kosei

Buddhism for Today

Welcome to Rissho Kosei-kai

For New Members

Rissho Kosei-kai International

For New Members of Rissho Kosei-kai

Welcome to Rissho Kosei-kai. You have just encountered Rissho Kosei-kai, one of the many Buddhist organizations in the world. You are unique among the eight billion people on earth, you are a child of the Buddha, and we are very happy to have met you.

The people of the world are born in many different countries and come from differing ethnic and cultural backgrounds, each with their own langauges, cultures, and traditions. But we all share a common humanity and all call this beautiful planet earth our home.

What is our shared humanity? According to Mahayana Buddhism, it is our buddha nature, in other words, our innate capacity for benevolence and compassion for others, rejoicing in their happiness, and impartially wishing the best for all living beings. The Lotus Sutra teaches that all people can walk the Way to buddhahood by manifesting their buddha nature.

Rissho Kosei-kai members help one another live life to become a buddha. In the hope that you will find true happiness, the Buddha will always be with you, guide you, and encourage you. The door of the Buddha's teachings is open before you. Let's walk the Way to buddhahood together.

The Great Sacred Hall

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What Is Rissho Kosei-kai?

Buddhism is a religion born in India some twenty-five hundred years ago. In order to liberate humanity from suffering, Shakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, taught people the truth he discovered after six years of ascetic practices and deep meditation.

Shakyamuni Buddha's many teachings were compiled and handed down to later generations of Buddhists throughout the world. Eventually, the teachings of the Buddha were transmitted in two main currents: Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. Theravada Buddhism took root in South and Southeast Asia, while Mahayana Buddhism spread mainly in Tibet and East Asia, first in China and then Korea and Japan, and also in Vietnam, to the south. The teachings and practices of Mahayana Buddhism came to Japan in 538 CE. The Lotus Sutra, one of the most prominent sacred texts of the Buddhist tradition, became an integral part of Japanese culture and thought. Based on the long history and traditions of Buddhism, Rissho Kosei-kai is a form of Buddhism for the world that we live in today. It was founded in Tokyo, Japan, on March 5, 1938, by Rev. Nikkyo Niwano and Rev. Myoko Naganuma, who shared an aspiration to liberate all people from suffering and make a better world. "Rissho" means placing the teachings of the Buddha in our hearts and minds. "Kosei" means aspiring to attain buddhahood through our interactions with the many people we encounter in our lives, fostering mutual learning and encouragement among one another; and "kai" means "society" or "organization."

Rissho Kosei-kai is a global Buddhist movement whose teachings and practices are based on the Threefold Lotus Sutra. Our principal training center is the Great Sacred Hall where the statue of our focus of devotion is enshrined. With the headquarters in Tokyo, we now have about a million member households in Dharma centers throughout Japan, as well as in 12 Dharma centers and some 50 meeting places in 18 different countries.

We, members of Rissho Kosei-kai, aspire to achieve a peaceful world by applying the Buddhas's teachings in our daily lives and cultivating our hearts and minds through our relationships with our family, coworkers, friends, and our neighbors. We also join hands with the followers of all faiths and people from all walks of life to take part in peacebuilding activities around the world.

The Gohonzon, or focus of devotion enshrined in the Great Sacred Hall

Members' Vow

We members of Rissho Kosei-kai
Take refuge in the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni
And recognize in Buddhism a true way of liberation,
Under the guidance of our revered founder, Nikkyo Niwano.
In the spirit of lay Buddhists,
We vow to perfect ourselves
Through personal discipline and leading others
And by improving our knowledge and practice of the faith,
And we pledge ourselves to follow the bodhisattva way
To bring peace to our families, communities, and countries,
and to the world.

President Niwano's Message

Buddhism Is a Teaching for Cultivating One's Mind

Rev. Nichiko Niwano, president of Rissho Kosei-kai, emphasizes that the most important teaching of Buddhism is the truth of impermanence.

Impermanence means that nothing ever stays the same but undergoes constant change. The human body is always changing, and everyone will eventually die. Although it is a sad fact, President Niwano tells us that we should not turn away from this truth, but face it directly and learn that it is what makes life truly worth living:

"This paticular life we have been given is precious and irreplaceable, never to be experienced a second time. Yet how many of us really treasure each moment of every day as we should? Shakyamuni did not teach us how to satisfy our hu-man desires. What he did was enable us to appreciate, through recognition of the truth, or the Dharma, how precious is this life that we have been given, and how grateful we should be for the gift."

President Niwano uses the term "cultivating our hearts and minds" to express the effort we make to get a firm grasp of how things really are. He explains, "Each and every one of us 'cultivating the fields in our hearts and minds' means looking within before looking at the external world and its conditions. This is the important meaning of 'cultivating the fields in our hearts and minds.' Looking deep within is one of the Buddha's teachings, and is fundamental to the way in which Buddhism builds peace in society and generates individual peace of mind.

President Nichiko Niwano

"I think we are truly liberated when we can, for example, give thanks for whatever weather, be it sunny, rainy, or windy. This is not an easy task, but to become people who willingly accept anything that, on the face of it, seems to be disadvantageous or bad is to truly cultivate the Buddhist heart."

By encouraging us to strive for this awareness, President Niwano always emphasizes that Buddhism is a teaching for cultivating one's mind.

Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures

All Buddhists take refuge in—wholeheartedly devoting themselves to—the three "treasures": the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Shakyamuni, or the historical Buddha, taught his disciples the importance of these Three Treasures soon after beginning to share his message with people.

