

Living the Lotus 9

Buddhism in Everyday Life

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Rissho Kosei-kai of Taipei Holds Memorial Services for Ancestors on August 25 Following a Two-Day Devotional Recitation of the Threefold Lotus Sutra

Living the Lotus Vol. 252 (September 2026)

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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.

Everyone, Light a Lamp

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



President Niwano adds sand to the pot of a bonsai pine tree following the ceremony for the completion of the new building and the enshrinement of the Gohonzon at the Kajikazawa Dharma Center, Yamanashi Prefecture, in June. The bonsai was grown from a cutting taken from a pine tree that President Niwano had planted in the precinct of the Dharma center.

“Rather Than Complaining About the Darkness”

At present, many people around the world are suffering due to war and oppression. Since the spring, Pope Leo XIV has been appealing to all world leaders to end war and make every effort to advance peace and reconciliation. In one of his homilies, he emphatically stated: “Enough of the idolatry of self and money! Enough of the display of power! Enough of war! True strength is shown in serving life” (“Prayer Vigil Led by Pope Leo XIV,” The Holy See, Vatican Publishing House, April 11, 2026, <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/homilies/2026/documents/20260411-rosario-pace.html>).

Yet, in an unprecedented turn of events, the leader of one nation directed harsh criticism at the Pope’s message. I find it regrettable when the mind and the ability to use words—precious gifts bestowed upon humanity—are used to sow conflict and discord. And for our part, we can do nothing but look on and lament this state of affairs.

That said, even in a world that appears shrouded in darkness and has a seemingly unforeseeable future, there is a powerful message that asserts every one of us can do something. This concept, articulated by the renowned Eastern philosopher Masahiro Yasuoka (1898–1983), is called “the practice of illuminating one corner [of the world] with one lamp—the practice of illuminating the world with ten thousand lamps.”

Yasuoka says: “Rather than complaining about the darkness, light a lamp. / We should all definitely become lamps that illuminate the darkness around us. / Even if only faintly, let’s illuminate one corner [of the world]. / Let’s string together these lamps, as far as our arms can reach. / If every person lights one lamp, then ten thousand people will light ten thousand lamps. / And Japan will instantly become bright. / This is our practice of illuminating one corner with one lamp, which becomes the practice of illuminating everywhere with ten thousand lamps. / Together, we should wholeheartedly devote ourselves to this practice of transforming the world,

shouldn't we?" (Haruki Koshikawa, *Ningengaku genshi roku* [The study of human nature: Reflections on self-mastery], Ibunsha, 1984).

It might be more appropriate today if this proclamation said "[every country in] the world" instead of "Japan." Also, I interpret the term "the practice of transforming the world" not as a call for a single individual to bring about some large-scale change, but as an appeal for everyone to take practical action close at hand. This is an extension of the theme discussed in last month's issue, "light a fire for the sake of other people."

Pope Leo also stated in his homily on April 11 that "all it takes is a little faith, a mere 'crumb' of faith, in order to face this dramatic hour in history together—as humanity and alongside humanity." When every person's daily actions become a lamp illuminating their corner of the world, and when these actions multiply into hundreds of millions or billions, we can look forward to a bright future for Earth—a future worthy of a planet that shines a brilliant blue in the pitch-black expanse of the universe.

As Far as Our Arms Can Reach

In Yasuoka's proclamation, the phrase, "Let's string together these lamps, as far as our arms can reach," teaches us something: if we interpret "as far as our arms can reach" to mean "within the scope of our own capabilities," then any practice of generosity—performed close at hand and without undue strain—can become a bright light that illuminates a world of darkness. In line with this thinking, surely it is no mere coincidence that on September 10, we observe the Annual Memorial Day of Rissho Kosei-kai's Cofounder, Myoko Naganuma.

