

# Living the Lotus 9

*Buddhism in Everyday Life*

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Rissho Kosei-kai of Sri Lanka

## Living the Lotus Vol. 240 (September 2025)

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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 Rev. Myoko 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.

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.

## Preparing for the Autumn of Life

Rev. Nichiko Niwano  
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



*President Nichiko Niwano offers incense and a paper crane during the ceremony for the Day of Prayers for the Repose of the Spirits of All Victims of War and Prayers for Peace, held at the Great Sacred Hall on August 15, 2024.*

### Things That Leave Are Leaving and Again Filling My Mind

Our lifetimes are often likened to the four seasons. Spring is a period of growth, when new life sends forth sprouts that grow by leaps and bounds; summer is a period of activity, when we are bursting with energy and socially very active; autumn is a period of harvesting, when we mature as human beings, welcome the autumn fruits of our labors, and prepare for winter; and winter is a period of living tranquilly, having reaped the fruits of life, as we wait for the new buds of spring to sprout from the seeds that have overflowed and fallen from us.

People may have different ideas about this, but based on the current thinking that our time is the era of the hundred-year life, I think we can assume that spring refers to the period up to age twenty-five, summer from twenty-five until age fifty, autumn from fifty until age seventy-five, and winter from then on.

However, of these four seasons, images of autumn and winter are hardly energetic and full of vitality, and I think many people associate those seasons with cold, lonely impressions, like dead leaves falling from trees and shivering from wind and snow.

On the other hand, in the ancient Indian concept of the four periods of existence that divides our lifetimes into four parts to match the four seasons, the stage of retiring to the forest, corresponding to autumn, is actually considered to be life's golden period—a time without being troubled by various entanglements and obligations, when one can prepare for a fulfilling and enjoyable final stage of life (the stage of wandering freely).

To quote a haiku by Ryuta Iida, “Things that leave are leaving, / And again filling [my mind]— / The skies of autumn,” indeed, autumn is a time in life when we are gradually liberated from things that, up to that point, we had found troublesome, and we turn toward winter with a clear mind and a heart full of things that are satisfying and hopeful (*Haiku konjaku* [Haiku now and past], Fujimi Shobo, 1988).

However, in the course of living our lives, we sometimes regret that we did not do things differently, and especially in the latter half of life, such thoughts tend to bubble up in our minds.

However, I think that these regrets and reflections can certainly become “fruits” that help us face winter.

Persimmons and chestnuts, which are harvested in the fall, do not become nourishment if we dislike their astringency or thorns, but if we accept them as bountiful blessings and take the time to carefully prepare them, we can enjoy their deliciousness. In the same way, we can say that “harvesting” bitter feelings and turning them into spiritual nourishment and energy for the winter is a great “fruit” only attainable in that season.

## Winter Is a Time of Learning

Approximately 2,600 years ago, Confucius, who died at the age of seventy-four, spoke of his own spiritual journey in *The Analects*: “At age fifty, I knew what heaven commanded of me; at sixty, my ears could listen obediently; and at seventy, I could follow my heart’s desire without overstepping the bounds of propriety.” In other words, in the autumn of life, you begin to understand the principles of the universe, and when you listen to what others say, their reasons make sense to you; and as you enter the winter years, you can do as you please, naturally, without straying from etiquette and social norms.

I am already in the middle of my winter years, but as a human being, I am nowhere near reaching such a mature state of mind. However, considering the average life expectancy back then compared with now, Confucius’s seventy years old would be about one hundred and ten years old today. I am an octogenarian, but my practice and learning are still far from complete, and there are many things I do not know or understand, so therefore, I honestly think that I should continue to learn as much as possible.

These aspirations are akin to the instincts that all human beings possess. Moreover, if you have the desire to learn, you can encounter many new things no matter how old you are, and that joy and inspiration will give you the energy to live as well as something to enjoy in the winter of your life.

In order to do this, health is also important, but as Seibo Kitamura (1884–1987), a sculptor known for the Nagasaki Peace Statue, said when he was a hundred years old (according to the Japanese way of reckoning age) in a conversation with Founder Niwano, who was then seventy-seven, the secret to a long and healthy life is, “Don’t get angry. Don’t let things get to you or bother you.” To this, Founder Niwano added, “And don’t lie,” to which Kitamura replied, “If you don’t lie, your mind is pure and your health is good,” and described his daily habit of writing in calligraphy, as people requested of him, “Pure mind, long life.”

Striving to deepen one’s learning, and being unpretentious and honest—this attitude is sure to serve as an example for younger generations. But I would like to return to the topic of deepening our learning in another issue of this magazine.



