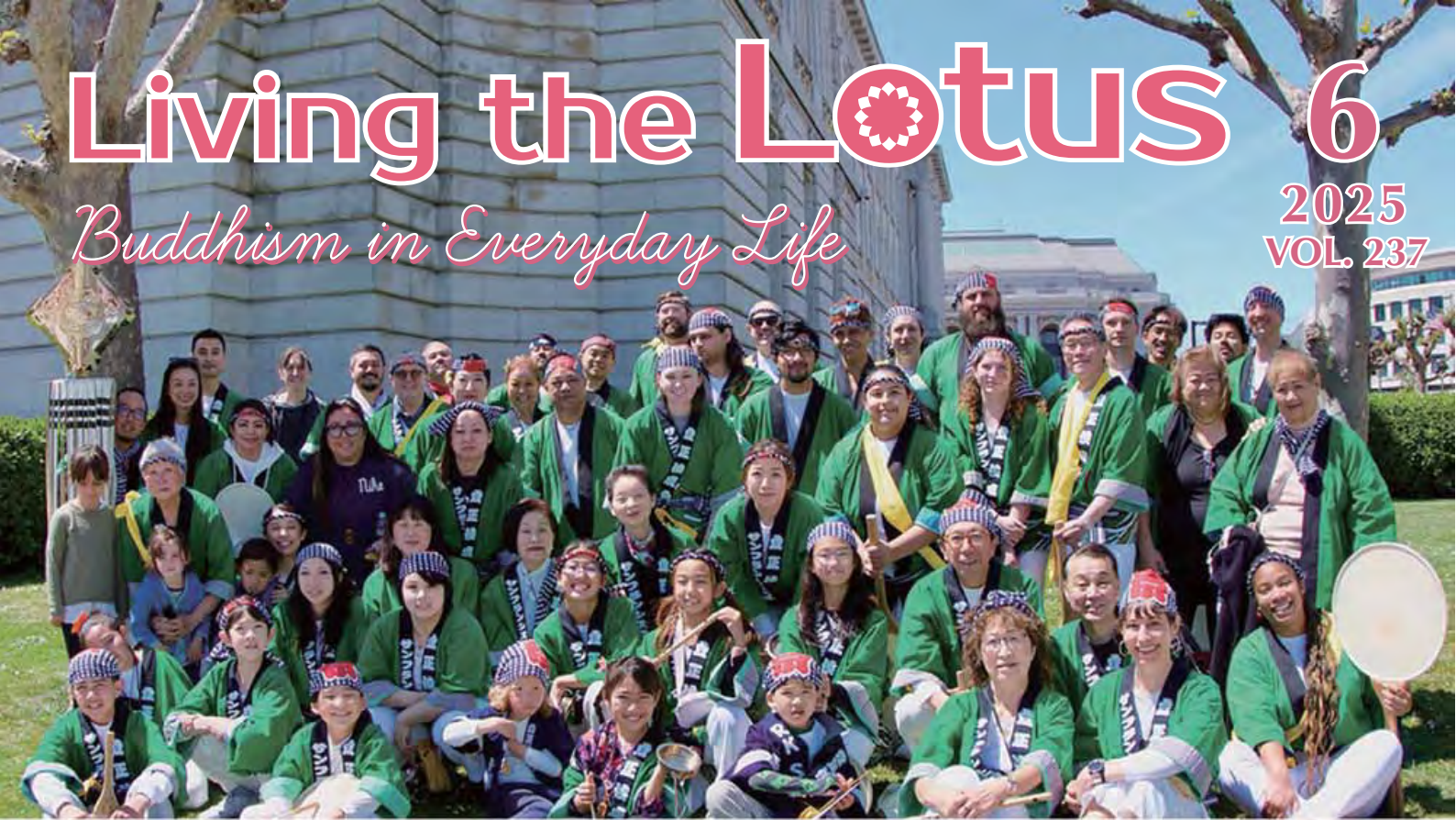


Living the Lotus 6

Buddhism in Everyday Life

2025
VOL. 237



2025 Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival Risho Kosei-kai Members in North America Participate in the Grand Parade in San Francisco



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Risho 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 Rev. Myoko Naganuma (1889–1957). With the guidance of President Nichiko Niwano, Risho 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.

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.

What Is Filial Piety?

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



Do Not Hate or Be in Conflict with Other People

There is a proverb that says “When you want to perform filial piety for your parents, they are gone. It’s like wrapping a blanket around a headstone.” I am sure many people are nodding in agreement, as they keenly feel the regret of not having performed filial piety for their parents while they were still alive and well. I think, though, that even when filial piety is “like wrapping a blanket around a headstone,” that does not mean that nothing can or should be done.