Cofounder Naganuma was well known for treating everyone she encountered as if they were her own children she had given birth to, and for giving them guidance that was at times stern, yet always kind. She devoted herself to practicing compassion that truly "lit a lamp wherever she went." Whenever she saw someone in need, she did not hesitate to give them whatever she had—food, bedding, money, or even the very clothes she was wearing. Because she viewed everything as a gift entrusted to her by the Buddha, she continued to keep her lamp burning brightly.

If we take a look at our daily lives and those who are "within arm's reach," we see not only our family members but also neighbors, people sitting beside us on trains or buses, and those standing in the checkout line with us at the convenience store. Offering a smile or a word of thanks to those people—or extending a helping hand to someone in need—serves as a light that illuminates our surroundings. Caring for and expressing appreciation to our family serve as a light that warms and brightens the home. And when you offer prayers for people in distant lands who are facing hardships, you are lighting a noble lamp for them. Today, without a doubt, people around the world are transcending differences of nationality, race, and religion, sharing the same hope and praying that the light of peace will spread far and wide.

Just as Founder Niwano told us that "the lamp you light for others illuminates a corner of the world and never goes out," let's tirelessly, unflinchingly continue our daily practices that brighten our immediate surroundings.



A Fresh Start—There Is No End to My Practice

Ms. Naomi Masuno, Rissho Kosei-kai of Los Angeles

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

I was born and raised in Osaka. I married in 1980, and because the family I married into belonged to Rissho Kosei-kai's Osaka Dharma Center, that was my introduction to the faith. My husband and his parents were all devoted members, so our home was constantly filled, day and night, with local members and youth leaders coming and going.

The year after we married, in 1981, we were blessed with our eldest son. However, during the economic boom of the late 1980s, my husband became caught up in its extravagant lifestyle. He frequently stayed out overnight, returning home in the morning, and our relationship gradually deteriorated. As he showed little concern for our family, I began to think, "I can't go on living like this. If possible, I want a divorce." Eventually, I took our son and lived separately from my husband for a time.

Concerned about my situation, the local group leaders and area leaders frequently came to visit and offer support. At first, I pretended not to be home. But members of the sangha—my fellow practitioners—continued to come to my apartment, and I was deeply touched by their kindness and compassion. Little by little, I began visiting the Osaka Dharma Center with my young son in tow.

At the Dharma center, the leaders would warmly ask me, "How have you been lately? Is anything troubling you?" and "If something happens, don't hesitate to tell us." They cared for me and also helped look after my young son. Thanks to their support, I gradually began attending Memorial Day services and participating in Dharma center duties.



Ms. Naomi Masuno

The members of the sangha truly stood by you during the most difficult time in your life.

I continued trying to talk with my husband and brought him divorce papers many times, but each time he tore them up. Overwhelmed by anxiety and unsure of what to do, I confided in my chapter leader about the difficulties in our marriage.

She said to me, firmly but compassionately, "The difficulties with your husband are a form of practice

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that you need at this point in your life. Getting a divorce may be easy, but unless you change your own heart, you will experience the same kind of suffering again. Entrust to the Buddha whether or not you will ultimately divorce, and for now, devote yourself wholeheartedly to Buddhist practice.” Trusting her words, I earnestly engaged in member visits and Dharma circle practice, taking a deep and honest look at my own heart. Then, before long, something unexpected happened. My husband, who had stubbornly refused to divorce me for so long, readily signed the papers. We agreed that I would have sole custody of our son and that there would be no child support or financial settlement. Our divorce was finalized in 1991, and each of us began a new chapter in life.

Afterward, raising my son on my own brought financial hardship and many other painful challenges. Although I had the determination and strength to protect my child, there were times when I felt that I might break down. Whenever that happened, members of the sangha were always there to encourage me and stand by my side.

It is only because of the support of so many people that I was able to work for a life insurance company during the day and serve as the head of the young women’s group for my chapter in the evenings, visiting and supporting members, all while raising my son. I also participated in training retreats in Ome and pilgrimages to Mount Shichimen, devoting myself wholeheartedly to youth activities.

Looking back now, I am deeply grateful that my son grew up close to the Buddha from an early age and became a sincere and kindhearted person.

