

A Letter to Dharma Protectors and Friends in 2021

Dear Dharma protectors and friends,
Auspicious greetings!

“A man’s lifetime diligence brings a lush land of green; an ox’s ever-trodding hooves turn over million acres of gold.” In the Year of Ox, I, Hsin Bau, on behalf of the Fo Guang Shan Board of Directors and worldwide Fo Guang Shan Sangha, wish for everyone to “Cultivate a Heart that Blooms in All Seasons.” May we practice diligently for the blooming of wisdom all year round.

In the early days of Fo Guang Shan, the founder Venerable Master Hsing Yun built a pathway over a valley—the Treasure Bridge—for visitors to reach Tsung-Lin University and the Great Compassion Shrine on the other side. In recent years, however, Venerable Master noticed that the flight of stairs leading to the bridge was not easily accessible by elderly devotees. As such, he instructed for the construction of a “new” Treasure Bridge to connect the Main Shrine directly to the Great Compassion Shrine. Upon its completion, Venerable Master joyfully said, “Though it is a very short bridge, it is a boundless pathway in life.” This exemplifies the bodhisattva spirit of giving as advocated by Humanistic Buddhism.



50 years after the first FGS Treasure Bridge, the new Treasure Bridge gives elderly devotees convenient access to the Great Compassion Shrine. (Photo by Venerable Zhi Guang)

In light of the COVID-19 global pandemic, showing us how insignificant human beings are in the face of nature, we humbly initiated the efforts of monastics and laity worldwide to collectively chant the *Heart Sutra* as a prayer for a swift end to the pandemic. Accumulating over 25 million recitations, all merits were dedicated to those affected. In Venerable Master's "A Prayer to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva for Safety from the Coronavirus Outbreak," he gives the following words of encouragement: "No matter how difficult the situation, as long as there is compassion and wisdom. When we all practice the Three Acts of Goodness—do good deeds, speak good words, and think good thoughts—if we all protect the environment and have respect for all lives, we shall be able to turn peril into safety." For us to live and work peacefully, it is important to remember that human beings coexist with Mother Nature.

Upholding the spirit of striving to rescue all beings from suffering and adversity, the Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA) World Headquarters initiated the donation of over 4.3 million masks worldwide, in countries such as Mainland China, the United States, Canada, and Brazil. Together, BLIA members have delivered personal protective equipment to medical care centers, government agencies, and police departments, as well as to rural clinics and vulnerable institutions. This endeavor was only possible through the assistance of many people including Zhang Jingzhi—Secretary-General of the Master Hsing Yun Cultural and Educational Foundation; Lim Bong Khai—Elder Advisor of BLIA Malaysia Chapter; and Hong Tsu Ho—Elder Advisor of BLIA Brazil.

Development of Online Dharma Propagation due to COVID-19

As countries and cities across the globe announce lock-downs and stay-at-home orders to ensure public health and safety, we too have made adjustments to our methods of Dharma propagation. Under the guidance of Ven. Hui Chuan—President of the Fo Guang Shan Executive Council, Ven. Hui Zhao's team at the Information Technology department has assisted Fo Guang Shan branch temples worldwide and the BLIA in using technology to hold various activities online.

In March, for example, the 2020 Chan and Pure Land Prayer Service held in front of the Main Shrine at Fo Guang Shan was broadcasted live through

Beautiful Live Television (BLTV) and the internet. Over 70,000 people worldwide joined the 500 monastics on-site in a collective prayer for world peace and prosperity.

In April, there was a live broadcast of the Bathing the Buddha Ceremony held at the FGS Main Shrine in celebration of the Buddha's Birthday. To commemorate the significance of the Buddha's birth in the human world, over 4.7 million people from 152 countries participated in the virtual bathing of the Buddha.

