

NanHua

Monthly NEWSLETTER



The release of doves to represent the spreading of light and peace · 27 sep 2008 (page 4 -5)

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A Good Sense of Humor by Venerable Master Hsing Yun

While our material lives in the 21st century have benefited greatly from advancements in science and technology, our spiritual minds have withered away. While our desire for good food has been satisfied, our inherent wisdom has been kept under lock and key.

In today's society, a good sense of humor is the foundation of a happy life, the lubricant of a successful relationship. Only through humor can one be charming and witty; only through humor can one have wisdom and the ability to enjoy what is amusing or comical.

However, we must bear in mind that humor is not sarcasm, but a language of wisdom. Humor is infinite in its profundity and inspiration. Humor is not derision, but a vehicle of self-mockery. A humorous gesture conveys an immeasurable amount of genuine affection and concern.

The intent of humor is not to create embarrassment for others by being overly forward, but to bring happiness to others by lightening or dissolving embarrassing moments. Hence, to have a good sense of humor is to have an enlightened mind, a mind complete with ingenuity, vivacity, and intelligence. It is indeed a mental state of unsurpassed carefreeness, without attachments or worries. It is an attitude of complete optimism, when all things past and present can be humorously perceived.

Humor is like a mountain spring, for it can cleanse our minds. It is like a cloud in the sky, for it can wander at will without obstruction. In today's society, people have lost their uniqueness and the ability to think for themselves. Instead of leading, people choose to become followers. Instead of exercising intellectual freedom, they choose to follow the decisions of others. It is society in general and not the individual that decides the common standard of morality. Under these circumstances, it is imperative to have a good sense of humor in our interpersonal relationships, because humor is like sunshine that can brighten our day and bring a smile to our faces. Humor is sometimes like a gentle breeze that can soothe a person's pain and misery. Humor is also like a spring blossom that can warm a person's heart and awaken his or her mind. We should strive to be like Charlie Chaplin, who has brought laughter to millions of moviegoers around the world with his genius for comedy; he has positively affected the lives of many people through his sense of humor.

There have been many eminent Buddhist monks who have possessed an excellent sense of humor. Contemporary Chinese literature is no exception; many authors have the uncanny ability to portray their subjects in a humorous light, without debasing their integrity. Their sense of humor is charming and graceful, which gives readers a refreshing sense of purity. As we struggle for true peace and happiness in our modern society, we find ourselves in desperate need of a few masters of comedy; those who can enrich the present world with their good sense of humor.



On 27 August 2008, SABC3 came to the temple to do an article on embracing unconditional love. Ven. Hui Xiang represented the temple during this interview:

Question: What is unconditional love and why it is necessary to embrace & practice it?

Answer: Practicing unconditional love makes sure that sentient beings do not suffer forever. Love can be perfect (unconditional) or imperfect (conditional). 'Perfect love' means love practiced in order to help all sentient beings get rid of suffering and to experience joy and happiness, without expecting anything in return. 'Imperfect love' is a selfish 'love' on show, for one's own benefit and is based on a condition, the intention being to get something back in return, like love, praise or admiration. If one is really committed to getting rid of suffering and attaining joy and happiness without selfish motives, then one practices perfect, unconditional love.

Q: How would the practicing of this love contribute to personal growth of an individual and of the society?

A: If one loves only oneself and not his family, there is no harmony with one's family. If one loves one's family but not one's neighbours, there will be no harmony with neighbours. If one loves family and neighbours but not strangers, there will be no harmony with strangers. If one loves one's countrymen but not people from other countries, there will be conflict and war. If one loves only humans and not other living beings, one will damage nature, natural resources and natural ecosystems.

If everyone adopts and practices unconditional love there will be no conflict, no racism, no war, no pollution, no damage to ecosystem, and no energy crisis. Adopting unconditional love and encouraging others to do so will lead to complete peace, harmony and enlightenment. Most human beings do not practice unconditional, unselfish love which is love that includes loving every being and things as they are.

by Ben Wen

Interview



Sacred Unity of South Africa's Spiritual Diversity

15 September 2008

Nan Hua Temple was honoured to be nominated to participate in an upcoming SABC pilot series Southern Rhythms -- The Sacred Unity of South Africa's Spiritual Diversity. This series will consist of 4 x 24 minute programmes that explore the South African unity through diversity of music, religion, and culture. It will endeavour to demonstrate the rich and diverse spiritual and religious communities sharing in this rainbow nation, through performances by leading traditional and sacred musicians and chanters. It will also include interviews with artists, scholars and other experts in their respective fields.