From *Kosei*, September 2025

## Sharing the Buddha's Teachings to Bring Happiness to the People of South Africa

Andrew Christie, Rissho Kosei-kai of Rome, Italy (Living in South Africa)

### When and how did you join Rissho Kosei-kai?

I joined Rissho Kosei-kai in May 2013. Currently, I live in Johannesburg, South Africa, at the southern tip of the African continent. For about twenty years, I belonged to another Japanese Buddhist organization. However, over time, I began to question that group's exclusive and intolerant views, and I gradually distanced myself. Even so, my interest in Buddhism remained strong. One day, I came across Rissho Kosei-kai's website and was deeply moved by an article there. It was a report about President-Designate Kosho Niwano, who had been visiting areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake, offering prayers for recovery, and providing heartfelt encouragement to the victims. After reading that article, I immediately called the Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters in Japan. Unfortunately, they told me there was no Dharma center in South Africa, but they introduced me to the Rome Center, which is now called Rissho Kosei-kai of Rome. That's how I got in touch with Rev. Katsutoshi Mizumo, the center's director, who is presently the minister of the Hamakita Dharma Center.

After that, I downloaded the PDF of the *Kyoten*, or "sutra readings," in English from the website and began offering morning and evening sutra recitations. I also downloaded Founder Nikkyo Niwano's books, including *Buddhism for Today* and *Invisible Eyelashes*, and began reading them. Later, I purchased the e-books *Cultivating the Buddhist Heart* by President Nichiko Niwano and *The Buddha in Everyone's Heart* by Rev. Kosho Niwano, which gradually deepened my understanding of Rissho Kosei-kai.

### How did you keep in touch with the Rome Center?

I began participating in the Rome Center's online programs. Together with the sangha members, I read and discussed President Niwano's monthly message



Mr. Andrew Christie

published in *Living the Lotus*. Sometimes I listened to members' Dharma Journey talks and joined *hoza* sessions to share what I had learned from them. In December 2013, Rev. Mizumo visited my home in Johannesburg and enshrined a locally bestowed *Gohonzon*, or "focus of devotion." I was deeply moved and grateful. To my joy, ten people, including my mother and older sister, attended the *Gohonzon* enshrinement ceremony. My mother lived with me until she passed away at the age of ninety-two. Although she was a Christian, she was happy that I have my faith, Rissho Kosei-kai. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when many programs were held online, she listened to the lectures and *hoza* sessions with great interest and shared her impressions with me afterward.

### What aspect of Rissho Kosei-kai are you fascinated by?

What fascinates me most is that Rissho Kosei-kai is a very open-minded organization. I truly admire its

# Interview

ability to accept different values and religions and to find common ground beyond those differences. The way Rissho Kosei-kai actively promotes interfaith dialogue and cooperation, both in Japan and internationally, is a strong example of its open-mindedness.

I am also fascinated that Rissho Kosei-kai values sutra recitation, which is one of the membership's basic practices of the faith. I consider my morning and evening sutra recitation essential, and every day, in addition to the *Kyoten*, I recite one chapter from *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*. This practice brings me a deep sense of peace. The morning recitation especially, which I perform before I go to work, gives me the strength and determination to start my day with resolve. Through the practice of sutra recitation, I feel I am receiving great merit, such as gaining wisdom on how to build better relationships with my friends and acquaintances, learning to approach everything with courage, and gaining the ability to reflect deeply on myself.

## **Are there any words and deeds that you especially value in the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai?**

Every month, I download President Niwano's message in *Living the Lotus* onto my tablet and make a habit of reading it repeatedly each morning and evening. After morning sutra recitation, I read President Niwano's message, and after returning from work, following the evening recitation, I read Founder Niwano's Dharma message. Recently, I was especially moved when President Niwano emphasized the importance of tilling the field of the heart, quoting verses from the Sutta Nipata: "Wisdom is my plow, and humility is my plow's shafts." These words remind me of the need to continually cultivate my heart. For me, the teachings of Founder Niwano and President Niwano serve as indispensable guides for self-reflection and spiritual growth.

## **You visited Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters in Tokyo in October of last year. What was the purpose of your visit?**

Living in Johannesburg, I could only participate online in the Rome Center's activities. So my main

purposes were to undergo training, experience *hoza* in person at the headquarters, and receive the headquarters-bestowed *Gohonzon* statue. I believe Buddhism is not just for personal practice but also for helping others and bringing happiness to all. That's why, after returning home, I resolved to spread the teachings of the Buddha with courage and confidence, applying everything I had learned.

I visited the headquarters and other places related to Rissho Kosei-kai for about two weeks in mid-October as an individual pilgrimage. I toured the Great Sacred Hall and other headquarters facilities, visited Founder Niwano's birthplace in Suganuma, Niigata Prefecture, and participated in the Oeshiki Ichijo Festival at the headquarters with the members of the Nerima Dharma Center. I also attended lectures on Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra by Dr. Dominick Scarangelo, who is an international advisor to Rissho Kosei-kai. At the Nerima Dharma Center in Tokyo, I underwent ritual training, learning how to sound the gong and wooden block during sutra recitation, and took part in Dharma dissemination practice. During my visit, I was filled with a desire to learn as much as possible from every encounter, like a sponge absorbing water. Then, on



Mr. Christie receives the headquarters-bestowed Gohonzon from Rev. Keiichi Akagawa, director of Rissho Kosei-kai International.

