

# Sangha in Motion

*U.S. Dharma Centers - Staying Connected*



## AUTUMN 2017

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## AUTUMN

the season that teaches us that  
*Change can be Beautiful*

With the change in seasons comes an opportunity for us to reflect on the closing of the year and think about our practice up to now. As we review and learn from our experiences studying and practicing the Teachings, we also prepare to make a plan for our practice in the New Year.

This is a time of harvest in the world. What has your practice produced? It is time to gather together and celebrate. There is natural beauty all around us and with the changes in weather there is a crisp feeling in the air... so much to be grateful for.

Thank you for being on this journey with me. Let's enjoy the remainder of the year and look forward to a great 2018.



Gassho,  
Rev. Kris Ladusau



## RK Buddhist Church of Hawaii



### Waterfront Clean Up and Autumn Higan Ceremony

Twenty-nine people helped clean up Kakaako Waterfront Park where lots of rubbish had been scattered throughout the park, making it unwelcome for park visitors. Many of Hawaii's poorest residents camp out at this park that was never designed to house permanent residents. Together with members of other Buddhist churches we spent a morning in September to clean the park in the name of The Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace. We roamed the 35 acres of park fronting the ocean to pick up trash and rake the area making it easier for the unfortunate people who have made this park their home. We tried to lighten the burden for our park keepers to maintain the facilities. Hopefully, this will make the park more welcoming to residents of the area and those that call it home.

The young ladies of the Dharma Center presented flowers and candles for the Autumn Higan Ceremony. The procession was followed by the service and lighting of incense in honor of our ancestors. After the service, the youth group held matoi practice in preparation for the upcoming parade.

Contributed by Bradley Tom, Rissho Kosei-kai of Hawaii



# Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Los Angeles

## Yard Sale, Niwanos Visit and S'mores

Our Los Angeles annual yard sale was held October 8th in support of the youth group's fundraising efforts. L.A. members came together and converted our parking lot to a lively flea market. Member-donated items were sold, and with the help of the locals coming out to support, our yard sale was a big success!



October ended with a highly anticipated week-long visit from special guests Reverend Hiroshi Niwano and his wife from Japan. On October 29th, we held the ceremony for Founder Nikkyo Niwano's 111th birthday and were delighted to hear a testimonial from Andy Buyo and Guidance from Rev. Niwano. With Halloween being around that time, we held a Halloween-themed welcome party for Rev. Niwano. Members dressed up in costumes, participated in skits, and performed songs for entertainment.



Following the Niwanos return to Japan, on November 7th and 8th, Los Angeles members Doris Hasegawa, Mona Grimmitt, and Bobby Donovan conducted enshrinement ceremonies at their respective home altars after their individual Focuses of Devotion.



RKLA's annual camping trip was held in the nearby San Gabriel Mountains, where members pitched tents and stayed the night in the woods. After a challenging six-mile hike, they returned to camp to stargaze, make s'mores and chat around the campfire. The campers had a chance to get to know one another better and deepen their bonds as members of the sangha.



Contributed by Richard Kano  
Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Los Angeles

## Rissho Kosei-kai of New York



### Celebrating Center's 35th Anniversary

On October 15th Rissho Kosei Kai of New York had a wonderful thirty-fifth anniversary celebration in picturesque Stony Point, New York. Celebrating the Center's thirty-fifth year since its establishment, Reverend Etsuko Fujita took New York's regional members, which includes Chicago, Boston and Ft. Myers, for an overnight meeting on a stunning autumn day and night. In total, 45 members attended, including many who flew in especially for the occasion. The members went to the facility by rented bus. Each and every member came bearing warm smiles and open hearts in order to participate in the historic celebration. They were not disappointed.

The gathering centered on a program of unity whereby members participated in celebrating the birth of the dynamic New York Chapter and it's continuing prosperity and growth in the future. The program began with organizing words in front of a stunning Buddhist altar and Rissho Kosei Kai's theme song, which many members had been practicing for weeks prior to the event. Various members then brought in candles during a solemn candle-offering processional, which stirred many observers to tears.

A highlight was when the dynamic Ft. Myers and Orlando centers were piped in remotely via the Internet, so that they could participate in the key portions of the program. There was also a truly moving member's

## Rissho Kosei-kai of New York (cont'd)

experience shared. Ms. Eiko Naito beautifully and elegantly detailed her battle with her health issues, and the miraculous occurrences surrounding her steadfast efforts in implementing her faith.

