



Humanistic Buddhism:

Community Wellness Digest Vol. 2, No. 3 (March 2023)

In this Issue:

- THE DEATH OF VENERABLE MASTER HSING YUN
- HUMANISTIC BUDDHISM
- FO GUANG SHAN
- RECOMMENDED READING/RESOURCES

Editors: Jiang Wu and Hannah Greene

Contributors: James Baskind, Manojkumar Saranathan, Ziling Wan

Welcome to the Center for Buddhist Studies Community Wellness Digest!

In this monthly email, we share wisdom from Buddhist teachings you can use in your daily life, wellness tips, and information about university and community events. After a successful launch in Spring 2021, we are expanding the newsletter with a team of expert contributors and new sections. Each month will feature a theme--this month we explore **HUMANISTIC BUDDHISM** and honor the life of the late **Venerable Master Hsing Yun**.

The opinions expressed in the books, articles, and websites referenced in this newsletter are those of the original authors and publishers, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Center for Buddhist Studies, the editors, the editorial board, or the organization to which the authors are affiliated. If you have questions concerning these opinions, please contact the original authors and their publishers.

If you would like to receive monthly emails on this topic, please sign up for our email list [here](#) and select the group "Community Wellness Newsletter." For those who have already signed up for our email list, please [update your preferences](#) to include "Community Wellness Newsletter."

Let us know what you think by emailing buddhist-studies@u.arizona.edu. Enjoying the newsletter? Hit the buttons below

and share it with your network.

Sincerely,
Jiang Wu
Director, Center for Buddhist Studies



Share



Tweet



Forward



IN HONOR OF VENERABLE MASTER HSING YUN

Venerable Master Hsing Yun 星雲, a leading figure in Chinese Buddhism and a proponent of Humanistic Buddhism, passed away on February 5, 2023 in Taiwan at the age of 97. Master Hsing Yun founded the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist order and the Buddha's Light International Association, a group for lay people. The death of Master Hsing Yun will be felt deeply by all who benefited from his mentorship and leadership.

In this edition of the Community Wellness Newsletter, we explore the influence of Master Hsing Yun in Taiwan and abroad, and the legacy of Humanistic Buddhism in the development of modern Chinese Buddhism.

On March 3, 2023, our Center director Dr. Jiang Wu spoke at an online "Memorial Seminar for Venerable Master Hsing Yun - A Roundtable of Global Buddhist Scholars," organized by the Center for the Study of Humanistic Buddhism of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Center for Buddhist Studies of Peking University, and the Institute of Buddhist and Religious Studies Theory of Renmin University of China. For a video of the seminar (in Chinese), please click [here](#). For an overview of the event, read this [news story](#) in *The Merit Times*, a daily newspaper founded by Fo Guang Shan.

In Fall 2022, Prof. Chia-lin Pao Tao, professor emerita in the Department of East Asian Studies at the University of Arizona, [published a book in Chinese](#) titled *Teaching Buddhism Through Calligraphy: Masters Hsing-yun and Hongyi* (以筆墨弘揚佛法：星雲大師與弘一大師).

In April, 2020, Venerable Hui Dong, Abbot of Hsi Lai Temple in Los Angeles, [donated 500 protective face masks to the UArizona Center for Buddhist Studies](#).

Prof. Chia-lin Pao Tao, a senior fellow at the Center for Buddhist Studies, [attended the Foguangshan University Presidents Forum in Taiwan](#) from November 5-8, 2019. The major theme of the Forum was "The Responsibility of the Buddhist universities toward the World." Participants came from 29 universities in 15 countries.

Dr. Alison Jameson attended the [7th Symposium on Humanistic Buddhism](#) in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, from November 1-3, 2019. She presented a paper titled "Transcending Borders: Using Regional and Ethnographic Studies to Envision the Future of Humanistic Buddhism."

On September 17, 2019, Ven. Hui Dong, Abbot of Fo Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple, gave a lecture as part of the CBS Lingyin Buddhist Studies Lecture Series. The talk was titled ["How to Deal with the Upheavals in Life From the Buddhist Perspective."](#)

Dr. Jiang Wu attended the 2017 [Fo Guang Shan University Presidents Forum](#) organized by the Fo Guang Shan International University Consortium. The event was held from November 3-8, 2017 at Fo Guang Shan Monastery, Kaohsiung, Taiwan.



HUMANISTIC BUDDHISM

An influential force in modern Chan Buddhist thought, Humanistic Buddhism originated in China and Taiwan in the early 20th century. Reformers Taixu and later Yin Shun promoted a Buddhism rooted in the human world 人間佛教 (*rénjiān fójiào*), focused on how humans act, think, and achieve liberation in this lifetime. A humanistic approach countered the perception that Buddhists could be escapist

acts of kindness and joy, and work for the social good and liberation of all beings.

Inspired by Yin Shun, Master Hsing Yun along with other members of his generation put the humanistic philosophy into action, creating a flourishing world-wide network of temples and organizations dedicated to spiritual education and charitable works.

In the chapter “My Understanding about Humanistic Buddhism” in [Humanistic Buddhism: Holding True To The Original Intents Of Buddha](#), Master Hsing Yun describes this shift to human agency and responsibility. “Humanistic Buddhism inspires us to elevate ourselves and have faith in ourselves; because this self embodies the wisdom and virtue of the Buddha. Thus we must realize that we are all buddhas ourselves and be proud to say that ‘I am a buddha.’ ... Instead of placing our fate in the hands of divine entities, we should take responsibility for our own lives” (no. 1).