As we progress through a variety of experiences in our life, both joyful and sorrowful, the Buddha guides us to improve ourselves and leads us to true liberation (enlightenment). The Buddha's boundless compassion is within everything that happens. When we take sincere refuge in the Buddha, we start to see the true value inherent in all phenomena. Then we can gather courage and find the power to overcome any difficulty.

The Dharma means the teachings of the Buddha. These teachings can be summarized by three principles called the Three Seals of the Dharma: First, all things are ceaselessly changing every moment ("all things are impermanent"); second, they possess no eternally unchangeable entity ("all things are nonself"); and third, all things are in a state of great harmony ("nirvana is tranquility"). All phenomena in this world exist in accordance with the Dharma. When we take refuge in the Dharma and our attitude and actions are in harmony with the Dharma, we can then live a peaceful life free from fear and anxiety.

Shakyamuni Buddha called a gathering of people who follow the Buddha's teachings a Sangha. In daily life we face various temptations and hardships. In such cases, if we have the fellowship of the Sangha, a community of people who all practice the same teachings, we can support and learn from each other. Together, we can overcome hardships and lead more fulfilling lives. Moreover, all life stems from the same root. From this perspective, all living beings in the world are fundamentally brothers and sisters and in a larger sense, united in a Sangha of humanity. Widening the circle of our Sangha contributes to the happiness of many and leads to world peace.

In order to wholeheartedly cherish the Three Treasures, Rissho Kosei-kai members recite "Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures" as part of our morning and evening sutra recitations.

The Buddhist Home Altar

A Central Focus of Our Lives

As Buddhists, we recognize the profound significance of building our lives around a central focal point, our Buddhist home altar. It is here that we enshrine our focus of devotion, the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, our great benevolent teacher.

The home altar, which contains an image of the Buddha, is the place we revere as the most sacred part of our homes. A dignified Buddhist altar contains the following elements: The focus of devotion is enshrined at the center of the altar. On either side of the Buddha are two plaques: the Dharma Titles of the Founder and Cofounder on the right, and on the left, the Posthumous Name for All One's Ancestors and the Land Purification Inscription.

We place the memorial book (the register of names and of posthumous names of ancestors and other special departed) at the front of the home altar, as shown in the picture. We offer rice (or bread, etc.), water, and tea (or coffee, etc.). Flowers, candles, an incense burner, and a bell are also placed in front of the altar. In addition, we offer sweets, vegetables, and fruits on memorial days.

Furthermore, reciting the Lotus Sutra before the home altar is one of the basic practices of Rissho Kosei-kai members.

In keeping with the saying "Faith arises from a dignified atmosphere," our devotion naturally deepens when we orient ourselves toward a Buddhist home altar that has been ceremoniously arranged.

In Rissho Kosei-kai we consider it very important to make the home altar a central focus of our lives. So, care should always be taken to keep the home altar bright, clean, and simple to make it an appropriate place for the enshrinement of the focus of devotion, Dharma Titles, Posthumous Name for All One's Ancestors, and Land Purification Inscription.

A properly arranged Buddhist altar

Focus of Devotion

Making the Buddha's Wish Our Own

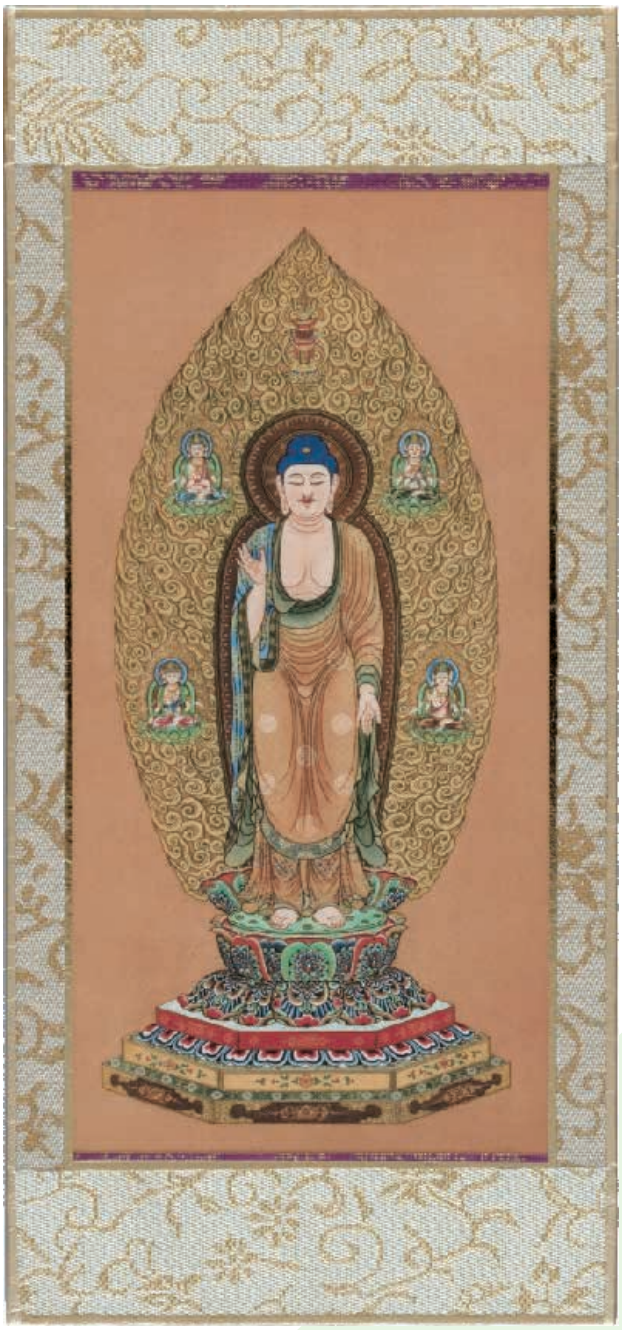
Members of Rissho Kosei-kai revere and venerate the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, Great Benevolent Teacher, World-Honored One, as our focus of devotion.