Please tell us how you eventually came to move to the United States.

In February 1992, the year after my divorce, I traveled to Las Vegas with a friend from my school days. There, in what seemed like an encounter guided by destiny, I met the man who is now my husband.

At the time, he worked for a travel agency in Los Angeles and was guiding tourists in Las Vegas. When we told him that we had come from Japan on vacation, he took us to one of his favorite restaurants. Although we had only just met, we immediately hit it off and enjoyed a wonderful meal together before saying goodbye.

Then, three days later, my friend and I happened to meet him again. It felt like something out of a movie or a novel. The coincidence was so extraordinary that I sensed a powerful connection between us. After sharing another meal, I gave him my telephone number and said, “If you ever have an opportunity to visit Osaka, please contact me.” My friend and I returned to Japan the following day.

About six months later, he actually came to Osaka for work, and we had a very moving reunion. That unexpected series of events brought us together. Both



Ms. Masuno with her husband (upper left), son (lower left), and granddaughter (upper right).

of us had previously been married and were single at the time, and we married in November 1993.

When he proposed, I honestly told him, “Even after we marry, I will continue practicing the faith of Rissho Kosei-kai. And my son, who is irreplaceable to me, will be coming with me.”

Because he had once lived in Suginami, Tokyo, he was familiar with Rissho Kosei-kai’s Great Sacred Hall. He had lost both of his parents, and the opportunity to honor his ancestors in the United States was meaningful to him. He therefore respected my wish to continue practicing the Rissho Kosei-kai faith and, of course, wholeheartedly welcomed my son as well.

In May 1994, I moved to the United States with my son, who was then in his second year of junior high school.

You went on to serve as head of the Japanese-speaking group at the Los Angeles Dharma Center, didn’t you?

Beginning in 2003, I simultaneously served as an area leader and leader of the women’s group. Then, in 2007, I was appointed head of the Japanese-speaking group, a role I served in for nearly twenty years.

When I first moved to the United States, I often felt bewildered by the differences in culture and customs. I also noticed differences between Japan and the



Ms. Masuno (front row, right) with members of the Los Angeles Dharma Center on the day of the enshrinement of the Gohonzon at the Arizona branch in 1996.

United States in the way members approached their practice.

Japanese culture tends to value cooperation and harmony. For example, when receiving guidance from a leader, many people in Japan may respond with “Yes, I understand” or “That’s right” in agreement. In the United States, however, people are generally encouraged to express their own views clearly, saying, “This is what I think” or “This is how I see it.”

This does not mean that one approach is better than the other. Through interacting with members in the United States, I learned how important it is to recognize, respect, and understand the differences in each country’s culture, values, and ways of thinking.

My home in Palm Springs is about two hundred kilometers from the Los Angeles Dharma Center, and the drive takes approximately two hours. When I was younger, I would make day trips to the Dharma center. Now, when I participate in monthly Dharma center duties and other activities, I usually stay overnight.

On my way to the Dharma center, I have also made an effort to invite and drive members who live far away and have babies or young children so that they, too, can participate in Dharma center duties and Memorial Day services.

Through the responsibilities entrusted to me, I have deepened my own faith. At the same time, remembering how the sangha once supported me, I have always tried to stand beside people in their pain and sorrow. With that intention, I have formed meaningful relationships with many members over the years.

Is there a particular teaching of Rissho Kosei-kai that you always keep in your heart?

I deeply cherish the teaching, “If one changes, others will change accordingly.” When I first married my present husband, I sometimes spoke to him uncon-

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sciously in a condescending way, as if to say, “Let me teach you how it is!” He responded, “I am not asking you to teach me.” His words made me realize how self-important I had been. I was reminded once again of how strongly attached I could be to my own way of thinking.

At the same time, the experience taught me the importance of learning from every encounter and every relationship. I came to understand that by learning from all the people and circumstances around me, I can change myself and continue to grow.

You stepped down as head of the Japanese-speaking group this June. How do you hope to approach your practice from now on?