On the auspicious occasion of the full moon of September (Monday, 15 September 2008), the Buddhist component was filmed at the Nan Hua Temple by the production company Innermedia Productions. This input consisted of a traditional piece of Chinese Buddhist chanting, as well as the individual interpretation of a base track that was provided to all who participated in the series, by adapting it to their own style and chant or song. The chanters therefore needed to not only be knowledgeable of the core Buddhist chanting traditions, but also be able and open to working creatively with the production team, in particular with regard to the common "interactive" aspect.

Once completed there will be nine groups participating in the pilot series, from both the indigenous community as well as universal traditions, which will in due course be aired on TV2.

by Peter G Just



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CHAN'S STORY

Let go! Let Go!

by Venerable Master Hsing Yun

There was once a person who took a trip to attend to some business. He had to climb mountains and forge streams, which was very difficult. One time, he was passing by a steep cliff when in a moment of carelessness he fell into a deep ravine. This person saw his life flash before his eyes. With both arms flailing in the air, he happened to grab hold of an old branch of a withered tree on the wall of the cliff, just barely saving his life. However, he was dangling in midair, unable to go up or down. Caught in this predicament and not knowing what to do, he suddenly saw the compassionate Buddha standing on the precipice looking at him kindly. This person, as though seeing some kind of savior, quickly begged the Buddha, "Buddha! I implore you to be compassionate and save me!"

"I can save you, but you must listen to me. Only then do I have a way to help you up," the Buddha said kindly. "Buddha! In a situation like this, how could I dare not listen to you? Whatever you say, I'll listen to you!"

"All right, then please let go of the branch you're holding onto!"

Hearing this, the person thought, as soon as he let go he would undoubtedly fall into the deep abyss and break every bone in his body. How could he survive? Therefore, he held onto the branch even more tightly and would not let go. The Buddha, seeing this person stubbornly clinging to his delusions, could only leave.

If we want to clarify our mind and see our nature, then we must follow the instructions of the Buddha and let go. When we are on a precipice, only by letting go can we be saved. Otherwise, if we cling with all our might, how can we be saved from dangerous situations?

This is an extract from the book *Chan Heart, Chan Art*, which can be purchased from the Curio Shop at Nan Hua Temple.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHT &



Above are the various religious representatives that participated in the Light Offering Ceremony.

1. Ven. Hui Fang - Temple Abbot 2. Bishop Geoff Davies - Anglican 3. Mr. Martin Konstant - Baha'i
 4. Ms. Hildegard Bicknell & Ms. Helen Ferreblanche - Tibetan (Buddhist) 5. Mr. Shi Hong Li - Tzu Chi Foundation (Buddhist)
 6. Ven. Somsak - Wat Thai (Buddhist) 7. Mr. Leon Greenberg - Sathya Sai Baba 8. Rev. Ghomsi - JJPWP

Nan Hua Temple has celebrated a Festival of Light and Peace each year for the past nine years, except for two years. That was due to the attempted bombing of the temple (2002), plus the year of the 'SARS epidemic' (2003), when it was felt that due to the large number of visitors we receive from the Far East we did not want to run the risk of in any way promoting the potential spread of the virus.

The main purpose of the event is to promote peace, by celebrating unity-in-diversity, tolerance, and acceptance of all living beings. In the past there was also always a great focus on health and holistic healing, but this year we changed the format slightly, and had "The Environment" as our main theme for an Interfaith Dialogue.

On Saturday, 27 September 2008, there were stalls trading exclusively wholesome wares from 10h00 onwards, covering a large range of goods like candles, incense, books, clothes, crystals, bead-work products, a wide variety of vegetarian food, and so much more. The multifaith Light Offering Ceremony took place in the Main Shrine Hall 11h00 - 12h30, which was then followed by a lunch break. After lunch we hosted an interfaith debate on the environment, which was open to the public for participation.

All religions had been invited to participate in all activities of this event. And though the attendance was generally quite good, not all the churches that had initially agreed to participate did eventually showed up. The Muslim and Jewish religions tendered apologies due to Ramadan and their Sabbath respectively. After the initial welcoming, as well as a song called "Harmonise" presented by a trio calling themselves "The Chosen One", the abbot of Nan Hua Temple, Venerable Hui-fang, delivered his opening speech. This was followed by the chanting of The Heart Sutra while candles were being lit. The lighting of the candles was done by 'passing on' the flame from one candle to the next, thus creating a link between all participants.