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October 27, just before returning home, I was honored to receive the headquarters-bestowed *Gohonzon* from Rev. Keiichi Akagawa, director of Rissho Kosei-kai International. On November 2, Rev. Mizumo kindly visited my home in Johannesburg once again and conducted the *Gohonzon* enshrinement ceremony.

**Lastly, as the first member of Rissho Kosei-kai in South Africa, could you share your goals for practice and dreams for the future?**

My current personal goal is to eliminate selfishness and anger and become a more warmhearted person. In terms of everyday human relationships, that means not dismissing others' opinions, not criticizing others based on my emotions, and not getting angry. I want to become someone with a generous heart who can interact with everyone without discrimination, accept others' words and actions, and bring a sense of calm and reassurance to those around me. That may be idealistic, but I believe it is the essence of what Buddhism teaches. So, I want to study Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra more deeply and continue my diligent practice.

As a member of Rissho Kosei-kai, I hope to share this wonderful teaching with many more people in South Africa. One of my goals is to establish a sangha

in South Africa in the near future. I would be grateful if I could use my home as an official base for promoting the Dharma in South Africa, where members can gather to participate in seminars and *hoza* sessions.

Although apartheid officially ended in 1994, South Africa still faces many difficult issues due to its legacy, such as poverty, declining public safety, and high unemployment rates, leaving many people suffering. But I believe that Buddhism has the power to transform communities and countries. I am convinced that the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai will have a significant impact on making South Africa a more peaceful and harmonious country.



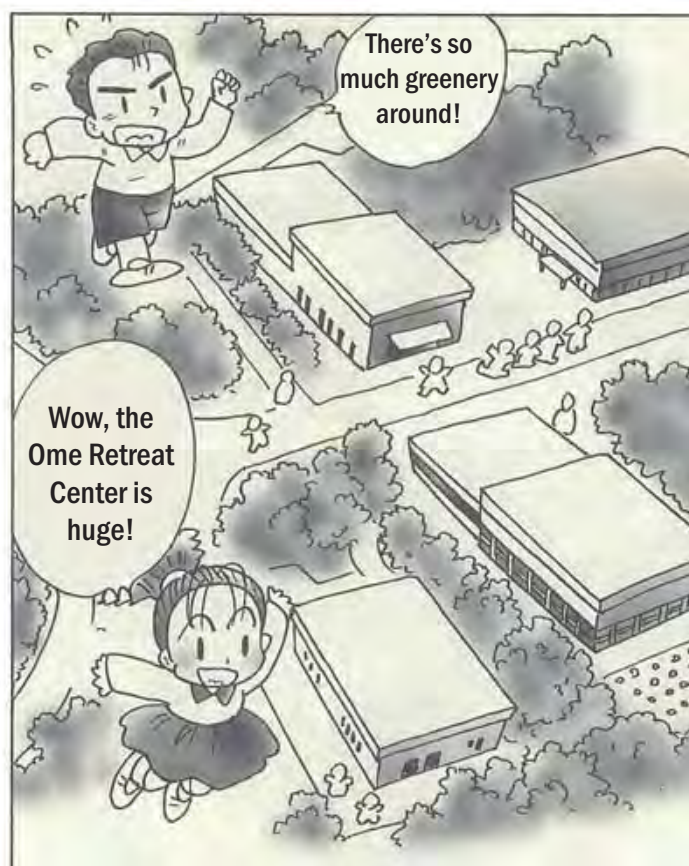
Mr. Christie (center) participates in the Oeshiki Ichijo Festival.



# An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics

## The Facilities of Rissho Kosei-kai

### The Ome Retreat Center and the Founder's Birthplace Center



The Ome Retreat Center was completed in 1966 in Ome City, Tokyo, as a training facility for youth members. Situated on a vast plot of land surrounded by greenery, it features two training halls, a track and field stadium, a baseball field, and more. Today it serves as a training venue for all members.

The Founder's Birthplace Center, built in 1978 in Suginuma, Tokamachi City, Niigata Prefecture—where the Founder was born—serves as the base for pilgrimages to the Founder's birthplace. Nearby stands a faithful reproduction of the house where the Founder was born.