President Nichiko Niwano often teaches us, “Make an effort, make an effort, I will keep on making an effort until I die, and if I am reborn, I will make an effort again.”

Although I have stepped down from my leadership role, my practice of the Buddha Way continues. I therefore intend to keep making diligent efforts each day toward the perfection of character described in the Members’ Vow.

One person I greatly respect is the late Kinuyo Grimmitt, a former chapter head of the Los Angeles Dharma Center. Even after stepping down as a chapter head because of her advanced age, she continued to drive members of her generation to the Dharma center and never failed to attend the monthly Memorial Day services.

I regard Ms. Grimmitt as a true model of a person of faith. With the conviction that “there is no end to diligent practice” firmly in my heart, I hope to embark on this new chapter of life with a fresh spirit and continue practicing as one devoted follower of the Buddha Way.



Members of the Los Angeles Dharma Center with Rev. Maeda, director of Rissho Kosei-kai International (front row, center), who delivered a Dharma talk at the center’s Sunday service on March 29, 2026. Ms. Masuno is fourth from left in the front row.

Practicing the Dharma in the Here and Now

The Lotus Sutra and the Four Noble Truths



Dr. Dominick Scarangelo
International Advisor to Rissho Kosei-kai



Practicing the Truth of the Cause

Last time, we considered how, using mindfulness and “bodyfulness,” we can practice the Noble Truth of Suffering through recognizing when we become distressed by the gap between our wishes and reality. If we can honestly recognize our suffering and acknowledge that we have a problem, we will already have overcome a great hurdle. But we cannot stop there. The Buddha teaches that if we wish to do something about our suffering, our next step is to investigate its causes.

Some Buddhist explanations say that the fundamental cause of suffering is desire, while others assert that suffering comes from an ignorance about the way things really are. The two are not mutually exclusive, however. Ignorance is our deluded notion of self, a deeply rooted egocentrism. Ignorance is not just a way of thinking; it’s something that becomes wired into the way we perceive the world. This egocentrism, in turn, creates the strong desire—the insistence—that reality accord with our wishes. Furthermore, we act egotistically in the world to force things to be as we want, creating distress for ourselves and those around us.

Consider a simple example based on an experience I had in my twenties. I am on my way to an important appointment when I become stuck in a traffic jam. As frustration builds, every driver around me begins to look like an obstacle standing between me and where I need to be. When another car cuts in front of me, I honk my horn, gesture angrily, and yell at the other driver. The other driver responds in kind, and what began as an ordinary traffic delay quickly becomes a heated confrontation. Such moments can feel like living in a realm of hell.

What was the cause of this incidence of suffering? Surely it’s safe to say that if I had not angrily yelled at the other driver and made aggressive gestures, the clash would not have happened. So, we could conclude that my actions were the immediate cause of the conflict.

But let’s go deeper. *Why* did I do what I did? If I don’t really understand the *why*, I might be doomed to repeat such angry outbursts and suffer further painful consequences.

When this incident occurred, I was wound up like a spring, and it was that pent-up, negative energy that was bursting to escape. And why did I have such negative potential? Was it because of the conditions—the situation of becoming late for my appointment? Many people would think so. But there were, no doubt, other drivers in that heavy traffic also heading to important meetings who remained calm and peaceful. The situation, or conditions, by themselves, could not have been the primary cause, so I must probe further.



As we learned when studying the Ten Suchnesses, our potential or likelihood for particular actions is a function of the nature of our minds. What was my mind like at that time? It was burning with rage, a fury born of an inability to reconcile myself with becoming late for my appointment. It was a situation I could do little to change, bringing me face to face with my lack of agency.

So, it's fair to say that the angry nature of my mind was the cause.

However, we may need to peel back still another layer, because my state of mind was shaped by previous experiences. The mind's "such a nature" reflects the enduring influence of our past actions, the "such a reward" of previous experiences. "Such a reward" conditions the nature of our minds. So I need to reflect on whether I am prone to an angry mindset. And if so, why would that be?