As I mentioned in last month’s installment, for those of us who are alive now, thanks to the relay of passing the baton of life in an unbroken chain of connections that forms part of the history of one great life stretching back to the birth of the universe, thinking about the meaning of being filial to our parents also means looking at the origin of our own lives through the lives of our parents and ancestors and asking what we can do now as we look toward the future.

Indeed, the character for “filial” [孝] in the word for “filial piety” is a combination of the characters for “old” [老] and “child” [子], which seems to suggest the unity of older generations and younger generations who are being bound together as one through the seamless process of passing down important things. So there is no doubt that filial piety has a deeper meaning and substance than merely being filial to your parents.

Nevertheless, according to *The Analects*, when Confucius was asked “What does it mean to be filial?” he gave an answer that is easy to understand: “Because parents are always worrying about their children’s wellbeing, it means looking after yourself so that you do not make your parents worry about you.” Of course, this too is an important point. But when we look into the etymology of the character for “disease” [疾] (in Japanese, *shitsu*), in addition to “illness,” it has other meanings such as “to hate,” “to envy,” “to resent,” and “to torment.” According to Masahiro Yasuoka’s research, it also seems that “‘disease’ is the same as ‘conflict.’”

Therefore, one of the ways we can perform filial piety in our daily lives is to be careful not to allow selfish desires or conflicts to create rifts in all our human relationships, including, of course, between parents and children.

Filial Impiety Is Like Taking Life

Gyoki (668–749), who people revered as a bodhisattva because he provided aid for the poor and helped control flooding, wrote this poem: “When I hear the pheasants calling, / I think, ‘Could that be the voice / Of my father or my mother?’” The poem fully expresses the feeling of longing for your deceased parents, as even the cries of the pheasants sound like your beloved parents calling out to you. That sentiment, as depicted in this poem, is profoundly moving.

While we may at times become immersed in such sentimentality, we are also apt to forget to be grateful to our parents for giving birth to us, lamenting our physical appearance or resenting that we cannot live our lives as we wish. These are acts of filial impiety—of failing to be grateful for the life we have been given—and as the Soto sect priest Suigan Yogo (1912–96) says, they are tantamount to violating the precept to not take life. Yogo asserts that we are living, just as we are, “the life that completely fills the heavens and earth.” In other words, our lives are none other than buddha nature, and they are all equally and indiscriminately wonderful; there is no meaningless life or meaningless existence in this world. He says that “passing judgement” on yourself or your own life is akin to taking life without regard for the source and origin of life—in other words, it is violating the precept to not take life, one of the five precepts that must be observed by lay Buddhists.

In that sense, for us, filial piety means avoiding conflict with others and reining in, as much as possible, the mind of anger or displeasure that lays bare the ego and believing that we ourselves are one and the same as buddha nature while honestly accepting whatever happens as the workings of the Buddha (the Truth). In addition, since the workings of nature—to which human beings belong—are based on the principle of unceasing progress, advancement, and creativity, we also have an important responsibility to develop our own selves and to “raise human beings” who will shoulder the next generation, which I think can also be considered filial piety toward our parents, as part of the unbroken chain of life that continues from the past into the future.

The key to this is being “loyal and considerate”—that is, nurturing a mind and attitude that encompass everything discussed so far. Forgiveness, acceptance, sincerity, and consideration for others—as we put these into practice every day, we are spreading and passing on the truly important spirit of *daiwa*, “great harmony.”

From *Kosei*, June 2025



Spiritual Journey

Guided by the Buddha's Teachings, I Want to Support as Many People as Possible

Myadagmaa Gulguu, Rishho Kosei-kai of Erdenet, Mongolia

This Dharma Journey was presented in the Great Sacred Hall on March 15, 2025, during the ceremony commemorating Shakyamuni Buddha's Memorial Day (Uposatha Day).

Hello, everyone. Thank you for this opportunity.

I was born in 1958 as the eldest child of ten brothers and sisters. Because my parents worked at a train station, our family frequently moved between rural stations. My parents worked from early morning until late at night, so I took care of my younger brothers and sisters and helped with housework. Despite these responsibilities, I spent my days happily surrounded by the warmth of a large family. While growing up with many siblings, I developed a dream of working with children. I wanted to become either a school-teacher or a pediatrician.

My father was someone who selflessly cared for others without expecting anything in return. My mother had a kind heart and often shared food with others. My father passed away at the young age of forty-five due to a serious illness. My mother is now eighty-seven and still healthy enough to sew traditional Mongolian clothing for her children and grandchildren. When we celebrated her eighty-fifth birthday two years ago, the family that began with just my parents had grown into a large family of 108 members.