The focus of devotion is the integrated figure of the human Shakyamuni Buddha, who appeared on earth and taught the Dharma some twenty-five hundred years ago, and the Eternal Buddha, described in chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra, "The Life Span of the Eternal Tathagata."

The Eternal Buddha is the ultimate truth, a fundamental power that has, from the infinite past, sustained all living beings, everywhere throughout the universe. The Eternal Buddha is the omnipresent, great life of the universe.

Through paying homage or reciting the sutra before the Buddha enshrined in our altar, we aim to become people who can revere and dedicate ourselves to the Buddha, which is essential to cultivating our hearts and minds. Revering the Buddha and reciting the sutra are not just repetitive formalities, but are an effort to understand the Buddha's teaching and continually lead our lives in accordance with the Buddha wisdom.

Taking refuge in the focus of devotion means that we take and keep as our own the Buddha's wish to liberate all people from suffering and that we diligently walk the Buddha Way.



An image of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, our focus of devotion

Dharma Titles

Our Teachers Who Taught Us the Buddha Dharma

Dharma Titles are the honorific titles of the Founder and Cofounder in place of posthumous names.

The Dharma Title for the Founder is "Founder Nikkyo, Great Teacher of the One Vehicle." It honors the Founder's virtues and achievements as a great teacher who showed many people how to live in the spirit of the One Vehicle, which means that all people, without exception, can attain buddhahood.

The Dharma Title for the Cofounder is "Cofounder Myoko, Bodhisattva of the Way of Compassion." "Way of Compassion" honors the achievements of the Cofounder, who without regard to herself reached out to help suffering people, walked the bodhisattva way, and was admired as a compassionate spiritual mother by many people.

The President explained the significance of Dharma Titles as follows: "The Founder and Cofounder are our teachers who taught the Dharma directly to us. The enshrinement of their Dharma in our home altar signifies and makes clear that we are their direct disciples."

Therefore, through the Dharma Titles, we commemorate them daily as the spiritual leaders who brought the Buddha's teachings to us.

Making the Buddha's wish their own, the Founder and Cofounder devoted their lives to liberating people. We aspire to renew our vow to follow their example when we read their Dharma Titles.

The Dharma Titles of the Founder (above) and Cofounder (below)

The Posthumous Name for All One's Ancestors and the Land Purification Inscription

Goals of Our Faith and How We Achieve It

Members enshrine the Posthumous Name for All One's Ancestors. This is an inscription bearing the posthumous name of our own ancestors, or in the case of partners and married couples, those of both sets of ancestors. The Posthumous Name for All One's Ancestors expresses one of the goals of our faith as well as the practice for us to achieve it.

Therefore, the Posthumous Name for All One's Ancestors has the following meanings: "The merits you accumulate through the bodhisattva way will be transferred to your ancestors and lead to their awakening as well as the awakening of other family members."

Members put their palms together every day before the Posthumous Name for All One's Ancestors, which symbolizes all the meanings stated above, and by doing so they live according to the teachings. Fulfilling the wishes of our ancestors can empower us to create new possibilities for our lives.

The Land Purification Inscription is a sort of posthumous name through which members pray for all the spirits connected to our residential land and express gratitude to them for having given us the chance to live there. What matters is to practice the Buddha Way where each of us lives. The enshrinement of the Land Purification Inscription makes us aware that where we live is a place to practice the Buddha Way.

A sample of the Posthumous Name for All One's Ancestors (above) and the Land Purification Inscription (below)

Three Basic Practices of Our Faith

On Becoming a Compassionate Person

The Buddha tells us that the world we live in is not only one of pleasure and joy, but on the contrary, that it is filled with pain and sorrow. Further, he teaches us that how we accept this suffering determines what kind of person we will come to be.

Do experiences of hardship make us self-centered and obsessed with earthly desires? Or do they make us warmhearted people who can understand others' difficulties? Of course, we would all like to take both our sufferings and joyful experiences as nourishment for our hearts and minds and become warmhearted people who feel compassion for others.

To become compassionate people, we members of Rissho Kosei-kai live a Buddhist way of life. This is based on the three basic practices of our faith:

1. Sutra recitation;
2. Connecting people with the Dharma, enhancing their connection with the Dharma, and participating in Dharma circles;
3. Studying and practicing the Dharma.

In Buddhism, the ultimate purpose of elevating humanity is for people to come to embrace the Buddha and his ideal. The basic practices of our faith show us how to become such people by means of daily devotion.

Sutra Recitation

Realizing the Dignity and Preciousness of Our Life

Reciting the sutra (*gokuyo*) every morning and evening at home is the first element of the basic practices of our faith. Its purpose is that we learn the true way to live as a member of humanity as taught in the Lotus Sutra, and thus become someone who benefits others as well.

