



Rissho Kosei-kai is a global Buddhist movement of people who strive to apply the teachings of the Threefold Lotus Sutra, one of the foremost Buddhist scriptures, in their daily lives and contribute to world peace. It was founded in 1938 by Rev. Nikkyo Niwano (1906-1999) and Myoko Rev. Naganuma (1889-1957). With the guidance of President Nichiko Niwano, Rissho Kosei-kai members actively share the Dharma widely and engage in peace activities both locally and internationally in cooperation with people from many walks of life.

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### A Rissho Kosei-kai to Be Proud Of

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano

AM very happy to be able to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of Rissho Kosei-kai together with all of you. The late Venerable Etai Yamada (1895–1994), head priest of the Tendai Buddhist denomination, once said to me, "Because you are genuine, Niwano, everyone in Rissho Kosei-kai follows your lead. It's truly extraordinary that lay people do all this for Rissho Kosei-kai."

We members of Rissho Kosei-kai have received the teaching that can bring true happiness to everyone, and we can forget ourselves in devotion to it, thinking of nothing but the need to share it with everyone. More than anything, sharing this teaching with everyone gives our lives meaning and is what we take pride in. I think I can rightfully say that our commitment to sharing the teaching is the wellspring of Rissho Kosei-kai's dynamism.

The English literary critic and author G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936) penned the maxim "Men did not love Rome because she was great. She was great because they had loved her." This point is what's most important.

With the help of each and every one of you, our great task from this day forth is to forge a Rissho Kosei-kai that we can take even greater pride in.

Kaiso zuikan 11 (Kosei Publishing, 1997), pp. 126-7

The title of this newsletter, Living the Lotus—Buddhism in Everyday Life, conveys our hope of striving to practice the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in daily life in an imperfect world to enrich and make our lives more worthwhile, like beautiful lotus flowers blooming in a muddy pond. This newsletter aims to help people around the world apply Buddhism more easily in their daily lives.

## President's Message

## Sowing Seeds in the Fields of Blessings— Donation, Part 3

Rev. Nichiko Niwano President of Rissho Kosei-kai



### The Story of the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation

In Taiwan, there is a humanitarian organization called the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation. Its first incarnation was a small volunteer group established in 1966 by Dharma Master Cheng Yen, who was awarded the Niwano Peace Prize in 2007. Today, this international Buddhist NGO has more than four million members and continues to develop various types of volunteer programs, such as disaster relief, in every region of the globe.

I am quite impressed by Tzu Chi—which is grounded in the same Lotus Sutra teachings as Rissho Kosei-kai—because as its name implies, its purpose is providing compassionate relief (that is, deploying the Buddha's compassion to liberate people from suffering) in the spirit of "people who need our help are giving us the opportunity to perform volunteer service." I think it is wonderful that its members are nurturing the mind of compassion through their volunteer work and monetary donations and that their participation in Tzu Chi brings them a sense of gratitude and joy that advances the organization's programs. This spirit—equally evident in Rissho Kosei-kai's Donate-a-Meal Movement—is the origin of Tzu Chi's formation and its story is still being told today.

For instance, Dharma Master Cheng Yen, handing a bamboo tube to her fellow volunteers, told them, "By slightly reducing what we spend on food, let's save a half yuan every day and put it in a bamboo tube like this." When one of them asked her, "Wouldn't it be all right to simply donate fifteen yuan in a lump sum every month?" She replied as follows.

"Every day, every time you put a half yuan donation into the bamboo tube, I want you to feel that you are liberating people from suffering. Every time you reduce your spending by a half yuan, I also want you to feel that your savings is a donation of the mind of caring for people and bringing them liberation."

I believe that Dharma Master Cheng Yen's attitude and spirit are teaching us something important as we think about our own practice of donation, in particular the donation of material things.