A commemorative family photo taken around 1991. Ms. Gulguu is on the right in the middle row.



Ms. Gulguu delivers her Dharma Journey talk in the Great Sacred Hall.

In 1982, I graduated from the National Medical University in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia, and fulfilled my dream of becoming a pediatrician. Later, I met my husband and gave birth to a daughter in 1985 and a son in 1989. However, my husband and I had different values and perspectives, and eventually, he became physically abusive. Seven years after our wedding, I divorced him and fled with our children to Erdenet, the second-largest city in Mongolia. There, I began working as a physician at a local community medical center. In Erdenet, I met a kind and dependable man and remarried. He was a wonderful stepfather to my children. Life with him was peaceful and filled with happiness.

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Around that time, an acquaintance approached me with a real estate business opportunity. Thinking I needed more money for my children's future, I took out a loan and decided to get involved. However, once I had invested, things didn't go as expected, and I eventually realized I had been deceived by the acquaintance. In 2005, to make matters worse, my husband passed away from illness. I was left with the burden of raising two children and repaying the debt on my own. I felt as though I had fallen from the peak of happiness into the depths of despair.

Shortly after my husband's death, I learned about Rissho Kosei-kai of Mongolia from Ms. Enkhtuya, who would later become my Dharma parent. She told me it was a group that recites sutras in Mongolian and teaches people to cherish nature, be filial to their parents, and be considerate of others. These values stayed with me, and I wished to visit someday.

In 2006, I had the opportunity to visit Rissho Kosei-kai of Mongolia in Ulaanbaatar. It was in a small apartment room where five women, including Ms. Shuger Zorigmaa, who now serves as a chapter head, were performing sutra recitation in Mongolian. When I joined the service, a phrase from chapter 3 of the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, "Make one who commits the ten evils aspire to the ten virtues," caught my eye. At the time, I was struggling to repay my debt, unable to properly raise my children, and tormented by self-reproach. Yet, while reading the sutra, I felt my mind become purified. I thought, "How wonderful it would be if children, whose hearts are still pure, could recite this sacred sutra daily from a young age." During the next Dharma circle meet-



Participants in the twenty-one-day sutra recitation practice held in Ms. Gulguu's home in 2006. Ms. Gulguu is third from left in the back row.



Ms. Gulguu with other participants in the enshrinement ceremony of the Gohonzon at the Erdenet Dharma Center in 2018 (fourth from left in the front row).

ing, I expressed my desire for children in Erdenet to recite this sutra.

Two months later, five members, including Ms. Zorigmaa, traveled 220 kilometers to Erdenet to share the Dharma. In a room at my workplace, I hosted a Dharma gathering with six local friends and their twenty children. Later, a *Sokaimyo* (the posthumous name for all the spirits of ancestors in the family) was enshrined in my home, and many of those who had gathered before joined the enshrinement service.

Ms. Zorigmaa encouraged us by saying, "If you perform sutra recitation for twenty-one days without missing a day, your wishes will come true." So, every evening at seven in the evening, we all gathered at my home for sutra recitation. Her words left a strong impression on us, and we wholeheartedly continued the practice. Ms. Zorigmaa had used skillful means to direct our hearts toward the Dharma. New participants kept joining, and three months later, the last participant completed the twenty-one-day practice. Through this, everyone's hearts were purified, and during a Dharma circle, we shared the joyous changes in our lives and the spiritual benefits we were receiving, such as, "a couple on the brink of divorce reconciled" or "a husband who drank heavily stopped drinking." Thus, the activities of members in Erdenet, which were based in my home, continued for three years.

I, too, received unexpected blessings through the sutra recitation practice. I had long held resentment toward my first husband, but the teachings helped me to reflect and realize that we were meant to meet. Looking back, I recognized that before I met him, I

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Ms. Gulguu with Rev. Saito (left) and Rev. Hirose (right) after the enshrinement ceremony of the Gohonzon at the Erdenet Dharma Center in 2018.

had also caused pain and sadness to others through my actions. I now believe that the Buddha allowed me to meet him so I could awaken to my own faults. This realization made me feel deep sorrow and regret for having hated him for so long. My perspective changed, and with it, my heart changed as well.

In 2008, I was appointed as a group leader. Fortunately, the number of members in Erdenet continued to grow, and we began our activities in a rented apartment room that we used as our Dharma center, located in the heart of the city. Every weekend, I visited the center with excitement to recite the sutra and study the teachings with fellow members. I guided my family, friends, and colleagues to the faith, and the circle of our sangha expanded into surrounding areas.