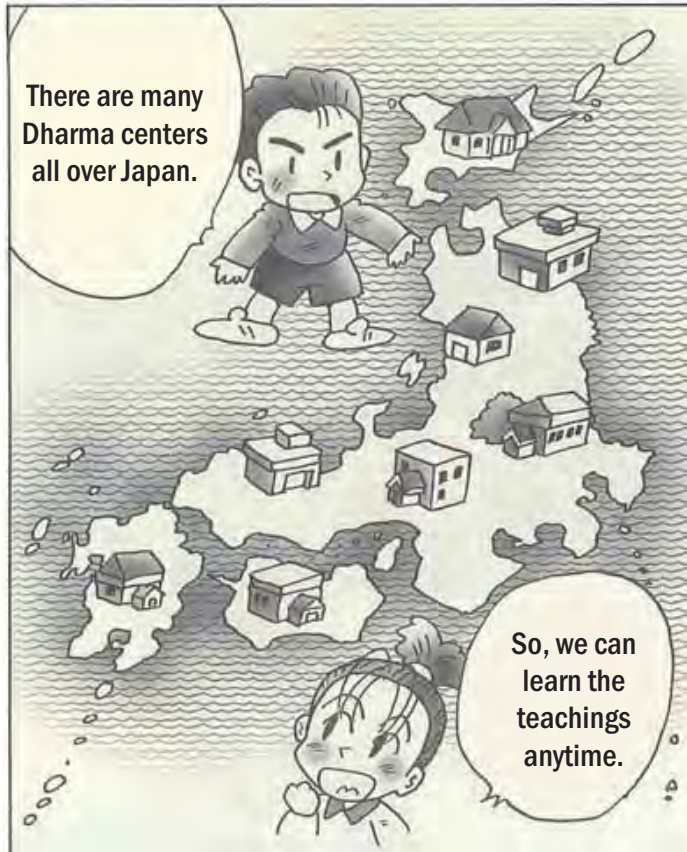


#### Did You Know?

The exact replica of the house where the Founder was born was built in 2006 as one of the projects commemorating the centennial of the Founder's birth. When you visit Suginuma, be sure to stop by and reflect on the life the Founder led in those days.



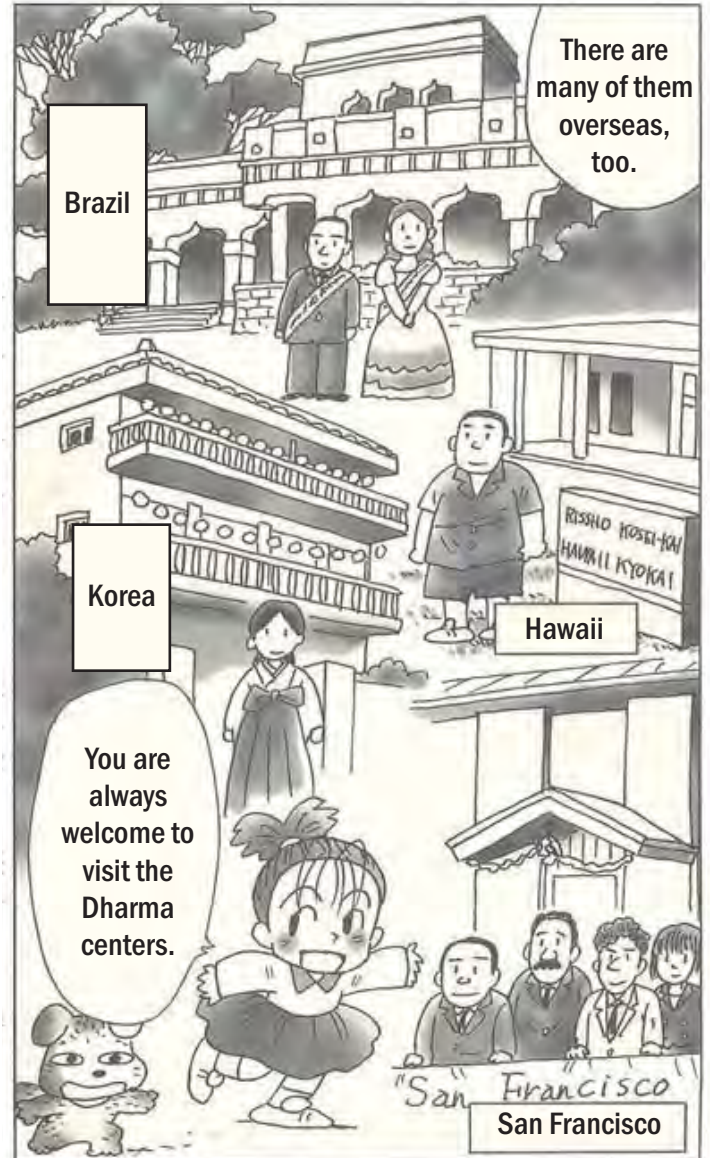
## Dharma Centers Located in Japan and Overseas



Rissho Kosei-kai has built its Dharma centers and training halls all over the country so that people can always access the teachings of the Lotus Sutra somewhere local to them.