Most importantly, sutra recitation enters us into communication with the Buddha (Eternal Buddha) who enlivens us. Through this dialogue with the Buddha, things suddenly occur to us that we are not able to notice when we are busy, such as our own faults or careless actions, and the support we receive from the people around us. In addition, the Buddha's teachings and wishes sink deeply into our hearts and minds.

Secondly, through sutra recitation we show appreciation to our ancestors for unceasingly continuing the family line, for giving us the gift of life, and for their having prayed for descendants. Service at the home altar is also an expression of our gratitude. Thus, sutra recitation elevates us spiritually.

In the morning recitation, we make a personal vow to diligently practice on that day, and later during the evening recitation, we express our gratitude for the events of the day. More importantly, however, through sutra recitation we deepen our faith in the Buddha and our aspiration to practice his teachings in our daily life. That is the most important offering of all to the Buddha and our ancestors.

Members recite the sutra before an altar.

Prayer Beads, Sash, and *Kyoten: Sutra Readings*

Coordinate Body and Mind to Serve the Buddha

Prayer Beads

Prayer beads are an important Buddhist tool that we always carry.

When we use prayer beads while paying homage to the Buddha, we place the side with three tassels over our right middle finger, twist the strand, and then place the side with two tassels over our left middle finger; then we put our palms together.

During sutra recitation, we loop the prayer beads into two circles and wear them on the left hand. There are two big beads on both sides, and strung among them are 108 beads and four small beads.

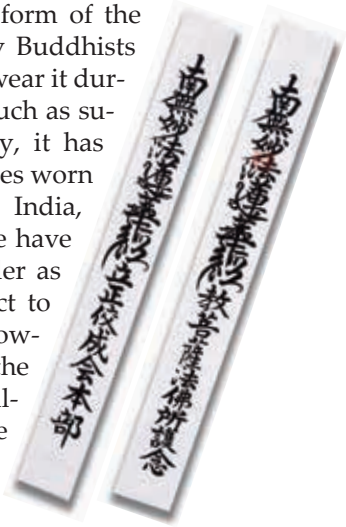
Before and after chanting the O-daimoku, we rub our hands together with the prayer beads between them.

The 108 beads represent the many kinds of delusions or defilements in our hearts and minds. Prayer beads remind us that we must convert those continually arising delusions into the aspiration to buddhahood for others' happiness. By carrying our prayer beads with us, we preserve a sense of being a Buddhist and bring ourselves closer to buddhahood.

Prayer beads

Sash

The sash is a symbolic form of the monk's robe, and as lay Buddhists of Rissho Kosei-kai, we wear it during Buddhist practices such as sutra recitation. Essentially, it has the same meaning as robes worn by Buddhist monks. In India, through the ages, people have bared their right shoulder as a means to show respect to venerable persons. Following this custom, we put the sash over our left shoulder, leaving the right side uncovered.



Left: The Japanese inscription on the front of the sash means "I take refuge in the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma; the headquarters of Rissho Kosei-kai."

Right: The Japanese inscription on the back of the sash means "I take refuge in the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma; a teaching that instructs bodhisattvas and that buddhas protect and keep in mind."

Kyoten: Sutra Readings

We recite *Kyoten: Sutra Readings* every morning and evening. *Kyoten* contains excerpts from the Threefold Lotus Sutra: the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma, and the Sutra of the Method for Contemplating the Bodhisattva Universal Sage. The Threefold Lotus Sutra, the main scripture of Rissho Kosei-kai, teaches us the workings of the Dharma, universal truth, and reveals the way things really are in our world..

Kyoten: Sutra Readings *for members' daily recitation.*

The Threefold Lotus Sutra and O-daimoku

Teaching You True Happiness and the True Way of Life

The Threefold Lotus Sutra

The Threefold Lotus Sutra, more commonly known as the Lotus Sutra, teaches that all of us are capable of spiritual growth as human beings and eventually attaining buddhahood. The Lotus Sutra consists of:

1. The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, also called the "opening sutra," which contains 3 chapters;
2. The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma, the main sutra, which contains 28 chapters;
3. The Sutra of the Method for Contemplating the Bodhisattva Universal Sage, also called the "closing sutra," in 1 chapter.

The Lotus Sutra teaches how the Dharma, or universal truth, works, how this world functions, what human beings are, and how we should live as human beings. It teaches us that true happiness exists in acknowledging the Dharma and living in accordance with it.

The contents and the spirit of the Lotus Sutra are sacred and precious, and this is revealed to us in the practice of its teachings.

O-daimoku

By chanting the O-daimoku "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" three times, we begin and conclude events, ceremonies, and our daily sutra recitation practice in the morning and at night. *Namu* comes from the Sanskrit word, *namas*, which means "taking refuge in" or "entrusting our whole body and soul to." *Myoho Renge Kyo* means "the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma."

President Niwano says that the chanting of "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" is an expression of our recognition of and devotion to the Buddha's wonderful teachings. At the same time, we place our palms together in reverence and pay homage in order to fully embody this sense of devotion.

The Threefold Lotus Sutra has been translated into multiple languages.

Connecting People with the Dharma and Enhancing Their Connection with the Dharma

Interacting with Each Other to Make Our Buddha Nature Shine

The second element of our basic practices encompasses connecting people with the Dharma, enhancing their connection with the Dharma, and participating in Dharma circles (*hoza*). Connecting people with the Dharma is introducing Buddhism to someone. Enhancing people's connection with the Dharma is encouraging them to put the teachings into practice in daily life so that they will find a joyful way of living. These practices help make the Dharma part of ourselves and create opportunities for us to learn the teachings and a way of life appropriate to ourselves through our involvement with someone else.