I now have 240 people whom I have guided to the Dharma. Encountering Rissho Kosei-kai completely transformed my life. The more I recite the sutras and study the teachings, the more I have come to see that all life experiences are expressions of the Buddha's compassionate wish to help me grow.

However, one more trial awaited me before I could reach this understanding. In 2014, my grandchild was born, and I temporarily moved to Ulaanbaatar to help with childcare, entrusting the Erdenet Dharma Center to Ms. A, one of the members I had guided. However, when I returned to Erdenet and visited the Dharma center a year later, I was shocked to find that Ms. A had become the new group leader without consulting me. I had worked so hard since the center's founding, and yet no one had said a word to me about this change. I felt hurt and abandoned. I grew despondent

and lost my enthusiasm for the Dharma, and I was no longer able to joyfully perform sutra recitation. This state lasted for about three years. My heart was constantly unstable, and the sadness never lifted.

One day, while reciting the Sutra of Repentance [the Sutra of the Method for Contemplating the Bodhisattva Universal Sage], a thought suddenly came to me that I was perhaps the cause of this situation. Reflecting on myself, I realized I had been arrogant, thinking that I was the one who had created the Erdenet Dharma Center. I had clung to the self-centered belief that I was working harder than anyone, and that I was right, and others were wrong. Then, like the line from the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, "Make one who commits the ten evils aspire to the ten virtues," I came to see that this suffering was the great compassion of the Buddha, who was guiding me to correct my arrogance. When I realized this, I felt joy throughout my body, and everything around me seemed to shine. I immediately visited the Dharma center and expressed my repentance for my self-centeredness during the Dharma circle. I am deeply grateful to the members who warmly welcomed and accepted me as I was.

In 2018, the Erdenet Dharma Center was officially registered with the headquarters, and Rev. Koichi Saito, then director of Rissho Kosei-kai International, and Rev. Ikuyo Hirose, then deputy director, visited our center for the ceremony to install the statue of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni as the *Gohonzon*, or the "focus of devotion." Rev. Hirose encouraged me to receive the Dharma Teacher qualification, and I gratefully resolved to wholeheartedly devote myself to my role. Through repentance and self-reflection, the Buddha gave me an unimaginable gift.

In 2020, I was diagnosed with liver cancer. Surprisingly, I felt no fear upon hearing the diagnosis. Cancer had been found in four locations on my liver, and a large portion needed to be surgically removed. At that time, the sangha members recited the Three-fold Lotus Sutra for a month and prayed for me. Their warmth gave me strength, and I earnestly wished to overcome the illness, live longer, and continue spreading the teachings to many more people. The cancer recurred in 2021 and again in 2023, and each time I underwent surgery. Thanks to the Dharma, I

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was able to remain calm and composed through it all. Even after another recent recurrence and another surgery, I feel no fear or worry. Had I not encountered the teachings, I might, as a doctor, have focused solely on the results of surgery and treatment and worsened my condition. But now, thanks to my past sufferings, I can face everything peacefully.

I have a dream right now. It is to be of support to

as many people as possible. For that, I want to live as long as I can. I will continue to dedicate myself to Dharma dissemination so that the activities of the Erdenet Dharma Center, which stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will flourish again, and everyone connected to the Dharma can live in good health and find peace of mind.

Thank you very much.