In August, the 2020 International Buddha's Light Young Adult Conference was held online with "Faith and Legacy" as its theme, bringing together 800 youths from 23 countries. Transcending the differences in time and space, it united everyone in the spirit of "Bodhisattva Heart and Youthful Strength." Similarly, in October, the BLIA hosted its 2020 World Conference online. Venerable Master Hsing Yun offered his best wishes during the opening ceremony, touching the hearts of participants around the world. Throughout the conference, which I had the honor of chairing, Venerable Tzu Jung—Acting President of BLIA World Headquarters—offered her guidance for each motion on the agenda. The conference was held in nine languages with simultaneous oral interpretation in Chinese, English, German, French, Japanese, Cantonese, Portuguese, Spanish, and Korean. 11,000 members from over 50 countries and 101 BLIA Chapters took part. When Venerable Chueh Pei—Secretary-General of BLIA World Headquarters—made this fact known at the conference, it was met with enthusiastic applause.

Catalyzed by the global pandemic, online Dharma propagation has reached far and wide. For example, I had the opportunity to preside over a "Taking Refuge in the Triple Gem Ceremony" online for 500 devotees from 20 European



The 2020 International Buddha's Light Young Adult Conference hosted online, gathering 800 youths from 23 countries across 5 continents.

(Photo provided by BLIAYAD, Taiwan Headquarters)

countries, where simultaneous oral interpretation in English and French was provided. Moreover, Venerable Yung Ku of FGS New York has hosted daily episodes of “Good Morning Dharma” on YouTube. Venerable Yung Fu has led her team of monastics at FGS Hong Kong in the making of videos on Buddhist stories and on *Between Ignorance and Enlightenment*. Venerable Chueh Ju of FGS Hui Chung Temple has released a series of online talks by various speakers in “Future and Hope: Cloud Lecture Hall.” Our branch temples worldwide also offer online Dharma talks, aiming to bring people peace of mind. Likewise, Venerable Miao Nan of FGS Tsung-Lin University has invited a panel of youthful monastics—including Venerables Hui Rang, Hui Zhi, Hui Ping, You Xian, and You Ding—to produce the online Buddhist college program, “What’s in Tsung-Lin?” Venerable Miao Guang and the FGS Institute of Humanistic Buddhism Team have released “Bodhi Light Tales” Podcast to bring the Dharma to English speakers worldwide. Moreover, as part of a series of online English Dharma Services broadcasted through YouTube, they have invited monastics across the world to give weekly Dharma talks and guided readings in English on the *Complete Works of Venerable Master Hsing Yun*.

The Continuation of Culture by Bridging Past and Present

It is necessary for Buddhist culture, dating back over two thousand years, to adapt to the needs of various locales and time periods. As such, it must keep up with modern developments. To allow Humanistic Buddhism to stay relevant, Venerable Master has proposed the following: the modernization of Buddhist language by using vernacular language, the modernization of Dharma propagation by utilizing current technology, the modernization of cultivation by focusing on daily living, and the modernization of temples by functioning as schools.

The FGS Buddhist Canon Committee published the 55-volume *Sravaka Canon* of the *Fo Guang Buddhist Canon* in August. Under the guidance of Elder Venerable Tzu Hui and editor-in-chief Venerable Yi Heng, the editorial team spent 12 years compiling the canon, which includes 42 historical and influential sectarian commentaries—such as the *Mahāvibhāṣā Śāstra* and *Abhidharmakosa Śāstra*—alongside its respective research. On a similar note, as reported by Venerable Jue Yuan, Director of the FGS Sutra Repository, Fo Guang Shan is

one of the few Buddhist orders in Taiwan with a comprehensive collection of Buddhist canons, which has an important effect on the preservation of Buddhist culture. The repository houses 50 editions of the Chinese, Theravada, and Tibetan Buddhist canons, published in 17 languages and from 13 different countries. Most of the canons were collected by Venerable Master over the last 50 to 60 years, including the *Pinjia Canon* and the Japanese *Tetsugen Canon*, serving as Venerable Master's references in his youth when he wrote the *Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha*.