In addition, the organization has Dharma centers and local branches in countries such as the United States, Brazil, England, Taiwan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Korea.

Dharma centers are not only for ceremonies, seminars, and spiritual retreats but also for people to find solutions to their worries and difficulties by learning from each other. On Uposatha days and holidays, consider visiting a Dharma center.



### Did You Know?

In the opening verse of *Kyoten* (Sutra readings) of Rissho Kosei-kai, we recite the “Meditation on the Place of the Way.” This verse reads that all places in our daily lives, such as home and school and the workplace, are places for practicing the Dharma. Yet, putting this into practice alone is very difficult. That is why Dharma centers are necessary for practicing the teaching.



## Chapter 2 To Connect with Others

### Reach Out with the Heart of the Buddha

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano  
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



#### **Liberating Those Closest to Us**

For the purpose of sharing the teachings to transform our world, our first priority should be to start by liberating each of the individuals closest to us from their worries and suffering. There may be some of you who think that liberating people from poverty, illness, and conflict is a relic of the days of Rissho Kosei-kai's founding, but even now, new forms of poverty, illness, and conflict continue to proliferate.

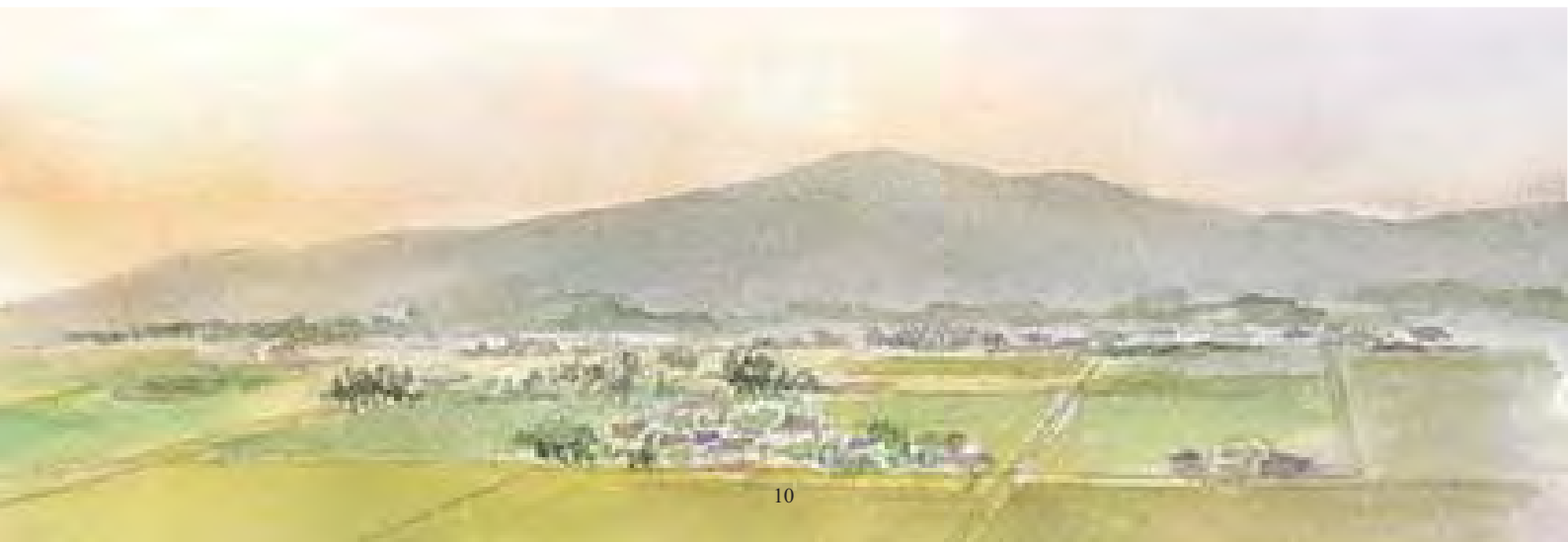
Therefore, we must attain the wisdom to fathom the ever-changing conditions of the world by reciting the Lotus Sutra over and over, and rereading its commentaries again and again, so that we internalize its truth. If we fail to obtain this wisdom, we will be unable to understand the worries and suffering of each and every person we encounter—and consequently, the skillful means they need will never occur to us.

What I would like to leave you with is this: Even if the Buddha Dharma you share with someone does not produce immediate results right then and there, I want you to understand that by sharing the Dharma, you have planted a precious seed in the depths of that person's heart. The seed you've



planted will surely sprout someday in response to the proper conditions. It is my heartfelt and unwavering wish that you have faith in this and continue to devote yourselves to bodhisattva practice without hesitation or discouragement.

*Bodai no me o okosashimu* (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 83–84



# Director's Column

## A Fulfilling Life Informed by the Four Periods of Existence

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa  
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

Hello, everyone. As the old Japanese saying goes, “The heat and cold last until the equinox.” Though the lingering summer heat remains, the occasional cool breeze brushing my cheek is a gentle reminder that the seasons are indeed shifting. I hope this message finds you well.

