



AZBTL Newsletter

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Meeting with Monroe County for Tax-exemption

Ven. Ta-Yu

I would like to show my appreciation to Mr. Zulick, our attorney, who did a great job in the Monroe County's hearing to waive the property tax for our temple. Many thanks to our friends Larry, Betsy, Marsha and Chung who accompanied me to attend the important meeting with the County on October 3.

There is a regular general meeting at Monroe County every Wednesday. Our case was heard second after the regular general meeting. Prior to the meeting, Mr. Zulick delivered our application and information to the county. So they had no doubt that AZBTL is a temple.

However, they asked us what "Therapeutic" stands for? Actually, I have no idea why our first president Ven. Heng Yuan chose this name. "Therapeutic" is more suitable for ordinary health businesses. As a temple, this word, "Therapeutic", causes many problems and confusions. Fortunately, we agreed to change our title in the last meeting (9/15/01) from America Zen Buddhist Therapeutic Laboratories (AZBTL) to American Zen Buddhist Temple (AZBT). The county was satisfied with our new name.

So far we just have to wait for the result from Monroe County. Whether pass or not, it was a perfect experience since we tried our best to apply.

In the future, we will involve more with our community to contribute whatever we can serve. Thanks to the Lord Buddha for blessing this beautiful spot to become a temple. And we can't forget those who have selflessly made their contribution to support the temple.

May the Buddha's wisdom and compassion bless all beings living with peace, pure and harmony.

Name Change AZBT vs. AZBTL

Larry Pross

AZBT!

Ven. Ta-Yu is pleased to announce that the Monastery will now be incorporated under the initials of AZBT instead of AZBTL. This decision was made at the last board meeting as recommended by legal counsel. The new name will be also reflected in a new corporate seal entitled American Zen Buddhist Temple. The new name is now a more accurate reflection of our mission statement outlined in the By-Laws. This statement specifically designates the monastery as a Religious and educational institution. In turn, our title will no longer cause a difficulty in perception regarding the terms therapeutic, and laboratories, which could have led to legal problems in the future.

Ven. Ta-Yu places this new title in context with the ancient tradition of Ven. Xu-Yun Master: "Dear friends, however many benefits we may derive from our Efforts, meditation is a spiritual exercise, not a therapeutic regimen. We do not practice in order to counter psychological disturbances or to help us cope with the ego's frustrations. We meditate in order to transcend ego-consciousness and to realize our Buddha Nature. Our intention is to enter Nirvana, not to make life in Samsara more tolerable." (Empty Cloud: The Teachings of Xu Yun, pg. 80.)

Running the temple is a primary responsibility and Ven. Ta-Yu hopes these minor changes, designed to avoid difficulties in the future, will not inconvenience any one.

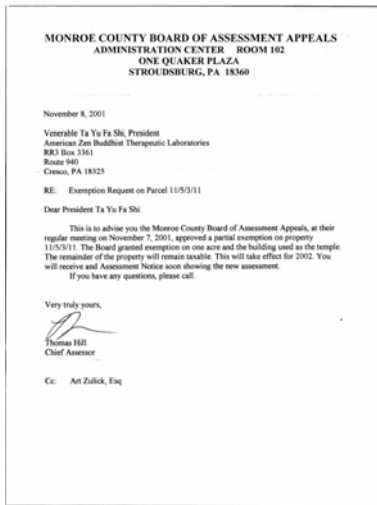
A Letter from Monroe County

Dear President Ta Yu Fa Shi:

This is to advise you the Monroe County Board of Assessment Appeals, at their regular meeting on November 7, 2001, approved a partial exemption on property 11/5/3/11. The Board granted exemption on one acre and the building used as the temple. The remainder of the property will remain taxable. This will take effect for 2002. You will receive and Assessment Notice soon showing the new assessment.

If you have any questions, please call.

Very truly yours,
Thomas Hill
Chief Assessor



After a great lunch, Ta-Yu Fa-Shi led us with a service of Amitabha Sutra. It was powerful. We then divided into two groups -- one stayed at the Monastery to plant all the daylilies that Franklin Chow donated. The other group went to a neighboring friend's place about 10 minutes away to dig up 7 big pine trees from their 200 acre property and transplanted them to the Monastery. Let me tell you, what we called "man power" was "man power" and more. At 5:30 pm we headed back to State College to continue our day of fun. What a day . . . a wonderful day.



The Significance of New AZBT Logo

Yuan Ming

The new AZBT logo may cover all aspects of relative and absolute truth regarding our spiritual practice.

The white circle represents the moon, which is on the top of the sun represented by a yellow circle. The white circle (moon disk) represents wisdom; it is the nature of emptiness. It is the reason there is a possibility for anything to arise with their characters (usage) and to disappear if the condition changed. The arising is not a real arising and disappearing is also not a real disappearing. All things, tangible or intangible, are just illusions.

