



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 groups in the world. You are unique among the seven billion people on earth, you are a special friend of the Buddha, and we are very glad to have met you.

People are born in different countries and belong to various ethnic groups, each with their own languages, cultures and traditions. However, we share a common humanity, and live on the same planet at the same time.

But what makes us human? According to Mahayana Buddhism, it is our buddha-nature, in other words, the capacity to nurture the Buddha's four infinite virtues in our own hearts: kindness, compassion, joy at others' happiness, and equanimity. The Lotus Sutra teaches that all people can walk the path toward the attainment of buddhahood by manifesting their buddha-nature.

Rissho Kosei-kai helps you learn how to live life to become a buddha. In the hope that you will find true happiness, the Eternal 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 path to buddhahood together.



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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 Dharma, or Truth, to which he became enlightened after six years of deep meditation and ascetic practices.

After his death, his 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 of Mahayana Buddhism came to Japan in 538 CE, and since that time distinguished priests have studied and practiced the Buddha's

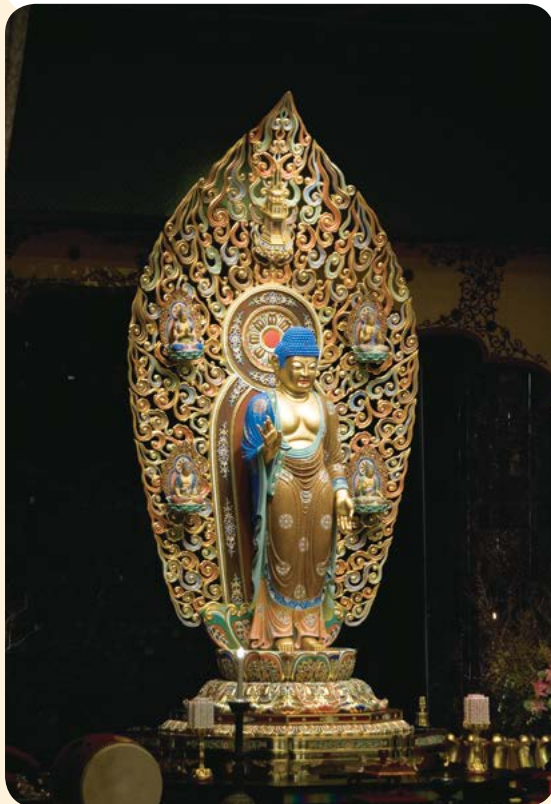
teachings according to many sutras, including the Lotus Sutra.

Based on the long history and traditions of Buddhism, Rissho Kosei-kai was born in the world that we live in today, with the aspiration to liberate all people from suffering and make a better world.

Rissho Kosei-kai was founded in Tokyo, Japan, on March 5, 1938, by Founder Nikkyo Niwano and Co-founder Myoko Naganuma. "Rissho" means establishing the teaching of the true Dharma in our hearts and minds; "Kosei" means aspiring to perfect oneself through interaction with many people, learning together, and encouraging each other; and "kai" means "society" or "organization." Our main scripture is the Threefold Lotus Sutra: the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, and the Sutra of Meditation on the Practice of Bodhisattva Universal Wisdom.

Our Gohonzon, or focus of devotion, is the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni—Great Benevolent Teacher, World-honored One. Our principal training center is the Great Sacred Hall located in Sugunami Ward, Tokyo, and the statue of our Gohonzon is enshrined there. We have Dharma Centers and branches in many parts of Japan and throughout the world.

Rissho Kosei-kai is a global Buddhist movement of people who hope to manifest the Buddha's teachings in our own lives, applying them in our homes, workplaces, and local communities, thereby making a more peaceful world. Each and every one of us cultivates our hearts and minds through close relationships with our family, coworkers, friends, and our neighbors, and by doing so we become people who contribute something to society.



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.

The Message of Buddhism

The Three Treasures

There are three treasures in which all Buddhists take refuge or wholeheartedly devote themselves to: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Shakyamuni, or the historical Buddha, taught this to his disciples soon after beginning to share his message.