Once all the candles had been lit the abbot read out a peace prayer, and then people went forward and placed their candles in front of the shrine, while the universal mantra of compassion, Om Mani Peme Hung, was being chanted by everybody. After all the candles had been placed in front of the shrine those religious representatives who were present read out their own individual peace prayers. Upon all prayers and messages having been delivered, Venerable Yi-chun, an elder nun from the Fo Guang Shan Order, gave a closing speech, followed by words from the deputy representative from the Taipei Liaison Office, Mr. Dick Fu.

The final item, before doves and balloons for peace were released outside in front of the main shrine, was a performance by the Nan Hua Young Adults Division.

PEACE 2008 27 SEP BY Peter G Just



Main Temple Shrine Hall



Interfaith Dialogue



Contemplating the Light Offering



MC (Peter & Kenny)



"Harmonise" by The Chosen One



Light Offering



Performance by the Nan Hua Young Adult Division

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE ON THE ENVIRONMENT 2008

After lunch, on the occasion of the Festival of Light and Peace, we hosted an interfaith debate on "The Environment", which was open to the public for participation. The debate was chaired by the Executive Director of the Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI), Bishop Geoff Davies, with representatives from various other faiths on a panel giving their own input and viewpoints.

Each faith was given 5-7 minutes to present their perspective and approach to the environment based on their own scriptures and sacred teachings. This was followed by a short period for clarification between the faith representatives, before the debate was opened to the floor for questions, or also to possibly challenge the viewpoints that had just been presented. Although the Muslim and Jewish religions had also been invited, both tendered apologies due to Ramadan and their Sabbath.

When summarised it could probably be said that generally all agreed that climate change, as well as all other environmental crisis, were largely, if not entirely, due to human irresponsible and selfish actions. And also that if we did not, as a matter of urgency become more environment conscious and responsible, then it was doubtful whether we would be able to continue enjoying the quality of life that we are accustomed to.

Far more needs to be done in terms of educating people with regard to what they can do to prevent further damage to our limited natural resources, as well as what can be done to rehabilitate those aspects which have already been polluted and/or damaged due to ignorance and carelessness. Coming from the floor were requests for greater youth involvement, in particular with regard to education and awareness, as well as suggestion for possible collaborative projects between different faith groups.

The panellists were:
Bishop Geoff Davies (chairperson), Ven. Hui-fang (Nan Hua Temple), Dr. Reggie Reddy (Sathya Sai Baba), Arjoon Ramkumar (Hare Krishna), Ven Somsak (Wat Buddhism - Thai Temple), Kate Davies (Anglican Church), Martin Konstant (Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'i), and Tim Huang (Tzu Chi Foundation).



Stall



A variety of sights, sounds & smells

Learning Experiences of **ABS** Students

African Buddhist Seminary

by Ben You (From Malawi)

It was very difficult for me to adjust to the life style and my studies during the first few months of joining the seminary. With little knowledge of Buddhism I found it difficult to understand or to accept. As I came from a Christian background I kept comparing one with the other and sometimes I got hopelessly lost.

But as time went on I found something interesting in Buddhism and I realised that religion alone cannot liberate us, only our good deeds and purity of mind can liberate us, religion is simply a method of training. With this knowledge my worries disappeared and I began to learn a lot from the Buddha's teachings.

Through observing the five precepts that the Buddha taught which include abstaining from killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct and taking intoxicants, I realised how important other living beings are. Contemplating the first precept I understood that no one wishes to be killed and that this concept also applies to all living beings. We also don't wish to be the victims of theft, adultery, lies and slander, and so should not do these to others, in this way the precepts teach us how important it is to avoid such bad habits. I also found that by upholding these precepts we create strong relationships with others and in so doing create a peaceful and stable society from which everyone benefits.

Buddhism has also made me realise that sometimes we deceive ourselves by thinking that what we desire will bring us ultimate happiness and so we ignorantly get attached to desires without knowing that they will inevitably bring problems and suffering. Only with a pure mind can one attain real joy and realise that the things we claim to be a source of happiness to us are simply there just to deceive us and that they are not real and will eventually disappear.

Through my studies and my change in lifestyle at the seminary, I have improved my ability to be patient, to persevere, to accept and to effectively use my time. I hope my improvement in these areas will assist me in the future.



by Ben Ao (From Malawi)

As a young child I grew up with the belief that only teachings from the bible can lead one straight to heaven. Because of this I never gave myself a chance to broaden my knowledge regarding other religions and as a result did not have any idea what other religions taught.

This changed upon my arrival at ABS when I realised that to be a member of a certain religion was not important what was more significant was the path one took to lead one to a peaceful, kind, loving, generous, respectful, and compassionate mind. It is this path that will help emancipate us from suffering and immorality. Only when one has a pure mind free from defilement can one stay off the path to hell.