The outer yellow circle (sun disk) represents compassion, which is the nature of clarity. It is how Buddha and Bodhisattva help all sentient beings. Although the truth is empty, however, they are not attached to emptiness. Based on wisdom and out of compassion, they can help sentient beings in the most effective way to realize the truth.



The three mountains represent the three jewels -- Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. These mountains also represent discipline, meditation and wisdom. According to Tibetan Buddhism, each color represents a different meaning:

- White represents Pure.*
- Red represents Power.*
- Blue represents Truth.*
- Yellow represents Increase.*
- Green represents Activities.*
- Black represents Pacify.*

Before we reach the ultimate Buddhahood, it is very important to keep our life practical and to increase positive essence with our body, speech and mind. It is the reason why the Vajrayana Buddhism has different colors to represent pure, power, truth, increase, activity and pacify. They are not only reflecting the Buddha's virtue, but they are also important elements for our daily practice and our regular life.

Liang-Hwang Confession Ceremony

Sentient beings circulate in the six realms of Samsara. They are far from Nirvana and suffering in the ocean of life and death. Almost every action in every moment creates impure Karma. If the sentient beings do not rely on the wisdom of confession, it is very hard to escape from the condensed nest of ignorance Karma. The king Wu of Liang dynasty with Buddha-mind, in

order to deliver his Queen Tsi, who passed away and was reborn in the animal realm, invited many high monks to originate the Liang-Hwang Confession Ceremony. By the merit of performing Liang-Hwang Confession Ceremony, the Queen Tsi was able to liberate from being a huge snake and was reborn in heaven.

During the Thanksgiving, from November 21 to 25, 2001, in order to thank all donors, especially the long-term monthly supporters, we practiced the sacred Liang-Hwang Confession Ceremony together. The longevity and fortune nametags for all long-term supporters and their families, along with others who had registered, were set up in the shrine. Other than the Liang-Hwang Confession Ceremony, every morning and evening, we had special dedication services for them. We also dedicated the merit to all sentient beings and prayed for the peace of the world.

The Retreat House (old motel building) was closed down for the winter to prevent frozen-pipes. All attendees stayed in the Temple Building and slept on the floor. Men slept in the library; women slept in the interview room and the master's room. To upgrade the Retreat House, so it would be functional all year round, is one of our future plans.



On November 22, 2001, we celebrated the Thanksgiving and had a special Chinese fire wok dinner together. During the Liang-Hwang Confession Ceremony, the weather was wonderful. Even in November, we had warm temperature and sunshine most of the time. The roses bloomed beautifully in the shrine as if all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, as well as heavenly beings and Dharma Protectors were happy. All attendees were full of Joy. It was a very auspicious event.

New Buddha Hall

Motion was made and carried to raise funds for the addition of the Buddha Hall. There was a separate funding besides our regular operation fund. The Board approved a contract with Mr. Dennise Destefano and the construction began at the end of September and expected to complete by the end of year. Currently, Vairocana Monastery is still under development period. All supports in many ways will help a lot and keep the temple operating properly.



Preview of 2002 Activities

As a Buddhist Temple, Vairocana Monastery carries the mission of spreading the teaching of Sakyamuni Buddha. Along with the long-term goal to become a retreat center, an on going program is designed to introduce the Buddhist teaching and practice that helps us to purify our body, speech and mind. In 2002, after the January winter break, starting in February, the group meditation will resume and meet every Tuesday night. The Dharma talk will be on the first or second Sunday of a month. The teaching on "Patient" will be started on February 3, 2002. The Chinese style group ceremonies and services will be mainly on the fourth weekend of each month.

Coming Events

Winter Break

No Activities in January 2002

Starting in February

Every Tuesday

7:00 p.m.

Group Meditation

Ven. Ta-Yu

2/3/02, Sunday

10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Patient

Ven. Lama Migmar

2/23/02, Saturday

10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

2/24/02, Sunday

10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Thousand-Buddha
Confession Ceremony

Ven. Ta-Yu

3/10/02, Sunday

10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Dharma Talk

TBA

3/23/02, Saturday

10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Avalokiteshvara (Guan-Yin)
Bodhisattva's Birthday Service
Great Compassion Confession
Ceremony

Ven. Ta-Yu

4/7/02, Sunday

10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Patient

Ven. Lama Migmar

4/27/02, Saturday

10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Medicine Buddha Confession
Ceremony

Ven. Ta-Yu

The Thousand-Buddha Confession Ceremony will be in February, May and September. Avalokiteshvara (Guan-Yin) Bodhisattva's Birthday Service and Great Compassion Confession Ceremony will be in March. Medicine Buddha Confession Ceremony will be in April. Sakyamuni Buddha's Birthday Service and Diamond Confession Ceremony will be in May. One-Day Zen Retreat will be in June. One Day Pure Land Retreat (Eight Precepts) will be in July and October. Earth-womb Bodhisattvas Ceremony and Great Mong-Sam ceremony will be in August. Liang-Hwang Confession Ceremony will be in November. Eighty-eight Buddha Confession Ceremony will be in December.

