

Living the Lotus 1

Buddhism in Everyday Life

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**Rissho Kosei-kai of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, Celebrates
the Anniversary of Shakyamuni's Attainment of Buddhahood on December 7, 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.

Learning from Kenji Miyazawa, Part One: A Broad Perspective and the Mind of a Bodhisattva

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



Living Our Lives, Aware of the Galaxy

Happy New Year! Let's be diligent in our practice and together make the most of each and every day so that 2026 will be a turning point in spreading peace all over the world.

The words this is based on were written at New Year's, exactly one hundred years ago, in Hanamaki, Iwate Prefecture, Japan:

It is impossible for the individual to be happy until the whole world becomes happy. / Awareness of the self gradually evolves from the individual to the community, society, and the universe. / This trajectory is the path that the ancient sages pursued and taught, isn't it? / The new era is moving toward a world that is becoming a single organism with one awareness. / To live correctly and strongly means to be aware that the galaxy exists within yourself and to act accordingly. / Let's seek the true happiness of the world. Our seeking the Way is itself the Way. (Kenji Miyazawa, *Nomin geijutsu gairon koyo: joron* [Outline of a theory of peasant art: introduction])

These are the words of Kenji Miyazawa, famous for the juvenile novel *Night on the Galactic Railroad* and the poem "Undeclared by the Rain." This year marks the 130th anniversary of Kenji's birth, and when we read his writings in light of the current world situation, we can see that they contain valuable messages for us today.

In the past, I have often spoken about being grateful for the Earth—a planet of water that is beautiful when seen from outer space—and the importance of revering all living beings on board Spaceship Earth. I believe that our challenge and responsibility is to learn from Kenji's spirit and insight—so grand in scale that they stretch to the galaxy—and to consider and act in accordance with our happiness and the happiness of others from an even broader perspective.

Furthermore, this passage is part of a draft that Kenji wrote for a lecture he gave to students at Hanamaki Agricultural School in which he spoke about the perspective and fundamental spirit that allows human beings to lead creative lives centered on agriculture. Therefore, I believe that “planting and growing” this kind of awareness in the minds of young people is the essence of cultivating human beings.

The Notebook “Undefeated by the Rain” Is Scripture

As you know, Kenji Miyazawa was a firm believer in the Lotus Sutra, and I think that he conveys, in the form of stories and poetry, the teachings of the One Vehicle and the idea of eternal life that are revealed in the Lotus Sutra. In doing so, though, he had no intention of indoctrinating people, and Kenji himself warned, “Never think of indoctrinating others!” Undeniably, Kenji purely and honestly expressed in his literary works what he himself believed, while steadfastly praying for “the whole world to become truly happy” and earnestly hoping for everyone to be liberated from suffering.

However, those who read his poems and stories naturally learn the joy of benefiting other people and being considerate of them. Readers are made all the more aware of the foolishness of greed and anger, and they are struck by the transience and eternity of life. Because of this, his works have been well-loved for a very long time, and there will always be people who appreciate his spirit, which is, in a manner of speaking, the very attitude of faith: “Believing yourself convinces others to believe.” I hope that whether we are in our workplaces, doing housework, or raising children, each and every one of us will—through our pure determination and our vow to lead our lives like bodhisattvas—naturally show such deep consideration for others that it will resonate with them and inspire empathy, thereby giving rise to more bodhisattvas.

Incidentally, when I read the famous poem “Undefeated by the Rain,” I have the same sensation I have when I am reciting scripture. On the first page of the notebook containing this poem, Kenji copied “Meditation on the Place of the Way,” followed by a simplified mandala with the names of the four bodhisattvas (Superior Practice, Boundless Practice, Pure Practice, and Steadfast Practice) written on either side of the *o-daimoku*, *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*, an arrangement that expresses invocation, just like in Rissho Kosei-kai’s *Kyoten*. Then, following these words expressing Kenji’s determination and his vow, comes the poem “Undefeated by the Rain,” which resonates within me and sinks into my heart like scripture.

I previously described this poem as “‘The Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect’ translated simply into Kenji’s words.” In next month’s issue, I would like to use this poem as the starting point of reconsidering the way of life and the spirit of a bodhisattva.

From *Kosei*, January 2026



Gratitude for the Life We Are Given

Ms. Sarah Ann Janson
Rissho Kosei-kai of New York (Residing in Florida)

When and how did you encounter the faith of Rissho Kosei-kai?

