

## World Interfaith Harmony Week Support Letter

Provided by *Buddhist Research Support Group of London Fo Guang Shan Temple*

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Aiming at harmony between all people regardless of their faith, World Interfaith Harmony Week was proposed by King Abudullah II of Jordan, who is renowned for anti-terrorism ideology and positive image of Islam, at the 65th United Nations General Assembly in September 2010. As members of Buddhist Research Support Group of London Fo Guang Shan Temple, a book club gathering young scholars in Buddhist research, especially the study of Humanistic Buddhism, we hope to call on interfaith dialogues on harmony in the name of this event. With diversified educational background, walks of life, and multi-religious beliefs, our members embody the interfaith harmony concept and expect our sharing could contribute to multiple cultural communication and rich reflection on this topic from different religious perspectives.

The development of Indian-oriented Buddhism in China exemplifies a long-term process of interfaith harmonisation. Its prosperity nowadays is the result of the integration with Chinese culture and local life, and the alignment with other religions and practices. With the common identification of “He” (和 ; harmony), “Fajie Yuanrong” (法界圓融; **great universal harmony between different realms of existence**) in Buddhist teachings synergises with “the world of Da Tong” (天下大同 ; the ideal world) in Taoist ideology and “Ren” (仁 ; virtue) in Confucian ideology. They are like different flowers scent, demonstrating the harmony of the universe. With this harmony, we could have the heritage of Chinese Buddhist Canon, the translated works of Buddhist Tripitaka. It is the crystallised work by Confucian education trained scholars, historically borrowed and lent out terminologies from and to Taoism. Closely linked to the patronage of emperors from Emperor Taizong of Tang Dynasty to Emperor Qianlong of Qing Dynasty, it includes Āgama, Vinaya and Abhidharma texts from Early Buddhist schools, as well as the Mahāyāna sūtras and scriptures from Esoteric Buddhism. Without the practice of harmony, we could not have such treasure today.

Rooted in the history of Chinese Buddhism, and developed from numerous Buddhist Masters during the period of the Republic, Humanistic Buddhism (人間佛教), inheriting core Buddhist teachings and integrating Chinese culture, has been recuperated and shaped into a driving force for Buddhism in contemporary Taiwan. As one of the representative groups, Fo Guang Shan (佛光山), founded by Master Hsing Yun (星雲大師) in 1967, holds the humanistic view of “oneness and coexistence” (同體共生), advocates the equality, tolerance, loving-kindness and compassion through “we are one” (人我之間), promotes self-cultivation through “Three Acts of Goodness” (三好; do good deeds, say good words, think good thoughts) and “Four Givings” (四給; giving others joyfulness, confidence, hope, and convenience), thereby achieving “Five Harmonies” (五和) from joy within oneself, cooperation within family, respect between self and other, unity within society, until peace throughout the world. Reverberating Buddhist vision of Pure Land on Earth, the ultimate goal of worldwide harmony can be realised from the starting point of individual efforts and self-formation through eliminating the boundary between self and others and considering others from the universal value of humanity and compassion.

One of Fo Guang Shan’s contributions to “Five Harmonies”, especially interfaith harmony, is exemplified by “When Buddha Meets the Gods” annual event. Praying for a well-rounded year and realising the anticipation of “living side by side without distinction”, the world association of Gods was launched by Master Hsing Yun in 2011 and has been held for consecutive nine years on the 25<sup>th</sup> December each year. In 2019, this inter-religious ceremony was a grand reunion of more than three thousand deities, one thousand religious groups and over seventy thousand followers from home and abroad, breaking the record granted by World Record Association in 2016 for the global multi-religious reunion attended by the most number of deities in the world. With multi-cultural performances, interfaith dialogues and forums, representatives of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Judaism, folk religions and other new religions gather together at Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum, Kaohsiung Taiwan, and are deeply immersed in harmonious atmosphere across religious and national boundaries.

Following this landmark interfaith annual event, the humanistic advocacy of harmony by Master Hsing Yun, the ideology of “He” in Chinese cultural tradition, and the common value of world peace and interfaith harmony, Fo Guang Shan worldwide branches also take positive roles in multi-religious communication and interfaith dialogues in local societies. Buddhist Research Support Group of London Fo Guang Shan Temple, based in British local community,

supports Buddhist research of young scholars, welcomes participants with diversified backgrounds, takes part in local inter-religious events, and responds to 2020 World Interfaith Harmony Week positively.