



Buddhism for Today:
Cultivating the fields of
the heart and mind

HIGHLIGHTS

Nisei Parade

Obon Festival

Lots of news from the
Sanghas!

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Sangha In Motion

Happy New Year!

Bimonthly eNewsletter for

RK Members in the US

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2013

President Niwano's New Year's Guidance

Learn and Then Put Into Practice

Continuing the spirit of "Nana korobi ya oki" (Stumble seven times but get back up eight) inherited from our ancestors, who overcame numerous hardships

I wish all of you a happy New Year.

We are greeting our second New Year since the massive earthquake and tsunami that struck northeastern Japan in March 2011. Today, there are still more than 320,000 persons living in temporary housing. Recovery and reconstruction will certainly require a lot more time.

As I mentioned last year, Japan is a country of frequent natural disasters, having experienced numerous major earthquakes and tsunamis up to now. At such times, our ancestors overcame their hardships and built the Japan of today. My hope is that we will continue that spirit of "Nana korobi ya oki" (Stumble seven times but get back up eight) and, with our hearts united as one, build a society and a nation that is better than ever before. As for our own Rissho Kosei-kai, I hope that all members will continue to support it wholeheartedly.

Due to the massive earthquake and tsunami, Japan can be said to have come to a turning point in many respects. The accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, in particular, has caused much suffering over a wide area. There are also serious problems from radioactive waste, the "nuclear trash" that comes from nuclear power generation. We are told that this is material with a half-life of tens of thousands of years. The whole future of energy must be discussed and decided on the basis of a long-term perspective and with a sense of our responsibilities to posterity.

What is more, our relationships with China and other neighboring countries have recently fallen on difficult times. Not only between governments, but also between peoples, emotional and uncompromising attitudes are gathering strength; this is something to be alarmed about. When we respond to anger with anger and force with force, it brings about an endless cycle of mistrust and conflict. The important stance for us, as religious practitioners and as Japanese, is to continue calm and sincere conversations with our fellow passengers on Spaceship Earth, and endeavor to realize the world of the One Buddha Vehicle, a world of great peace and harmony.

Recently our organization has published statements called "Toward a Truly Prosperous Society—Beyond Nuclear Power" and "Our View on Amending the Constitution of Japan: Making Pacifism a 'Treasure for Humankind.'" I would like you to refer to these as each of us, on our own initiative, ascertains the future course of Japan.

Guidelines for members' practice of the faith based on perfect trust in the Three Treasures of Buddhism—the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha: every one of us should deepen our understanding through daily practice.

I would like members' guidelines for the practice of the faith for the year 2013 to be the same as for last year, as follows.

New Year's Guidance (con't)



Nikkyo Niwano
Founder of
Rishsho Kosei-kai

Excerpt from

Living in the Present
Moment

from
Monthly Guidance of
President Nichiko
Niwano, August 2009

Since 1998, the sixtieth anniversary of our organization's founding, its general goal has been "Rishsho Kosei-kai cultivates the fields in the heart and mind of each and every person."

Since its seventieth anniversary, in 2008, our organization has promoted the enshrinement of the *gohonzon* (an image of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni) in every member's home.

In this historical context of events, we have established our basic form for taking refuge in the Three Treasures of Buddhism.

In the spirit of Shakyamuni and of the founder and cofounder, let us now walk the path we must walk as human beings, deepening our sense of compassion and consideration for others, with cheerfulness, kindness, and warm heartedness, which are important for the great peace and harmony of the world.

Additional remarks

Let us always remember to pray for those who perished in the great earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan.

In the words of a classic poem,

"Sowing grain seeds is best for a one-year plan,

Planting trees is best for a ten-year plan,

And for a lifelong plan, nothing surpasses the development of human beings."

When we think about the world's future, those words make us keenly aware of the world's many problems, such as lack of food security, nuclear accidents, and degradation of the environment. We can gain the experiences of sowing grain seeds and plant-

ing trees as well as of striving to develop the people in each sphere of our membership—at the levels of the individual, the chapter, the Dharma center, and the whole of Rishsho Kosei-kai. Let us choose and pursue some of these goals and contribute to our community, our country, and our world.

These guidelines for the practice of the faith indicate the future course of action to be cherished, based on the historical meaning of the basic form that we have established for taking refuge in the Three Treasures of Buddhism.

It is my earnest desire that all of you will further deepen your understanding and connect it to your daily practice.

We are encountering now the teachings of Shakyamuni by way of the founder and cofounder. These teachings are not just to be comprehended, but have their real worth in being put into practice in daily life.

At the root of the Japanese word *manabu*, meaning "learn," is the word *manebu*, meaning "emulate." Applying this to the membership of Rishsho Kosei-kai, the implication of "learning" is the process of coming into contact with the teachings of Shakyamuni and the words and deeds of the Sangha and, with the thought of "I would like to be like that," emulating them and putting them into practice.

There is the saying "Practice makes perfect." Even if at first you think something is difficult, repeated practice will gradually make it familiar, and eventually you will master it.

It is frequently the case that we unintentionally become self-indulgent and cause problems, but we reflect on ourselves in the light of the teachings. When one is inexperienced those shortcomings can't be helped, but in the spirit of "the now, here, and me," nothing is more vital

New Year's Guidance (con't)

than always putting the teachings into practice. I believe the person who embodied this was the founder.

The founder established Rissho Kosei-kai and led us to become the organization we are today. Furthermore, he put his heart and soul into the establishment and development of the World Conference of Religions for Peace. In the process he was the victim of much defamation. He developed a stomach ulcer and a duodenal ulcer and underwent surgery. The founder undoubtedly suffered private anguish.