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### An Organization That Produces Blessings and Virtues

When you help other people who are having a hard time or going through something difficult, you are definitely helping yourself and making yourself happy. And this is what all people of faith understand well and why they gladly make donations, with heartfelt joy. In addition, their monetary donations are steadily accumulating in the course of daily life. As I mentioned last month in "Donation, Part 2," saving money in order to donate it is both one of life's goals and a purpose to live. Through donation, benefitting oneself and benefitting others becomes one and the same and therefore, it brings human beings the greatest happiness.

However, making many donations does not necessarily mean receiving greater merits. Indeed, Buddhist scripture clearly states that "Although what you give may be very little, if you practice donation with the mind of faith, you will benefit others and thereby bring yourself peace and comfort."

Peace and comfort are merits that fill people's hearts with joy and makes them feel tranquil and at ease. Their hearts, made full by smiling faces, experience a refreshing purity, completely carefree—and that gives them the power to live. Having experienced this, you want to savor that feeling of happiness again and gladly make another donation, don't you?

From long ago, a Buddhist congregation has been called "a field of blessings" because when the seeds of giving are sown there, they grow into blessings and virtues. Of course, at Rissho Kosei-kai, when we are entrusted with precious seeds of giving—the donations made by all of our members—we have a duty to grow those seeds into blessings and virtues that lead to the liberation of humanity. The question is how to make the best use of these seeds that are your donations, imbued with all of your hopes and wishes and all of your compassion, in light of the true nature of making and sharing donations.

But is there any arrogance or self-righteousness in our actions? Are they truly meaningful? Are we listening to the voices calling out for liberation? Is everyone around us experiencing the joy of the Dharma? Right now, we should once again seriously ask ourselves these questions while we sincerely put our monetary donations to the best use, because doing so ensures the happiness of the people who are together cultivating the Rissho Kosei-kai "field of blessings," sowing the seeds of giving, and practicing diligence—something that we should freshly call to mind this month as we observe the anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai's founding.

From Kosei, March 2022

## The Way To Happiness

Mr. Kris Kresge Rissho Kosei-kai of Hawaii

This Dharma Journey talk was delivered during the ceremony marking the Anniversary of the Birth of Shakyamuni at Rissho Kosei-kai of Hawaii on April 4, 2021.

OOD morning, everyone. My name is Kris Kresge and I am thirty-four years old. Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to share my Dharma Journey with all of you in the sangha today.

I believe that all that I have experienced in life has led me to a point where I can finally appreciate all of my sufferings. Through the teachings, I am living a much better life, better than I could have ever imagined.

I was paroled three years ago from the Waiawa Correctional Facility, where I served two years. It's a minimum-security prison that aims to integrate inmates back into the community. Now, I am in the final month of my original ten-year sentence. As I stand before you now, this has been the longest period I've ever been out of incarceration since the age of thirteen.

Growing up, my family was always there for me and still is. My father is a retired harbor patrol officer and my mother is an office clerk. I also have an older sister who is mentally challenged, but she has one of the biggest hearts in the world. We have always been a very close family with open communication and still talk to each other daily. My family also values helping one another and, as a member of this family, I learned the meaning of donation from a very young age by always being helpful to my family.

My parents gave me many things, including the opportunity to learn various sports, such as baseball, soccer, and martial arts. But for one reason or another, I always desired more.

I started having repeated run-ins with the law when I was ten or eleven years old, before I was even old enough to be legally fingerprinted. From a very young age, I wanted to have the best of all things and

would do whatever I could to get them. I envied others and gravitated towards those who felt the same way I did. Right after I finished elementary school, my close friends in the neighborhood introduced me to drugs such as marijuana and crystal meth, which sent my life into a downward spiral. Overnight I became a drug addict but was the type called a "functioning user," who could outwardly project normalcy. I began committing various criminal acts including burglarizing homes, shoplifting, and drug dealing, which eventually led to armed robbery. At first, committing crimes with my close friends gave me a sense of camaraderie, but soon I began to carry them out alone for myself.