Our life revolves around relationships with various people at home, in the workplace, and in our social community. We cannot master the Buddha's teachings or practice them to achieve true happiness without interaction with others. Thanks to our interactions with other people—connecting people with the Dharma and enhancing their connection with it—we change ourselves for the better.

We come to feel more joy in others' happiness than in our own, and this is evidence that we possess the same wish as the Buddha in our heart of hearts. Connecting people with the Dharma and enhancing their connection with the Dharma are the practices of wishing for the happiness of others from the bottom of our hearts. Both practices cultivate our own hearts and make us realize that our wish is the same as the Buddha's.

Members enjoy coffee while talking about their lives and the teachings.

Members visit the home of fellow members to enhance their connection with the Dharma.

Hoza, or Dharma Circle

Where We Learn, Empathize, and Improve Ourselves

Hoza, or Dharma circle, is a discussion and sharing group in which members gather together to learn to make the Buddha's mind their own, and look at things through the eyes of the Buddha to empathize with each other, and to help one another to improve and develop.

Hoza is the life and soul of Rissho Kosei-kai and one of the important basic practices of our faith. In *hoza*, members unite their hearts as one and share their innermost thoughts, from worries and suffering to joys and happiness, and cultivate empathy for one another. In the process we come to realize that the Buddha's wish is present in our worries and suffering as well as our joys and happiness.

To be more precise, *hoza* is a conversation between a coordinator, called the *hoza* facilitator, and a person who is suffering or facing challenges in their life. The other participants then attentively listen to them and speak about their understanding of the dialogue. The most important thing is that by participating in *hoza*, along with learning how to resolve suffering and anxiety, people learn wisdom for their lives and acquire the courage to live.

Furthermore, through listening to many people's stories, we can discover our life's purpose as human beings.

Members participate in hoza.

Studying and Practicing the Dharma

Self-Reflection in Light of the Teaching

The third element of the basic practices of our faith is studying and practicing the Dharma. This means to understand the Buddha's teachings correctly, to think about them in the light of our daily lives, and to repeat this process. In other words, it is nothing less than walking the Buddha Way.

To study and practice the Buddha's teachings correctly means that we comprehend the Buddha's wishes, always maintain an attitude of reverence, and cultivate a compassionate heart. These practices are central to Buddhists.

Have you ever felt that a sentence in a book or a phrase in a song has something in common with the teachings of Buddhism? Having the attitude that we can see common truths in a variety of contexts is also an important part of studying and practicing the Dharma.

However, even if we try to always maintain an attitude of reverence, our hearts and minds may unknowingly become antagonistic toward others. In light of the teachings, we should reflect and ask ourselves, "Am I at fault?" or "Did I communicate with others with the underlying self-centered motive of having things my way?" In this manner we can change our way of thinking, which enables us to move in a better direction. By practicing this repeatedly, we will develop our hearts and minds.

Members learn the Dharma from a book at home.

Above, above right: Members participate in a seminar at the headquarters.

Practice of Selflessness

Three Practices

To remove self-centeredness in the context of daily life, members of Rissho Kosei-kai focus on what we call the Three Practices. First, we exchange greetings with others warmly and cheerfully at home, school, workplace, or in our community. For people who have never exchanged greetings with others spontaneously, it might take a bit of courage to take the initiative, but it is good training for divesting oneself of egotism, and sets the tone for one's entire day.

Second, we can respond clearly and positively when someone speaks to us. In our dealing with people in our daily life, we clearly respond when addressed most of the time, but when we are locked in a self-centered state of mind, we cannot respond to others clearly and warmheartedly. Responding to people clearly and positively is the most important way to ensure harmonious interpersonal relations.

Third, we return things to their appropriate places; and we push in our chairs after we step away from the table, or return things to where we found them, like dishes or things we borrow from others. Always putting things to their appropriate places has the effect of anchoring you mentally and emotionally. One who can master this practice will be able to maintain balance and moderation in life and will be unlikely to deviate from their path in life.

President Niwano emphasizes the importance of working to achieve harmony in our families. Our homes are where we build the foundation of our character, and these three practices discussed above are introduced as the essential education at home. However, not only at home, the three practices can be applied to the places wherever we happen to be, and they have a positive important impact on character formation and a harmonious interpersonal relations at work and in the wider society. The Three Practices help us overcome our self-centeredness and lead meaningful lives of interrelatedness with others.

Practice of Generosity

"Putting Others First" Is the Way to the Happiness of Oneself and Others

The practice of generosity, also called donation, is one of the important practices of Rissho Kosei-kai.

Generally, the word "donation" is used to refer to a contribution made at temples and churches or to something that we give to others for charity. However, originally the Buddha taught generosity as one of the virtues of the bodhisattva who practices and prays for others' happiness. There are three types of generosity: material donation, the donation of the body, and the donation of the Dharma.

Material donation means giving money or material goods, or donating money as an of-fering to the Buddha.

The donation of the body means using our body to work for others. Rissho Kosei-kai members volunteer to serve at Dharma centers and also perform other outreach activities. Keeping a smile is one of the seven types of nonmonetary generosity that everyone can practice anytime, anywhere.

Members do volunteer work.

The donation of the Dharma means correctly conveying the Buddha's teachings to others. Dharma dissemination, such as connecting people with the Dharma and enhancing their connection with the Dharma, is Rissho Kosei-kai's practice for the donation of the Dharma.