For Master Hsing Yun, Buddhist teachings on the interconnected nature of all beings inspired him to advocate for a “proactive,” positive approach to human relations. “From a proactive perspective, life can be happier, more tranquil, more peaceful, more harmonious, and more liberated. In the end, the faith of Humanistic Buddhism helps pursue a life lived in joy, in the boundless space and time, as well as within unlimited connections and achievements” (no. 9).

“The ultimate goal of Humanistic Buddhism,” according to Master Hsing Yun, “does not inherently reside in the attainment of Buddhahood. Since the Buddha had declared that everyone possesses the buddha-nature, what we need to do now is ‘to awaken.’ Awaken to the fact that we can harmonize ourselves with the rest of the world” (no. 10). For Master Hsing Yun and his followers, this awakening led to the development of religious and social programs with the goal of reaching out to the rest of the world and establishing the Pure Land on Earth.



Playlist of talks by Master Hsing Yun in English or with English subtitles.

FO GUANG SHAN

Master Hsing Yun was born in 1927 in Jiangsu Province in the Republic of China, and was ordained at Qixia Temple near Nanjing. In 1949 after the civil war, he left the mainland for Taiwan, where he attracted a devoted following in the 1950s and 60s.

In the spirit of creating harmony with the rest of the world, Master Hsing Yun established Fo Guang Shan 佛光山 in 1967 and built [Fo Guang Shan Monastery](#) in Dashu District, Kaohsiung, Taiwan. The complex is now the largest Buddhist monastery in the country and the center of an influential religious, educational, and charity organization. The name of the order means “Buddha’s Light Mountain” and belongs to the “Four Great Mountains” of Taiwanese Buddhism along with Dharma Drum Mountain, Tzu Chi, and Chung Tai Shan. Master Hsing Yun and the leaders of the other orders are beloved figures in Taiwan and reverently called the “Four Heavenly Kings.”

According to *The Merit Times*, over 300 temples and over 2,000 monastics around the world are associated with the order. Fo Guang Shan engages in educational outreach and charity in Taiwan and abroad. The order has established medical clinics, food assistance programs, wildlife conservation programs, Buddhist colleges, regular colleges, community colleges, high schools, and educational centers for younger children. Among the more well-known institutions are [Fo Guang University](#), [Nanhua University](#), and [University of the West](#) in the United States. Fo Guang Shan [Hsi Lai Temple](#) in Los Angeles serves as the North American Regional Headquarters of the order and is one of the largest Buddhist temples in North America.



In the early 21st century, Master Hsing Yun and Fo Guang Shan expanded their activities to mainland China, at first with a focus on charity and cultural activities. In recent years, as the Chinese government embarked upon efforts to revive traditional Chinese spiritual traditions, Master Hsing Yun at times drew criticism for his support of reunification and his pragmatic approach to working with Beijing.

Despite his political views, Master Hsing Yun remained highly popular and revered by leaders across the political spectrum in Taiwan. President Tsai Ing-wen 蔡英文 and Premier Chen Chien-jen 陳建仁, as well as Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Chairman Eric Chu 朱立倫, attended the Master's funeral along with tens of thousands of mourners. According to [Taipei Times](#), "Tsai awarded Hsing Yun with a posthumous presidential citation in recognition of his 'far-reaching impact and contributions to the state, society and religious life' of Taiwan."

Master Hsing Yun will be remembered for his influence in shaping modern Chan Buddhist thought and for his world-wide efforts to create harmony and peace for all living beings. Through his spiritual teachings, educational and charitable organizations, Venerable Master Hsing Yun left a lasting legacy that will impact many generations to come.



Calligraphy by Master Hsing Yun gifted to the Center for Buddhist Studies,
University of Arizona.

Recommended Reading/Resources

[Establishing a Pure Land on Earth: The Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization](#), Stuart Chandler, PhD

[Humanistic Buddhism: Holding True to the Original Intents of the Buddha](#), Venerable Master Hsing Yun

[Humanistic Buddhism Journal](#), Fo Guang Shan Institute of Humanistic Buddhism

[“Some Remarks on the Usage of Renjian Fojiao and the Contribution of Venerable Yinshun to Chinese Buddhist Modernism,”](#) Marcus Bingenheimer, PhD

Subscribe

Past Issues

Translate ▼

[“Buddhist leader Hsing Yun wooed Beijing to access China,”](#) Thompson Chau

[Fo Guang Shan Monastery Website](#)

[Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center](#)



Share



Twitter



Forward

DONATE NOW

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We respectfully acknowledge the University of Arizona is on the land and territories of Indigenous peoples. Today, Arizona is home to 22 federally recognized tribes, with Tucson being home to the O’odham and the Yaqui. Committed to diversity and inclusion, the University strives to build sustainable relationships with sovereign Native Nations and Indigenous communities through education offerings, partnerships, and community service.

Copyright © 2019 Center for Buddhist Studies, the University of Arizona, All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

341C, Harvill Building
1103 E 2nd St, Tucson, AZ 85721-0076

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).