The Buddha, or more accurately the Eternal Buddha, is Life as the source of all things, that is, the great Life through which all living beings come into existence and live. 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 you take sincere refuge in the Buddha, you start to see the true value inherent in all phenomena. Then you 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 devoid of self"); and third, all things are in a state of great harmony ("nirvana is quiescence"). 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 active 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 many people's happiness and to world peace.

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



President Niwano's Message

Buddhism Is a Teaching of Self-Awakening

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:

“Life 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 human 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.

“Each and every one of us

‘cultivating the fields of 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.”

“I think we truly become liberated when we give thanks for whatever weather, be it sunny, rainy, or windy. Of course it’s not an easy task, but to become people who willingly accept anything that superficially seems to be disadvantageous or bad is to truly cultivate the Buddhist heart.”

President Niwano always emphasizes that Buddhism is a teaching of self-awakening.



President Nichiko Niwano

Let Us Create Warmhearted Homes

Three Practices

What does your home mean to you? Some people may answer, "The place where I can recover from a hard day's work." Some may say, "Back at home, my family reassures me with smiles." It's the kind of place where you want to be.

In Rissho Kosei-kai, President Niwano guides us by saying, "Let us create warmhearted homes," and we members try to build harmony in our families. Our homes are

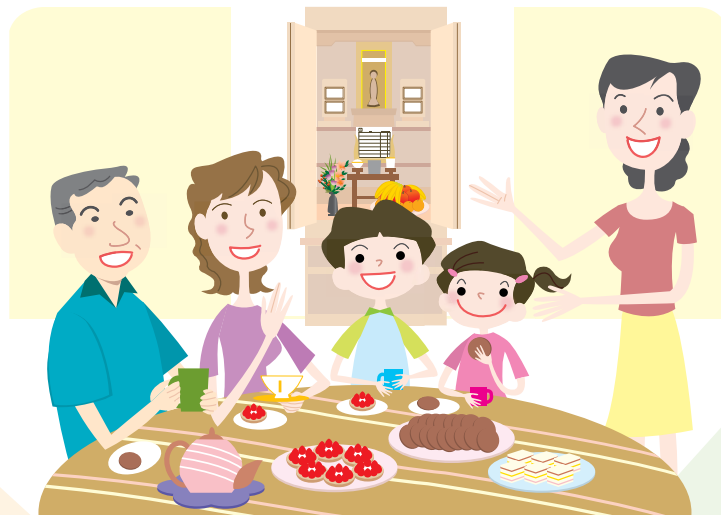


where we build the foundation of our character. Through day-to-day interaction and parents' attitudes at home, children, in particular, learn how important it is to venerate the Buddha, and love other people.

First of all, as family members we keep in mind what we call the Three Practices. First, we exchange morning greetings. Second, we respond clearly and positively when someone calls us. Third, we put things in appropriate places; and we push back our chairs when we stand up and arrange our footwear together neatly.

As Buddhists, nothing is more important than how we build our lives with a central focus on our Buddhist home altar where the Gohonzon is enshrined. Each one of us sits in front of the sacred altar and expresses gratitude to the Buddha by placing our palms together in reverence and performing sutra

recitation. Whatever type of family you belong to, whether an extended or a nuclear family, or even if you live alone, over time these practices result in the creation of a warmhearted home.



The Buddhist Home Altar

The Spiritual Support for Our Family Members' Hearts and Minds

We enshrine and pay homage to a Buddha statue on our Buddhist home altar and we revere this place as the most sacred part of our home. Here are the basic rules for making a dignified home altar: The Gohonzon, or 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 gong are also placed in front of the altar. In addition, we offer sweets, vegetables, and fruits on memorial days.

Furthermore, reciting the Lotus Sutra at such a home altar is one of the basic practices of Rissho Koseikai members.

In keeping with the saying "Faith arises from a dignified atmosphere," our devotion naturally deepens

when we face a Buddhist home altar that has been ceremoniously arranged.

