

Sangha in Motion

U.S. Dharma Centers - Staying Connected

FALL 2018

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With the change of season and welcoming fall, it is the time of harvesting. We have the opportunity to reflect upon ourselves and think how our practice has been. What a good time to reflect and learn.

In these trying times, we learned not to waver because of changing emotions and conditions but always to have a calm and tranquil mind. Has your practice given others a feeling of calmness?

Words are also an excellent interpreter of the soul. Do your words impart calmness to others? Words must be the symbols of the soul, the messengers of the soul, the angels of the soul. Words we speak are reflections of our soul.

Let us believe that each word we speak is the reflection of our hearts. Cherish our words and to bring calmness and compassion to everyone around us.



Thank you,
Rev. Laura Meya
Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Church of Hawaii

RK Buddhist Church of Hawaii



The annual Hiroshima Nagasaki Remembrance was held on Maui on August 5, 2018. This interfaith event was sponsored by various peace organizations and churches, including Rissho Kosei-kai Maui Dharma Center. Pictured above is guest speaker Dr. & Mrs. Bill Durston (front and center) from Sacramento, California, with a group of Marshallese choral performers. Dr. Durston, a community activist for causes ranging from social justice, gun violence, to nuclear war, spoke on *“The Threat of Nuclear War and What We Can Do About It”*. He encouraged everyone to contact your U.S. senators and representative regarding the Restricting Use of Nuclear Weapons Act (H.R. 669/S200) so that no one person will have the sole authority to launch a civilization-ending nuclear war.

Also shown at the event was a video of the poem *“Anointed”* by Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, a heart-wrenching account of the nuclear fallout aftermath on her island home and people due to 67 nuclear test explosions conducted by the United States on the Marshall Islands from 1946-1958.



Contributed by Jenny Uemura-Sano
Rissho Kosei-kai of Hawaii



Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Los Angeles



LA Wishes Rev. Jim Hodgkin Farewell and Gratitude

July 4 is a celebration day for the United States of America. And this year 2018, we celebrated Dr. Jim Hodgkin's life at the Riverside Community Hospital as we prayed farewell at his bedside on July 4 at 2:37 PM. Quietly Dr. Jim passed away and softly faded away to the next life.

Later in the month, we held a celebration of life at the Los Angeles Dharma Center, which he was dedicated to for over forty years. The service included eight flower rings from Japan, including flowers from President Niwano of Rissho Kosei-kai, CEO Rev. Kawabata of Rissho Kosei-kai, and Director of Rissho Kosei-kai International Rev. Saito. Every Rissho Kosei-kai church sent us their condolences and flowers.

We all expressed our gratitude for his dedication and love of Kosei-kai at his celebration of life. Over thirty members attended the burial service at the Riverside National Cemetery later that week. We will all miss this great hero of the Los Angeles church. He was present at the church from its dedication on its founding day on February 5, 1977.

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

Dr. Jim was instrumental in working with the various ministers of Los Angeles and the Board. While busy with church volunteering he earned his Doctor's Degree in Buddhism through the University of the West. His devotion and love for the Lotus Sutra and the teaching developed by our Founder Nikkyo Niwano will an inspiration to all.



The Los Angeles Dharma Center hosted the second annual *Matoi* Camp August 8-10. We welcomed 17 participants from Los Angeles, Hawaii, San Antonio, San Francisco and Japan. The objective of *Matoi* Camp was to provide for the Rissho Kosei Kai youth and young adults to learn and experience *Matoi*, while simultaneously building life-long friendships with fellow members across different sanghas, providing exposure to the basic Buddhism teachings, and practicing daily rituals including altar offerings and prayer service duties.



This year, the program's theme was around self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-improvement. We started the camp by identifying personal goals on we wanted to achieve through the camp. The program was very rigorous which started at 6 a.m. cleaning the church facilities, cooking breakfast, and then followed by a prayer service every day. The group participated in various team building activities such as an obstacle courses, human knot game, and a scavenger hunt in Little Tokyo. The teams also learned about rituals and the importance of *Omorimono* for Co-Founder's monthly memorial day on August 10th.



