

Sangha in Motion

U.S. Dharma Centers - Staying Connected

WINTER 2018

IN THIS ISSUE

Opening Message

Hawaii

Los Angeles

New York

Oklahoma

San Antonio

History of Japanese
Buddhism

Founder's Faith

Closing Message



Last month we had midwinter recitation practice, *Setsubun*, as well as Nirvana Day. The Dharma Centers around the U.S. were busy with activities and everyone was participating joyously. I hope you all had a wonderful month!

As usual in March, we commemorate the Foundation Day of Rissho Kosei-Kai. Rissho Kosei-Kai was established on March 5, 1938, by founder Nikkyo Niwano and cofounder Myoko Naganuma.

Rissho means establishing the teachings of the true dharma, Lotus Sutra, in the world. *Ko* of Kosei signifies mutual exchange of thought among people seeking spiritual growth - that is, the principle of spiritual unity among all human beings. *Sei* stands for perfection of the personality and the attainment of buddhahood. *Kai* means association or society.

Rissho Kosei-Kai is based on the teachings of the *Threefold Lotus Sutra*, which explains Shakyamuni Buddha's compassion and wisdom to advance all living

Opening Message (cont'd)

beings to enlightenment. At Rissho Kosei-Kai our focus of devotion is the Eternal Buddha.

March 5 is the day to reflect and remind all members that our mission is to build a society filled with compassion and helping one another based upon the spirit of the One Vehicle. Each day we can do this through practicing the teachings of Buddha at work, at home with your family, or in the community.

It is easy to get caught up in daily life and forget the full meaning of our practice. Please take the time on the founding day to remind yourselves of the organization's objectives, as well as what it means to be a member of Rissho Kosei-Kai. Let us use this day to renew our commitment to disseminate this profound teaching.

Gassho,
Rev. Takashi Yoshizawa
Rissho Kosei-ka of San Francisco
Minister



RK Buddhist Church of Hawaii



Aloha 2018

Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Hawaii welcomed 2018 and the New Year with a service with snacks from Japan and the traditional *konbu* and cuttlefish. After the service and inspirational message from Rev. Meya, we greeted all the members with a toast to the New Year with *sake*. Members always look forward to preparing the altar with the New Year's offerings of *sake*, *mochi*, fruits and flowers. We also had our car and driver blessing service where we said prayers for another safe year for motorists. This year brings a new *omamori* or amulet for good luck to hang in your car.

February brought the *Nehan-E* Nirvana day where we took a group picture.

We also said farewell to our Japanese student as she heads back to



RK Buddhist Church of Hawaii (cont'd)

Japan after spending a month in Hawaii studying and staying with several member host families. We will miss *honju* student Miss Hajime.

We hosted Rev. Thich Thong Hai from the Chan Khong Monastery and his 130 members as they make their annual pilgrimage of Buddhist churches and temples throughout Oahu. We had prayer in both English and Vietnamese.

We are preparing for our parade next month with both *matoi* and musical instrument practice. Our group is almost ready for the Honolulu Festival Parade down Waikiki in March. We will have Rissho Kosei-kai members from Japan, Oahu, Maui and Kona to enthusiastically entertain the crowd.



Contributed by Bradley Tom
Rissho Kosei-kai of Hawaii

Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Los Angeles



New Year Ceremony

We started our first ceremony of the New Year where we received President Nichiko Niwano's guidance for 2018. We were excited to hear the announcement of the new theme of Rissho Kosei-kai for the next 20 years, which states, "connecting with others wholeheartedly" and "be a nursery to raise *bodhisattvas*". In this spirit we have certainly continued to practice.

At the Los Angeles Dharma Center, we gathered to take part in the Midwinter Sutra Recitation Training where members read the entire Lotus Sutra. English Leader Doris Hasegawa encouraged some members to be chanting leaders and some members to take supporting roles such as wood block and bell. From January 20 through February 3, after meeting five times we finally finished chanting the entire Lotus Sutra. On the last day, members reflected on their practice and for many this was a growing experience and a chance to renew their vows to practice the Lotus Sutra.