The home altar is the spiritual support for our family members' hearts and minds. In Rissho Koseikai 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 Gohonzon, Dharma Titles, Posthumous Name for All One's Ancestors, and Land Purification Inscription.



A properly arranged Buddhist altar

The Gohonzon

Making the Buddha's Wish Our Own

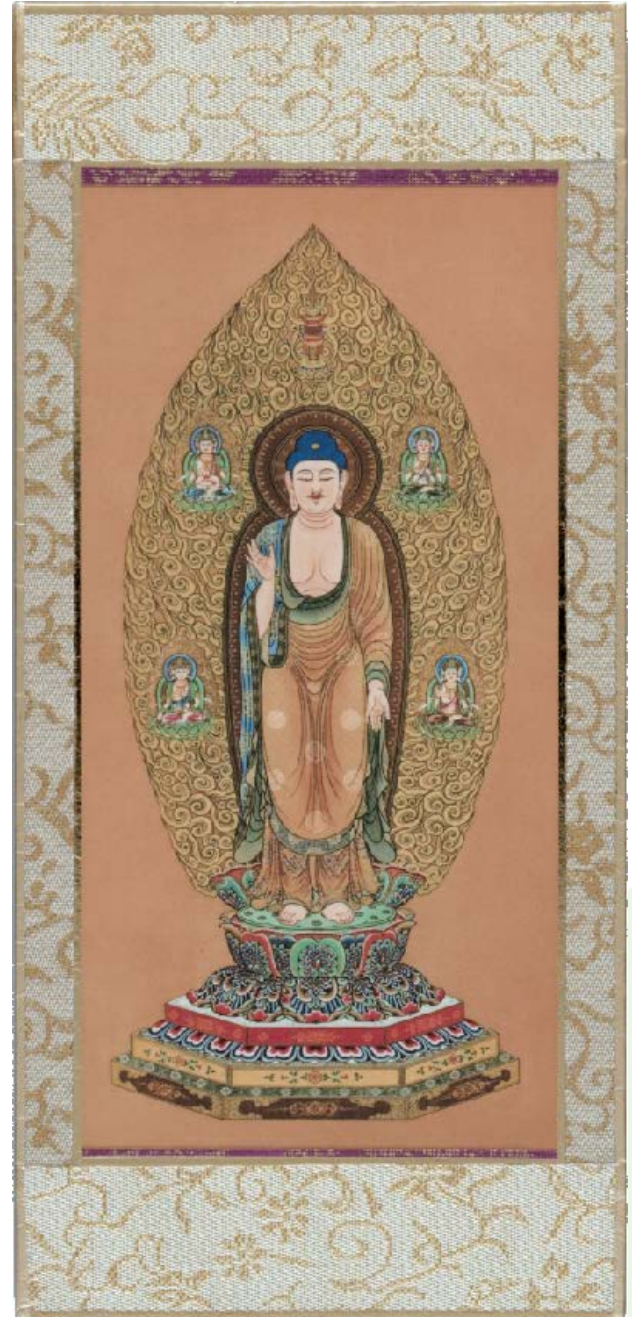
It is the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni—Great Benevolent Teacher, World-honored One whom we members revere and venerate as the Gohonzon, or focus of devotion, of Rissho Kosei-kai.

The Gohonzon is the integrated figure of the human Shakyamuni Buddha, who appeared on earth and taught the Dharma approximately twenty-five hundred years ago, and the Eternal Buddha, described in chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra: “The Eternal Life of the Tathagata.”

The Eternal Buddha is the fundamental power which 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 humbly 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 rather an effort to understand the Buddha's teaching and continually live our lives in accordance with the Buddha's wisdom.

Taking refuge in the Gohonzon 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's path.



The Gohonzon

Dharma Titles

Our Teachers Who Taught Us the Buddha’s Teachings

Dharma Titles (*Gohogo*) are the honorific titles that the President bestowed upon the Founder and Cofounder in place of posthumous names when the Founder passed away on October 4, 1999.