The practice of generosity is seemingly something we do for others, but it is an important practice for ourselves in order to remove our delusion and learn the spirit of "putting others first." Generosity brings us our own improvement and happiness.

Members contribute money by placing it in a donation box like this at Dharma centers.

A minister welcomes a member at the entrance to a Dharma center.

Pilgrimages to the Headquarters and Visits to Dharma Centers

Living with Gratitude and Our Vows

Pilgrimages to the Headquarters

Pilgrimage to the Great Sacred Hall, which is the principal training center in Tokyo, is one of the important practices of Rissho Kosei-kai. There we pay homage to the focus of devotion and are embraced by the Buddha's great compassion. When we feel both the spirit of Buddhism and the vow of Founder Niwano that fill the Great Sacred Hall, we are afforded a good opportunity to feel gratitude for everyday life and to renew our vows.

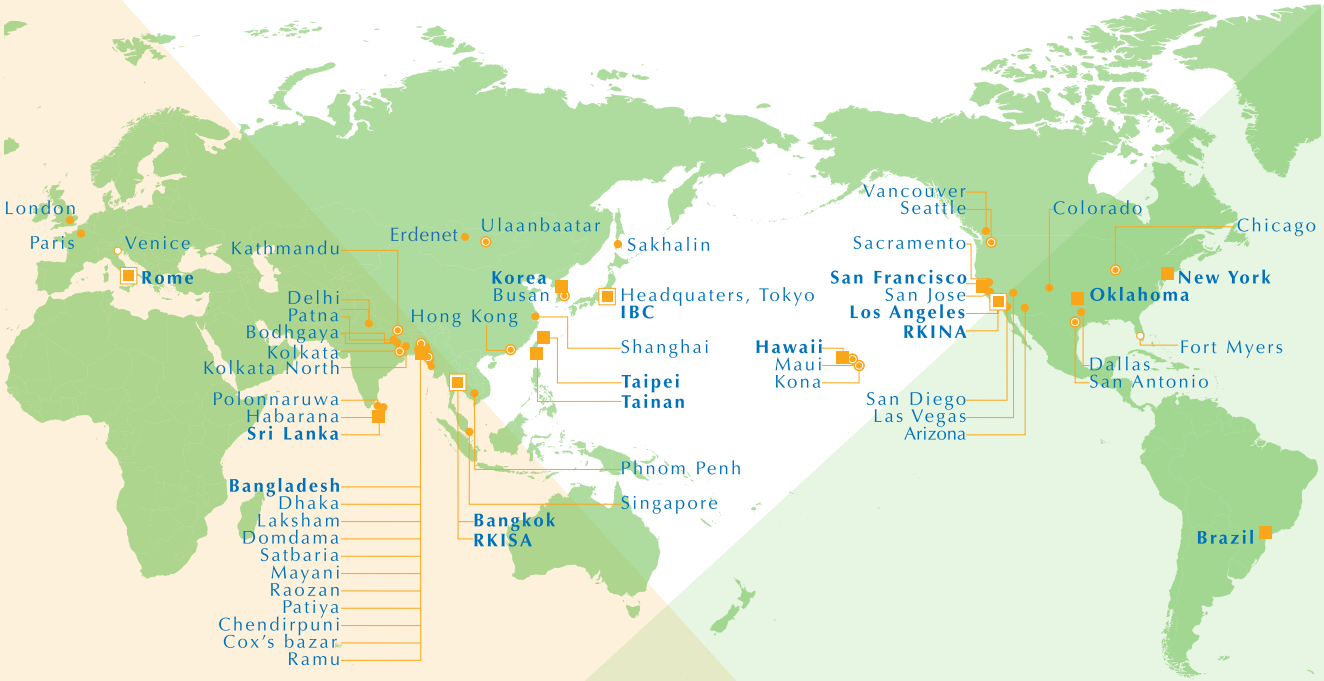
Visits to Dharma Centers

In our daily lives, our minds are occupied with various concerns. To gain an insight into our hearts and minds as well as learn the teachings, we should go to the places where members of the Sangha gather, that is, the religious training halls of Dharma centers and branches of Rissho Kosei-kai.

Every month, the first (first-day visit of the month) and the 15th (the memorial day for Shakyamuni Buddha) are Uposatha Days. On these days, or other occasions such as Sunday Services, together with our fellow Sangha members, we look back on our daily practice and share our gratitude, joy, and self-reflections, and renew our vows to disseminate the Dharma.

During the World Sangha Assembly 2016, about 1,250 members from 16 countries participate in a pilgrimage to the headquarters.

Rissho Kosei-kai International Branches



Publishing in Multiple Languages

Rissho Kosei-kai publishes the monthly online newsletter, *Living the Lotus,* in more than ten languages for its members around the world. *Living the Lotus* features Dharma talks by the Founder and the President, members' Dharma experiences, and articles, with some variation according to the language edition.

Information about the teachings and activities of Rissho Kosei-kai is available on our English website <www.rk-world.org>.

Rissho Kosei-kai also publishes *The Threefold Lotus Sutra* and *Kyoten: Sutra Readings* (excerpts from the Threefold Lotus Sutra) in multiple languages, as well as books by the Founder, the President, and the President-designate in English and other languages, including *Buddhism for Today, Lifetime Beginner,* and *Shakyamuni Buddha,* by the Founder; *Cultivating the Buddhist Heart, The Inward Path,* and *My Father, My Teacher,* by the President; and *The Buddha in Everyone's Heart,* by the President-designate. Other publications, mainly in English, include works on Buddhism by noted Japanese scholars and experts.

