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Celebration of the Lunar July Blessing Ceremony held online

Due to COVID-19 Auckland returned to level 3 lockdown from 12 August. In compliance with the government's standard operating procedures, Tzu Chi NZ cancelled the Lunar July Blessing Ceremony to the public, and replace the event with an internal online celebration for Tzu Chi Commissioner and the volunteers on 23 August. Tzu Chi NZ leads its volunteers to pray and hope that the coronavirus epidemic will end soon.

Thanks to four Tzu Chi young members, Steve Hsieh, Oscar Chu, Timmy Tu and Julie Kuo for their help in making this online event happen. Ten volunteers at the Jing Si Hall, together with 24 online volunteers and their families, celebrated the Lunar July Blessing Ceremony.





Visit of New Zealand Police Counties Manukau District

On the morning of 14th July, Kevin Deng (Ethnic Peoples Community Relations Officer / NEW ZEALAND POLICE Counties Manukau DHQ), and eight new police officers visited Tzu Chi NZ Branch. The visit was to help the junior police officers get to know the Chinese community.

The morning event started with a briefing on Tzu Chi Foundation's philosophy, followed by short video footage on the footprints of Tzu Chi's mission in New Zealand and globally. After the show, Brother Bruce Lee introduced the "Oriental Tea Ceremony" to the visitors while tea music was played and snacks were served. Following that, the visitors were led to the recycle centre, the young police officers were greatly impressed by Tzu Chi's recycle works, they were shown some eco-friendly products such as the enzyme cleaner, and the series of products made from recycled PET bottles produced by Da Ai Technology.

The final programme was the musical sign language performance of The Spirit of Great Love. At the end of the visit, the visitors were each given a precious gift of the four-language version of "Jing Si Aphorisms" and a pair of sunglasses made from recycled materials.





Food Parcel Distribution

Early this year, many people were affected by the first wave of coronavirus. During the lockdown, Tzu Chi NZ helped a total of 71 persons of 12 countries who needed emergency aid. Currently, many low-income families and community schools are facing financial difficulty following the second wave of COVID-19 community transmission. Tzu Chi NZ hopes to help poor students and their families by giving food parcel and food voucher donations. The scheduled food parcel distributions will be held on 19 September, 3, 17 and 31 October.

Volunteers help to prepare food vouchers and pack food parcels. On the food vouchers a reminder of abstaining from spending the voucher on tobacco, alcohol, drugs and animal flesh is stated.

On the morning of 19 September, pre-registered families collected their food parcels and food vouchers from Tzu Chi NZ branch. From 11.30 a.m. onwards, undistributed food parcels were offered up to walk-in families who had not pre-registered. 23 volunteers helped to ensure all safety precautions against the coronavirus disease are met, which include wearing face masks, taking care of hand hygiene, taking body temperature, and scanning coronavirus QR code. Apart from maintaining appropriate social distancing, only 10 persons were allowed to enter the hall each time.

Donation recipients expressed their sincere appreciation. Terekia thanked Tzu Chi for sharing the message of great virtue is accumulated by doing small good deed. Jeremiah thanked Tzu Chi for introduced vegetarian diet which helped to promote good health. Terepii came to Tzu Chi for the first time, she wished Tzu Chi volunteers a good day in Maori language "Kia Manuia to ou ra".





Tzu Chi's actions in combating Coronavirus

Following the first locally transmitted coronavirus infection on 11 August in more than 100 days of zero case, the Government ordered Auckland to return to level 3 lockdown and the rest of the country to level 2 lockdown from 12th - 26th August. During the lockdown, people were strongly recommended to wear a mask when going out. No one except for Auckland residents was allowed to enter Auckland. While People in Auckland were ordered to stay-at-home, only essential services were allowed to remain operating such as pharmacies and supermarkets; social distancing rules and gathering limits were reinstated.

Tzu Chi New Zealand took immediate action in compliance with the standard operating procedure for COVID-19, everyone coming to Tzu Chi was reminded about the importance of handwashing and maintaining good personal hygiene. Tzu Chi New Zealand branch and Hamilton branch had displayed the NZ COVID Tracer QR codes posters at the entrance.