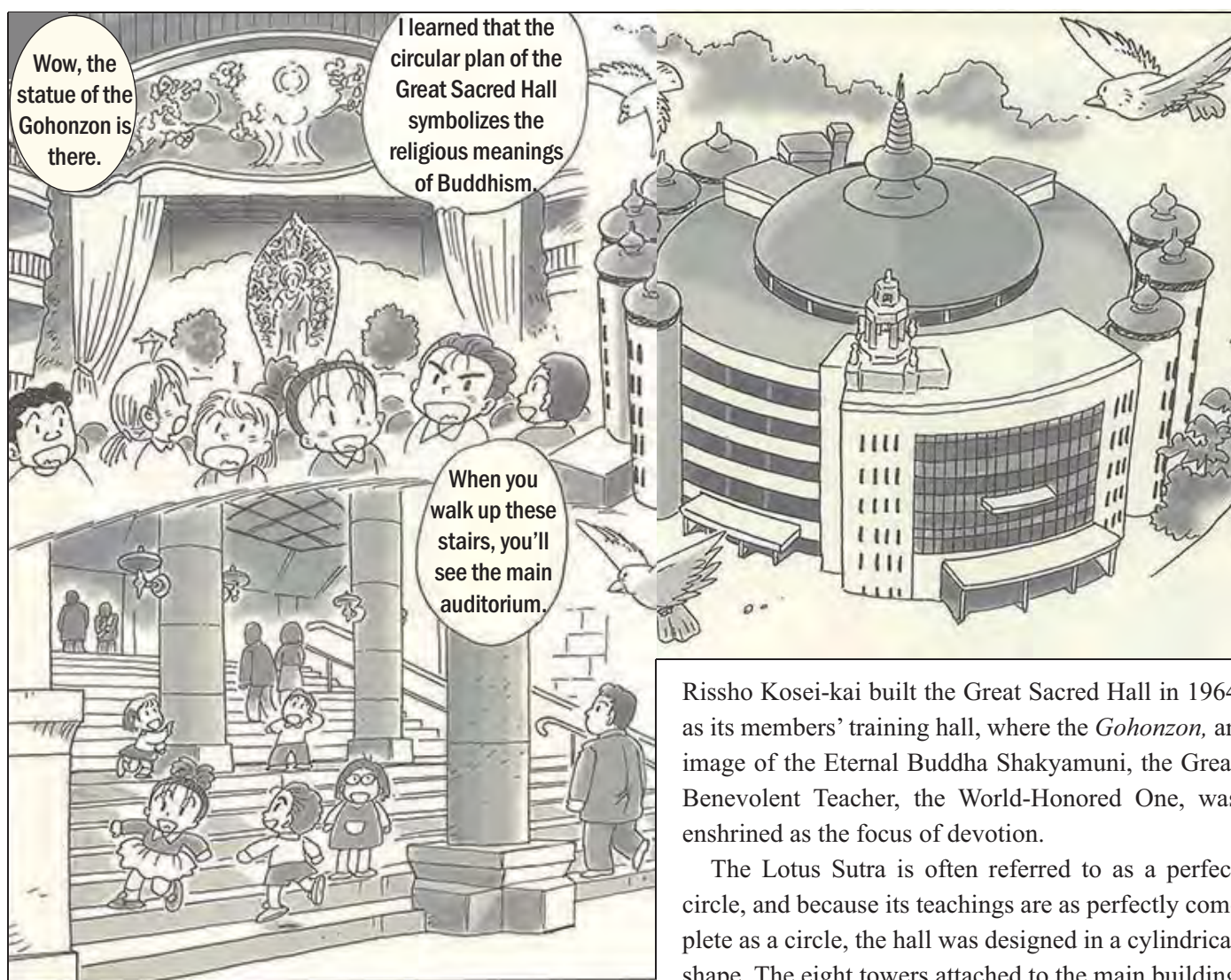
Recipients of the Dharma Teacher qualification from Mongolia after the 2018 presentation ceremony held in the Great Sacred Hall. Ms. Gulguu is second from left.



An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics

The Facilities of Rissho Kosei-kai

The Great Sacred Hall



Did You Know?

Three lacquer paintings of bodhisattvas are displayed on the upper front wall of the main entrance of the Great Sacred Hall. From the right side, they are the Bodhisattva Manjushri, the Bodhisattva Universal Sage, and the Bodhisattva Maitreya. The Bodhisattva Manjushri represents the wisdom of all the buddhas, the Bodhisattva Universal Sage symbolizes the practice and virtue of all the buddhas, and the Bodhisattva Maitreya is regarded as the embodiment of the compassion of all the buddhas.

