

# A Letter to Dharma Protectors and Friends 2024

Dear Dharma protectors and friends,  
Auspicious blessings!

“With heavenly blessings and protection, may fortune grace our homes.” As the new year dawns and we move towards the Year of the Dragon, I, Hsin Bau, hereby extend my 2024 Lunar New Year greetings to you all on behalf of the Fo Guang Shan Board of Directors and all Fo Guang Shan monastics throughout the world. In the words of Venerable Master Hsing Yun, Founding Master of Fo Guang Shan, “May You Be Free as Cloud and Water, Auspicious and Joyful.” I respectfully send my wishes to all of you: in all places, may you be peaceful and at ease; at all times, may you enjoy happiness and auspiciousness!

On February 5th last year, the day of the Lantern Festival, our beloved teacher Venerable Master Hsing Yun passed away peacefully at the age of 97. His departure was a deep source of sorrow. Following Venerable Master’s final wishes and adhering to Buddhist customs, seven days later, on February 13th, the sevenfold assembly of disciples at Fo Guang Shan held the Memorial Service of Venerable Master Hsing Yun, the 48th Generation of the Linji School and Founding Master of Fo Guang Shan. The cremation ceremony later took place at Baihe Daxian Temple in Tainan. President Tsai Ing-wen personally offered her condolences and flowers and conferred a Presidential Citation Award. Kaohsiung City Mayor Chen Chi-mai presented an Honorary Citizen of Kaohsiung City Certificate, while Kuomintang Chairman Eric Chu presented an honorary first-class medal. On February 19th, Pan Wen-chung, the Minister of Education, visited Fo Guang Shan to confer the highest national honor in education, the First-Class Professional Education Medal, to recognize the Venerable Master as an exemplary educator. All of these bear witness to the Venerable Master’s lifelong efforts in propagating Humanistic Buddhism worldwide, fostering cultural exchange, and advocating for cross-strait harmony and world peace.

Upon hearing of Venerable Master’s passing, the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, the State Administration for Religious Affairs, and the Buddhist Association of China immediately organized a condolence delegation and prepared to visit Taiwan. However, as this did not come to fruition, the groups commemorated him at Dajue Temple, the Ancestral Temple of Fo Guang Shan in Yixing instead. To return this gesture of friendship, I led a Fo Guang Shan Appreciation Delegation to Beijing from February 28th to March 2nd, and visited organizations such as the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People’s Republic of China, the State Administration for Religious Affairs, and the Buddhist Association of China to express our gratitude. During this visit, all parties continued to foster the positive relations which the Venerable Master had established, and exchanged thoughts on future developments regarding cross-strait culture, Buddhism, and Chinese culture.

As disciples of Fo Guang Shan, we continue to uphold the principle of “regarding our teacher’s aspirations and mindset as our own.” In doing so, we spread Fo Guang Shan’s core tenets: may the Buddha’s light shine universally on the three thousand realms, and let the Dharma stream flow across all five continents. Two weeks later, on the anniversary of the Venerable Master’s Renunciation Day, we held a book launch for the 395-volume expanded edition of *The Complete Works of Venerable Master Hsing Yun*. We aim to disseminate Venerable Master’s precious teachings—his Dharma relics—for the benefit and joy of all sentient beings.

In memory of the Venerable Master, the 2023 Fo Guang Shan Chan and Pure Land Cultivation and Commemorative Light Offering Prayer Service for Venerable Master Hsing Yun was held at Fo Guang Shan Monastery in early March. Over ten thousand devotees participated in person and online to reverently praise the Buddha and Venerable Master. In May, Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise and Global Views-Commonwealth Publishing Group worked together to publish *Venerable Master Hsing Yun’s Teachings in Words and Actions: As Stated by His Disciples*, edited by Venerable Yi Kung, Director of the FGS Culture Council. The book includes stories from thirty disciples that recount the Venerable Master’s personal guidance and instruction. It highlights the depth of his teachings to disciples and has been well-received.

May 16th, 2023 marked the 57th anniversary of Fo Guang

Shan and also coincided with the 100th day of Venerable Master’s passing. On this occasion, Most Venerable Zongxing and Liu Wei, Vice President and Secretary-General of the Buddhist Association of China respectively, led a delegation to Fo Guang Shan to pay their respects. They also presented the 1,629-volume *Jinling Canon*, which was published by the Jinling Scriptural Press from Nanjing. As a return to this generous gesture, the monastery reciprocated with a complete set of the *Fo Guang Buddhist Canon* in both printed and digital editions. This included the *Agama Canon*, *Chan Canon*, *Prajnaparamita Canon*, *Pure Land Canon*, *Lotus Canon*, *Yogacara Canon*, *Jataka Canon*, and *Sravaka Canon*. This cross-strait exchange of Dharma treasures marked a new milestone in Buddhist relations. On the same day, monastic and lay assemblies from Fo Guang Shan branch temples around the world congregated online for events such as In Commemoration of Venerable Master Hsing Yun and Global Sutra Transcription Event, both of which were deeply meaningful.