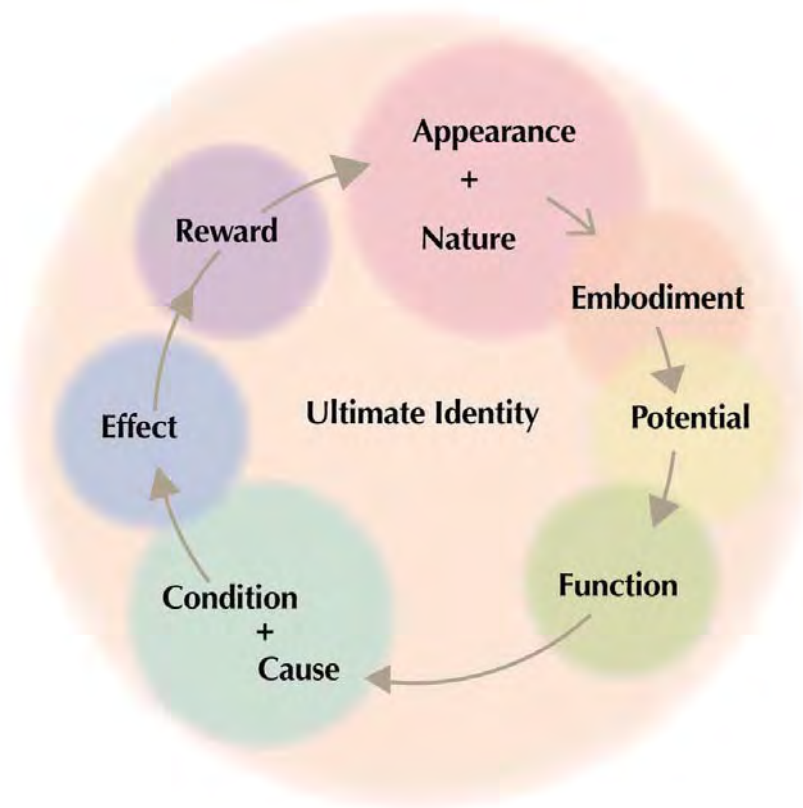
In my own case, when I was a child, I was chronically late and often missed deadlines, which led to severe scoldings and a stress on punctuality both at

home and at school that almost became traumatic for me. Part of my emotional reaction to the traffic jam may have arisen from a wish to avoid reliving those painful consequences of failing to be on time.

There is nothing wrong with such a wish. Mine grew from a natural compassion for myself. But my wish warped into the unskillful feelings of fear and anger, which then expressed themselves in actions as I attempted to force reality to be the way I wanted it to be.

Practicing the Truth of the Cause is not always easy; it may require time, honest introspection, opening our hearts to objectify our feelings and thoughts by sharing them with members of the sangha. If we are to formulate a path of practice that could lead us to transcend our suffering, we need to get to the heart of the matter.

Next time, let's stay with this example and consider how we might practice the "Truth of the Path" to the extinguishment of suffering.





Field Report from the Sangha

Rev. Hiromi Maria Sasaki
Minister of the Brazil Dharma Center

I have a son who is entering adolescence. One day, I was in a hurry and asked him to help with some household chores. I said, “I really need you to do this now, please,” but he was completely absorbed in a video game at the time.

He replied irritably, “But I can’t stop right now!” I immediately became frustrated and snapped back, “All you ever do is play games!” Before long, we found ourselves arguing.

When I reflected on what had happened, I realized that the cause of my suffering was not my son’s attitude itself. Rather, it was my attachment to wanting things to go my way—wanting him to help me immediately and do what I, as his mother, was telling him to do. It was this attachment that gave rise to my frustration and anger.

Actually, a little while before that, I had forgotten that my son had asked me to mend his favorite pair of pants. A few days later, when he asked, “Mom, are the pants done yet?” I replied, “Oh, I forgot. I’m sorry.”