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 have the courage to live by the spirit of the One Vehicle, which means that all people, sustained by the great Life of the universe, walk the way to 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 Titles signifies and makes clear that we are their direct disciples.”

Therefore, through the Dharma Titles, we venerate 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 Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai

Aiming for the World of the One Buddha-Vehicle

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano, the founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, was born on November 15, 1906, in the village of Suganuma in Niigata Prefecture, in central Japan. He went to Tokyo at the age of 16. After experiencing several types of folk religion, he was introduced to the Lotus Sutra by his mentor, Mr. Sukenobu Arai.

On March 5, 1938, together with the Cofounder and some thirty other people, Rev. Nikkyo Niwano founded Rissho Kosei-kai with the wish to liberate all people through the teaching of the Lotus Sutra and change the world for the better. From then on, for over sixty years, the Founder communicated the teachings in a clear way that led people to an altruistic way of life.

Moreover, aspiring for world peace, he paved the way for interreligious cooperation so that different religions could join together

in dialogue. He also advocated the Brighter Society Movement and invited both secular and religious groups to join it in order to make communities more harmonious. He truly embodied the teaching of the Lotus Sutra throughout his life.

Founder Nikkyo Niwano passed away on October 4, 1999, at the age of 92. His relics are preserved inside the Precious Stupa of the One Vehicle, installed at the headquarters. The stupa is a place where the memory of the Founder continues to inspire us to practice the Dharma.



"I founded Rissho Kosei-kai out of my earnest desire to truly liberate people from suffering and change the world for the better. Moreover, I was convinced that in order to change the world for the better and to truly liberate people from suffering, there was no other way than to spread the true spirit of Buddhism that is taught in the Lotus Sutra."

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano,
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai

The Cofounder of Rissho Kosei-kai

Living the Practice of Compassion as a Witness to the Dharma

Cofounder Myoko Naganuma was born on December 25, 1889, in the village of Shidami in Saitama Prefecture, just north of Tokyo. She lost her mother at an early age, lived in poverty, and her daughter died from sickness. She was divorced from her husband, and endured many years of severe illness.

However, thanks to the Founder's guidance and her encounter with the Lotus Sutra, in the latter half of her life Cofounder Naganuma was able to accept all the hardships she had experienced with gratitude. She single-mindedly wished for people's happiness and wholeheartedly lived a religious life. Together with the Founder, as Vice President she laid the foundation of Rissho Kosei-kai.

From the time that Rissho Kosei-kai was founded, she practiced the

teaching of the Lotus Sutra and dedicated herself as a witness to the Lotus Sutra under the guidance of the Founder. Out of compassion she also devoted her whole life to teaching and developing members. She was admired by many members as a compassionate spiritual mother. The Cofounder passed away on September 10, 1957, at the age of 67.



"The President [now the Founder] often says that it is not that we become happy if we practice our faith. It is that we realize where happiness is by practicing our faith. I believe that the way of faith is to endeavor to feel happiness in our hearts and minds."

Rev. Myoko Naganuma
Cofounder of Rissho Kosei-kai

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

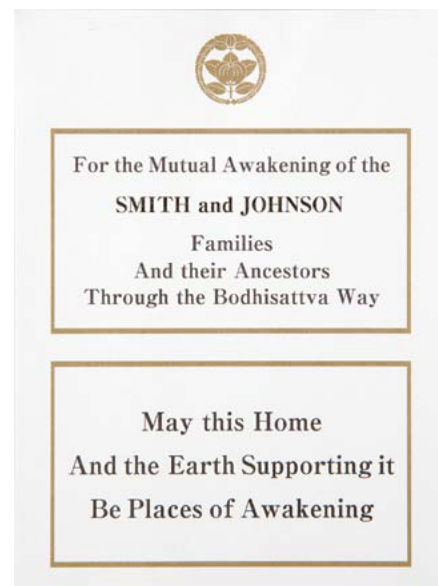
Goals of Our Faith and How We Achieve It

Members enshrine the Posthumous Name for All One's Ancestors (*Sokaimyo*). This is an inscription bearing the posthumous name of our own paternal and maternal ancestors, or in the case of a married couple, 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: "Through practicing the teachings of the Buddha and the Founder by both the husband's (paternal) and wife's (maternal) family, and especially through the practice of the bodhisattva way, the merits of the family's practice will be transferred to their ancestors and lead to their awakening as well as the awakening of the members of both families."