In this month's message, President Niwano introduces the ancient Indian concept of the four periods of existence that divides our lifetimes into four parts to match the four seasons, teaching us how to live a fulfilling life. I first encountered this philosophy of life in my forties, when I read the book *Rinjūki* by Hiroyuki Itsuki. This teaching divides life into four stages—the stage of the student, the stage of the householder, the stage of retiring to the forest, and the stage of wandering freely—and describes the appropriate way of life for each stage. While I felt that it would be physically and financially challenging to follow these guidelines literally in modern society, I recall thinking that perhaps a spiritual four periods of existence would be possible. If one could live that way in reality, one would surely enjoy a state of complete freedom.

The President describes the autumn of life, which corresponds to the stage of retiring to the forest, as “a time in life when we are gradually liberated from things that, up to that point, we had found troublesome, and we turn toward winter with a clear mind and a heart full of things that are satisfying and hopeful.” Just as each of the four seasons offers its own unique fruit, each stage of life offers its own blessings. We must be careful to avoid feelings of lack in each stage of life, losing sight of our faith, and instead focus on the blessings all around us. Remembering the truth that “the present is the result of the past, and the present creates the future,” I hope to strive steadily this month as usual with a humble and grateful heart.



Rev. Akagawa with leaders from Korea and Mongolia who participated in the last session of the East Asia Leadership Education program held at the headquarters on August 2. This year, prior to the session at the headquarters, three online sessions were held in which leaders from the Tainan Dharma Center also participated.



## Let Your Heart Rejoice

### What Is the Donate-a-Meal Movement?

This movement invites people to reflect on those suffering from conflicts, disasters, and poverty in the world. By donating a portion of the money you might spend on meals or personal indulgences, you contribute, in the spirit of sharing, to the movement's activities.

The movement began in Japan in 1975 with people skipping one meal several times a month and donating the equivalent amount of money. Today, this is practiced in various ways worldwide and adapted to suit individual lifestyles. In this issue and next month's issue, we will introduce the voices of sangha members around the world who are practicing this movement.



**Kayoko Wekarski**  
Florida Group, Risho Kosei-kai of New York

*Ms. Wekarski with her granddaughter*

“Every Sunday, I skip breakfast and put \$2 in the Donate-a-Meal box. Once a year, I offer the total amount as a donation to the New York Dharma Center. I chose \$2 because a ticket for the weekly Florida State Lottery costs the same price. Instead of buying a ticket, I add that same amount to the Donate-a-Meal box once a week.

In November 2016, Ms. Yuri Sugino, general affairs director of the New York Dharma Center, gave a lecture on the Donate-a-Meal Movement. Until then, I had only participated in the movement occasionally, whenever I happened to remember. After listening to her lecture, I felt encouraged to try doing it consistently. At that time, I was going through a financially difficult period, so when I had no cash, I would write down ‘\$2’ and the date on a piece of

paper and put it in the box as a placeholder. Then, when I had cash later, I would put the money in the box. My family also began contributing—whenever they found coins or had spare change, they would put it in the box. I am very grateful that my family started supporting the movement with me.

Through this practice, I have reflected on my lifestyle and learned to value money and material things more carefully.”



**Mary Tracy Sigman**  
Fort Myers Group, Risho Kosei-kai of New York



## Why the Donate-a-Meal Movement Is Important to Me

“Like many of you, I was given a small cardboard box by one of my Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma leaders and asked to get into the habit of placing the cost of a meal in that box. Ideally, I would also not eat that meal, so I could feel in a small way the hunger pains of a person truly without food to eat.

Sometimes I did that, but often I found that I would just donate some money at the end of the month towards the Donate-a-Meal campaign. I knew that Rissho Kosei-kai did great humanitarian work during crises around the world, and I wanted to support that.

In 2022 our home was nearly destroyed by Hurricane Ian in Florida. It took many days to get power restored, and even when it was restored the only cooking appliance that survived was our microwave. We ended up eating things like cold beans, canned tuna, and peanut butter for weeks. My husband and I lost weight but were still so grateful to be alive and have a place to rebuild and live. For the first time, I felt the pangs of hunger just a little bit and felt the suffering of those who are marginalized. While I always realized in my head that we are all interconnected and interdependent, I was feeling that now in my heart. Our dear neighbors helped us a great deal during those early days of recovery, and I will never forget the evening they had us over for dinner. It tasted so delicious! It was our first home-cooked meal in weeks, and it was wonderful. I vowed to never forget this feeling of connection with food.

