

Religious Counseling

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I. Introduction

Since Buddhism is the most prevalent religion in Taiwan, and family support is an important component in the rehabilitation of individuals under probation, the Taipei District Prosecutors Office has instituted a landmark program combining the two in group religious and life counseling. The aim is to let individuals under probation to realize their benevolent nature through religion, reduce violent tendencies, and control their emotions, ultimately leading to a peaceful society.

1. Authored by Probation Officer.

II. Goals

Group counseling relies on professional lecturers, who lead their subjects into the profundity of Buddhism. Through the aura of religion, subjects are led to reflect upon themselves and their perspectives on life, thereby resulting in a thorough change of thought and be-



9 Jul., 2009, individuals writing out scripture as part of meditation in a Buddhist seminar.

havior. This also follows in the spirit of community support in the prevention and correction of criminal behavior.

III. Effectiveness assessment

As governmental resources are always much more limited than civilian resources, the Taipei District Prosecutors Office has actively sought out civilian institutions in its jurisdiction to hold life education and rehabilitation courses. These courses began in 2001 with the cooperation of the Buddha's Light International Association, with the Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation taking over the reins beginning in 2014.

The foundation fields Buddhist lecturers and prison Buddhist chaplains. Regarding their efforts, feedback surveys show that 83% of subjects under prohibition felt that the lectures were warm and rewarding, 25% remarked that they would apply Buddhist knowledge in their lives, and 63% felt that their character and relationships improved after the group sessions; these statistics show that the courses have a positive effect.

Religious courses schedule

Time	Content	Work assignment
9:00—9:30	Registration	Taipei District Prosecutors Office, Taipei Honorary Probation Officer Association
9:30—9:50	Vitality supplement: Motivational articles and health care issues	Cheng Chen-kun, Lecturer
9:50—11:20	Main Topic: Life education Seminar Lecture (delusions/relationships/life stories/Zen in life/reading group)	Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation Li Jin-ling, Chiu Sheng-feng, Lin Li-hua, prison Buddhist chaplains
11:20—11:30	Recess	
11:30—12:30	Individual counseling	Taipei District Prosecutors Office



Introduction to the Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation

- In 1949, Master Hsin Yun brought his Buddhist relief team to Taiwan. Even under dire circumstances, Hsin Yun never forgot his calling, and continued selflessly in offering relief to people under hardship.

- In 1956, while stationed in Yilan, Hsin Yun led young students into Yilan Prison to convert inmates to Buddhism and help them change for the better. This prison project now encompasses prisons across Taiwan.

- In 1964, the Compassion Center at Shoushan Temple was established, with its focus on relief efforts and medical aid. In 1967, the Emergency Relief Association was established, offering relief and assistance each winter.

Fo Guang Shan's charity work does not focus merely on monetary or material relief; rather, it combines cultural, educational, and co-meditation efforts in combatting the trivium (three poisons) of delusion, greed, and aversion, in promoting a clean society. In order to offer professional assistance for the ever-changing

problems in society, the Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation was founded in 1989, to coordinate programs dedicated to youth and elderly welfare, volunteer medical aid, religious counseling, emergency relief, natural disaster relief, prison and institutional counseling, second-hand medical equipment, and dementia prevention; moreover, the Foundation is also contracted by the government to provide social welfare.



Religious courses satisfaction

General feeling after attending religious courses...		The greatest assistance that religious courses offer...		After religious courses, I feel...	
Warm and rewarding	83%	Improvement in character and relationships	63%	Thankful	54%
No particular feeling	13%	Buddhism can be applied in life	25%	Calm	25%
Casual and entertaining	4%	More wisdom in dealing with everyday life	13%	More wisdom	8%
				No particular feeling	8%
				Less burdened	4%

