

Together Action Is Not Empty Speech

Not for Me

Zen Master Dae Kwan

In Hong Kong, we have an annual 1,000-People Meditation Event. It started about six years ago, when Hong Kong began to go through some turbulent times and people's minds were unsettled. Venerable Chang Lin, together with *Buddhist Compassion Magazine* and the Centre for Spiritual Progress to Great Awakening, joined together and created this event. The intention was to help people with no meditation experience to start practicing, calm their minds, and see how meditation could transform their lives.

Venerable Chang Lin invited several Buddhist temples, including Su Bong Zen Monastery, Plum Village, and the Tergar Meditation Centre. Each temple would share some practices and guide participants to take a pause, go back to their breathing, and experience meditation together. And to encourage participants to continue their practice at home, each participant was given a set of sitting cushions as a souvenir.

The first year's response was overwhelming. To join the event, people needed to buy their tickets online, and all tickets were sold out in the first three hours. With such an encouraging response, 1,000-People Meditation soon became an annual event. Later on, two more temples joined—Awareness Spiritual Growth Centre and Tung Lin Kok Yuen.

It is a three-day event, and was held in different venues for the first four years. For the past two years the event has been held through Zoom because of COVID. The response was very good, with more than ten thousand cumulative viewers.

It is wonderful that temples of different traditions join hands and do together action. More than a hundred vol-

unteers offered their hard work and loving support. The following are some sharings from our students who have supported this event as volunteers.

Don't Check, Just Do It! That Is the Miracle

Francis Lau

I had the precious opportunity of joining the 1,000-People Meditation in the recent years, and the experience was invaluable.

Organized through the collaboration of different Buddhist temples of various traditions, the annual event attracted more than a thousand participants every year. In the first year, Su Bong Zen Monastery was responsible for the venue. It had to organize all volunteers coming from different backgrounds, and to place a thousand cushions within an hour and a half. All the cushions were to be placed neatly in straight lines and rows in a space the size of twelve standard basketball fields. All the sudden changes and challenges encountered were totally a test to our practice on the cushion.

There was one episode to share: One morning, the admission time was supposed to be 10:00 a.m. At 9:00, while I was feeling relieved that the last row of cushions had just been perfectly set, suddenly there was an announcement onstage. There was a space problem with the stage, and all thousand cushions needed to be moved backward by about ten feet. All the volunteers' jaws dropped. How could that be possible? There were only thirty minutes left, and everyone was exhausted! It seemed to be an impossible task, unless some miracle happened.

And a miracle did happen! All the volunteers put down their work and gathered together. We all stood behind the last row of cushions, ready for instructions coming from the sunim onstage. Through the loudspeaker, Sunim gave us the rhythm. More than a hundred volunteers bent down, took up the cushions and, "1, 2, 3, step back," then "1, 2, 3, step back," and "1, 2, 3, step back . . ." It was just like planting rice seedlings! Within twenty minutes, all thousand cushions were moved to their new positions, smoothly and neatly. It was a truly touching moment. Everyone was overjoyed with the miracle!

Coming from different temples and all walks of life, the volunteers were just strangers with

Photo: Su Bong Zen Monastery Archive



different skill sets. Yet in front of challenges, they put down their I-mine-me, and did together action without any chaos or complaints. There is only one mind—serving others! Everyone became master of “don’t check, don’t hold, put it all down, and just do it!”

Francis Lau, volunteer at the Su Bong Zen Monastery, assists with graphic design, photography and video production. In 2002 he began practicing Zen meditation at Su Bong Zen Monastery and received five precepts. He went on to receive ten precepts in 2016.

Mind-to-Mind Transmission

Hye Won

Working with other Buddhist centers’ volunteers during the four-day 1,000-People Meditation in early June 2021 was an amazing experience.

On the first day, I was assigned to the live-streaming desk. The person in charge wanted me to play some slides and was showing me how to do it. I thought, “Well, this is very simple.” I could notice my pride-mind talking. Ultimately the job turned out to be not so simple due to my fatigue and cloudy mind, so I turned down the job politely.

Another time, other teams were discussing how to give a smooth video cue to the control room. Though we were on different teams, they seemed to have included us. We listened to each other, exchanged ideas and came to a solution together. The teams’ actions showed what listening really means. Listening to others does not only mean following instructions, but also listening to what people really need. When I went back to the venue the next day, I realized I could not be indifferent anymore. I was touched by the teams’ inclusiveness, warm-hearted culture, and open mind.

When one has “don’t-know” and “how can I help” mind, one will be clear about what is correct situation, correct relationship, and correct function—not over-helping or providing any help not needed. The next day, other teams were asked to arrange devices for a monastic while they were busy. Something interesting happened. I just went to them naturally and helped with the cabling. Then, they needed someone to fill up some cushions, and I sat down on a cushion and started working on that. They guided me with actions, and we just enjoyed filling up cushions together!

Though we had been strangers two days ago, we had by now built up a strong bond and trust. In a video streaming session, a volunteer stepped out from the control room. The bond was so strong that I already understood why she came out. When we looked at each other, I took away my mask and whispered “video delay.” She smiled and nodded her head. She came out again after thirty seconds. Then, I showed her a thumbs-up with another

hand pointing to my ear implying the video and audio were normal. She wore a warm smile and went back to the room. It was like a mind-to-mind transmission!

This experience showed me that with practice, all teams, despite being from different Buddhist centers, had become one! The moment when the live streaming finally completed, everyone cheered, jumped up, and high-fived. We felt grateful and looked forward to sharing our together sweats and laughter again soon!

Hye Won first found Su Bong Zen Monastery via Google in 2010 after returning to Hong Kong from overseas and was looking for a place with air-conditioning and fun, free activities to settle her mind. She started practicing at the monastery one year later. She took five precepts in 2012 and continued her practice until now. In 2020, she took ten precepts at Su Bong Zen Monastery.

My Experience of Working Together

Ji Duk

For me, I’m glad to be working in the Zen center. Although I don’t know much about the work of technical support, I am blessed to have two good team members, Francis and Monica. They both taught me and helped me a lot. All jobs given to me are fresh and interesting, and I always follow my teammates’ guidelines and instructions. I hope I can help and support them.

I am happy to be one of the volunteers in this year’s 1,000-People Meditation. As always, I tried to cooperate and work with everyone. We would discuss the whole process first and do rehearsals. When problems appeared, everyone would give advice and work together to solve them.

What worried me the most was the live streaming of the Zen center on the last day. Less than ninety minutes before the streaming was to start, I needed to explain to Sifu a whole new way for her to see her own notes during the talk. I was nervous and worried that there was not enough time to make all the arrangements. When I walked into the room and tried to explain to Sifu, she reminded me not to panic and to focus on my breathing. This helped me to pause and return to the present moment. Slowly I become less nervous. With Sifu’s permission, I left the room and started to organize the new arrangement and related cables with the help of other volunteers. At that time, I had forgotten to be nervous; I just did it without much thinking and totally focused on the event. ♦

Ji Duk first met Zen Master Dae Kwan in March 2019. At that time, she took the opportunity to ask questions about sitting meditation. A week later, she joined the introduction to Zen meditation class and afterward started practicing at Su Bong Zen Monastery. In 2020, she took five precepts and began work as a volunteer.