So now when I make my monthly donation to the Donate-a-Meal Movement, I do it from my heart. I may forget to skip a meal that month, but I always remember that I had meals that month, and I want to help those who don't have anything to eat. I am so fortunate and grateful that Rissho Kosei-kai gives me the opportunity every month to be mindful of my connection with all my fellow living beings who are struggling to survive.”



**Rev. Kevin Roche**  
Rissho Kosei-kai of San Antonio

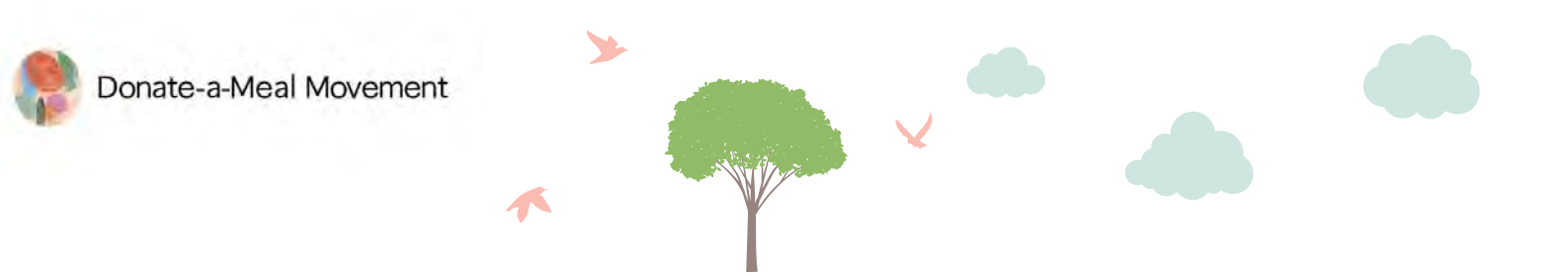
“We are honored to share with you our ongoing commitment and heartfelt efforts in support of Rissho Kosei-kai's Donate-a-Meal Movement, a campaign that continues to inspire compassion and action within our community.

Living in South Texas, we are keenly aware of the challenges many families face—extreme weather, economic hardship, immigration insecurity, and limited access to fresh, nutritious food. Participating in donations to the San Antonio Food Bank is a powerful way to support our neighbors and strengthen the fabric of our community. A single act of giving—whether it's a can of food, a few hours of volunteer time, or a heartfelt meal offering—can help ensure that no family goes hungry. It's a reminder that even in times of struggle, compassion can grow and flourish right here at home.

Each year, the San Antonio Dharma Center hosts a food collection drive to benefit the San Antonio Food Bank, guided by the spirit of the Donate-a-Meal Movement. Through the generous support of our members, we fill large barrels with non-perishable food items, contributing to a growing store of nourishment that is distributed to individuals and families facing food insecurity in our area.

Our commitment to this cause deepened during the COVID-19 pandemic. In those challenging years, our sangha members joined a volunteer initiative at a





local farm, sponsored by the San Antonio Food Bank. There, we helped plant, fertilize, and tend to garden produce—with our hands in the soil and our hearts in service. This work not only provided fresh fruits and vegetables to those in need but also strengthened our connection to the earth and to each other.

Each month, our membership donates \$100 to the San Antonio Food Bank to support the work Rissho Kosei-kai is doing to provide nutritional resources to members of our community.

In addition, after every sangha-wide meal or event, we donate any leftover food to members who are experiencing food insecurity.

These efforts reflect the core teachings of our faith: to embody compassion through action and to alleviate suffering wherever we can. We are deeply grateful to be part of a global sangha inspired by the vision and practices of Rissho Kosei-kai, and we look forward to continuing this work hand in hand with our brothers and sisters around the world.

With gratitude and humility.”



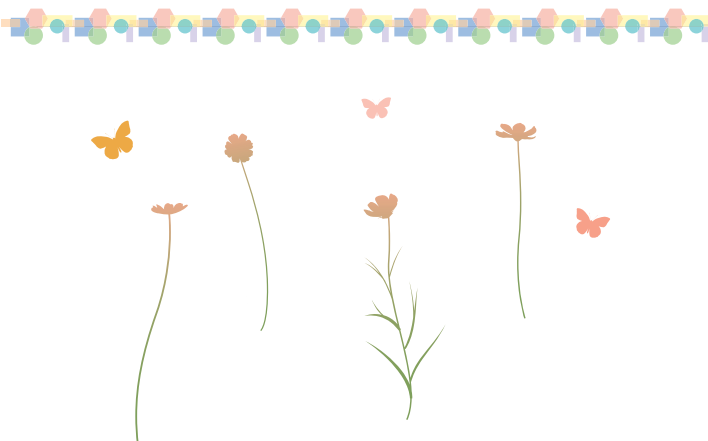
**Graeme Cutting and Yuna Akiba**  
**Rissho Kosei-kai of London**

“We first became aware of the Donate-a-Meal Movement when we joined the London *hoza*. Soon after, Yuna took on the role of reminding members about the practice, which she continued to do for a while. Since then, we have carried on with the Donate-a-Meal practice and integrated it into our regular Dharma routine as one of the very important Six Paramitas, Generosity. Of course, along with making a charitable donation, the practice involves forgoing at least one meal on two days of each month, which we do try and manage as much as possible. However, we always remember to make a donation in our Donate-a-Meal box, which we keep in a prominent place in our home.