Members put their palms together every day before the Posthumous Name for All One's Ancestors, which symbolizes all the meanings stated above, and 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 (*Takuchi Innen Kaimyo*) 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.



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.

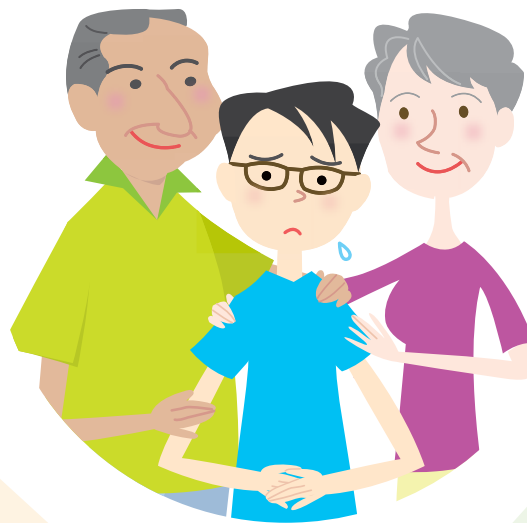


Do experiences of hardship make us self-centered and obsessed with earthly desires? Or do they make us warmhearted people who can understand others' difficulties? Of course, we would all like to take both our sufferings and joyful experiences as nourishment for our hearts and minds and become warm people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

To become such people, we members of Rissho Kosei-kai adhere to 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. Learning and understanding the Dharma.

In Buddhism, the ultimate purpose of educating 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 preached 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 enables us to live. 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 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 are grateful for the events of the day. More importantly, however, through sutra recitation we deepen our faith in the Buddha and 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.

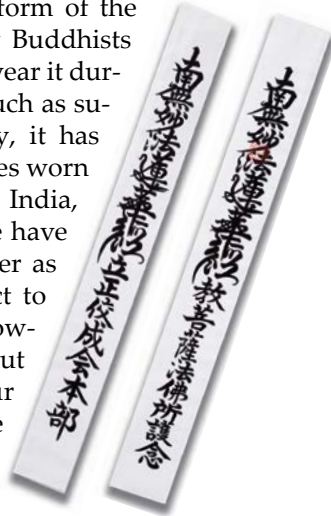
The 108 beads represent the many kinds of delusions or defilements in our hearts and minds. Prayer beads remind us that we must convert those continually arising delusions into the aspiration to buddhahood for others' happiness. By carrying our prayer beads with us, we preserve a sense of being a Buddhist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

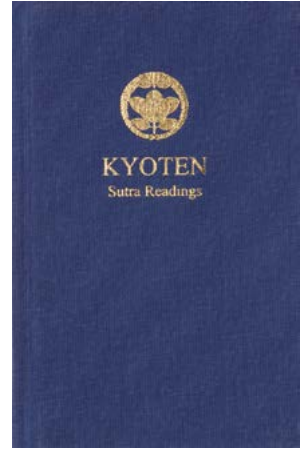


Left: The Japanese inscription on the front of the sash means "the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma; the headquarters of Rissho Kosei-kai."

Right: The Japanese inscription on the back of the sash means "the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma; a teaching that instructs bodhisattvas and that which 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 Wonderful Dharma, and the Sutra of Meditation on the Practice of Bodhisattva Universal Wisdom. The Threefold Lotus Sutra, the main scripture of Rissho Kosei-kai, teaches us the workings of absolute Truth, or the Dharma of the universe, and the way things really are.



Kyoten: Sutra Readings

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 Wonderful Dharma, the main sutra, which contains 28 chapters;
3. The Sutra of Meditation on the Practice of Bodhisattva Universal Wisdom, also called the "closing sutra," in 1 chapter.