On February 4, we celebrated the last day of winter in a ceremony known as "*Setsubun*". After receiving Reverend Hosoyama's message, members then received their official role within the church designated by the

Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Los Angeles (cont'd)



reverend. We then ended the ceremony with throwing beans at members dressed as demons representing Greed, Anger and Ignorance. According to their birth year, members received a written fortune based on the Nine Star System used in Japan, as well as a bookmark with a single quote gathered from various Rissho Kosei books.



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

Rissho Kosei-kai of New York



The Enlightenment Day Service

On December 3, 2017, the New York Dharma Center held “The Enlightenment Day Service.”

After viewing a video on Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, we affirmed that it is because the Buddha had attained enlightenment, we are able to learn the valuable teaching and put it into practice. We then had members share how, as a result, they are now receiving the merits.

There were numerous accounts of merits shared that day, such as:

“After listening to this teaching, I started to consider somewhat accepting my father, whom I could not forgive until now, and was able to contact him. Now, I am inviting him to visit my apartment.”

“Every phenomenon that occurs in front of me is a message from the Buddha. I would like to carefully address each, one by one.”

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

On January 1, members gathered for the “New Year’s Day Visit.”

From several days prior to the New Year, we solemnly arranged the altar and welcomed the New Year with renewed spirits. The first service of the New Year was held by all who “visited” that day. After the service, we enjoyed the delicious traditional Japanese “*osechi*” dishes prepared by the members.

This year we held the “special chanting practice during the coldest season” for seven days – from January 27 to February 2.



In Fort Myers, the members also gathered every day, to chant the entire Threefold Lotus Sutra. And other members, who live in remote areas, performed the chanting practice in their homes.

Toward the Eightieth Anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai’s Founding on March 5th, we determined who will reach out to whom and are developing fine-tuned “*tedori*” practice.

We are able to learn this valuable teaching because of the Founder’s compelling passion to actually liberate people who are troubled and suffering. Keeping that and our gratitude in mind, we would like to develop closer relationships with many members and diligently devote ourselves to our practice.



Contributed by Yuri Sugino
Rissho Kosei-kai of New York

Dharma Center of Oklahoma



Women's Interfaith Tea

The Oklahoma Dharma Center has been active despite the cold winter season. Members attended a women's interfaith tea and discussion time. This is an annual event and we enjoy going every year. It is great to share time with women from other cultures and religions and to have great discussions and become friends.

This year Mandy Leung, one of our Chinese members, offered to teach everyone how to make potstickers. We thought that would be a great way to celebrate the Chinese New Year here in Oklahoma. Many members gathered to help in preparation and cooking and, of course, the eating of the potstickers. We had a wonderful dinner together talking about Chinese horoscope, and shared fun times and good music.

Finally, Adam and Ben Peters became new members of the Oklahoma Dharma Center. We welcome the new, young energy to the sangha.



Contributed by Rev. Kris Ladusau
Dharma Center of Oklahoma
Minister



Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of San Antonio



Construction of Church Addition Underway!

It's been another busy and happy few months around the San Antonio Dharma Center. We are busy with construction of our 2,000 sq. ft. church addition, which will give us some breathing room at the Center. Everyone is excited about all the possible activities we will be able to offer our Sangha and our community in the near future. The San Antonio Sangha continues to grow larger each month, and we are all so proud of our city for supporting our growth.

We said goodbye to some old friends, Reverend Yoshizawa, and Reverend and Mrs. Okada. We will be forever grateful to them for their leadership and friendship. The San Antonio sangha celebrated the installation of Reverend Kodaka as our new minister. He will be located in Los Angeles, but hopefully, we will see him often in the future.

We have been having fun with yoga, painting, and massage classes — all offered by sangha members. Our “Outsider” members are busily planning all the new gardens and walkways featured in our new Center, which will have its Grand Opening in October 2018. These next few months are going to be very exciting in San Antonio, Texas !!!!!



Contributed by Kevin Roche
Rissho Kosei-kai of San Antonio



A Brief History of Japanese Buddhism



Hōnen delivering sermon to the public.

Part Three: *The Kamakura Period*

The Kamakura Period lasted from 1185–1333 and was a time of great growth and new development for Japanese Buddhism. Some of the most respected and widely known Buddhist leaders lived during this period.