I was sixteen when I was sentenced for armed robbery to a term in the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility that lasted until my nineteenth birthday. This is where I spent the majority of my teenage life, learning to adapt to long-term living in a controlled environment.



Mr. Kresge giving his Dharma Journey talk.

Just before I was released on my nineteenth birthday, I was caught smuggling contraband cigarettes into the facility, which delayed my release. When I was finally released from prison, I had already reached adulthood and was placed on probation.

But by that time, I was no longer afraid of going back to prison and my criminal lifestyle escalated. I had become so used to life inside prison that I did not care about the consequences of my actions when I was on the outside, thinking that if I were caught I would just go back to what I was used to.

Obviously, I violated the terms of my probation and at the age of nineteen I was sentenced to ten years in the Halawa Correctional Facility.

Before this sentence, I was given every opportunity from the state to turn my life around. As part of this, I was sent to various behavioral and drug treatment programs, but I didn't expect that any of them would help me. So, I tried to convince the staff that the treatment was working for me by always giving the "correct answers" to the questions asked in the programs so that I could finish them quickly and be free. I posed as a good student and as soon as I passed all the programs and was set free, I went right back to my criminal lifestyle.

While incarcerated at the Halawa Correctional Facility, I was reunited with all of my peers that had been through the criminal justice system their whole lives with me. As I spent years of my life with them getting through the prison time together, I grew strong bonds with them. However, most of my friends that I grew close to in prison have since lost their lives to murder, suicide, or health issues. Otherwise, they are still in jail serving even longer prison terms.

I was twenty-seven years old when I was released on parole after completing the work furlough program. I began to work regularly outside the prison and earn my own living. For the first time in my life, I had acquired legal, gainful employment to support myself. However, I again became involved in an unhealthy relationship where arguing and drug use became normal. Soon I was sent back to prison.

This time I participated in the KASHBOX Program, which is an intensive residential substance abuse treatment program for inmates with serious substance abuse problems. With the instruction of my counselor, Mr. Kalama, I became aware of the spiritual aspect of all things. For some reason, I then knew this was the time to change my life. I began to read books on Buddhism, which inspired me to pursue my path.

Around that time, I was introduced to the Buddhist service at the facility, where I met Ms. Jo-Ann Ozaki, a volunteer from Rissho Kosei-kai. I started taking in all I could about Buddhism from her. I studied hard and also shared what I learned with other inmates. For some reason, the teachings felt familiar to me and I was able to connect with the inner part of me. Jo-Ann gave me much advice on many parts of my life and used teachings such as the truth of causation to guide me in making my daily life better for myself and others.

Through learning the Parable of the Medicinal Herbs, in chapter 5 of the Lotus Sutra, I became aware of the benevolent rain that the Buddha had been giving me throughout my whole life. I found that I could grasp the teachings more deeply through this and other parables in the Lotus Sutra. I also realized that I could be happy by being helpful to others, being sincere, and appreciating every moment of the day. I was determined to continue on this path and live correctly. While incarcerated I would share all that I learned with people around me and I discovered that this not only benefited them but also helped me retain firmly in mind what I'd learned.

I was paroled in March 2019 and returned to my family's home in Waipio Gentry. I cut all ties with my old friends and began to attend the Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma center in Pearl City on a regular basis.

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Everyone at the Dharma center has made me feel so welcomed and I enjoy attending service. Since I began actively applying the teachings, my life has been growing brighter in every respect.

Participating in the various activities at the Dharma center is a very exciting experience. I am a member of both the Men's and the Youth groups, where we sit in hoza. I always relate to the experiences shared in hoza and apply what I've learned to my own life. Once a month, I attend the Dharma study session on Zoom, where I learn new things, and reviewing each chapter of the Lotus Sutra deepens my understanding of the teachings. I have also learned how to help with Sunday services, the role of toban, or Dharma center duties, and the basic movements of matoi. In addition, I find it rewarding to be able to help with special events at the Dharma center. I feel connected to the Buddha and the Dharma center. Furthermore, at the Dharma center, I can express myself freely, and receive guidance from senior members as well as Rev. Meya.

