakland, CA 94606	510-879-0971 F: 510-879-0971		Austin Service Center	7221 Northeast Dr. Austin, TX 78723	512-491-0358 F: 512-926-1373
	Tzu Chi Academy, San Jose	625 Educational Park Dr. San Jose, CA 95133	408-457-6970	TX	San Antonio Office	19179 Blanco Rd. #109-2 San Antonio, TX 78258	909-576-2387 F: 210-566-3970
	Fresno Service Center	7421 N Maple Ave. Fresno, CA 93720	559-298-4894 F: 559-298-4894		Central Region/Academy/ Jing Si Books & Café	534 W. Belt Line Rd. Richardson, TX 75080	972-680-8869 F: 972-680-7732
	Orlando Service Center	5401 Alhambra Dr. #A Orlando, FL 32808	407-292-1146 F: 407-292-1146		Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool & Kindergarten, Dallas		214-446-1776 F: 214-446-1772
	Miami Service Center	8070 Pasadena Blvd. Pembroke Pines, FL 33024	954-538-1172 F: 317-645-9907	VA	Greater Washington D.C. Region/ Academy	1516 Moorings Dr. Reston, VA 20190	703-707-8606 F: 703-707-8607
Atlanta Branch/ Tzu Chi Academy, Atlanta	3120 Medlock Bridge Rd. Building E Peachtree Corners, GA 30071	770-458-1000		Richmond Service Center	1318 Tomahawk Creek Rd. Midlothian, VA 23114	804-306-6037 F: 804-378-3520	
Pacific Islands Region/Academy	1238 Wilhelmina Rise Honolulu, HI 96816	808-737-8885	WA	Seattle Branch/Academy	15800 SE Newport Way Bellevue WA 98006	425-643-9104	
Midwest Region/Academy/ Jing Si Books & Café	1430 Plainfield Rd. Darien, IL 60561	630-963-6601 F: 630-960-9360		Milwaukee Office	5356 W. Silverleaf Ln, Brown Deer, WI 53223	414-357-8427	
Chicago Chinatown Service Center	215 W 23rd St., Chicago, IL 60616		WI	Madison Office	1019 Starlight Ln, Cottage Grove, WI 53527	608-960-1962	
Indianapolis Service Center	2929 E. 96th St. #E Indianapolis, IN 46240	317-580-0979					



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Three Dharma Masters from the Jing Si Abode, where Dharma Master Cheng Yen resides, are part of the Tzu Chi delegation to the 2023 Parliament of the World's Religions, and together, they offer a Buddhist prayer during the Climate Action Assembly on August 14. *Photo/Jennifer Chien*