The Lunar July Blessing Ceremony was cancelled in adherent to the rules of social distancing during the lockdown. All community services, Jing Si Chinese classes, community courses are closed, and will only be reopened when the lockdown moves to level 1. Meanwhile, Tzu Chi volunteers continue making masks and providing mask filters for people in the medical fields. Some of the activities such as the Friday reading group had been done online since the lockdown started.





Looking back: Christchurch Earthquake Relief

2020 is the 20th anniversary of Tzu Chi NZ, many thanksgiving activities were organized to commemorate small milestones of Tzu Chi during these years. One of the milestones is the Christchurch earthquake relief operation. When Christchurch was hit by an earthquake in February 2011, Tzu Chi NZ wished to participate in the humanitarian care for the earthquake victims, but at that point, Tzu Chi had no access to the Christchurch disaster relief operation.

Rod Duke, who is the husband of volunteer Patricia Duke, referred Tzu Chi NZ to the then Auckland Mayor John Banks; and John Sargent from Mondiale Logistics. Tzu Chi NZ subsequently set up an emergency relief centre in New Zealand with the help of these people.

On September 5th, Volunteers Tzu Chi NZ visited Rod Duke, John Banks, and John Sargent to thank them for supporting and believing in Tzu Chi 9 years ago. During the visit, volunteer Steve Hsieh presented a complete compilation of Tzu Chi's relief work in Christchurch and the medium and long-term care for the earthquake victims.

Rod Duke of Briscoes Group Limited had known Tzu Chi for many years because of his wife, he had visited Tzu Chi Foundation at Taiwan Hualien. Rod said when he mentioned Tzu Chi to Christchurch residents, people remember how Tzu Chi volunteers helped the earthquake victims in 2011, he said the future of Tzu Chi looks bright. John Sargent said Tzu Chi shares similar corporate philosophy with him. Mr Sargent was deeply moved when he watched the video on Tzu Chi's relief work in Christchurch, he promised to support Tzu Chi again in the future.

John Banks commended on Tzu Chi's practice of earmarking the donations for purposes as specified by the donors, which is most different from other charity organizations. Mr Banks said, "Although Tzu Chi is not big in New Zealand, and is not well known. But Tzu Chi is very important."



Be Kind, Be Strong

Auckland had been at Level 3 lockdown after a community outbreak of Covid-19 on 11 August. After 18 days, Auckland entered alert level 2.5 on 31 August. Social gatherings are still limited to 10. As of 6 September, New Zealand has had a total of 1772 confirmed cases and 24 death from the virus.

Since the second wave of community outbreak, people are required to wear a mask when taking a public transport. Passengers are encouraged to manually record their travel or scan QR codes using the NZ COVID Tracer App if available.

Tzu Chi NZ branch reopens to the public from 31 August. Volunteers are on flexible schedule, any one feeling unwell are encouraged to stay home. Meanwhile, volunteers continue making cloth masks; look after care recipients and the rest home community; preparing PPE donations for various health care entities.





Sela - Home Visit

Sela is a thirty years old mother that lives in Otago. In 2019, the social worker of Flat Bush School referred Sela to Tzu Chi when the family needed help. In 2020, Sela's family was affected by COVID-19. Two Tzu Chi volunteers visited Sela on 6 August at her house to determine the appropriate course of action. Sela said her husband's income has been reduced due to COVID-19. Although Sela received child support from the government,

The money is barely enough to cover the expenses. Sela wished to have some blankets as her rented house lacks insulation, they were very cold in the winter night. On 8 August, four Tzu Chi's volunteers delivered two blankets and a food parcel to Sela's house. Tzu Chi will also provide Sela and family a food parcel every fortnight. While observing the family struggling to make ends meet,

Sister Sarah Liu handed Sela a bamboo bank and encouraged Sela to do small donations each day. Sister Liu explained to Sela, that to reap blessings we need to sow blessings, a small donation to the bamboo bank each day is like planting a seed of blessing that will change her destiny.



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