



New York City Comptroller
John C. Liu

NEWS RELEASE

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**LIU, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, BUDDHIST TZU CHI
FOUNDATION ANNOUNCE UNPRECEDENTED
\$10 MILLION THANKSGIVING EMERGENCY CASH
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR STORM SURVIVORS**

NEW YORK, NY – In the biggest direct relief effort related to Hurricane Sandy to date, Comptroller John C. Liu and City religious leaders today announced a \$10 million Thanksgiving emergency cash assistance program for people affected by the storm – in the form of debit cards from funds raised by the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, an international nonprofit humanitarian and disaster-relief organization.

“One bright spot amid the darkness caused by Superstorm Sandy has been the volunteer work and contributions of so many caring people, especially those from our diverse religious communities. This unprecedented cash gift will go a long way toward helping families affected by the storm, just in time for Thanksgiving,” Comptroller Liu said. “Our thanks go to the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation for its generosity and kindness, and to the donors around the world who are extending their support and friendship to New Yorkers in this time of need.”

Volunteers from the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation have already begun giving out cash assistance to storm survivors in the form of Visa debit cards. Recipients can use the cards to buy everything from food and coats to baby diapers, plus pay bills and more – wherever Visa is accepted. The volunteers have also distributed food and blankets as well as hot meals and hygiene kits.

“The words ‘Tzu Chi’ mean ‘Compassionate Relief’ in Mandarin and that’s exactly what we hope our aid will bring New Yorkers in their time of greatest need,” said **George Chang, Executive Director, Buddhist Tzu Chi Northeast Region.**

The \$10 million was raised by the foundation entirely from individual contributions and by its members worldwide.

The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation was founded in Taiwan in 1966. It built its first hospital in Taiwan in 1986 and, since then, has conducted disaster relief in more than 70 countries, including Haiti, Afghanistan, Japan, El Salvador, Chile, Australia, Peru, and China. Organized in the United States as a 501c3, it is a United Nations nongovernmental organization and has a working relationship with the American Red Cross.

The \$10 million cash gift is believed to be one of the largest of its kind by a company or nonprofit group to New Yorkers affected by the storm.

“The American Red Cross and Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation work side by side as partners to bring assistance to the most vulnerable survivors of disaster. The American Red Cross values the unique expertise and resources Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation brings to disaster response,” said **Monica Montoya, manager of community engagement and disaster partnerships for the American Red Cross.**

“Many faith-based organizations like Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation and national voluntary agencies continue to provide services to Hurricane Sandy survivors, including providing shelter, meals, clean-up supplies, etc. Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation and organizations on the ground represent the best of what we call the Whole Community response to disasters,” said **the Rev. David L. Myers, Director of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Center for Faith-based & Neighborhood Partnerships.**

“It is most gratifying to know that the faith communities are first responders in times of crisis. We may have different beliefs, but we also see each other as one family,” said **Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, Executive Vice President of the New York Board of Rabbis.**

“When people of faith and goodwill cross international and religious boundaries to help alleviate suffering, we all have something to be truly thankful for. All New Yorkers – but especially those among us whose lives have been most devastated by the effects of Hurricane Sandy – are blessed by the Tzu Chi Foundation’s generosity this Thanksgiving,” said **the Rev. Chloe Breyer, Executive Director, the Interfaith Center of New York.**

“Hurricane Sandy was devastating to so many of our fellow New Yorkers. It truly knocked our inner soul and helped all of humanity see beyond race, color, and religion. We are grateful for Comptroller John Liu’s dedication and direct involvement in helping those who have been victimized by this tragic hurricane,” said **Imam Shamsi Ali, Jamaica Muslim Center in Queens.**

“We are grateful that Comptroller John Liu has reached out to identify resources for the people in need. Many of the people impacted by Sandy are elderly, and the storm has shook them up completely,” said **Rabbi Yechezkel Pikus, Executive Director of the Council of Jewish Organizations of Flatbush.**

“The devastation by Sandy in the Tristate area is not just a local disaster, it has the attention of the global community. Those of us who are delivering relief and recovery appreciate the partnership of our friends around the world. Our heartfelt thanks to the Tzu Chi Foundation for

their generosity and to Comptroller Liu for mobilizing this relief effort for our fellow New Yorkers,” **the Rev. Dr. Gary V. Simpson, Concord Baptist Church** in Brooklyn.

“ ‘O Lord, shower Thou thine benediction and take care of all the being. Produce Thou plenty of corn and water and ridding them of pain and penury, ferry them across the world ocean,’ ” said **Mohinder Singh, founder of Baba Makhan Shah Lobana Sikh Center** in Richmond Hill, Queens, quoting Sikh holy scripture in a prayer for Sandy victims.

“Serve all creatures of God. The service of servants is his real worship. Serving God’s creation is like serving God himself,” said **Vikram Deonarain, President of N.Y. Hindu Milan Mandir** in Richmond Hill, Queens.

Comptroller Liu’s office is helping the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation in this relief effort by providing local introductions, liaison with City agencies, and volunteers from its Community Action Center.

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