Certainly, a short fast does superficially focus the mind (albeit only very briefly!) on what it feels like to be hungry, but plainly, this is nothing like the feeling that someone in real, desperate need has day in and day out. It does, perhaps, at least make us appreciate how fortunate we are, and it helps keep the ideas of donation, empathy, and thankfulness regularly in our minds as we try to keep to the routine.

Another positive fact to mention is that all our donations reach people in need very quickly and efficiently through the Donate-a-Meal channels, which are very skilled at getting immediate assistance to places where there are famines, earthquakes, war zones, and other disasters across the world. We lived in Nepal for some years and always felt close to people who needed a lot of practical help to thrive, so the spirit of the Donate-a-Meal campaign does sit quite comfortably with us.

This is one of the very important practices of the Six Paramitas, and through the Donate-a-Meal program, we feel we can carry out, and hopefully spread, the spirit of donation and pray together for world peace.”

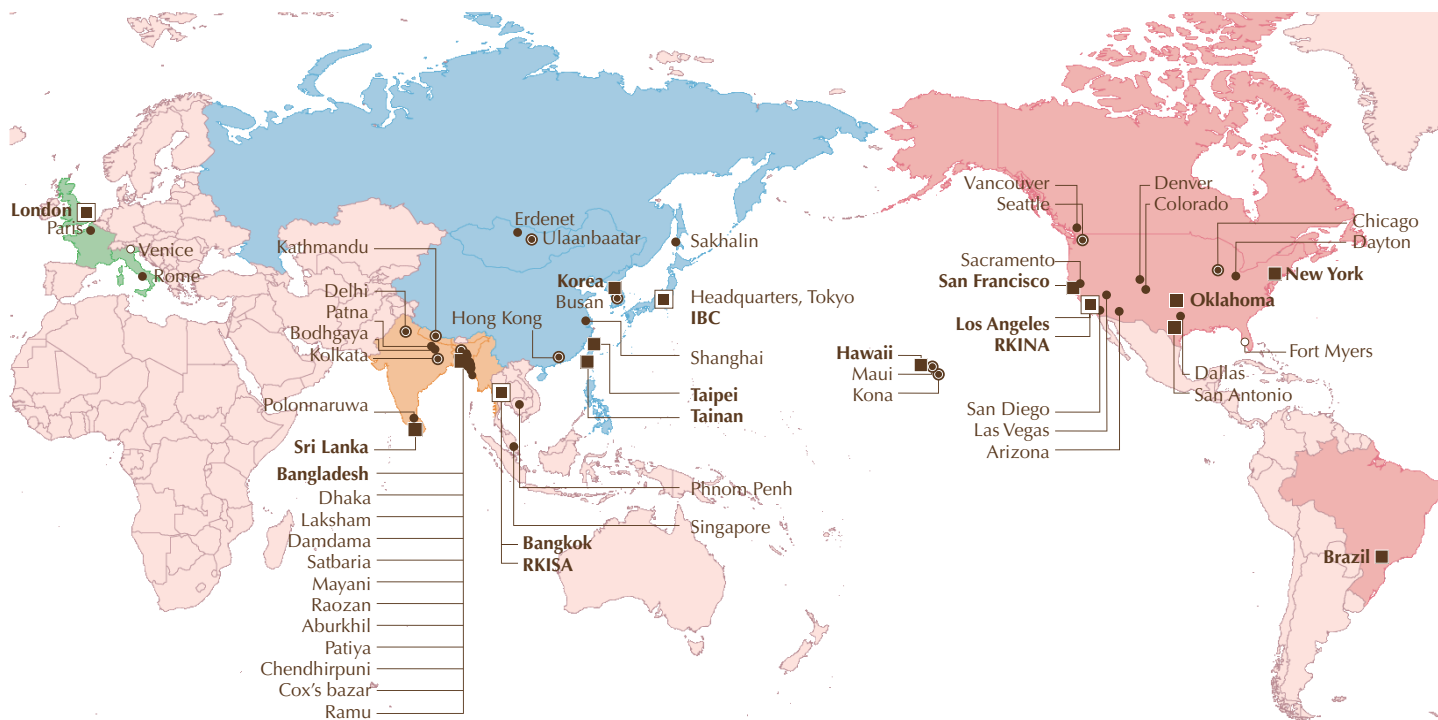


# Rissho Kosei-kai International

Make Every Encounter Matter



## 🌸 A Global Buddhist Movement 🌸



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