The Dharma connections of the Venerable Master extend all over the globe. Although many devotees and people who have affinities with the Venerable Master were unable to personally attend the ceremonies due to time and space constraints, they shared their memories of him in *The Merit Times*. These heart-warming tributes, filled with sentiment and remembrance, have been ongoing for nearly a year. The Fo Guang Shan Institute of Humanistic Buddhism has compiled these essays and published a special issue titled “In Memory of an Eminent Master of an Era: Times with Venerable Master Hsing Yun” in *Humanistic Buddhism: Journal, Arts, and Culture*.

In August, six months after Venerable Master’s passing, the elders of Fo Guang Shan Elder’s Council and the nine members of the Fo Guang Shan Board of Directors followed traditional monastery rules as well as modern-day democratic procedures and nominated me, Hsin Bau, as the Refuge Master during the Fo Guang Shan Board of Directors meeting. I am succeeding the Venerable Master as both the tonsure and precept master of Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order, and I vow to continue Venerable Master’s vision and focus on two main directions in Dharma propagation: fostering talents as well as developing the distinguishing features of the headquarters monastery and branch temples across the five continents.

Moreover, to commemorate the history of Venerable Master’s founding of the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order and to document records of Humanistic Buddhist practitioners, the FGS Institute of Humanistic Buddhism launched a new series titled *Oral Histories of Fo Guang Shan*. The series, composed of interviews with founding elders, released its first installment in November, featuring interviews with Most Venerable Hsin Ting and Hsiao Pi-hsia Shigu.

In other tributes, Buddhists from various traditions in India, including Mahayana, Theravada, and Tibetan traditions, recited sutra texts and prayed for Venerable Master at Mahabodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya. Devotees across the five continents spontaneously organized memorial events. Cotia city in São Paulo, Brazil, dedicated an important two-kilometer-long road to Venerable Master, naming it Rua Venerável Mestre Hsing Yün in honor of his contributions to the Brazilian community. Furthermore, BLIA Sydney registered a star in the International Space Registry named “Venerable Master Hsing Yun” and received an official certificate.

New translations published this year made Venerable Master’s teachings more globally accessible. These include *Le Sutra du Lotus: La porte universelle du bodhisattva Avalokitesvara—Commentaire*, the French edition of *A Commentary on Avalokitesvara’s Universal Gate Sutra*; the Vietnamese edition of *Views of Changing Destiny: Phương Pháp Sửa Đổi Mệnh Vận*; and 다원화환 인생을 열다 — 성운대사의 「자학自學」의 길, the Korean edition of *Activating the Slash Identity: Venerable Master Hsing Yun’s Path of Self-Education*. Moreover, the Association of Ancient and Modern Humanities, Chunghua, completed and promoted the Thai and Arabic editions of Venerable Master Hsing Yun’s *365 Days for Travelers: Wisdom from Chinese Literary and Buddhist Classics*. To date, the book has been published in 13 languages and distributed over 1.82 million copies to hotels worldwide.

Under the theme “Vast as the Cosmos,” the Humanistic Buddhism Reading Club Headquarters enthusiastically promoted



the National Reading Expo both domestically and abroad. Over 5,000 people gathered to study and read together. The Fo Guang Shan Global Information Network launched the “Venerable Master Hsing Yun’s Audiovisual Dharma Teachings,” featuring productions from Humanistic Buddhism’s “iBuddha” series by Buddha’s Light Television (BLTV). Through this online audiovisual platform, people around the world can listen to Venerable Master’s teachings.

In October, following the pandemic, the Buddha’s Light International Association (BLIA) held the 2023 BLIA General Conference with the theme “Coexistence and Coprosperity.” 2,500 members from nearly 50 countries and regions and 110 associations gathered at Fo Guang Shan Headquarters to commemorate the Venerable Master. During the conference, the newly established BLIA Dubai was officially recognized. A 21-language “Ode to the Triple Gem” was presented by Jenny Chen Ralske, sung by international artists from over ten countries as a tribute to our beloved Venerable Master. Furthermore, a delegation from Fo Guang Shan Headquarters and BLIA led Taiwanese devotees to Dajue Temple, the Ancestral Temple of Fo Guang Shan in Yixing. This fulfilled the wishes of global BLIA members in paying respects to our ancestral masters.