Lastly, and most demanding challenge was doing *matoi* at Venice beach. The teams showcased their *matoi* skills in a public setting, on uneven foundation, and with the heat and wind in their faces. It was very difficult to say the least, but every single person gave it their all, which was very inspiring. Everyone supported one another, paced for each other, and truly showed their kindness through the practice of *matoi*. It was definitely an encouraging and memorable sight to witness.



Contributed by Rev. Ken Nagata
Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Church of Los Angeles

Rissho Kosei-kai of New York



From July 29th to August 1st, Rissho Kosei-kai participated in a very special event at George Washington University in Washington, DC, called Reimagining Interfaith. Reimagining Interfaith was a global gathering of grassroots activities and interfaith peace-builders organized by a diverse coalition of interfaith and faith based organizations focused on skill building, networking and organizing.

With diversity and inclusion as the gathering's priority, the event gave participants an opportunity to engage with fellow changemakers in intimate personal cohorts.

RKK members came from as far away as New York, Chicago, Florida, Pennsylvania and Japan. It was a wonderful opportunity for RKK members to participate in this important and harmonious interaction of various religions. Many things were discussed: from interfaith co-operation to human rights, from how to be active in the public sphere to how to work best with others, and to how to achieve meaningful and long-lasting changes in our society.

One of the literal highlights of the gathering was the interfaith service of Morning Prayer that RK participated with Shinto priests, with Rev. Sawada from the headquarters as a leader, and Rev. Fujita and Rev. Yanagida, also from the headquarters, as sub leaders. The service was extremely moving, as well as thought-provoking. All observers left knowing they had witnessed something sacred and special.

On the 30th we also got to participate in a panel presentation led by our own Rev. Saito, the Director of RK International, who spoke on the need to make religion effective and responsive to the needs of the people.

There were also meaningful and dynamic small discussion groups that mirrored, in most respects, our own *hoza* circle.

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

Indeed, my own discussion group featured a mature woman named Lucie from the Netherlands who was sitting next to me. Lucie shared with me that she was a member of an interfaith group that visited Japan when she was only 32 years of age. Lucie told me that her interfaith group, while on this trip in Japan, had the incredibly good fortune to meet and speak with Founder Niwano over 40 years earlier.

Lucie noted that while the encounter with Founder was brief, it was indeed life-altering. She said that when Founder was speaking with her group, he asked her what her age was. When Lucie replied, “32,” Founder responded by saying “that was an auspicious age,” in that he, himself, started Rissho Kosei-kai at that age and that “you could do something special, too”.

Lucie went on to tell me “from that moment on, I said to myself daily that I could do something special with my life. And indeed from that very day, I have worked in various positions, with various organizations, for peace and interfaith dialogue for well over 40 years.” Lucie then carefully leaned over to me and whispered that there was a “certain energy” around Founder that made “you feel like you could just do it; do anything!” This made me reflect that all of this could come from one brief encounter. I reflected on how impactful that just one word from Founder Niwano or any of us could be.

Indeed, many of the attendees had equally wonderful experiences and realized that many people of other faiths have great affection for and affinity with Rissho Kosei-kai.

I think I left the gathering along with most of RKK members feeling extremely hopeful for the future, knowing that there are many people of good will marching towards a more peaceful and compassionate world.

Palms Together.



Contributed by James Lynch
Rissho Kosei-kai of New York
Director of the External Affairs



Dharma Center of Oklahoma



The Oklahoma Dharma Center was honored to host the 2018 U.S. *Gohonzon* Ceremony June 2 - 3. Rev. Saito and Rev. Nagata were joined by staff members from Tokyo to assist in the program. Rev. Yasuko Hildebrand and Rev. Kris Ladusau were on hand locally, supported by Dave Rose and the members of the Oklahoma Sangha. Twenty-five participants received their *Gohonzon* statues, as well as guidance and education on the significance of this occasion. We all had a wonderful time together.

Other activities that were held during the summer included members engaged in our annual sutra copying practice. We see it as a type of meditation.

Members also would take care of the Dharma Center property and practicing donation at the same time.

Lastly, a children's class was offered to teach how to make paper lanterns for *Obon*.



Contributed by Rev. Kris Ladusau
Dharma Center of Oklahoma
Minister



Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of San Antonio



Well, it's been another exciting quarter here in San Antonio.