Dharma World is Rissho Kosei-kai's English-language magazine, published semiannually both in print and online, that focuses on interreligious dialogue for world peace and the presentation of Buddhism as a living faith. It features essays by religious leaders and religious scholars around the world that address contemporary social issues from religious points of view. The magazine also serializes the Founder's commentary on the Threefold Lotus Sutra.

For further information about Rissho Kosei-kai's publications, please ask a leader at your local Dharma center.

Rissho Kosei-kai's periodicals in multiple languages.

Books by the Founder, the President, and the President-designate in multiple languages.

Local and Global Activities for Peace

Toward a World Where All Living Beings Are Respected

In Buddhism there is a phrase, "the Sangha in four directions," which means that all people living in the world, from east and west, north to south, are one Sangha (fellowship) and that all people are siblings who share the same life.

We are not able to live alone. We live a life supported by family and friends, interconnected with a variety of people in a network that extends beyond local communities and countries. We are truly sustained by unimaginable blessings.

In light of this fact, can we really enjoy happiness when it is only ourselves who are liberated from sufferings? There are many problems in the world, such as religious conflict, ethnic divisiveness, wars, poverty, and environmental degradation.

Kenji Miyazawa (1896–1933), a Japanese writer of children's stories and poems who was devoted to the Lotus Sutra, wrote: "Until the whole world becomes happy, individual happiness cannot exist." In keeping with the basic spirit of Buddhism as described by his words, we engage in various social and peace initiatives, praying for the happiness of all people in the world. Social engagement at Rissho Kosei-kai is founded on work for peace, through interreligious dialogue and cooperation, and contributions to public welfare by means of the Donate-a-Meal Movement.

A peaceful world is one in which there is harmony among people, and between humanity and nature. To achieve such a world, we must reflect upon our hearts and minds through our own activities and, at the same time, work together with many others in our own community and throughout the world. At Rissho Kosei-kai, our goal is to achieve a world where the sanctity of all living beings' lives is revered.

Members discuss interreligious cooperation with youth of various faiths at a Religions for Peace workshop.

Members collect donations to support activities of UNICEF around the world.

Members and local villagers who planted trees together in a deforested area in Ethiopia.

Members and their children prepare Dream Bags—handmade cloth bags of gifts containing toys and stationery.

Lebanese children open Dream Bags from members in Japan.

Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation

Founder Niwano was devoted to interreligious dialogue and cooperation with the conviction that all religions have the same root or foundation, and that at the foundation of every religion is a common, universal truth. Following in his footsteps, we diligently promote interreligious dialogue and cooperation while hoping to work together hand-in-hand with people of the world to achieve global peace.

One of our main activities is our partnership with Religions for Peace, of which Rissho Kosei-kai is a founding member. In 1970, when the organization was called the World Conference on Religion and Peace, it held its first World Assembly in Kyoto, with about 300 religious leaders gathering to discuss the three main issues of disarmament, development, and human rights. In 2019, the tenth World Assembly was held in Lindau, Germany, and some 900 religious leaders and other people of faith attended from 125 countries.

In addition, Rissho Kosei-kai is expanding the circle of religious dialogue and cooperation by working together with the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace (ACRP), the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF), the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations, and Shinshuren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan). Each Dharma center sets up meetings with local religious leaders and promotes interaction with them.

The tenth World Assembly of Religions for Peace was held in Lindau, Germany, in 2019.

Members participate in a workshop for religious youth during the tenth World Assembly of Religions for Peace.

Donate-a-Meal Movement

Rissho Kosei-kai has promoted the Donate-a-Meal Movement since 1975.

In the spirit of compassion, prayer, and generosity, on several days a month, members forgo one meal or their favorite food and beverage and donate the amount it would have cost to purchase them. Their donations have been used to support people who face economic difficulties, starvation, conflicts, or natural disasters. Donations are also used to develop human resources for peace that are generous and respect the humanity of others. The donation from members in Japan are pooled in Rissho Kosei-kai's Donate-a-Meal Fund for Peace and used for various projects around the world.

The sufferings of others are our own suffering; the joys of others are our own joy. The Donate-a-Meal Movement is a practice of compassion that awakens us to the reality that we all share one immense life of the universe.

Please join us and extend this circle of compassion to your family and friends.

The Donate-a-Meal Fund for Peace supports health care in Mongolia.

The Donate-a-Meal Fund for Peace primarily supports:

Elimination of Poverty and Starvation

Bhutan: school meal programs at schools in areas where children suffer from malnutrition

Laos: land and forest conservation and support for sustainable agriculture

Education and Human Resources Development

Japan: project to support the development of Japanese NGOs

Afghanistan and other countries: Dream Bags for children

Urgent Assistance and Reconstruction Support

Iraq: school environmental improvement and hygiene promotion project

Jordan: support for Syrian refugees

President Nichiko Niwano

Rev. Nichiko Niwano, the eldest son of Founder Nikkyo Niwano, was born on March 20, 1938. After graduating from Rissho University in 1968, where he acquired a master's degree in Buddhist studies, he entered Rissho Kosei-kai. During his career, he held the offices of head of the Dissemination Department and president of Gakurin, Rissho Kosei-kai's seminary. Rev. Niwano succeeded to the presidency of Rissho Kosei-kai on November 15, 1991.