New Email and Web Address

Lately, we changed our email and web address to cut down the expenses. Welcome everybody to contact us through our new email and visit our website.

The new email address is:

azbt@evenlink.com

The new web address is:

<http://www.evenlink.com/~azbtnews>

The Buddhism

Jorge Luis Borges

Translated by Miin-Ron Lin

The Karma

Now we come to the difficult part, to what our western minds tend to reject: the transmigration, which was to us a poetic concept before all. What transmigrates is not the soul, but the Karma, which is a kind of mental organism, which transmigrates infinite times. In the western world, that idea is linked to thinkers, overall to Pythagoras. Pythagoras recognized the shield with which he had battled in the Trojan War, when he had other name. En the tenth book of Plato's, The Republic is the

dream of Er. That soldier sees the souls that choose their destiny before they drink the water of the Forgetfulness. Agamemnon chooses to be an eagle, Orpheus a swan and Ulysses – who sometime called himself Nobody – choose to be the most modest and the most unknown of men.

In Buddhism, there is no God; or there may be one, but it is not essential. What is essential is that we believe that our destiny has been prefixed by our Karma. If it has fallen on me to be born in Buenos Aires in 1899, if it has fallen on me to be blind, if it has fallen on me to give this speech before you, all this is the work of my previous life. Not a single fact of my life that has not been prefixed by my previous life. That is what is called the Karma. The Karma, I have already said it, becomes a mental structure, a very fine mental structure.

We are weaving and interweaving in each moment of our life. It is that we are weaving, not only our volition, but also our actions, our semi dreams, our sleep and our semi vigilance: perpetually we are weaving all things. When we die, another is born to inherit our Karma.

Deussen, disciple of Schopenhauer, who likes Buddhism so much, recounts that he met with a blind beggar in India and felt sorry for him. The beggar told him, "If I have been born blind, it is due to the actions that I committed in my previous life; it is fair that I am blind". People accept the pain. Gandhi is opposed to the foundation of hospitals saying that the hospitals and the work of the beneficence simply delay the payment of debt, that it does not help the rest; if the rest suffer they must suffer because of the guilt that they have to pay and if I help them, I am delaying that they may pay the debt.

The Karma is a practical law, but it has a curious mathematical consequence: if my actual life is determined by my previous life, that the previous life was determined by other life; and that, by another and so on without end. That is: the letter z was determined by the y, the y by the x, the x by the v, the v by the u, except that alphabet has an end but no beginning. The Buddhists and the Hindus, in general, believe in an actual

infinity; they believe that an infinite time has already passed in order to arrive at this moment, and by saying infinite, I do not mean indefinite or innumerable, I mean strictly infinite.

Of the six realms where we are possible to be reborn (some can be a demon, a plant, an animal), it is most difficult to be born as a man, and we must take the advantage to save ourselves.

The Buddha imagines in the bottom of the sea, a turtle and a bracelet that floats. Each six hundred years, the turtle raises his head and it would be very rare that the head might find the bracelet. Buddha says, "so rare as the chance that it may succeed with the turtle is the chance that we may be born as men. We must take advantage of being men in order to arrive to the Nirvana". What is the cause of suffering, the cause of life, since we deny the concept of a God, since there is not a personal god that creates the world? That concept is what Buddha called Interdependent. The world Interdependent may appear foreign to us, but we could compare it to other words that we know.

Let's think for example the Will of Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer conceives *the world as will and performance*. There is a will that incarnates in each one of us and produces this performance that is the world. We find this also in other philosophers with different names. Bergeson speaks of *the life impetus*, Bernard Shaw, of *the life force*, that is the same. But there is difference: to Bergeson and to Shaw the life force are forces that must be imposed, we must continue dreaming the world, creating the world. To Schopenhauer, to the somber Schopenhauer, and to Buddha, the world is a dream, we must stop dreaming it and we can achieve it through long exercises. At first, we have the suffering, that becomes Interdependent. And Interdependent produces the life and the life is, inescapably, unhappiness: because, what is living? Living is to be born, to get old, to get sick, to die, in addition to other misfortunes, among them a very pathetic, the most pathetic to Buddha, is not being who we want to be.

(To be continued)