The Lotus Sutra teaches how absolute Truth, or the Dharma of the universe, 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 rengo-kyo* means "the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful 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 (*michibiki*), and enhancing their connection with the Dharma (*tedori*), 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 and finding 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 and practice them to achieve true happiness without involving others. Through connecting people with the Dharma and enhancing their connection with the Dharma, we ourselves change for the better thanks to our interactions with other people.

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 the occasion when members gather together to learn a point of view or an attitude based on the Buddha's teachings, to empathize with each other, and to help one another to improve and develop.

It is said that *hoza* is the life and soul of Rissho Kosei-kai and it is indeed one of the important basic practices of our faith. In *hoza*, members unite their hearts into one, regardless of their social status or whatever differences they have, and share their innermost thoughts, from worries and suffering to joys and happiness, and feel 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, in *hoza* a conversation is held between a leader, called the *hoza* facilitator, and a person who is suffering from worries. 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 guidelines for their lives, and acquire the courage to live.

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



Members participate in hoza.

Practice of Learning and Understanding the Dharma

Self-Reflection in Light of the Teaching

The third element of the basic practices of our faith is the practice of learning and understanding the Dharma (*shugaku* of 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 learn and understand the Buddha's teachings correctly means that we comprehend the Buddha's wishes, always preserve a sense of putting our hands together in reverence, and maintain a compassionate heart. These practices are central to Buddhists.

Also, 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 an important part of the practice of learning and understanding the Dharma.

However, even if we try to always preserve a sense of putting our palms together in 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.



Right and left: Members participate in a seminar at the headquarters.



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 Gohonzon 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 cluttered up 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

