

Tzu Chi Makes First Relief Distribution in Quake-hit Christchurch

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Tuesday, 15 March 2011 14:41



On March 12, the foundation held its first distribution in Christchurch, the city in New Zealand hit by a powerful earthquake on February 22, providing relief goods to 475 people.

The earthquake, which registered 6.3 on the Richter scale, was the greatest natural disaster to hit New Zealand for 80 years. It killed about 180 people in Christchurch, in South Island, and leveled much of the city.

The foundation co-operated with the local branch of the Salvation Army (SA) to arrange the distribution at the army's center in Aranui, a poor area of the city. The volunteers were helped by local friends and SA members. In accord with the foundation's custom, they delivered the goods in person to the recipient, a symbol of the love and concern of Tzu Chi people around the world for them. The set of goods contained a [letter from Master Cheng Yen](#), a cash card with NZ\$100, blankets, towel, toothbrush and toothpaste, shampoo, soap and face lotion as well as a medical kit. The number of recipients was 132 households or 475 people. The letter included a prayer for all those who had suffered in the disaster and that the world would be peaceful. The recipients were very moved; some wept and said 'we thank Tzu Chi for reaching out to help us'.



Charles Prapple, the local director of the SA, said that the compassion and Great Love of Tzu Chi was very close to the Christian spirit of the SA. "We will keep a record of how Tzu Chi has raised money for and helped the people of Christchurch. We will tell people how they have helped those affected by the disaster and hope that they will come again. They will certainly help."

Aranui is a poor area; some of its inhabitants are alcohol and drug addicts. Before the distribution, police came to the center to keep watch over the event. Rachel, director of the Aranui Community Trust, also came to the center to help. "Initially, I was very anxious about the distribution, how the Tzu Chi volunteers would keep order. But now that it is concluded, I see that it is a very organized and experienced charity. The distribution deeply moved people and we should learn lessons from it," she said. Since the earthquake, the volunteers have been working constantly in Christchurch, fund-raising on the streets and using every way possible to help the victims.