Hōnen (1133-1212) was the founder of the Jōdo-shū (True Pure Land) Buddhist sect. He had been a monk in the Tendai Buddhist sect but he was dissatisfied with their teachings. Instead, he took to the streets and preached to the masses. Hōnen taught that all people could find salvation in chanting the *nembutsu* (the name of Amitābha Buddha).

Eisai (1141-1215) and Dōgen (1200-1253) promoted Zen teachings and quickly gained followers in the upper classes. At separate times, they both studied in China. Both founded temples in Kyoto. Eisai is regarded as having started the tea tradition when he brought green tea seeds from China to Japan. Dōgen would found the Soto Zen sect whereas Eisai brought Rinzai Zen teachings to Japan.

Nichiren (1222-1282) is perhaps the most widely known of all the Buddhist figures of the Kamakura period. Both widely praised and respected, he was also equally criticized and despised. Like many of his peers, he studied in the Tendai school, but grew dissatisfied with the teachings and sought to find the highest teaching

A Brief History of Japanese Buddhism (cont'd)

of Buddha.

Nichiren found this in the Lotus Sutra and he taught that salvation could be gained by chanting *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo* (the title of the Lotus Sutra). He condemned the government and religious institutions for failing to work for the common people. His criticism did not go unnoticed. He was beaten, nearly executed and exiled twice. He was later pardoned and offered a temple with government support. However he decided to retire to Mount Minobu where he spent his last days in humble living conditions.

Interestingly, despite great differences in practice, ritual and theology, many Buddhist leaders taught similar things. Both Nichiren and Eisai preached the idea that Buddhism is critical for a functioning society and that the country would experience peace and prosperity if society embraced their teachings. Hōnen sought to make Buddhism accessible to all, not just the upper classes. He taught that by wholeheartedly reciting the name of Amitābha Buddha anyone could be reborn in the Buddha's Pure Land. Nichiren, too, wanted a Buddhism for the masses. For him salvation was open to all who sincerely chanted the sacred title of the Lotus Sutra.

The Kamakura Period witnessed the birth of new Buddhist schools and the formation of unique doctrines. It was a time of tremendous growth and development of Japanese Buddhism and the ideas and schools that came out of this period remain to this day.

Contributed by Robert C. Piemme
RK New York City Sangha

The Founder's Faith

Key to a Fulfilling Old Age

The way to ensure a long life is to give ungrudgingly of our time and energy, always smile, and offer cheerful greetings to those around us.

There are two broad categories of the elderly: the old man or woman who is always smiling and is liked by everyone, and the grouch who is disliked by one and all. The person who is warmly regarded is the one who always puts others first, while the one who is disliked is the selfish person who has lost flexibility.

What type of elderly person each of us will become depends on our attitude. We can either sit back and decide that others should be doing things for us because we are old, or make a positive effort to serve others instead of being served by them.

Clearly, the older we get, the more important positive thinking becomes. This is the key to a fulfilling old age.



Closing Message

Spring Up

Having read the President's Message in *Living the Lotus*, volume 150 (March 2018), "*Becoming Happy Together with People in the Community: On the Occasion of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Founding of Rissho Kosei-kai*," what comes to mind is friends in the United States, including the ones who have been introduced through "*Sangha in Motion*."



These friends are making efforts for the sake of Dharma Centers and their communities. They draw near the people around them who have troubles. When they hear that people are worried, they listen carefully to what they have to say. When they see people who are depressed and have a dark expression, they try to light a lamp of hope in the people's hearts so that they are able to smile again.

They are, as you know, *bodhisattvas*. And you, the readers of *Sangha in Motion*, empathize with them, too. You have sprung up or are about to spring up from the earth of the United States where they live, just as described in chapter 15 of the *Lotus Sutra*.

This spring of the 80th anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai's founding, let us realize that we are *bodhisattvas* who are aware of whatever happens in our life is by arrangement by the Eternal Buddha, a practice for attaining Buddhahood, and a chance to lead everyone to happiness.

Rev. Takashi Kodaka
Rissho Kosei-ka International of North America
Director



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