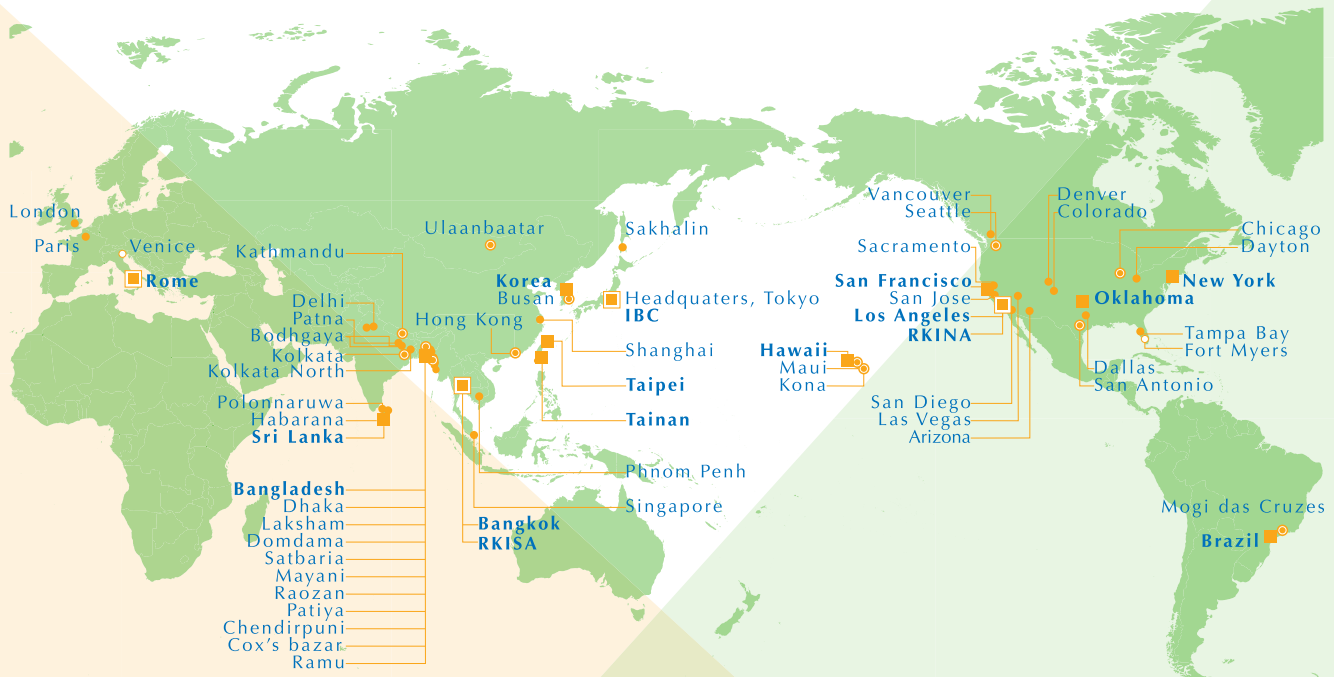


During the World Sangha Assembly 2016, about 1250 members from sixteen countries participate in a pilgrimage to the headquarters.

Buddha) are Uposatha Days. On these days, together with our fellow Sangha members we look back on our daily practice and share

our gratitude, emotions, and self-reflections, and renew our vows to disseminate the Dharma.

Rissho Kosei-kai International Branches



Practice of Generosity

“Think of Others First” Is the Way to the Happiness of Oneself and Others

The practice of generosity, also called charity or 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 donation, or generosity, as one of the virtues of the bodhisattva who practices and prays for others’ happiness. There are three types of generosity: material generosity, physical generosity, and generosity with the Dharma.

Material generosity means donating material goods or money to others, or donating money as an offering to the Buddha.

Physical generosity 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



Members do volunteer work.

that everyone can practice anytime, anywhere.

Generosity with 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 generosity with 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 “thinking of 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.

Publishing in English and Other Languages

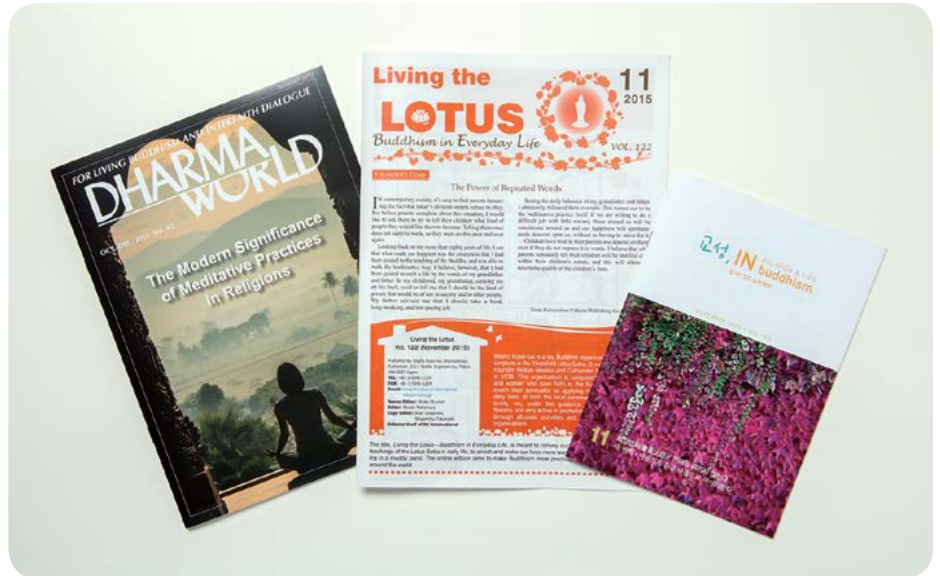
Rissho Kosei-kai publishes the on-line newsletter, *Living the Lotus*, in more than ten languages every month for members all over the world. The newsletter contains the Founder's essay, the President's Dharma talk, members' Dharma experiences, and other articles, although there may be some differences depending on the language.

Our organization's information is available at our English website and you can read news articles on our activities and information about our English publications. For access to the website, see back cover.

We publish English translations of The Threefold Lotus Sutra and a prayer book of excerpts from the sutra, as well as from Japanese books by the Founder, President, President-designate, and other authors. Translations include *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. We also publish many other English translations such as works on Buddhism by Japanese scholars. Translations in other languages are also available.