Soon thereafter, the gathering was treated to a light-hearted, but extremely profound presentation by Reverend Kazuya Nagashima of the San Francisco Dharma Center. This presentation skillfully wove together key portions of Ms. Naito's presentation, into a strong narrative about the power of each person's life, Buddha Nature and the recognition that everyone in our lives is a necessary ingredient to our eventual happiness.

The group then heard from Reverend Fujita, who eloquently shared the importance of our faith and the need for us to move together in unity as President Niwano has instructed, with an attitude towards embodying cheerfulness, and with a kind and warm heart.

The gathering then closed with a group photo and with each member being renewed in their faith and with a positive outlook for the future.



Contributed by James Lynch  
Rissho Kosei-kai of New York



# Dharma Center of Oklahoma



## Fall Season Interfaith Activities

We engaged in a couple of interfaith activities during the fall season. A very large gathering at the Turkish House provided us with excellent Mediterranean food and a wonderful speaker from Kashmir. There was special entertainment from a Native American dance group and we did an art project together. Also members and friends of the Interfaith Alliance of Oklahoma worked together at the Food Bank to prepare meals for hungry folks here in Oklahoma. After working together for two hours, we helped create 3,600 meals to be distributed statewide. It is great to work together for the benefit of all.

Sometimes our kids class at the Dharma Center put on a puppet show. The subject is usually connected with the lesson for the day. They are all very creative in their approach to share the Dharma. We are proud of them.

We had a paint and fix up weekend at the Dharma Center. Volunteers helped on both inside and outside the Center for our autumn fix up time together. They are doing a wonderful job of cleaning and caring for our Dharma Center.





Every year we honor our Founding Mothers here in RKOK. This year we celebrated with dessert and a small gift to let them know how much we appreciate them. They are our treasures.

Finally, Rev. Kris and her good friend Teresa Morton finished their music project. They are having a special program on December 2nd to share this new Ekayana Buddhism music with the sangha. Dr. Scarangelo will be a guest at RKOK for that weekend. He will be giving the Lotus Sutra Lecture for RKINA and the U.S. locations on December 3rd.



Contributed by Chris Peters  
Rissho Kosei-kai of Oklahoma

# Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of San Antonio



## The adventure continues at RK San Antonio!



In August, seven of our Youth members participated in the Matoi Parade in Los Angeles and built friendships with our sister sangha members. In October, four of the L.A. Youth members returned the favor by spending a weekend witnessing the San Antonio spirit!

Reverend Okada performed our first Pet Blessing two weeks ago and all the cats and dogs went home happy! In September, 30 of our members helped move our garden and playground to new areas of the property in preparation for the Big Dig. Just this week we began our new addition to the Dharma Center, which will add approximately 2,000 square feet to our Center, two new bathrooms, and an altar-kitchen. Prior to the construction, Reverend Yoshizawa performed a Land Blessing Ceremony for our Sangha. We are all tired but excited about the promise of a bigger room!

San Antonio is becoming a haven for RKK Buddhism - we have tripled attendance in Sunday Service and our classes over the past few years. We literally don't have room to fit any more people in the building!

With all of this activity, we still managed to hold a 6-week painting class, a 5-week martial arts class, and a 4-week yoga class — all led by members of our sangha!

On a bittersweet note, our mentors Reverend and Mrs. Okada completed their final mission with San Antonio and have returned to their well-earned retirement in Chiba, Japan. We had several wonderful farewell parties for the Okadas. We love them and miss them. They are now part of our living history.

These great times **are** the lotus flower that has risen out of the mud of our past struggles. Enjoy!

In July, our *Sangha* attended a Buddhism exhibit at the San Antonio Museum of Art on a Tuesday evening. Thirty-five people enjoyed a wonderful tour and learned a great deal about the history of Buddhism in Japan.

We are looking forward to the next few months in which we will be busy planning activities around the expansion of our facility in San Antonio.



Contributed by Kevin Roche  
Rissho Kosei-kai of San Antonio

# A Brief History of Japanese Buddhism

## PART TWO: *Buddhism Takes Root and Gains Influence in Japan*

By the mid seventh century CE Buddhism had firmly taken root in Japan. To facilitate the growth of the religion, the Japanese imperial court sent delegations to Korea and China to obtain sutras. By this time there were a number of temples, religious orders, priests and icons in the capital and throughout the nation.

By the eighth century monks such as Saichō and Kūkai had established monasteries that

became prominent centers of study. Both Saichō (767–822) and Kūkai (774–835) had studied in China and brought back sutras, teachings and ritual practices to Japan. Kūkai established a monastery on Mount Kōya and developed Shingon Buddhism. Shingon is one of the few surviving Vajrayana Buddhist lineages in East Asia, and today is a major denomination in Japan.