Established 26 years ago, BLIA Young Adult Division (YAD) has grown from the initial 23 sub-divisions to 250 worldwide. In June, they published *Bodhisattva Hearts, Youthful Vitality: 58 Ways to Benefit Self and Other*, featuring coming-of-age stories of YAD members over its 25-year history. In July, they returned to Fo Guang Shan Headquarters to hold the 2023 Wisdom and Innovation International Buddha’s Light Young Adult Conference. Additionally, Fo Guang Harmonics released a new digital album titled “One for All.” BLIA YAD, Chunghua, organized the “Motorcycle Marathon Around the Island in Venerable Master Hsing Yun’s Footsteps,” exhibiting a creative way to remember the Venerable Master and to hold on to their original aspiration of following the footsteps of the Venerable Master.

To continue the teachings of the Buddha, over 20 young adults from Singapore, Malaysia, the United States, Canada, Australia, India, and Taiwan were ordained as monastics at Fo Guang Shan Tsung Lin University. All of the aspirants vow to carry on the Venerable Master’s work of spreading Humanistic Buddhism—they truly bring joy and inspiration.

Building on the foundation of Venerable Master’s guidance to his sevenfold assembly of disciples, our efforts in teaching the Dharma and intercultural exchange have never waned. In March, we formed a delegation with the United Association of Humanistic Buddhism, Chunghua, and made our first joint visit to the Vatican. Pope Francis received us with the highest honors, praising Venerable Master Hsing Yun as “a master of interreligious hospitality.” Together with Buddhist representatives, the Pope silently prayed for world peace for three minutes in this historic gathering of two major religions. In May, we co-hosted the first “Praise the Buddha Grand Concert,” where choirs from various Buddhist organizations, including Luminary International Buddhist Society, Bliss and Wisdom Sangha, and the Association for the Promotion of Buddhist Music, Chunghua, sang together at the Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum. Their singing permeated three-thousand realms, bringing the Dharma across a thousand-billion lands.

In November, Venerable Tzu Jung, Acting President of the Buddha’s Light International Association, led a delegation to the Tranquil Mind, Auspicious Coexistence Third China-US-Canada Buddhist Forum, which was held on the banks of the Qiantang River in Hangzhou. Venerable Miao Guang gave a presentation on “The Translation and Spread of Buddhist Texts in the Global Era.” Moreover, the BLIA Taipei Choir, Fo Guang Harmonics, and the cast of *Siddhartha: The Musical* from the Philippines were invited to perform at the forum’s Coexistence and Auspiciousness Buddhist Music Concert. Their performances of Buddhist songs written by Venerable Master Hsing Yun received thunderous applause from the audience.

In terms of education, Guang Ming College, the first Buddhist-founded university in the Philippines, was inaugurated in June by College President Dr. Michael Tan after nine years of construction. Guang Ming College is the youngest member of the Fo Guang Shan University Consortium founded by Venerable Master. Nan Tien Institute in Australia once again received accreditation from the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency for its Master of Applied Buddhist Studies and Graduate Diploma. In October, Dr. Minh-Hoa Ta, President of the University of the West in the United States, and Datuk Dr. Ewe Hong Tat, President of Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) in Malaysia, signed a memorandum of understanding to promote transnational teacher training and collaboration in academic research.

Under the leadership of Presidents Lin Tsong-ming and Ho Jow-fei respectively, both Nanhua University and Fo Guang University in Taiwan achieved several honors, including the Ministry of Education’s “Friendly Campus Award for Outstanding Schools.” For the eighth year in a row, Nanhua University ranked in the top 100 green universities worldwide and first in the nation, as well as tying first in waste-management in global rankings. Sparing no effort in promoting education, the Fo Guang Shan Juntou International School of Experimental Education became an official IELTS test centre authorized by the British Council. Moreover, the Venerable Master Hsing Yun Public Education Trust Fund is now in its 13th year of promoting the TAG (Three Acts of Goodness) School Campaign. To date, it has presented awards to 268 schools and benefited over 3 million students. The Merit Times promoted newspaper-reading in schools and has become the most widely read newspaper in Taiwanese schools. In the 2023 academic year, 451 schools and over 150,000 students read *The Merit Times* on a daily basis.