Our English periodical, *Dharma World*, is edited and published with a focus on both the application of the Buddha's teachings in our daily life and the implementation of world peace through interreligious dialogue. The magazine features a variety of topics on Buddhism from different angles and also serializes the Founder's Lotus Sutra commentary.

For further information about our publications, please ask leaders at your local branch or Dharma center.



Rissho Kosei-kai periodicals and magazines



Rissho Kosei-kai publications in multiple languages

Activities for Peace and Society

Toward a World of Respect for All Living Beings

In Buddhism there is the term “The Sangha in four directions.” It means that all people living in the whole 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 writer of children’s stories and poems who was devoted to the Lotus Sutra, wrote: “Until the whole world achieves happiness, there can be no individual happiness.” 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 this world. Social engagement 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 world in which there is harmony among people, and between humanity and nature, is a peaceful world. To create it, 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. Our goal is to build a world that respects the lives of all living beings.



Members collect donations for UNICEF to support children around the world.



Youth of various faiths discuss interreligious cooperation.



Japanese members and Ethiopian villagers who planted trees together in a deforested area.



Lebanese children open Dream Bags from Japanese children.



The children of Japanese members prepare Dream Bags—handmade cloth bags of gifts, such as toys and school supplies.

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. Succeeding his aspirations, we diligently promote interreligious dialogue and cooperation, while hoping to work together hand in hand with people of the world to create global peace.

One of our main activities is partnership with Religions for Peace. In 1970, when it was called the World Conference on Religion and Peace, its first world assembly was held in Kyoto, and about 300 religious leaders gathered. In 2013, the ninth

world assembly was held in Vienna, and more than six hundred religious leaders and other people of faith attended from about a hundred countries and regions.

In addition, we expand 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 Shins-huren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan). Each Dharma center sets up meetings with local religious leaders and promote interaction with them.



The Ninth World Assembly of Religions for Peace (WCRP IX) was held in Vienna in 2013.



WCRP IX participants shake hands at the opening ceremony.

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 cost of 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 in the world.

The sufferings of others are our

own suffering; the joys of others are also 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.



Above and below: 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 program at schools in areas where children suffer from poor nutrition

Laos: land and forest conservation and support for sustainable agriculture

Education and Development of Human Resources

Japan: domestic project to support displaced persons

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

Rissho Kosei-kai has an English-language website where we provide an overview of our organization. We hope to share Buddhism with people all over the world, to talk and cooperate with them to achieve world peace. We share our organization's hope with the people of the world and connect with them through this site.

Our website will keep growing and developing. Kindly email us to let us know if you have any questions, comments or requests: info@rk-world.org

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Rissho Kosei-kai website. At the top, there is a search bar and a language selector for Japanese. The main navigation menu on the left includes links for Home, The Buddha, Teachings, Who We Are, Publications, Peace Activities, Int'l Dharma Centers, and Contact Us. The central banner features a group photo of members and a quote: "Our true essence is our buddha-nature, which is the reality of our innermost being. from Cultivating the Buddhist Heart". Below this, there are sections for "RK NEWS" with headlines such as "HEADQUARTERS: Rissho Kosei-kai Donates 46 Million to Help Fukushima Disaster Victims" and "INTERFAITH: Shinshonen Holds Symposium on Japan's Constitution and Religious Freedom". A prominent orange banner reads "In Pursuit of Safeguarding All Lives on Earth — grave concerns about the security related bills —" with a "LEARN MORE HERE" button. Another similar banner is below it. A "FEATURED VIDEO" section highlights a video by Dr. Alyn Ware. The footer contains the logo "The Gift of Life The Power to Live" and copyright text: "2008-2015 Copyright by Rissho Kosei-kai. All rights reserved. Site Map | Copyright | Links | Japanese Website Website design by OneWorks".

Dharma Center _____

Name _____

Date of Membership _____

Dharma Parent _____

My Vow _____

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