**Saichō (left) and Kūkai (right) are two major figures in Japanese Buddhism.**

Saichō is the founder of Japanese Tendai Buddhism and his teachings would influence later monks such as Dōgen (Zen), Hōnen and Shinran (Pure Land), as well as Nichiren (Nichiren & Lotus Buddhism). While in China, Saichō copied and translated numerous sutras and brought these back to Japan with him.

Despite differences in theology, both Saichō and Kūkai supported one another in their efforts to spread Buddhism and develop their monasteries.

During this time, Buddhism began to play a role in government; many powerful clans belonged to various denominations and Buddhist temples were both influenced by government and at the same time influencing government themselves. For example, the Tendai tradition was popular with the upper class and imperial court. As such, it not only developed respect, but began to gain both military and political power.

This was not limited to just the Tendai tradition. Other forms of Buddhism competed for power and influence. At times this led to conflict among the denominations, as well as among different political factions. Unlike today, where Japan's constitution enshrines separation of church and state, religion played a strong role in state affairs.

Contributed by Robert C. Piemme

RK New York City Sangha

# The Founder's Faith



## *Gratitude*

There is a strong tendency to give a logical explanation for everything and to deal with things as matters of rights and duties. For example, some people think that when a parent raises a child, the parent is only obeying an animal instinct, so there is no particular reason for the child to be thankful. Some think that it is only natural for teachers to teach, since after all they receive salaries. Pursuing this line of thought, one concludes that plants give oxygen just because they are alive, and that the sun gives light and heat as just natural phenomenon. In other words, there is no cause to be thankful.

There is no way for such thinking to make people happy. It can only make people egoistic, cold-hearted, puffed up, and lonely. By contrast, we cannot imagine how much happier it makes us to be grateful to our parents, to the people around us, to the plant kingdom, and for the blessings of heaven and earth. If the number of people who feel such thankfulness grows into the thousands and millions, not only will they support one another with affection, but they will be able to exist in harmony with the plants, the oceans, and the atmosphere. This planet will become a peaceful, comfortable place to live.

When one looks at how the world is formed, one can understand that everything is interdependent, and is connected in some way. Nothing exists entirely in and of itself. Our environment is one of constant, interrelated change; in which the death of one thing becomes the source of life for another. With everything so interdependent, a grand but subtle harmony is built up. As a consequence, we can say that it is most natural to live in grateful acceptance of every encounter with those who share this bond. Conversely, as long as we do not forget to see things as they are, the feeling of gratitude for all things will surely spring forth.

# Closing Message

## *Impermanence*

In fall, we experience changes in the color of the leaves; the changes in the temperature outdoors; the changes in the mood of human beings. Fall is the time for us to really feel, see and touch the changes of nature. Those changes, of course, affect our mind which alters from one moment to the next.

The Lotus Sutra expresses that the mind is like a monkey that never rests, but jumps here and there all the time. This is an expression of impermanence.

Impermanence can be understood in various ways. The meaning and understanding of impermanence varies from each individual and situation. For example, when you are offered a promotion to a new job or position, you may appreciate the word impermanence. Everything is changing in favorable ways. But when you become sick or are diagnosed with as serious illness, then impermanence can take on a negative connotation.

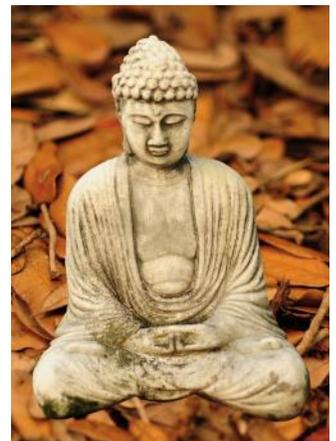
Impermanence itself is a Law of Nature; it has always been and it always will be.

Our minds change whether we appreciate a particular situation or if we worry or suffer from it.

The next time you are caught up with impermanence, the best way to use this law for empowering the mind is to meditate on changes. Changes are natural and unavoidable, but with meditation situations can be recognized as opportunities when our perspective changes.

During this time of season, we should live with impermanence since we are within impermanence.

Rev. Takashi Yoshizawa  
Rissho Kosei-kai International of North America  
Chief Operating Officer/Minister



Past issues of *Sangha in Motion* can be found here: <https://rkina.org/sanghainmotion/enewsletterarchive.html>