In January 2020, I was able to enshrine the locally-bestowed Gohonzon at my family's home. I asked everyone in my family if they were okay with welcoming the Buddha, and they all agreed to it. My family was very accepting. Ms. Ozaki led the enshrinement ceremony for us. Ms. Karen Fujii, my chapter head, and members from the Youth Group also came to the ceremony. I felt relief and extremely happy after making offerings in front of the Buddha and my ancestors at the ceremony.

My family has always remained strong and supportive even though I caused many problems in the past. Sometimes I can't believe it when I think about how they have stuck by me even in the many times when I did things to hurt them. It brings me much happiness that I can fill my family's lives now with joy rather than disappointment. Now that my parents are getting into their older years, I am

reclaiming the time with my parents that I missed as a child by helping them more than ever. I'm also preparing myself to become a reliable brother who can take good care of my sister for the rest of her life.

I had an opportunity to ask my parents how they felt when I put them through all the turmoil of my past misbehavior. They responded that they were so disappointed and hurt that their son could keep repeating the same mistakes over and over again. How close-minded I was when I did not listen to anything that anyone had to say! When I thought about it, my parents' words sank in. Despite all those years of pain, they still believed that I would turn around and walk in the right direction. Today, I would like to sincerely apologize to my parents for my past attitude and promise to be the best son I can be for them.

Since then, I have found a person I want to spend the rest of my life with. I also asked her to join Rissho Kosei-kai, and she did. On March 14, 2021, I married my wife, Jolyn. With the help of the sangha and Rev. Meya, we were able to hold the wedding ceremony at Rissho Kosei-kai. Due to the pandemic, only family and close friends attended, but we were able to have a drive-through reception afterward. There were many friends who celebrated our special day with us and we were overjoyed. My wife and I have formed an even stronger bond since we got married. I am very grateful to my wife for being my strongest ally and supporter.

Since my early twenties, I've had an interest in the plumbing trade. With all the problem-solving skills and subfields within the trade, it has always fascinated me. I was so excited when I became a member of the local plumbers union. I could finally wake up to a job that I enjoy doing.

I have also become very appreciative of my ancestors and all those who have come before me. It brings me much joy to acknowledge and show appreciation to them. I have grown much closer with my family and am grateful that I can be a dependable asset to them.

Moreover, I'm now able to show respect and consideration to all people and objects around me instead of being careless as I was before. I am grateful every day that I can wake up in the morning and have a choice about how I'm going to make my day. Even if unfavorable things happen, a lesson will be learned.

The Buddha is always guiding me through the people I encounter and the experiences I live through. I see my past misfortunes as experiences that I can use in the future to help others who might be going down the same road I went through, because I can relate to them. I now see myself improving as I polish my buddha nature each day so that my true self will shine through.

I understand that every day will have its set of challenges. There may be days when the challenges will be too much to bear. But I have faith that the Buddha will always allow only what I can handle and give me the guidance to get me through it.

Today I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you who have been a special part of my life and helped me build a foundation to walk the bodhisattva way. I will continue to persevere through life's challenges, always remain teachable, and become a person who is helpful to others.

Thank you for letting me share.



Mr. Kresge helping with the drive-thru omairi [worship] with Mr. Neal Matsushima.