I first came into contact with Buddhism when I was thirteen or fourteen years old, through a religion class in middle school. After that, I gradually developed an interest in Buddhism, and one day, after finding a book titled *The Way of the Bodhisattva* at a bookstore, my curiosity deepened even further.

In 2011, I moved from my home state of Wisconsin to Tampa Bay, Florida, where I encountered the faith of Rissho Kosei-kai. At that time, the Rissho Kosei-kai Tampa Bay Center was located only about half a mile (approximately eight hundred meters) from my home and held ceremonies and gatherings in English. I began to participate in their activities little by little. In the United States, meditation has become very popular, but for me, reciting the sutra aloud felt more natural and resonated more deeply. It was the kind of practice I had been seeking.

What kind of practices or activities do you engage in regularly?

Previously, there was a resident staff member in Tampa Bay, but he is now based in Seattle. Unfortunately, the Tampa Bay Center has been closed since he moved.

Currently, I mainly participate online in the Sunday Service and Dharma Circle of the New York Dharma Center, as well as in a Lotus Sutra study group led by Rev. James Lynch, the minister of the New York Dharma Center. I also attended the *Advanced Seminar on the Lotus Sutra* organized by Rissho Kosei-kai International of North America, where I studied the teachings with other sangha members across North America to deepen my understanding.

Individually, I spend much time studying Founder Nikkyo Niwano's and President Nichiko Niwano's Dharma guidance and strive to apply the Buddha's teachings in my daily life. I wish to con-



Ms. Sarah Ann Janson

tinue putting the teachings into practice and to grow into a devout follower.

You received your Gohonzon at the Gohonzon Presentation Ceremony held at the Great Sacred Hall in September last year. Could you share your impressions of the ceremony and your current feelings?

When I visited the Great Sacred Hall of Rissho Kosei-kai's headquarters for the first time, I was deeply moved by the sight of the Eternal Original Buddha, who radiated an awe-inspiring light and presence. During the ceremony, after the graceful performance of gagaku music, I had the precious opportunity to recite the sutra with many sangha members, including those from the Ulaanbaatar chapter in Mongolia and others from Japan.

Now, each time I make an offering before my Gohonzon, I feel a kind of spiritual inspiration and a deep sense of gratitude for having encountered such a precious teaching. I am determined to study the Lotus Sutra and the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai more deeply and to walk step by step along the Buddha's path.



Ms. Janson (left) learns from a Japanese member how to fold a paper flower decoration for mando, a portable lighted pagoda, used in the Oeshiki-Ichijo Festival.

Is there a passage or teaching from the Lotus Sutra that particularly resonates with you?

My favorite chapter of the Lotus Sutra is chapter 25, “The Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World as Universal Gateway.” We are taught that the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World compassionately hears the cries of those who seek liberation and rescues them from all forms of suffering.

This teaching became very real to me through personal experience. Two years ago, after having a wisdom tooth extracted, I developed an infection and suffered from a high fever and severe pain unlike anything I had felt before. Overwhelmed by the pain and anxiety, I single-mindedly recited chapter 25 while visualizing the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World. After some time, the pain and anxiety mysteriously subsided, and I felt truly healed.

I believe this was due to the merit of reciting chapter 25. Through this experience, I learned how important it is to have faith in the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World and to hold the spirit of compassion in my heart.

What do you find most appealing about Rissho Kosei-kai?

I believe the greatest appeal of Rissho Kosei-kai is its teaching of having “gratitude for the life we are given.” Our lives are truly a gift from the Buddha. When we realize the preciousness and sacredness of our own lives, we can also recognize the same value in others’ lives.

With a heart of gratitude for this life, we can find fresh joy and inspiration in even the smallest events of daily living, leading to personal growth and a richer life.

Moreover, when we truly feel that we are caused to live, we become aware that our existence is supported by many people and the blessings of nature. I believe that this awareness naturally leads to a desire to contribute to the wellbeing of others as an expression of gratitude.

Finally, could you share what you are currently aspiring toward and your goals for future practice?

Since receiving the Gohonzon, my aspiration has been to grow into a leader who can serve as a good karmic connection for people around me, someone who draws close to, encourages, and inspires others based on the Buddha’s teachings.

President Niwano often reminds us in his Dharma guidance that “it is important to recognize impermanence.” Accepting change in life is often difficult, especially when we face unfavorable circumstances. It can lead to irritation, panic, or even anger that causes greater trouble.