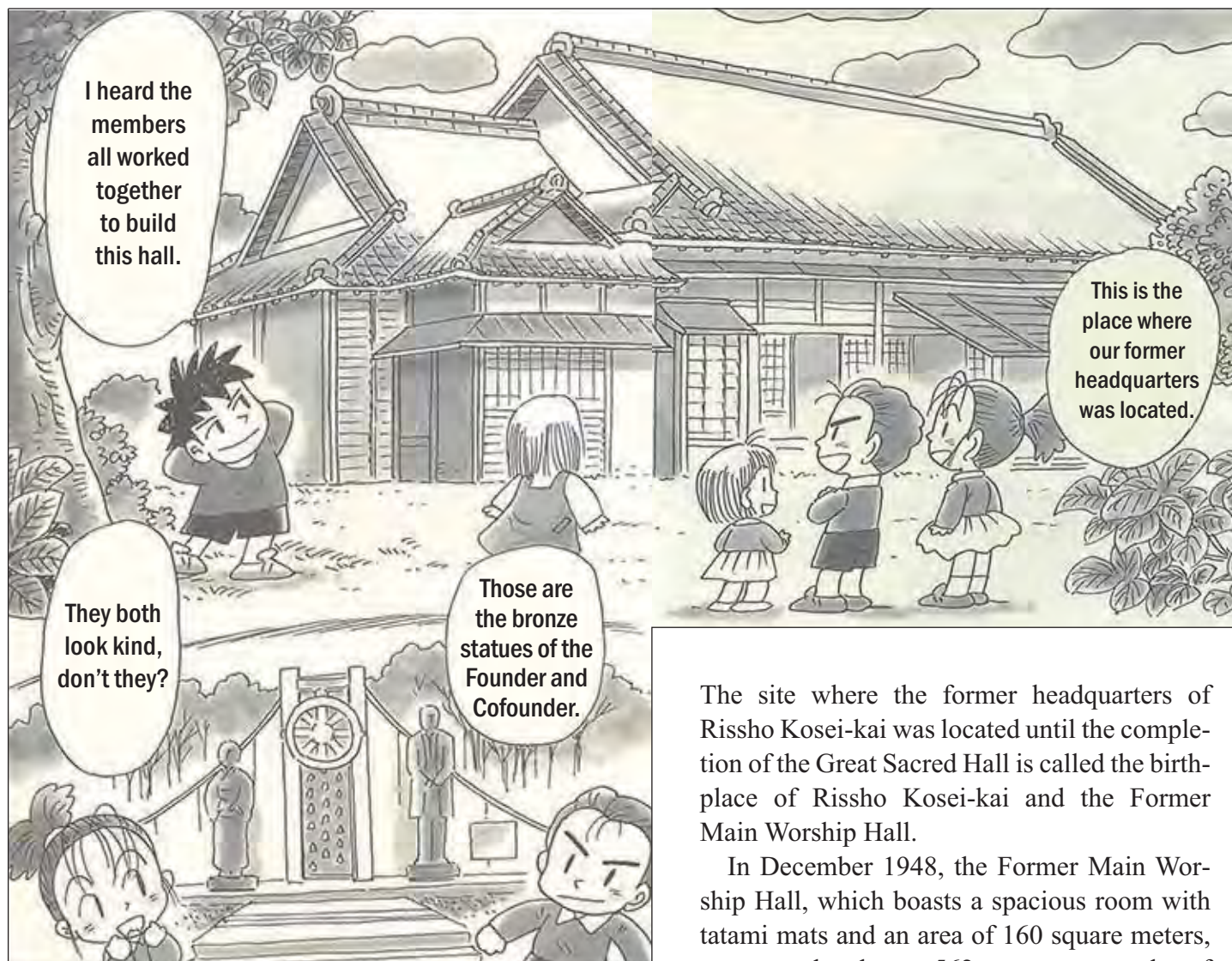
Rissho Kosei-kai built the Great Sacred Hall in 1964 as its members' training hall, where the *Gohonzon*, an image of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, the Great Benevolent Teacher, the World-Honored One, was enshrined as the focus of devotion.

The Lotus Sutra is often referred to as a perfect circle, and because its teachings are as perfectly complete as a circle, the hall was designed in a cylindrical shape. The eight towers attached to the main building represent the Buddhist teaching of the Eightfold Path. (Please see details about the Eightfold Path in past issues of *Living the Lotus*, from January to April 2023.) In the main auditorium on the fourth floor, the Gohonzon, the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, is enshrined. The fifth to seventh floors are used for Dharma circle sessions. There is a cafeteria on the second floor, and the meditation room is on the seventh floor.

In 2006, a project was carried out to renew the Great Sacred Hall. The building was equipped with a seismic isolation system that protects its foundation from major earthquakes.



The Birthplace of Rissho Kosei-kai and the Former Main Worship Hall



Did You Know?

The bronze statues of the Founder and the Cofounder were erected in 1987 as part of a project to build a monument commemorating the birthplace of Rissho Kosei-kai. When you visit the site, take a turn around the grounds with a thought for what it was like when Rissho Kosei-kai was founded.

The site where the former headquarters of Rissho Kosei-kai was located until the completion of the Great Sacred Hall is called the birthplace of Rissho Kosei-kai and the Former Main Worship Hall.

In December 1948, the Former Main Worship Hall, which boasts a spacious room with tatami mats and an area of 160 square meters, was completed on a 562-square-meter plot of land. The members provided all the construction work through their service. It is said that the Founder also worked hard, sweating while carrying the soil.

In one corner of the site, there are bronze statues of both the Founder and the Cofounder, Myoko Naganuma. This site also includes the Myokoden, the memorial house of the late Ms. Myoko Naganuma, which she used as her residence.



Chapter 2 To Connect with Others

Learn to Like People You Dislike

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



Raising Dharma Children

So far, we have considered things from the perspective of how we should take the words and actions of others. But in order to better ourselves, and for our workplaces and society to improve and progress without difficulty, we need to step up our thinking.