## An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics

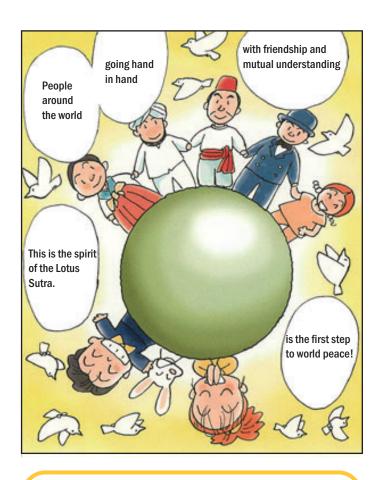
## The Founder's Life and the History of Rissho Kosei-kai

### Rissho Kosei-kai Spreading Worldwide

Rissho Kosei-kai currently has overseas branches in dozens of countries such as Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Mongolia, Nepal, Russia, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Thailand, Taiwan, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The members of Rissho Kosei-kai are devoting themselves to practicing the teachings and promoting the realization of world peace at each place.

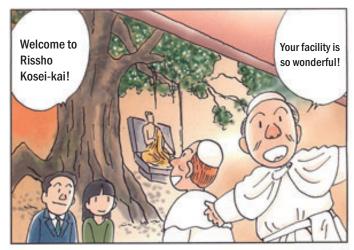
Many people in Japan and around the world are interested in the teachings and activities of Rissho Kosei-kai and visit the organization—including religious leaders among others.

Rissho Kosei-kai started with fewer than thirty members and now spreads its circle of sangha across the world. We can say that this is because of the excellent presentation of the teachings offered by the Founder, the Cofounder, and the President.



#### Did You Know?

In order to disseminate the teachings of the Threefold Lotus Sutra to many people across the world, the books written by the Founder such as: *Shinshaku hokke sanbukyo*, "The Threefold Lotus Sutra: A Modern Commentary," *Hokekyo no atarashii kaishaku*, "Buddhism for Today," and *Bukkyo no inochi hokekyo*, "The Lotus Sutra Life and Soul of Buddhism" are translated into foreign languages and published.





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## An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics

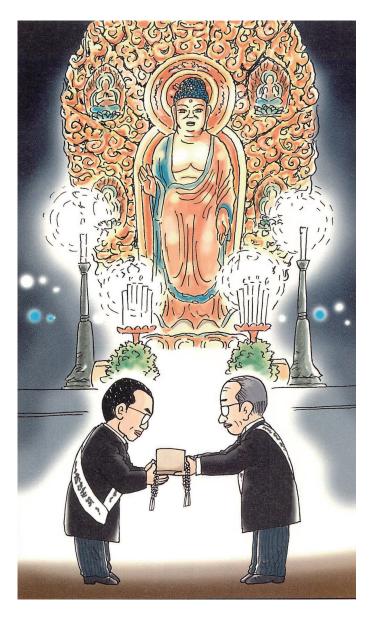


# The Inheritance of the Dharma from the Founder to His Son, Nichiko Niwano

President Nichiko Niwano was born as the first son of the Founder in March 1938.

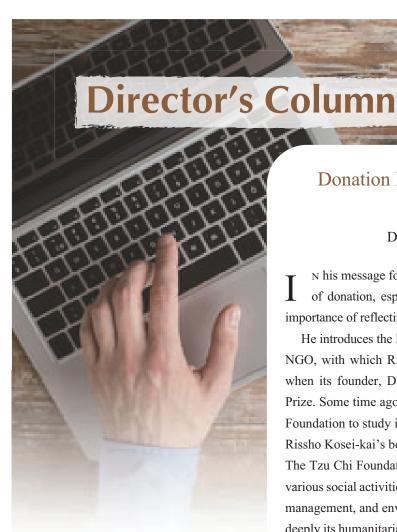
During and after the war, he lived in Suganuma, a mountain village in Niigata Prefecture, for ten years apart from the Founder. Though he was a small boy, he worked to help his mother and also took care of his younger brothers. Eventually he and his family returned to Tokyo to live together with the Founder, where he witnessed that many people were liberated from suffering by the Founder's guidance based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. The President says it was an opportunity to realize the wonderfulness of his father.

In 1991, he inherited the Lamp of the Dharma from the Founder and became the second president of Rissho Kosei-kai.