As I looked back on that moment, I realized that while I did not want my own requests to be put off, I had put off the one thing my son had asked me to do. I realized that his behavior of not helping me right away, which had made me irritated, was in fact a reflection of my own behavior.

I also realized that although my son regularly helps

with household chores and supports me in many ways, I had begun to take his help for granted and had not expressed enough gratitude to him.

With my new understanding, I changed the way I asked for his help. Instead of expecting him to respond immediately, I considered his schedule and began saying, “I’d like you to help me with something. What time would work for you?” Then, he responded without becoming irritated. I, too, no longer spent the rest of the day carrying feelings of frustration and resentment.

Through this experience, I learned the importance of reflecting on my heart instead of searching outside myself for the cause of my suffering. I came to understand, through my relationship with my son, that the cause of my suffering lies in my own attachments (the Truth of the Cause).

Thanks to this realization, our days have become calmer and more peaceful. Before trying to change others, I hope always to remember the importance of first aligning my heart with the Dharma.

In my effort to practice the Dharma in the here and now, I will accept everything that happens to me as a learning opportunity given by the Buddha, and I will refine my buddha nature by sincerely facing each event and encounter. Thank you very much.





Chapter 2 To Connect with Others

Cultivate Toughness Born of a Compassionate Heart

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



Founder Niwano visits the Chiyoda Dharma Center, Tokyo, in September 1993.

Accepting Stern Words with Humility

Shakyamuni's stern admonition of Rahula undoubtedly arose from a place of great compassion. But I am deeply impressed by the profound wisdom of using the metaphor of water to reprimand Rahula. Water is naturally pure. By comparing the inherent buddha nature possessed by every human being to water, Shakyamuni taught Rahula this: "Your original nature is as pure as water."

Because Rahula was a humble person, he was able to take those words to heart in the way they were intended, and as a result, turn himself around.

Here, I believe, lies the secret of Shakyamuni's skill as a mentor. As far as I know, no matter which sutra we read, we never find Shakyamuni denying the humanity of anyone he speaks to by saying things like "You are an awful person." Even when admonishing someone, he points only to that person's mistaken attitude or wrongful actions. And because the individual already knows what the Buddha tells them to be true, they can accept his words humbly. If we listen humbly and receptively, even stern admonitions no longer feel stern.

Whether in the workplace or in Dharma circles, people tend to avoid those who speak sternly. However, if such sternness affirms people's human dignity and recognizes their good qualities and strengths, it is sure to be understood.



If Cofounder Myoko Naganuma thought, “I must help such-and-such a person become a genuine practitioner of the Dharma,” she would even correct the way they used chopsticks. She would give them extremely detailed guidance not only on practicing the Dharma but also on their conduct in daily life, observing their every movement.

Thanks to the Cofounder, the leaders of the Dharma centers developed the proper attitude and bearing. The extraordinary thing about Myoko-sensei was that each and every one of her stern words fully conveyed the heart of great compassion from which they arose. With great empathy, she was meticulously attentive to each and every member. When people know that someone has their best interests at heart, they can accept that person’s critiques and advice willingly.