However, change is an unavoidable law of nature, and we cannot live in opposition to it. That is precisely why it is essential to understand that “all things are constantly changing.” With this awareness, even when hardships come, we can remain positive and find hope in the fact that difficult times, too, will eventually pass.

Instead of being swayed by the ups and downs of life, we should recognize impermanence, the fundamental truth at the core of the Buddha’s teaching. My goal in practice from now on is to share this teaching of impermanence with as many people as possible.



Ms. Janson (left) with other Gohonzon recipients from overseas Dharma centers after the presentation ceremony held in the Great Sacred Hall on September 28, 2025.

Practicing the Dharma in the Here and Now

Acknowledgment and Remorse: “Reflecting and Correcting” as Right Mindfulness

Dr. Dominick Scarangelo
International Advisor to Rissho Kosei-kai



When an unwholesome thought crosses our mind, or when we suddenly feel angry, we can instantly examine ourselves by asking if such thinking is the Way to buddhahood.

—Founder Niwano on “Right Mindfulness”
(*Buddhism for Today*, 281)

Previously, we learned about the ten realms within our minds. Our minds wander through these ten mindsets, six of which are realms of delusion where we will suffer, and four are the mindsets of awakening that lead to liberation from suffering and awakening to the truth. We also learned from Founder Niwano that to achieve happiness and find contentment, we need to escape the “burning house” of the six realms and enter the realms of Buddhist practitioners: the mindsets of awakening.

If we realize we are wandering in a realm of delusion, that will naturally call forth a spark of the aspiration to change—to reach a realm of awakening. In that very moment of realization, we discover the seed of a realm of awakening that is dormant within the realm of delusion. The good news is we can transport ourselves to that realm of awakening if we practice as the Buddha teaches.

But, to practice the Dharma in this way, self-awareness is the important first step. If we are inattentive and unaware of our mindsets and oblivious to how we are acting toward others, we will probably not even notice that we are manifesting a realm of delusion until it causes us some trouble or suffering. And even when we begin to feel that suffering, we must recognize suffering as suffering. We must always acknowledge the state of our minds and how we are interacting with others. In short, we need to practice mindfulness.

Today, people often think of “mindfulness” as a

form of meditation done sitting on a cushion at a temple or Dharma center. But a practical kind of mindfulness that is indispensable to liberation from suffering and moving toward awakening is the Three-fold Lotus Sutra’s practice of “acknowledgment and remorse” or, as former minister of the Oklahoma City Dharma center Kris Ladusau describes it, “reflect and correct.”

The practice of “reflect and correct” comes in two forms. The first, Founder Niwano explained, is “cleansing our hearts and minds by acknowledging our past mistaken thoughts and actions and expressing remorse for them directly to, or in the presence of, our mentors and fellow practitioners” (*Buddhism for Today*, 507). Dharma circles, or *hoza*, are “the place of acknowledgment and remorse” for this practice. The second is to “acknowledge our shortcomings and express remorse for them with the Buddha as our witness” (*Buddhism for Today*, 508). A good place for practicing this form of acknowledgement and remorse is our home altar, where we recite the sutra.

When we “reflect,” we acknowledge the character of our thoughts and actions, and we vow to change them. But then we must strive to actually change those thoughts and actions that are causing suffering—the thoughts and actions of the realms of delu-



sion. This is what it means to “correct.” As Founder Niwano also taught, a “vow does not merely entail having an aspiration; it also implies doing one’s utmost to realize it.” “Correction” is doing our best to realize our aspirations for liberation and awakening by practicing the Buddha’s teachings.

Dharma circles and sutra recitation are indeed special places of acknowledgment and remorse, but truly living the Dharma means that we must also practice the mindfulness of “reflect and correct” in our daily lives. Incidentally, one of the principal teachings of Rev. Myoko Naganuma, the cofounder of Rissho Kosei-kai, was “continuously practice self-introspection and perpetually ‘reflect and correct.’” Cofounder Myoko taught members to always be attentive to both their minds and actions and to continually examine themselves in light of the Buddha’s teachings.

As we encounter people and situations in daily life, we can always reflect: How are our minds reacting to the other person or the situation? How are we behaving toward the other person? How are they experiencing their encounter with us? What kind of environment are we creating in the world around us? Simply put, are we manifesting a realm of delusion or a realm of awakening? Are our thoughts and actions Ways to buddhahood?

