

# CAM LO VUONG BUDDHIST COMMUNITY TEMPLE 'S ACTIVITES

By Ven. Thích Chân Nhân

Demographically, about 80% Vietnamese are Buddhist followers. With a population of about 150,000 in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), the Vietnamese community has established more than 10 Buddhist temples and formed several Buddhist practicing groups. Vietnamese Buddhist followers in Canada have well preserved their traditional Buddhism and Vietnamese culture at home and convergingly in the temple settings. The Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community Temple is one of more than ten Vietnamese temples in the GTA.

Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community Temple was formed in June 1999 and has been incorporated as non-profit organization since June 14, 2002. The Temple has also registered with the Revenue of Canada under the charity registration number 8887-8802-RR0001 on May 20, 2003. The Temple's affairs are voluntarily managed by a Board of five director members including monks and lay people. Since 1999, the Temple has had several thousands of voluteers who help in various functions to maintain, develop, and expand the scope of spiritual services to the Vietnamese-Canadian and international Buddhist communitis in Canada. The Temple is a member of the *International Sangha Council of Ontario Buddhist Ministry*.

The Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community Temple was originally located at 2380 Keele Street in North York, Ontario. On April 20, 2010, the Temple purchased a new property at 2430 Teston Road, in the City of Vaughan, Ontario and moved the entire religious services to this new property sine. "Cam-Lo-Vuong" in Vietnamese means "ambrosia king." The Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community Temple is under the spiritual guidance of the Most Venerable Thich Hue Minh who is also the Founder of the Temple. Besides practicing Buddhism, the Temple has also preserved and promoted Vietnamese culture and actively contributed to the development of the Vietnamese Canadian community in Canada.

The objectives of establishment Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community Temple are three folds: (1) to promote, teach and practice the sublime doctrine of Buddha through worshipping and education to all interested members; (2) to organize and provide religious instruction and perform pastoral works; and (3) to acquire, establish and maintain buildings for worship and other religious uses.

Under the guidance of the Most Venerable Thich Hue Minh, the Temple has organized once a month the 24-hours-a-day retreat for members and those who are interested. On the retreat day, participants arrive at the temple for praying, studying Buddhism, and practicing Zen meditation. Vegetable foods are free and served by volunteers during the retreat.

The Temple's regular programs include but not limit to pastoral services; public worships and Buddha's teaching lectures; meditation class; confessional and communion services; supportive counseling to individual, family, youths, people with mental health condition, and correctional services; and reaching out to isolated seniors.

Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community Temple is founded and chaired by the Most Venerable *THÍCH HUỆ MINH*, also known as the Most Venerable THICH NHẬT TÂM, who was born into a devoted Buddhist family from the Southwestern Vietnam known as Mỹ-Tho city in the province of Tiền Giang. He entered into his monkhood at the age of twelve and grew up in the famous Long-Thien monastery in the city of Bien-Hoa, Province of Dong-Nai, South Vietnam. He was ordained and obtained his vows of Sramanera at age 15 and Bhikkhu at age 20. He did his post-studies at the College of Buddhist Philosophy in the City of Bien-Hoa, Vietnam. In 1989, the Most Venerable Thich Hue Minh fled Vietnam to arrive by boat to the Vietnamese refugee camp in Indonesia. There, he helped to establish the Quan-Am (Avalokitesvara) Temple. He guided and served as a spiritual leader to thousands of Vietnamese refugees in the Galan Refugee camp.

The Most Venerable Thich Hue Minh landed in Toronto, Canada in 1991 as a permanent resident and eventually became a Canadian citizen in 1995. The Vietnamese Unified Buddhist Ministry in Canada appointed him to the abbot position at Hai-Hoi (Ocean Assembly) Temple in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In Winnipeg, the Most Venerable Thich Hue Minh served as a committee member of the Interfaith Immigration Council of Manitoba (1993 –1995). He was also appointed by the Manitoba government to perform pastoral duties throughout his abbotship in Winnipeg. He was an honorary member of the International Amnesty (Canada chapter). In 1996, the Most Venerable Thich Hue Minh came back to Toronto to begin the establishment of the Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community Temple formerly named Linh-Thuu Temple. He was an honorary member of the International Amnesty (Canada chapter). The Most Venerable Thich Hue Minh has been a great spiritual leader, cultural preserver, and supporter to the Buddhist disciples. He serves the whole community; also, puts out time for young adolescents to help them expand their knowledge on religion as well as basic moral beliefs.

In 2001, the Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen Temple in Bangkok, Thailand, offered to the Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community Temple 3 pieces of Sakyamuni Buddha's relics. In March 2007, the Temple once again received an offer of Sakyamuni Buddha's relic from the Most Venerable Dodampahala Amarawansa Adhikarana Sangha Nayaka Thero, Chief Incumbent of the Sri Sugatha Dharmayataya, Mount Lavinia in Sri Lanka. These relics are precious treasures for Buddhist followers around the globe.