### O Did You Know?

The President lived in Suganuma with his mother and siblings for ten years from 1944. During that period, the Founder remained alone in Tokyo and devoted himself to the practice.



## Donation Brings Merits to Both Self and Others

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

N his message for this month, President Nichiko Niwano discusses the practice of donation, especially the donation of material wealth, reminding us of the importance of reflecting on our everyday attitude toward faith.

He introduces the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, a Taiwanese NGO, with which Rissho Kosei-kai has been in a close relationship since 2007, when its founder, Dharma Master Cheng Yen, was awarded the Niwano Peace Prize. Some time ago, at the suggestion of President Niwano, I visited the Tzu Chi Foundation to study its administration with Rev. Yasutaka Watanabe, then chair of Rissho Kosei-kai's board of trustees, and several staff members from headquarters. The Tzu Chi Foundation is a professional humanitarian organization that promotes various social activities including international disaster relief, hospital and university management, and environmental protection. During the visit, I was impressed how deeply its humanitarian activities had taken root in Taiwanese society, for which the efficient and extensive public relations by the foundation-owned television and satellite networks played an important role.

While learning from the example of the Tzu Chi Foundation, which is also grounded in the Lotus Sutra, that nurtures compassion through the practice of donation and produces blessings and virtues, we should once again reflect on our relations with monetary donations, our understanding of the significance of simplicity, and our ways of practicing the faith.

As Rissho Kosei-kai celebrates the eighty-fourth anniversary of its founding this month, I hope we will return to the basics of the practice of donation and with a renewed mind dedicate ourselves to spreading the teachings to bring forth joy to both ourselves and others.



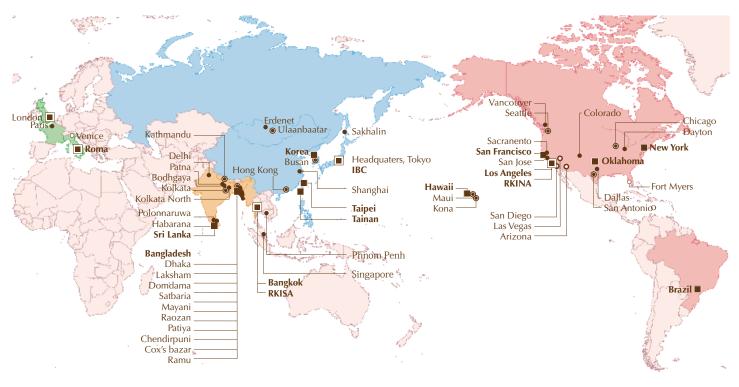
We welcome comments on our newsletter *Living the Lotus*: living.the.lotus.rk-international@kosei-kai.or.jp.

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## Rissho Kosei-kai: A Global Buddhist Movement





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#### Rissho Kosei-kai Bangladesh

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#### Rissho Kosei-kai Mayani

Mayani Barua Para, Mirsarai, Chittagong, Bangladesh

#### Rissho Kosei-kai Damdama

Damdama Barua Para, Mirsarai, Chittagong, Bangladesh

#### Rissho Kosei-kai Satbaria

Village: Satbaria Bepari Para, Chandanaih, Chittagong, Bangladesh

#### Rissho Kosei-kai Chendhirpuni

Village: Chendhirpuni, P.O.: Adhunogar, P.S.: Lohagara, Chittagong, Bangladesh

#### Rissho Kosei-kai Raozan

Dakkhin Para, Ramzan Ali Hat, Raozan, Chittagong, Bangladesh

#### Rissho Kosei-kai Laksham

Village: Dhupchor, Laksham, Comilla, Bangladesh

#### Rissho Kosei-kai Dhaka North

408/8 DOSH, Road No 7 (West), Baridhara, Dhaka, Bangladesh

#### Rissho Kosei-kai Cox's Bazar

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