If we are always mindful of these things, that will allow us to correct in real time—to practice “in the here and now” toward both liberation from suffering and greater awakenings. Cultivating the mindfulness of “reflect and correct” like this in our daily lives is also how we can do our utmost to realize the aspirations that we kindled in Dharma circle with the help of the sangha and the vows we made with the Buddha as our witness.



Field Report from the Sangha

Rev. Laura Meyra
Minister, Hawaii Dharma Center

An Invisible Connection

A few weeks ago, I was welcomed at church by member A, who had just returned from his vacation. He was cheerful and expressed his gratitude to Buddha for his safe return.

After the morning recitation, we had *hoza*, and he shared his experience of the trip. We were eager to hear his story. He started with the words “It was an interesting trip.” *Pause*. Then he became very emotional and began sharing.

He was invited on the trip by his dear friend, and member A was very eager to travel with him. However, once they began traveling, member A noticed many things that he had not noticed before. His friend looked down on people, was arrogant, spoke angrily, and was not kind. Within a few days, member A felt intimidated.

With tears in his eyes, he shared that his friend’s actions and words were just like his own had been when he was younger. Member A shared that he had spoken words like that to his parents, and he became

aware that he now speaks to his son in that manner. He felt terribly ashamed and embarrassed. Now, he was reflecting on his behavior and actions and apologizing for hurting many people.

He also shared that since returning to Hawaii, he had been trying to get hold of his son but was unable to reach him. Member A was worried. As I was about to say something, member A’s phone rang. It was his son returning his call. Seeing this, I truly felt the presence and the workings of the Buddha. I also felt that member A’s repentance of his past actions had reached Buddha and his son’s spirit. At the closing of *hoza*, member A renewed his vow to continue his practice of having a dialogue with his son and with everyone.

I thank member A for sharing because on that day, I too reflected and atoned for my past actions which may have hurt others. With many thanksgivings, I would like to see things that come my way as messages from the Buddha.



Chapter 2 To Connect with Others

Find Joy in Nurturing People

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



Founder Niwano converses with local members in the waiting lounge at San Francisco International Airport during his trip to the United States to attend the First Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament held in New York in 1978.

My Father and My Grandfather's Teachings

Incidentally, an important rule when guiding people onto the Buddha Way is to do so with a compassionate heart and the wish “May this person find true happiness.”

Saicho, known as Master Dengyo (literally, “the master who transmits the teaching”), established Enryakuji Temple on Mount Hiei and founded the Tendai school of Japanese Buddhism. It is Master Dengyo who famously said, “Forgetting oneself and benefiting others is the height of compassion.” I would like you to reflect deeply on these words.

Forget about yourself, show kindness to others, and help them resolve their problems—this is the conduct of a bodhisattva.

Until people enter the Dharma, their approach to life lacks direction. They grope around in the dark, turning this way and that, alternating between joy and sorrow in reaction to all the changes in the things around them. But once they enter the Buddha Dharma, they become conscious of a single path in life—the joy of dedicating oneself to others—and this settles their minds. The authentic way to guide others is to do so with a compassionate heart that wishes to put them on this single path.



Most readers have already been guided onto this path by someone who taught them. At its root, that too was the guidance of Shakyamuni, our great benevolent teacher, who is the World-Honored One. But are you all fully conscious of that gracious kindness? If you find it difficult to fully appreciate Shakyamuni's benevolence, I implore you to try guiding even a single person onto the Buddha Way.

Just as in the Japanese saying "People come to understand their parent's love through having their own children," you can deeply appreciate the debt of gratitude owed to those who guided you when you guide someone yourself. And through that appreciation, you will also truly feel the gracious kindness of Shakyamuni, who is at the root of it all.

As I said before, sharing the teachings of the Lotus Sutra with the wish "May this person find true happiness" is the way to repay the great benevolence of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Bodai no me o okosashimu (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 90–92



Kenji Miyazawa, My Friend of the Heart

Rev. Takashi Maeda
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

On December 13, 2025, Rev. Takashi Maeda (right) delivers a speech at the inauguration and retirement ceremony for the minister of the Bangladesh Dharma Center.



Happy New Year! It's a pleasure to meet you all. My name is Takashi Maeda, and I have taken the baton from the previous director, Rev. Keiichi Akagawa. I look forward to your continued support.

In this month's message, President Niwano expresses his wish that "2026 will be a turning point in spreading peace all over the world." He also shares how the thought and way of life of Kenji Miyazawa, a Japanese poet and writer of children's stories, carries an important message for those of us living today.