In 2008, the Cam Lo Vuong Buddhist Community Temple successfully organized the celebration of the Lunar New Year to welcome the year of the Rat at the International Centre in the city of Mississauga, Ontario. There was a variety cultural show performed by professional artists coming from the local areas, the USA and Vietnam. The Lunar New Year Festival was held in a venue of more than 100,000 square feet. It offered the richness of a cultural food fair, traditional and children's games, community and business displays, talent competitions, entrepreneurs' presentations, and community and

government agencies' booths. More than 8,000 community members and friends came to celebrate the Lunar New Year in this one-day cultural event. More than 200 volunteers from 6 to 85 years old put their hands together to assist the Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community Temple to successfully organize the celebration of the Lunar New Year - the year of the Rat 2008. Ten thousand dollars received from sponsored corporates at the Festival was donated to enhance the Dieu-Quang Orphanage Centre in Saigon, Vietnam.

In her greeting to the 2008 Lunar New Year's Organizing Committee, the Governor General of Canada Michaelle Jean wrote: *this Festival will ensure that Vietnamese Canadian of all ages can remember their past and celebrate their ancestry, keeping a strong connection alive for today's youth and for future generations.*" The Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper sent his video speech to congratulate the Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community Temple in organizing the 2008 Lunar New Year for the Vietnamese-Canadian Community in the GTA emphasized that: " Today, *as you mark the Year of the Rat, I hope that you will take time to recognize the important role your community has played in the development of our nation cultural and economic landscape. Our shared values of hard work, equal opportunity, commitments to family and community have indeed secured Vietnamese Canadians as proud citizens of a strong and united country.*"

The 2008 Lunar New Year Festival was well received and attended by many well known government representatives and politicians such as The Ontario Lieutenant David Ontley, Senator Vivienne Poy and her husband Dr. Neville Poy; The late Honorable Jack Layton, the then Leader of the New Democratic Party; the Honorable Peter Fonseca, Ontario Minister of Tourism; Madam Laura Albanese, Member of Provincial Parliament and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Culture; City Councillor Adam Giambrone, Chair of the Toronto Transit Commission; Dr. Alok Mukherjee, Chair of the Toronto Police Service Board; Chief William Blair, Chief of the Toronto Police, and Staff Superintendent Frank Roselli of Peel Regional Police. Many representatives from Members of Parliament, Members of Provincial Parliament, municipality officials, agencies and organizations were among the dignitaries.

Many international Sangha members from several Buddhist temples in the GTA attended the 2008 Lunar New Year Celebration. Among those Venerable guests, there were several Buddhist monks from Vietnamese Temples across Ontario, Ottawa, Montreal. Interantionally, there were the presence of the Most Venerable Hwasun Yangil, Chairperson of the Sangha Council of Ontario Buddhist Ministry, and representative monks from Korean, Srilankan, Tibetan, Japanese, Indian, Burmese, Chinese, Laotian, Cambodian, and Canadian's Buddhist communities in Ontario. There were also representatives from the Vietnamese Romance Catholic and Protestant churches in the GTA. The "TET" Festival has been one the activities organized annually by the Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community Temple to fulfil its cultural preservance objective.

Since 2010, the Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community Temple has grown together with the Vietnamese community and its congregation members, who have expanded their demographical living to the City of Vaughan. The Temple purchased the current land and

received the construction permit to build the first Vietnamese Buddhist Temple in Vaughan. Thousand Vietnamese Canadians, who have chosen their home in the City of Vaughan highly praised the City of Vaughan, which has embraced the diversity policy and understood their needs of spiritual services. The Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community is grateful to many great supports from the City of Vaughan, its governing and management body and the City Councilors; especially, the interfaith residents in the local district. Nationally, the Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community Temple has also been endorsed and supported by the Federal and Provincial government since its establishment. At the ground-breaking ceremony to begin the construction project in 2014, beside the local government dignitaries, the Temple was honoured to welcome the attendance and well-wishes of the Honourable Julian Fantino, the Honourable Jason Kenny, Senator Thanh Hai Ngo, and other government officials. Their supports has helped us build one of the religious landmarks right in the heart of the City of Vaughan.

The construction of the main Buddha Hall has nearly completed. Though the COVID-19 pandemic has set the construction project back in the past 2 years, the Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community Temple is hopeful to finish phrase one of the project in late Summer 2022. By then, the Main Buddha Hall will soon complete and open its door to welcome worshippers and guests coming to enjoy and obtain spiritual services. Once, the construction completes, the Temple will expand its services both in the Vietnamese and English language to everyone who is interested in learning and practicing Buddhism. The Temple will invite Buddhist scholars to teach Buddhism courses; host annual Summer Retreat and grand assembly of monks, nuns and lay people around the globe. The program will also include disseminating, promoting and preserving the Vietnamese culture and Vietnamese Buddhism amidst the young Vietnamese Canadians. The programs will also provide facility supports to host activities of the Vietnamese professionals, who, in return, contribute their skills and knowledge to the Temple and the Vietnamese Canadian community at large.

In conclusion, more than 80 per cent Vietnamese population are practicing Buddhism. Therefore, a Buddhist temple is the essential needs in every Vietnamese's daily life. A Buddhist temple helps to formalize the spiritual, cultural, and charitable per se in each Vietnamese's mind and heart. Under the spiritual guidance and leadership of the Most Venerable Thích Huệ Minh, the Cam-Lo-Vuong Buddhist Community Temple would certainly serve, enhance and fulfil cultural preservation and spiritual needs of the Vietnamese Canadian Buddhist community and general public in the City of Vaughan and Canada.