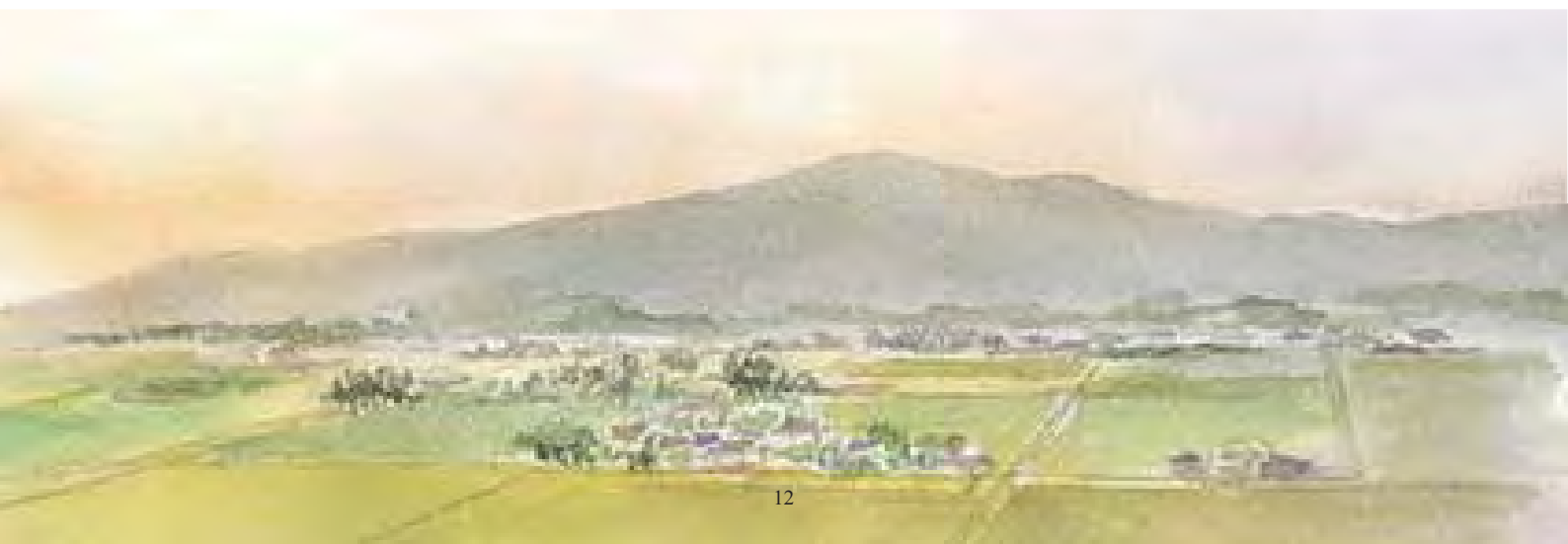
An acquaintance of mine shared the following story. When he was a boy, he had done something wrong and been severely scolded by his uncle. At the time, his uncle asked him, “Why would a bright boy like you do something like that?” The words “a bright boy like you” resonated with him. Instead of resenting the scolding, he became extremely fond of his uncle, and those words have sustained him ever since—even up to now, well into his eighties.

That said, the phenomenal world in which we live is a harsh world full of suffering, just as Shakyamuni Buddha described it when he taught that “All conditioned existence is characterized by suffering.” To survive in such a world, it is important for us to be raised to be resilient from childhood.

Accordingly, while nurturing others requires a foundation of 100 percent loving care, there are inevitably times when that love must be expressed through stern words.

On the other hand, even when we encounter hardships in our daily lives, we must not forget that the Buddha’s great compassion is at work therein. When we can accept those hardships with an open and honest heart, we will realize that they open a path to happiness.

Bodai no me o okosashimu (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 105–108





Lighting a Lamp Here and Now

Rev. Takashi Maeda
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

Hello, everyone. Many of us surely wish for peace in the world. Yet, the events taking place around the world can feel so overwhelming that it is easy to believe there is nothing we can do as individuals to make a difference.

I usually commute to work on a small motorbike. One day, while I was stopped at a red light, I noticed a man in a wheelchair struggling to get over a curb onto the sidewalk. Just then, a college student walked up and naturally began pushing the wheelchair.

As people around them watched, the man safely reached the sidewalk and a sense of warmth filled the air.

The student probably did not act with the intention of bringing about world peace; she simply reached out to help someone who was struggling right in front of her. Yet, that small act helped not just one person but everyone who witnessed it by bringing a light to their hearts. I believe this is exactly what the words from Masahiro Yasuoka in the President's Message for this month, "Rather than complaining about the darkness, light a lamp," are pointing us toward.

Following the major earthquake that struck Kumamoto Prefecture in July, many people have been asking themselves, "What can I do?" and continuing to offer support in whatever way they can. If we look closely at our own surroundings, we also find people who need support and compassion.