Since my youth, I have deeply loved the poem "Undefeated by the Rain," and I still recite it more than three times a day. I have retained this practice for many years with the hope of attuning my heart to that of Kenji Miyazawa. As reciting the poem became a habit, the words began to arise naturally in my mind without conscious effort, and thanks to this, I feel that I have gradually become able to live in a way that brings at least a little joy to others. I also believe there is deep significance in the fact that he wrote this poem not on manuscript paper, but in a notebook he always carried with him.

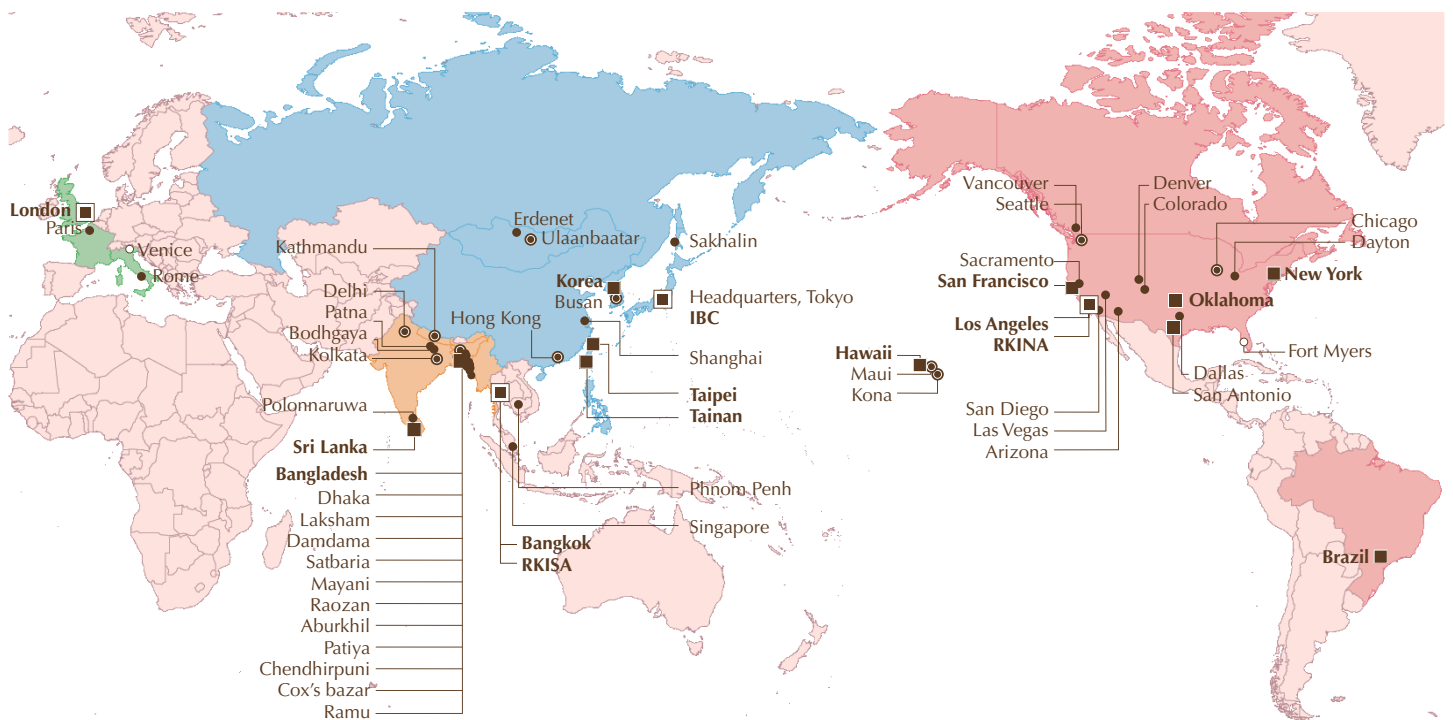
The President also explains that although Kenji Miyazawa conveyed the spirit of the Lotus Sutra through stories and poetry, he had no intention of indoctrinating people. If one's way of life itself can evoke empathy and resonance, and in doing so give rise to bodhisattvas, would that not be the finest way to live? Let us walk together into this new year, each of us utilizing our unique strengths to bring peace to many people.



Rev. Maeda (third row, center) with participants in the inauguration and retirement ceremony for the minister of the Bangladesh Dharma Center.



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