President Niwano regularly speaks about the Buddha's wish for us to devote ourselves to the happiness of others and encourages us to enrich our inner spirituality by dedicating ourselves to this endeavor.

He is also an honorary president of Religions for Peace (RfP), a co-president of the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace (ACRP), and the honorary president of the Niwano Peace Foundation. He has been actively involved in promoting interreligious cooperation through his work with these organizations.

Rev. Niwano is the author of several works in English, including *Cultivating the Buddhist Heart, Modern Meditations, The Inward Path, and My Father, My Teacher.*

"We take refuge in the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, our focus of devotion, but we do not pray to the Buddha for our personal wishes to be granted. The objective of our religious practice is to open our eyes to the Dharma that Shakyamuni revealed to us and to communicate it with others. We also strive to awaken to the preciousness of life, to emulate the Buddha by sharing in the suffering of others with compassion and caring, and thereby give deeper meaning to our own lives."

Rev. Nichiko Niwano,
President of Rissho Kosei-kai

President-designate Kosho Niwano

In her current role as president-designate of the organization, she is dedicated to studying the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and sharing this knowledge at Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma centers both in Japan and overseas. She also shares this wisdom with Japanese and international members who come to Rissho Kosei-kai's headquarters in Tokyo for practice and special events.

Additionally, Rev. Kosho Niwano plays an active role in promoting interreligious cooperation and regularly participates in interfaith congresses, aiming to build bridges between different faiths and foster greater understanding and respect among people of all beliefs. She serves as a co-moderator and executive committee member of Religions for Peace (RfP) International and is a member of the Board of Directors of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID).

She is also the author of *The Buddha in Everyone's Heart: Seeking the World of the Lotus Sutra.*

"We are all walking on the path toward happiness. What is important to attain happiness is to take the initiative and make the effort to discover the Buddha hidden within the painful aspects of present reality. By making the effort to discover the marvelous treasure we have been granted—that is, our buddha nature—we are able to create for ourselves a calm, happy life that enriches our hearts and minds."

Rev. Kosho Niwano
President-designate of Rissho Kosei-kai

Founder Nikkyo Niwano

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano was born on November 15, 1906, in Niigata Prefecture, in central Japan. He went to Tokyo at the age of sixteen. After exploring various religious practices, he was introduced to the Lotus Sutra by Sukenobu Arai, who became his mentor.

On March 5, 1938, together with Cofounder Myokyo Naganuma and some thirty other people, Rev. Niwano founded Rissho Kosei-kai with the aspiration to liberate all people through the teaching of the Lotus Sutra and make the world a better place. For the next six decades, Rev. Niwano shared the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, which lead people to a deeply fulfilling and altruistic way of life, in ways that anyone could understand.

His dream of world peace inspired him to pave the way for interreligious cooperation through which the world's various religions could work together toward achieving peace. In 1979 he was awarded the prestigious Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. Guided by his unwavering belief in the spirit of the One Vehicle as embodied in the Lotus Sutra, Rev. Niwano devoted his entire life to the cause of achieving global peace and the liberation of all humankind. Rev. Niwano passed away on October 4, 1999, at the age of ninety-two.

Rev. Niwano is also the author of several books on the Lotus Sutra and Buddhism, including *Buddhism for Today*, *Shakyamuni Buddha*, *Buddhism for Everyday Life*, and *Invisible Eyelashes*.

"I founded Rissho Kosei-kai with a deep yearning to liberate all people from suffering and make the world a better place. I firmly believed that the most effective way to achieve these goals was spreading the true spirit of Buddhism that permeates in the Lotus Sutra."

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano,
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai

Cofounder Myoko Naganuma

Rev. Myoko Naganuma was born on December 25, 1889, in Saitama Prefecture, just north of Tokyo. From a young age, she faced numerous challenges and losses, including the untimely death of her mother, living in poverty, and the heartbreaking loss of her daughter to illness. Later in life, she endured even more difficulties as her marriage ended and she suffered from illness for many years.

In the latter half of her life, Rev. Naganuma's encounter with the Lotus Sutra, under the guidance of Founder Nikkyo Niwano, enabled her to embrace all the hardships she had endured with gratitude. Her singular focus was to bring happiness to others, and she lived a devoted religious life. As Vice President of Rissho Kosei-kai, she worked alongside Rev. Niwano to lay the foundation of the organization.

After the founding of Rissho Kosei-kai, she devoted herself to practicing the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and becoming a witness to its transformative power. Driven by her deep compassion for others, she dedicated her life to teaching and nurturing members of the organization. Her boundless kindness earned her the admiration of many, who affectionately regarded her as a compassionate spiritual mother.

Rev. Naganuma passed away on September 10, 1957, at the age of sixty-seven.

"President [Founder] Nikkyo Niwano often tells us that practicing our faith does not guarantee happiness, but rather it helps us discover where true happiness lies. I believe that in order to truly embrace the way of faith, we must strive to cultivate a sense of happiness within our hearts and minds."

Rev. Myoko Naganuma
Cofounder of Rissho Kosei-kai

www.rk-world.org

Rissho Kosei-kai has an English-language website <www.rk-world.org>, where we provide an overview of our organization. We welcome access to our website from the people of the world. We hope to share the teaching of the Buddha with people all over the world, and talk and cooperate with them to achieve world peace.

Our website will keep growing and developing. Kindly email us at <info@rk-world.org> with any questions, comments, or requests.

Dharma Center

Name

Date of Membership

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