This means that it's important to make a conscious effort to actively show kindness to people, serving and helping them. Through such actions, we cultivate something between ourselves and others. As we continue to be kind to one another, serve one another, help one another, and nurture one another this way, these actions amplify themselves, and our workplaces and society can become brighter, warmer, and continue to improve and progress.

The reason Buddhism places generosity (donation) as the first of the bodhisattva practices, and why Rissho Kosei-kai sets “each person guiding another” as its goal, is none other than that both emphasize the willingness to take the initiative to engage others.

“Each person guiding another” ultimately means nurturing a child of the Dharma. When a child is born, parents devote themselves to raising that child. They read parenting books, seek advice from experienced parents, and do their best to ensure the child grows up healthy and sound.

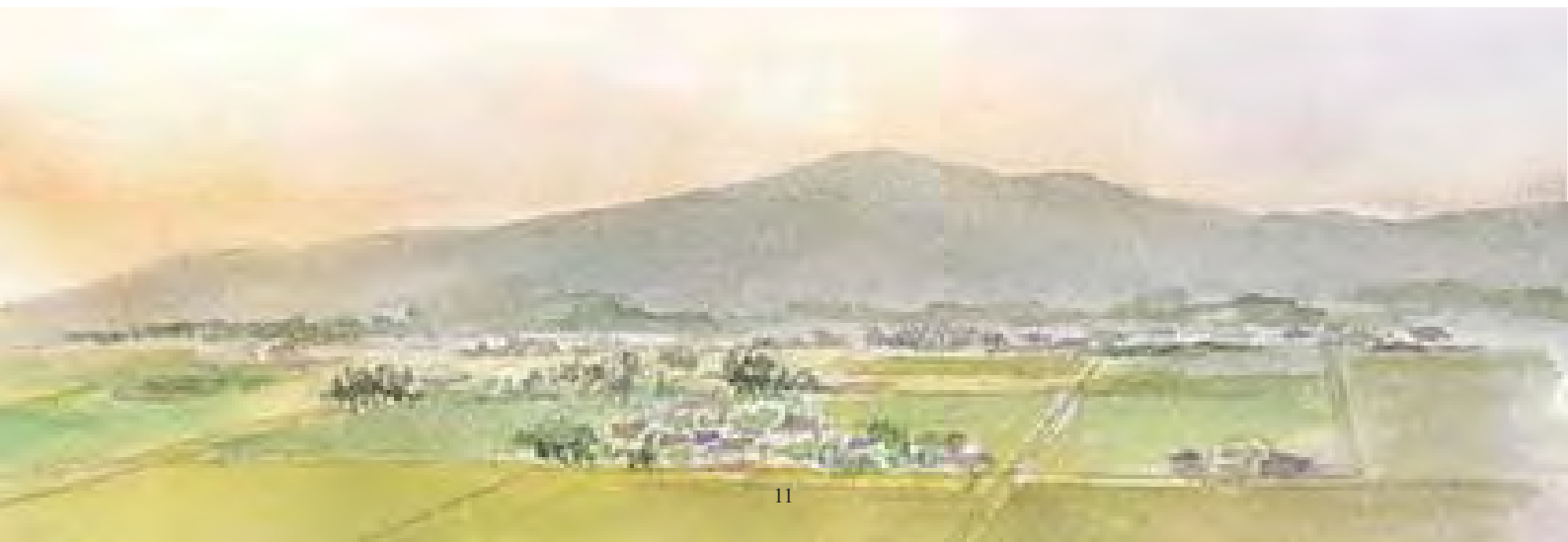


Nurturing someone you are guiding in the Dharma is the same. There will probably be times when you are uncertain and times when your Dharma child turns away from you. But it is precisely through these kinds of experiences and moments of trial and error that you'll mutually grow, and that is where true joy is found.

Nurturing others is surely one of the greatest joys of being human. When you recognize the value of a relationship of yours in which two people are challenging and inspiring each other to grow, the other person is bound to become someone truly irreplaceable and a person that you will come to deeply appreciate.

Even when it comes to the problem of learning to like someone you dislike, I believe that in addition to the three approaches I've already talked about—reflecting upon and changing oneself, seeing the reality of the other person (buddha nature), and cultivating a gentle heart—it is the willingness to serve the other person in some way that becomes the decisive factor.

Bodai no me o okosashimu (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 77–78



Director's Column

Filial Piety from Afar

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

Hello, everyone. June has arrived, and we have already reached the year's midpoint. The rainy season, which marks the transition from spring to summer, is just around the corner here in Tokyo.