Keeping up with the rapid development of internet technology, Venerable Jue Nian from the Voice of Ganges Co. Ltd. released an app for Venerable Master Hsing Yun's audiobooks that allows people to listen at their convenience. Furthermore, she invited Venerable Yi Kung—Chancellor of FGS Culture Council—to give a series of talks introducing the *Complete Works of Venerable Master Hsing Yun*. Also, Venerable Man Guan from Fo Guang Cultural Enterprises was pleased to unveil the electronic version of the *Complete Works*, facilitating the learning of the Dharma.

Moreover, 15 public talks were organized around Taiwan as part of the 2020 annual tour of the Humanistic Buddhist Reading Conferences on Sutras, with over 70,000 people reading the *Complete Works of Venerable Master Hsing Yun*. In particular, one of the talks broadcasted online had over 200,000 viewers across Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and India.

Further good news came in August from Venerable Chueh Yann in Portugal: *365 Days for Travelers: Wisdom from Chinese Literary and Buddhist Classics* has been published in Portuguese. The book, with Venerable Master as editor-in-chief, has now been translated into 12 languages. Over 1.75 million copies have been distributed by the Association of Ancient and Modern Humanities to schools, libraries, and hotels. As we travel on this journey of life, Venerable Master hopes to bring inspiration to the readers of this book so that those who are weary can find encouragement, and those who are dejected can gain new clarity of mind.

Venerable Miao Pu from Shanghai Dajue Culture also reported that all 132 volumes of *Selected Chinese Buddhist Texts in Modern Language* have been published in Simplified Chinese. This is not only a step forward in the

modernization of Buddhist sutras, but also a great occasion in terms of Cross-Strait Buddhist cultural exchanges. Furthermore, Chineseall.cn has produced 164 ebook editions of Venerable Master Hsing Yun's works, benefiting millions of readers and listeners.



Selected Chinese Buddhist Texts in Modern Language, published in Simplified Chinese, conveys the essence of the *Tripitaka* in the vernacular and provides an easy way to learn Buddhism today.

The Fo Guang Shan Institute of Humanistic Buddhism (FGSIHB) has nominated 40 scholars as honorary professors and researchers for the advancement of research on Humanistic Buddhism and its propagation. Hailing from eight countries, amongst them are Lewis R. Lancaster (University of California, Berkeley), Kiyotaka Kimura (University of Tokyo), Lou Yulie (Beijing University), and Wei Daoru (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences). The FGSIHB's Center of International Affairs has not only published the *Studies on Humanistic Buddhism* series, but also the *Glossary of Humanistic Buddhism* and the first three volumes of *Buddha-Dharma: Pure and Simple* in English. Other FGSIHB publications include *Religious Syncretism: Collection of Papers on When Buddha Meets the Gods Event*. As reported by Venerable Miao Fan, Chancellor of the FGSIHB, this is the first study on the practice of religious syncretism in Humanistic Buddhism.

Also, in celebration of its 20th anniversary, the *Merit Times* has collaborated with Thailand's *Universal Daily News* to issue special weekly editions. According to Venerable Miao Xi, President of the *Merit Times*, this is another laudable event resulting from the newspaper's collaboration with 18 overseas temples and their local Chinese media. Readership of the weekly overseas edition of the *Merit Times* has now reached over a million.

Fostering Future Talents with a Focus on Education

In his article "The Future Prospects of Fo Guang Shan," Venerable Master Hsing Yun highlights that education is the foundation for the prosperity of Buddhism. For the future, Fo Guang Shan disciples should strive to support

its five universities as well as other social education and cultural endeavors. There is a saying, “Ten years are needed to plant a tree, while a hundred years are needed to nurture a man.” As our hundred years of work has just begun, we must solidify the foundation of our universities and ensure the continuation of the Million-Member Fundraising Campaign to support education.