Abroad, Fo Guang Shan New Zealand hosted the Ninth Annual 3G4G Festival of Cultural Sharing, which has become an important outdoor educational program for local schools. Nearly 5,000 teachers and students participated in the 10-day event. Additionally, Fo Guang Publications, Malaysia, published the beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels of *Buddhist Textbook for Middle School Students*. This series is supported by the Ministry of Education and written by UTAR President Datuk Dr. Ewe Hong Tat, and is now widely used in Malaysian middle-school Buddhist societies, libraries, Buddhist organizations, and temples.

In sports, the seven-year-old Nanhua University’s baseball team achieved runner-up in the University Baseball League (UBL), setting the best record in team history. The soccer team, mainly composed of members of “Sons of Zulai” from Brazil, also won runner-up in the University Futsal Championship. Guang Ming College in the Philippines won five gold, one silver, and two bronze medals in the National Athletics Championships and took the champion in the women’s division. Pumen High School’s baseball team achieved runner-up in the 111th High School Baseball League Wooden Bat Division Championship,

tying its best historical record.

The BLIA Cup International University Basketball Tournament, which was founded by the Venerable Master, resumed in August after a three-year hiatus due to the pandemic. Sixteen teams from Taiwan, USA, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and New Zealand competed at the Kaohsiung Arena, with Midwestern State University (Texas, USA) and Shih Hsin University winning the men’s and women’s championships respectively. With a decade-long history, the Tournament has remained a prominent annual international basketball competition in Taiwan, drawing enthusiastic participation from players and fans alike.

In response to climate change, Dharma propagation efforts have shifted to align with current conditions. The FGS Culture Council has signed cooperative agreements and memorandums of understanding with National Taiwan University and I-Shou University to develop initiatives such as research and development for vegetarian food for carbon reduction and digital archiving. In May, *The Merit Times* and Friends of The Merit Times, Chunghua held the International Vegetable Culture Festival at the Taipei World Trade Center. The Pure Green Veg Food Guide recognized over 300 manufacturers and 600 stalls, along with 46 exemplary “star-rated” vegetarian restaurants across Taiwan in the award ceremony. Collectively, these vegetarian enterprises are a significant force in promoting healthy vegetarianism. Notably, BLIA and the Pure Green Foundation co-organized VegRun and promoted the “You Run, I Give” campaign. The campaign garnered participants from all continents and contributed holistically to sustainable development.

In terms of international humanitarian aid, following the major earthquake in Turkey in February, the BLIA World Headquarters, along with the BLIA Malaysia Federation and the Malaysia Sin Chew Foundation, dispatched a large quantity of supplies including army beds, tents, and blankets for assistance. In October, Fo Guang Shan New Delhi Educational and Cultural Centre and the Fo Guang Shan Sramanera College, India, organized the Traditional Chinese Medicine Free Medical Camp in Assam, India. Doctors of Traditional Chinese Medicine and dentistry from Singapore, Malaysia, the United States, and Taiwan served approximately 3,000 beneficiaries.

In the presence of sunlight, the Buddha’s Light shines. The 300 branch temples, established worldwide by the Venerable Master, diligently labored to unlock the inner gates of wisdom of all sentient beings. Dajue Temple, the Ancestral Temple of Fo Guang Shan in Yixing, especially serves as a root of faith for both domestic and overseas Fo Guang members. In May, Dajue Temple held the Celestial Palace Dharma Treasures Enshrinement Ceremony, permanently enshrining thirty-five categories and 30,000 volumes of Dharma treasures, including Buddhist canons, *The Complete Works of Venerable Master Hsing Yun*, and One-Stroke Calligraphy, in the temple’s Sutra Repository. In November, Dajue Temple held its first Water and Land Dharma Service. Solemn in its rituals and venues, the service brought Dharma joy to all and benefitted both the living and the deceased. The Master Hsing Yun Cultural and Educational Foundation and FGS Institute of Humanistic Buddhism hosted the 8th Humanistic Buddhism Young Scholars Forum at Dajue Temple, where over 30 postgraduate students from around the world presented their papers and renewed the vitality of research on Humanistic Buddhism.

Good deeds continue to flourish under the collective effort of the global Fo Guang Shan community. The Buddha Museum turned thirteen this year and renewed its memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the British Library in April to share resources and facilitate cultural exchange. In May, the Venerable Master Hsing Yun Memorial Academic Conference—Buddhist Maritime Silk Road and Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum 10th Anniversary Book Launch Conference was held. In the same month, the Buddha Museum also signed MoUs with the National Palace Museum, the National Museum of Marine Science and Technology, and the Yunlin County Government. In December, the Buddha Museum held a joint exhibition with the Dunhuang Academy titled “Silk Road Splendor: Dunhuang Cave Art Exhibition.” Moreover, the museum’s long-term efforts in sustainability earned the Environmental Education Award and the Energy Management Award in the ESG Awards. Over the past two years, the museum staff have acquired 111 professional certifications including energy managers and environmental educators, significantly advancing public education.