A simple "thank you" at home, a warm "thank you for your hard work" in the workplace, a smile to a stranger, or attentive listening until someone has finished speaking may each be only a small light. Yet these small lights connect from person to person, eventually becoming a light that illuminates our families, our communities, and even the world.

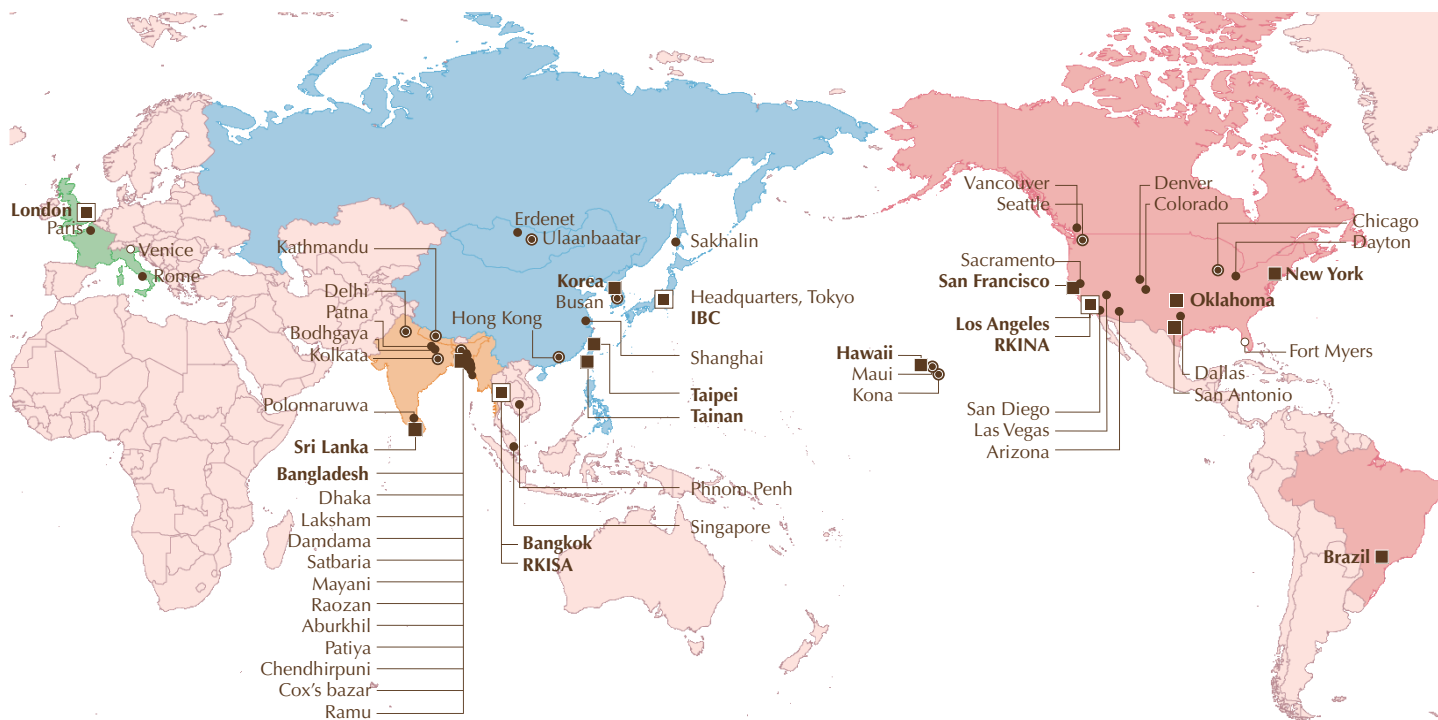
Perhaps the first step toward world peace does not begin somewhere far away, but right here and now by each of us lighting a lamp that we can offer.



Following the magnitude 7.1 Kumamoto earthquake on July 28, members of the Yatsushiro Dharma Center and a team from Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters carried out relief efforts, delivering water and clearing debris.



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Information about
local Dharma centers



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