With the efforts of Presidents Yung Chaur-shin and Lin Tsung-ming, both Fo Guang University and Nanhua University had full enrollment as Advanced Subjects Test (AST) results were announced. Moreover, Fo Guang University received the Ministry of Education’s Arts Education Contribution Award for its emphasis on establishing foundations in Art and Culture. Nanhua University also achieved excellence in being certified as a National Environmental Education Institute and Environment Education Facility by the Environmental Protection Administration. The university also received other awards such as the National Enterprise Environmental Protection Gold Award and Green Action Award.

We were informed by Venerable Man Ko from Australia that Nan Tien Institute’s accreditation by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) has been renewed for another seven years and that the first class of students specializing in Humanistic Buddhism graduated. On behalf of the monastery, Venerable Yung Guang in the Philippines expressed our gratitude to Dr. Helen Correa for fulfilling her term as the first President of Guang Ming College. Acknowledging Venerable Master’s ideals, Dr. Michael Tan, former President of the University of the Philippines, will continue to advance education in Humanistic Buddhism as the next President of Guang Ming College.

In 2020, Pumen High School had 26 students admitted to college via the Multi-Star Project, among which 15 were admitted to national universities. The school’s baseball team won third place, for the third time, in the Wooden Bat Division of the High School Baseball League and was recognized with the 2020 Award for Excellent High School Sports Team. The first athletes of Nanhua’s soccer and baseball teams have graduated and are now serving in related professional fields to continue pursuing their athletic dreams. Holding on to Venerable Master’s ideal of “sports as education,” Liu Chao-ming, President

of the Three Acts of Goodness Sports Association, especially expressed his gratitude to its sports coaches: basketball coaches Yang Shu-ching, Liao Che-yi, and Tai Wan-rong; baseball coaches Tsai Chung-nan and Hung Rong-hung; and soccer coach Tu Teng-sheng. The association will continue its full support to dedicated and hard-working athletes.

Fo Guang Shan Malaysia has collaborated with the University of Malaya, one of the top 60 universities in the QS Global World Ranking, in establishing the UM Humanistic Buddhism Research Centre at its campus. Representatives Venerable Jue Cheng—Abbess of Fo Guang Shan Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia—and Datuk Danny Wong Tze Ken—Dean of the UM Department of Anthropology and Sociology—signed the collaboration agreement, marking the establishment of the first academic institute dedicated to the study of Humanistic Buddhism in an Islamic country.

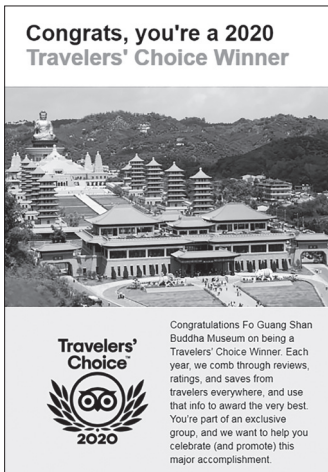
Da Ci Children's Home, founded in 1970, also celebrated its 50th anniversary. Venerable Yi Lai and Hsiao Pi-liang Shigu, who have accompanied and cared for over 1,000 children, both expressed their joy in seeing the children raised at the home grow to establish themselves and contribute their talents to society.

Promoting Humanistic Buddhism Through Awards and Honors

The 8th Hsing Yun Education Awards was held by the Venerable Master Hsing Yun Public Education Trust Fund. Dr. Chen Rong-chi of National Taiwan University's College of Medicine was the honored recipient of the 2020 Lifelong Role Model for Education Award, after unanimous agreement from President Yung Chaur-shin and fellow committee members. In addition, the Award for Exemplary Teacher was presented to 18 individuals. Furthermore, 198 elementary and high schools became Three Acts of Goodness Schools. With the assistance of Professor Lee Jui-teng, the Hsing Yun Award for Global Chinese Literature is now in its 10th year, with Sima Zhongyuan, a renowned author, receiving the Award of Contribution. Other awards were also presented to 25 authors.