The Shoushan Temple in Kaohsiung reopened in June, a historical location that detailed Venerable Master’s over 60 years

of Dharma propagation efforts in Kaohsiung. The Kaohsiung Buddhist Hall held a groundbreaking and blessing ceremony for its new construction in August and Chen Chi-mai, the City Mayor, and his office attended the ceremony. Construction work to temporarily relocate the temple commenced in mid-December. In mid-November, the Samantabhadra Shrine at Fo Guang Shan Headquarters was fitted with a new elevator and tea meditation space, making the shrine more accessible to devotees. Moreover, after 30 years of effort, San Bao Temple in San Francisco and Chung Tian Temple in Australia began reconstructions on their current sites and held foundation-laying ceremonies for their main shrines. Additionally, the opening of IBPS Paraguay, now the largest Buddhist temple in the country, was especially noteworthy. A Triple Gem and Five Precepts Ceremony was held concurrently and participated by over 200 devotees from Paraguay, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, as well as second- and third-generations of the Chinese diaspora. This is a celebration of Buddhism taking roots in South America.

To realize the Venerable Master’s vision of promoting cultural and educational causes, the Venerable Master Hsing Yun Public Education Trust Fund held the 11th Hsing Yun Award for Education. The Trust presented the Lifetime Dedication Award in Education to Dr. Lee Lin-Shan, Emeritus Professor of National Taiwan University, and recognized 22 outstanding teachers. Furthermore, the 13th Global Hsing Yun Award in Chinese Literature honored indigenous writer Syaman Rapongan and celebrated 27 individuals with awards in categories such as historical fiction, journalism, essays, and contemporary poetry.

BLIA Chunghua received the national Gold Award in public welfare and is the only religious service organization to win the award twice. Furthermore, the Ministry of the Interior’s Religious Public Welfare Award recognized twelve Fo Guang Shan branch temples, including Lanyang Temple, Chi Le Temple, Ze Shan Temple, Fa Bao Temple, Ta Ming Temple, Toufen Hong Fa Temple, Fu Shan Temple, Yuan Fu Temple, Hui Tzu Temple, Nanping Temple, Gangshan Lecture Hall, and Hai Tian Temple.

Yuan Fu Temple in particular received the National Architecture Gold Award—Public Construction Quality Award. Fo Guang Shan Singapore was honored with the Community Spirit Merit Award for the fourth time. Nan Tien Temple in Australia received the Excellence in Cultural & Community Events Award. Additionally, the Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation was certified as a Chinese Public Welfare Ambassador by the Chinese Industry Commerce Economy Trade Science & Technology Development Association.

Most Venerable Hsin Ting, Abbot of Thai Hua Temple, was honored with the Ashoka Pillar of Moral Leadership Award by the Thai royal family, the only Chinese monk to receive this honor in 2023. Venerable Jue Cheng, Head Abbess of Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and India, was appointed as a member of the Harmony Committee among Religious Believers (HARMONI) by the Prime Minister of Malaysia. Venerable Ru Bin, Abbess of Hsingma Temple, was appointed as a member of the Negeri Johor Inter-Faith Harmony Committee. Venerable Manshin, Abbess of Fo Guang Shan New Zealand, was honored as one the 100 Local Heroes of 2023 by Kiwibank; and Venerable Miao Ru, Abbess of the FGS Kolkata Buddhist Centre, received the Manyata Award in Kolkata, India.

As 2024 approaches, we continue to advance our Dharma propagation efforts as we remember the Venerable Master. We hold on to what the Venerable Master often says, “I am Fo Guang Shan; who else is responsible for Fo Guang Shan if not me?” We should also encourage ourselves that as practitioners of Humanistic Buddhism, we need to be a buddha, practice as a buddha, and become a buddha. By unhesitatingly taking responsibility, uniting as one, and working together, only then can we ensure that Buddhism will have a bright future, people will live in peace and happiness, and the world will be at peace.

I am deeply grateful for your continuous support, daily dedication, and constant diligence. My heartfelt thanks are beyond words. With sincere hearts, I wish everyone:

An Auspicious New Year of Ease and Peace

Hsin Bau  
Head Abbot  
Chairperson, Fo Guang Board of Directors  
New Year’s Day, 2024

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