What we can do first is to understand ourselves, to know who we are, our goals and how to achieve them. Even the Bible says; 'for if anyone thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself, but let one examine his own work and he will have rejoicing in himself alone and not in others, for each one shall bear his own load.'

Buddhism teaches us that any choice we make in life will have a repercussion from which there is nowhere to run and we shall have to face it be it in this life or the next. This shows that it is our deeds that are very significant and that they will create for us a hell or a heaven.



INFORMATION

Emperor Liang Repentance 22-26 Oct 2008

The emperor is probably best known for being one of the co-authors of a major scripture in Chinese Buddhism. A major Buddhist repentance service is named after the emperor. Titled the Emperor Liang Jeweled Repentance (梁皇寶懺), the repentance records and details the reasons behind his wife's transformation, examples of people affected by karma, stories about people receiving retribution, and what one can do to prevent it. The repentance also involves prostrations to a number of Buddhas.



Historically, Emperor Liang initiated this ceremony approximately 1500 years ago. His wife, Chi Hui, died at age of thirty after leading a life marked by jealousy and anger. After her death, she turned into a giant snake and was in purgatory. She came to recognize that she needed prayers from the sangha to expiate her sins and release her soul from the lower realms. Through great generosity, Emperor Liang requested Ch'an Master Bao Zhi and other high monastics to write ten chapters of the repentance. As a result of performing this ceremony, his wife was indeed released from her suffering.



Beginner's Meditation Retreats 2008

October 11-12 (October Retreat is fully booked)
November 8-9
December 13-14

7 Day Meditation Retreat October 13-19

The 7-day Meditation Retreat is for staff members of the Nan Hua Temple and ABS students only.



Spiritual Camp for Youth and Children

Youth camp- 7th to 11th December

Children's camp- 13th to 17th December

For more information please contact:

Nan Hua Temple- (013)-9310009 ext.306 or 297

Ven. Master Jue Kai- 082-676-4588 Mr Yen Lin Lai- 074-246-8668

YAD(Young Adult Division)'s email- yad@nanhua.co.za

Temple Tours



Date	Group	From	Number
28/08/08	Probus Club	Springs -JHB	11
02/09/08	Pretoria Boys High School	Pretoria	15
12/09/08	Aston Manor Primary School	Kempton Park	103
21/09/08	Moreleta Church Group	Pretoria	35
23/09/08	Perm Tours Club	Johannesburg	20
24/09/08	Pretoria University	Pretoria	45

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How Buddhism changed my life

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years ago nothing seemed to make sense to me, not my religion, my job or my lifestyle. Although I had everything I could ask for; money, cars, a beautiful house, lots of friends, I was not happy. Something was missing but I did not know what. My feeling of dis-ease took me to a book shop where I found two books on Buddhism. Although I had no idea why at the time, I bought them.

They were difficult to read as they turned out to be discussions on specific Buddhist texts of which I had no knowledge. I did manage though to sift out some valuable ideas. Concepts like rebirth, karma and meditation resonated inwardly as if they were long lost relatives. Immediately I embarked on a mission to discover as much about Buddhism as I could.



By Heleena Billing

My search took me to various Buddhist groups and eventually to Nan Hua Temple in Bronkhorstspuit where I met Harold Lemke, and many wonderful monks and nuns. I made wonderful friends and knew almost immediately that I had found my 'place' in Humanistic Buddhism. I took refuge with Grand Master Hsing Yun in 1998 and the Bodhisattva precepts later the same year.

Over the years I have come to learn patience, respect, kindness and consideration for not only others but for myself. I understand the concept of karma and how my actions affect others as well as myself. Fore mostly I came to realise my purpose in this world namely to do the best I can with awareness and wisdom so that this life can give my next one the means to become enlightened.

I have seen and experienced how small things in life lead to great awakenings, lasting awakenings, awakenings that can only come from the heart. I try to live within the moment and to remember that whatever arises also ceases and that nothing is permanent. If nothing is permanent then there is nothing to grasp, nothing to get angry about, nothing to fight over. Everything is in a constant state of flux, nothing lasts forever, NOTHING; therefore everything must be an illusion.

Buddhism has taught me that everything is impermanent and that life is woven into a fabric that unites us all. Most importantly, for me, is to show gratitude in all situations, it is humbling and constantly reminds me of how far I still have to go but if I had not discovered Buddhism I would not even be on the path.

Buddhism is not just about contemplation it is about discovery, about learning through experience, it is a lifestyle and gives us the means to live a valuable life and be of benefit to all sentient beings. There is nothing more challenging... nothing more rewarding...