The Future of Buddhism is in My Hands is a documentary conceived by Dr. Charles H.C. Kao and Cora Wang, respectively the founder and CEO of Global

Views-Commonwealth Publishing Group. Chronicling Venerable Master's Dharma propagation for over half a century, the documentary won an honorable mention in the 2020 Heritales: International Heritage Film Festival's category for long documentaries—a testimony to Venerable Master's contributions in spreading Humanistic Buddhism across the five continents.



Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum wins the Tripadvisor 2020 Traveler's Choice Award.

(Photo provided by
FGS Buddha Museum)

The FGS Buddha Museum, certified as the youngest member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 2014, also joined the Federation of International Human Rights Museum Asia-Pacific (FIHRM-AP) last year. Additionally, it has received the Travelers' Choice Award from Tripadvisor for its third consecutive year—an honor received by only 10% of travel destinations worldwide, according to Venerable Ru Chang, Director of the Buddha Museum. Moreover, the Museum once again received the Best Public Restroom Certification by the Kaohsiung City Government Environmental Protection Bureau. It has also been included as one of the top 25 disabled-friendly attractions in a guidebook compiled by the Kaohsiung Tourism Bureau to promote a more accessible city for all. Similarly, *CommonWealth Magazine* has praised the Buddha Museum as being a “humanistic museum for the future.”

In the past year, the Buddha Museum has brought joy to many through several events. For example, it has collaborated with the Ministry of Culture's Bureau of Cultural Heritage to jointly organize the “National Treasures Exhibition: A Close Look at Taiwan's Traditional Crafts.” 15 national-level artisans congregated for the first time to exhibit their unique crafts. Additionally, in response to the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, the Buddha Museum collaborated with the National Science and Technology Museum to organize the first Taiwan Science Festival, with the theme of “The Earth, Ours to Care,” and an exhibition on “Technology and Readiness for Disaster Reduction.” The exhibition was an immersive and interactive learning experience for the many

students who visited during the International Book Fair and Vegetarian Expo. Furthermore, the Yunlin County Bureau of Tourism held the “Craftsmanship of Yunlin: Beigang Centennial Religious Arts and Crafts Exhibition” at the Buddha Museum. Last but not least, the Buddha Museum has joined the Google Arts and Culture platform.

Having promoted the Three Acts of Goodness and taught in correctional facilities for years, the BLIA was awarded the Public Welfare Contribution Award by the Ministry of the Interior, the only religious organization to receive such an honor. The following FGS branch temples also received the Religious Group Commendation Award from the Executive Yuan for the past consecutive years: Lanyang Temple, Chi Le Temple, Che San Temple, Da Ming Temple, Fa Bao Temple, Hong Fa Association, Yuan Fu Temple, Fu Guo Temple, Nan Ping Temple, Gangshan Lecture Hall, and Hai Tian Monastery. Fo Guang Shan branch temples play a key role in bringing kindness to society. For example, 2.5 million bowls of Laba congee are distributed annually by branch temples on the Buddha’s Enlightenment Day.

Interfaith Harmony in International Dharma Propagation

In February, Fo Guang Shan Thaihua Temple held a consecration ceremony for the Triple Gem Buddha Statues in its Main Shrine. Upon Most Venerable Abbot Hsin Ting’s invitation, the ceremony was presided by His Holiness Somdej Phra Ariyawongsakhatayan, the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand. The ceremony included chanting from both Northern and Southern traditions, as well as a Sangha offering to 2200 monastics. Although Thaihua Temple is less than a decade old, it is the only Chinese Buddhist temple listed amongst the ten most magnificent temples in Thailand.

The sunshine of May brought 2,500 peonies from Heze, Shandong into blossom at Hosuiji Temple, Japan. Abbess Venerable Man Run dedicated the occasion to Venerable Master, for enabling the conditions that brought about this symbol of auspiciousness and hope for all in this pandemic. In addition, Shibukawa City and the Kan-etsu bus system has included Hosuiji Temple as a key destination to promote local tourism—an opportunity for locals to learn about Humanistic Buddhism.