Obviously, most of our energy has been directed at trying to complete our Dharma Center building addition. We are getting closer every day and we are excited about the coming Enshrinement in October with President Niwano. Many of the members have been working hard on helping with landscaping, painting and fundraising projects.

And to add to our great excitement, we have our new leader, Reverend Kodaka, back in the USA! Reverend Kodaka will be visiting us often and guiding our future.

In June, 12 of our members formed a caravan and drove to OKC to receive their *Gohonzon*. This was a memorable trip that forged an unbreakable bond for these members.

In addition, we had a group of our younger members participate in the Matoi Parade in Los Angeles this month and they returned inspired and energized!

All members of the San Antonio sangha are grateful for the support given to us by our U.S. and international Rissho Kosei-kai friends. We have waited a long time for this moment and it is almost upon us.



Contributed by Kevin Roche
Rissho Kosei-kai of San Antonio

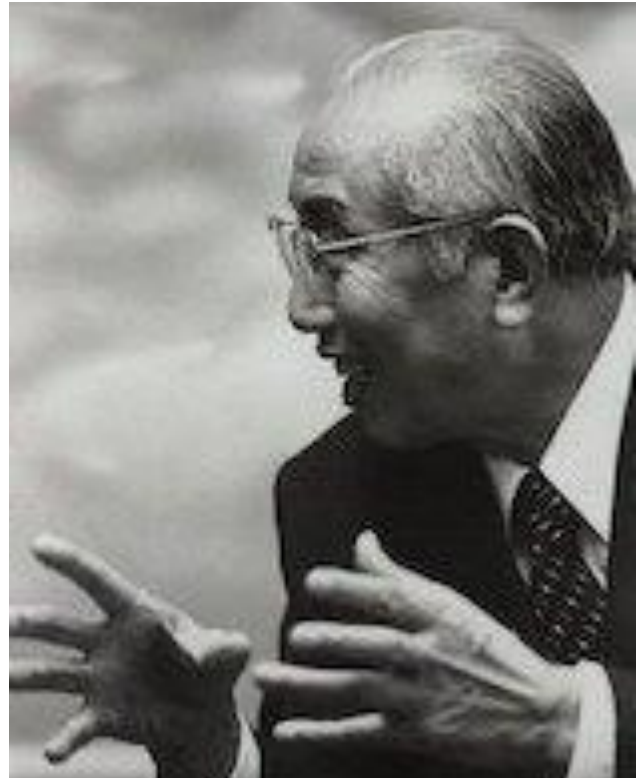


The Founder's Words

Let Us Be Human

“If we live always to serve others, we will win everyone’s respect. No matter what happens, let us be human. To be human means to go beyond the pursuit of immediate profit, to live instead focusing on mastering one’s job, whatever it may be. Be earnest in your work and you will find you will earn enough to support yourself.

This is what Saicho was talking about when he said, ‘Sustenance is to be found in the will to follow the Way; the will to follow the Way is not be found in pursuit of the means of sustenance.’“



Closing Message

Learning From a Good Teacher

I'm looking forward to reading a new monthly dharma message from Rev. Nichiko Niwano, President of Rissho Kosei-kai. When I'm reading it, I guess I'm nothing other than a simple lay Buddhist. Mostly, I feel he kindly gives me appropriate guidance. Occasionally, I find he is a severe teacher. However, overall I feel the warmth of compassion from his teachings.



As you may have noticed, President Niwano has started sharing what he learned about each of the practices of the Eightfold Path with us in *Living the Lotus* (volume 152). Thus far, articles on Right View, the Right Thinking, the Right Speech, the Right Action, and the Right Living (volume 156) have been issued. I assume he will complete this series of articles his December. I really hope to read through all these practices soon.

In the first issue of this series, titled *Living Joyfully*, President Niwano described the Right View and concluded his message with this sentence: “On this occasion, taking into consideration the meaning of the word ‘right,’ I hope to continue learning the Eightfold Path for some time, together with all of you.”

Here he says he is learning one of the very basic Buddhist practices, together with all of us. Then I remember, he has been a practitioner and a learner who is seeking innumerable meanings in everything throughout this universe with a humble mindset. This is why I love to learn from President Nichiko.

Rev. Takashi Kodaka

Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International of North America

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