The theme of President Niwano's message for this month is filial piety. For me, this is a somewhat painful topic. The reason is that I left my parents' home in Akita to move to Tokyo, and this year marks my thirty-ninth year away from home. During that time, my eldest sister and her family took care of my father when he fell ill and nursed him until his passing. She now continues to care for our mother, who turned ninety this year.

My mother shows some signs of dementia, and there have been various challenges in the past. However, thanks to my sister's care, she is now having regular check-ups, receiving daycare services, and living a peaceful retirement at home.

Last December, when I returned home for my father's thirteenth memorial service, my nephew, who is in his forties, suddenly said to me, "Grandma is clearly different on days when Uncle calls. She looks livelier, and her face stays bright all day. So, I would be happy if you could call her more often to show your filial piety."

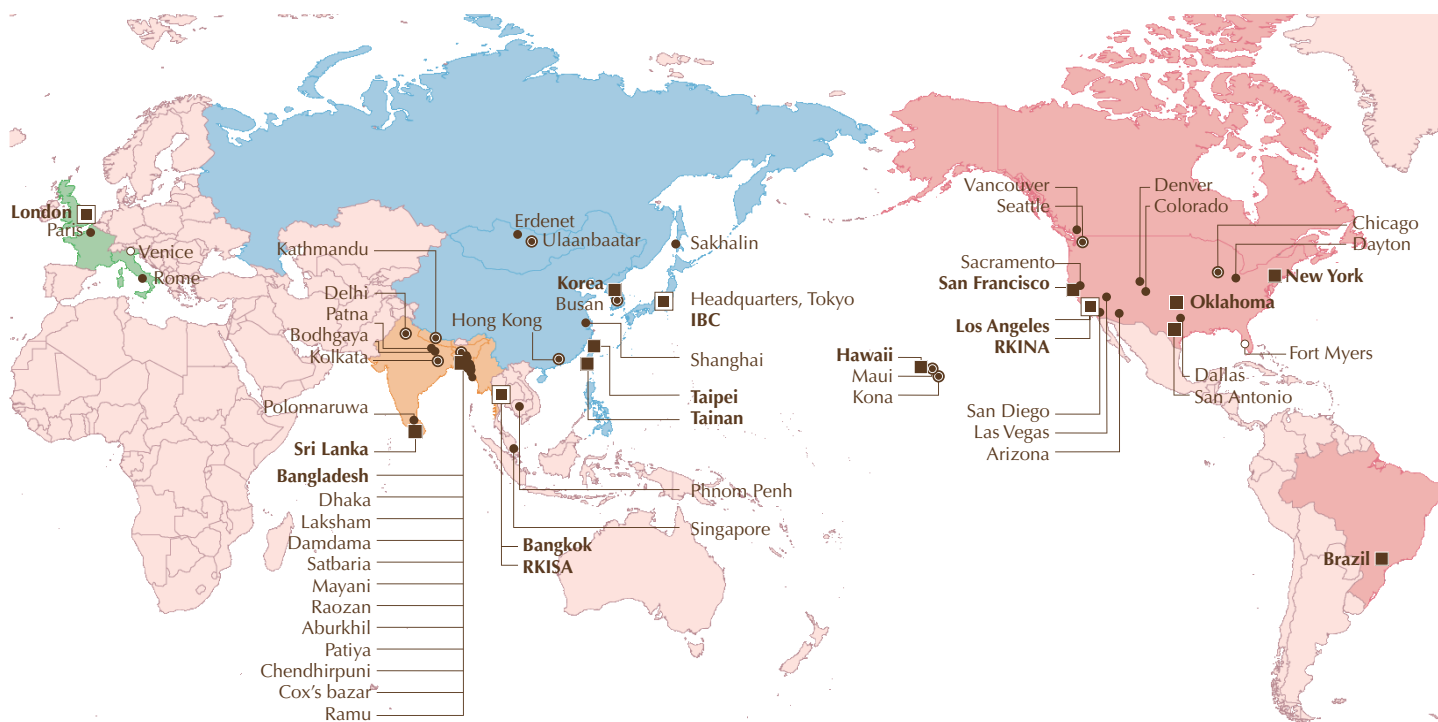
Although my mother has a strong personality, my nephew's words made me realize once again that she is facing anxieties and inconveniences in her old age. Although I live far away from my mother, I firmly vowed to myself to be as close as possible to my mother's heart and, as the President teaches us, do my best every day to practice being "loyal and considerate."



Rev. Akagawa (front row, center) with members of Rissho Kosei-kai of Tainan, Taiwan, where he visited on April 29.



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