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Across the globe in Bussy Saint-George, France, hailed by the United Nations as the city for interfaith dialogue, Fo Guang Shan France hosted the “8th Interfaith Prayer and Light Offering for World Peace Concert.” As reported by Venerable Miao Duo, representatives from Judaism, Catholicism, Islam, Hinduism, Eastern Orthodox Church, and Buddhism congregated to pray for world peace.

In response to the global pandemic, Venerable Man Shin of Fo Guang Shan North Island New Zealand created a 3G4G (Three Acts of Goodness and Four Givings) banner hung outside the temple to bring comfort to all who see it. This banner drew the attention of the Auckland Museum and is now part of their collection. In November, *Kia Ora*, the inflight magazine of Air New Zealand, published an article on the temple’s Water Drop Tea House, art gallery, and garden aesthetics, giving passengers a chance to sample Humanistic Buddhism.

According to Venerable Miao You from Brazil, close to 10 million people have registered as “hard of hearing” and sign language is now the country’s second official language. To meet the needs of those with disabilities, and allow them the opportunity to learn about Buddhism, Zu Lai Temple has planned a series of Dharma classes given in sign language. Furthermore, the Lotus Gesture that represents Humanistic Buddhism and BLIA has been included in the vocabulary of the Brazilian Sign Language. This is indeed a new beginning of Dharma propagation in South America.

Venerable Miao Yuan—Head Abbess of FGS South America—has reported that Hospital Los Angeles Paraguay-China and BLIA Chinese Charity Foundation of Paraguay have donated 17 incubators, 12 bili lights, and 10 vital signs monitoring devices to 11 public hospitals in Paraguay, saving more than 10,000 infants to date.

To commemorate the 32nd year of Hsi Lai Temple, Venerable Hui Dong especially created a short film about its history, beginning in 1978 when Venerable Master first instructed Venerable Tzu Chuang to build a temple in the United States. Despite many challenges along the way, Humanistic Buddhism had finally been brought to the West.

In November, the United Association of Humanistic Buddhism, Chunghua held the “5th Humanistic Buddhism Development Seminar and Members

Conference” at Jin Guang Ming Temple. The conference consisted not only of several proposals and discussions, but also included a panel discussion on the Buddhist perspective regarding management. There were 300 participants, including representatives from Dharma Drum Mountain, Tzu Chi Foundation, Bliss and Wisdom Sangha, and other temples. During the conference, member organizations that established Buddhist colleges were presented with a set of the *Fo Guang Buddhist Canon*.

Under the leadership of Venerable Master, Fo Guang Shan Ancestral Temple Dajue Temple is nearing the completion of its fourth phase of construction. Similarly, the construction of Tianlong Temple in Nanjing is also coming to an end. These are the results of the collaborative efforts by Venerable Miao Shi—Superintendent of FGS Mainland China—and Venerables Hui Kuan, Hui Hao, and Hui Ming in Nanjing.

Lastly, I would like to use this opportunity to invite everyone to participate in the Buddha Museum’s 10th Anniversary Celebration this upcoming year, and be part of the united effort in promoting culture and establishing a Pure Land on Earth.

The fruits of Dharma propagation, as reported by abbots and abbesses worldwide, are possible only by the whole-hearted support and contributions of our benefactors, devotees, and friends. In the words of Venerable Master, “Humanistic Buddhism is the light of hope for the future of humanity.” As long as we continue to uphold the spirit expressed by the saying “Buddhism depends on me,” and practice the Buddha’s way—as long as we remember our initial aspirations and find strength in forbearance—world peace and a Pure Land on Earth are not far in the future.

My best wishes to you in perfecting merit and wisdom, and may all be auspicious!

Hsin Bau
Head Abbot

Chairperson, Fo Guang Board of Directors
New Year’s Day, 2021

(Translated by the FGS Institute of Humanistic Buddhism,
Center of International Affairs)