But even with all that, the founder didn't complain, didn't feel sorry for himself, never sank into low spirits, and absolutely never criticized anyone who accused him. He accepted everything with a sunny smile. One could easily think this was an innate talent, but I accept it as the result of the founder's practice of abiding by the Buddha Dharma, always putting the teachings into practice.

Taking the founder's practice and diligence as an example, I believe we too should keep practicing continuously.

Living beautifully like the lotus flower and believing in the Sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Dharma is the role of the practitioner

As long as they live, people cannot escape trouble. Immediately following the massive earthquake and tsunami, I said the following.

"The lotus flower blooms in muddy, dark, dank water; the muddier the water, the larger the flower. We should not accept the disaster simply as tragedy; I believe it is important for all of us to let what happened be the catalyst for our greater growth as human beings."

No matter what difficulties we encounter, this is what we should always keep in mind.

The flower of the lotus is said to have three major characteristics.

The first is called the "flower-fruit simultaneity." Ordinary plants bear fruit after their flowers have blossomed, but the lotus plant flowers and bears fruit at the same time. This is also what is called the nonduality, or simultaneity, of cause and effect and is the symbol of cause and effect being one and the same. In other words, it means that in the same way that the lotus draws sustenance from mud, the very fact of having painful, sad ex-

periences can lead to enlightenment.

The second is being "untainted by muck." The lotus plant comes up out of dirty, muddy water. Regardless of this, it produces spotless, beautiful flowers. Chapter 15 of the Lotus Sutra, "Springing Up Out of the Earth," says of the bodhisattvas "and [they] are as untainted with worldly things as the lotus flower in the water." This indicates the importance of living according to the teachings, untainted by the self-centered values of the world.

The last characteristic is that lotuses have no nonfruit-bearing flowers. There are no failed blooms. Practically all lotuses produce flawless flowers. We can say that this symbolizes all sentient beings' possessing the buddha-nature, the preciousness of all living beings, and their potential.

In the environs of the Great Sacred Hall at the Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters complex in Tokyo, when summer comes there are many lotuses in bloom. The large blossoms are splendid, but even the small flowers are lovely and touch the heart. It is important for your own flower to bloom to the full. The role of us who put our faith in and practice the teachings of the Sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Dharma is to become like those lotus blossoms, and at the same time make our homes and workplaces, our communities, and on a larger scale, our country and the world, as beautiful as lotus blossoms.

In 2012 Rissho Kosei-kai began implementing our Eleventh Administration Plan, whose main theme is "The gift of life and the power to live: let us be cheerful, kind, warmhearted people." The aspiration to be "cheerful, kind, warmhearted" is not limited to members of Rissho Kosei-kai, but should be a universal aspiration for all people to cherish. Its spirit should prevail on the personal level, obviously, as well as regional, national, and even global levels.

I would like all of you to take this to heart and in all aspects connect it to your actual practice for this year.



Nikkyo Niwano
 Founder of
 Rissho Kosei-kai

Excerpt from

Living in the Present
 Moment

from
 Monthly Guidance of
 President Nichiko
 Niwano, August 2009

Guidance from President Niwano

... "In discourses with his disciples, Shakyamuni spoke of the length of human life as the time in which one takes a breath. He even used the Sanskrit word kshana, meaning an inconceivably short mind-moment, to describe life. Since what occurs in the present is all that we ever have before our eyes and since it is only that with which we human beings can actively engage, we should be living in the present moment to the fullest. In other words, each and every moment is part of our actual lives.

Certainly, we can neither relive the past nor experience the future before it arrives. When we clearly recognize this,

we are filled with the feeling of living life fully by exercising care for the people around us and devoting our hearts and minds to what is taking place in front of us. ...

...Scientists tell us that life on earth began some 3.8 billion years ago, so the present is but a brief instant in a period that seems almost like eternity. But the present actually is filled with precious moments that are the materials of our lives. Since that is the case, we should let go of past regrets, stop chasing after an illusory future, and keep in mind the need to live in the 'now' of every moment so that we will lead our limited lives to the fullest."

Commentary

This particular Guidance was chosen not only for its perfect "fit" for our topic, but also because I think President Niwano very succinctly summed up the major aspects of this topic. While I have always found this topic an easy one to relate to, I still struggle to keep this type of awareness in my daily practice. Like most of us, I dwell too often in the past or future. I have regrets about something in the past and fears about the future. I had never before read of Shakyamuni's use of the word kshana, an inconceivably short mind-moment, to describe life. I find the wording beautiful and its focus on the mind most pertinent, for it is in our mind that we need to begin our work. Our perception of life is clouded with the past and future, when it only truly exists in the present moment. President Niwano reminds us to look at what is right before our eyes --that is where we need to focus our attention. Our life is "taking place in front of us," as he says, and we keep foolishly turning our gaze backwards or forwards. We are missing the greatest part of our lives in doing so. Shakyamuni's description of the length of a human life used the word breath. Focusing on the breath has been a

by Mary Sigman

tool used by the sages throughout the centuries to help one's mind to be aware of the present moment. Sitting quietly every day, even for 5 minutes, can be a very calming, centering practice. I like to do this right after I finish my morning chanting at my altar. It helps me, I think, to absorb the words I have just chanted, to let the dharma enter my heart. But I begin this practice by focusing on at least 5-10 breaths. This helps my body and mind to settle down. It is a great way to start the day or end it.

President Niwano concludes this Guidance with another image of the vastness and brevity of time. We see it as stretching back 3.8 billion years, and our present moment is so short, so brief, in a spectrum that goes on to eternity. But he reminds us that these moments are "precious" and they are the "materials of our lives." This "material" is what we have to work with. There is no "material" in the past or future. His final words to us give us three things to work on: to "let go," to "stop chasing," and "to live in the 'now' of every moment." Perhaps if we can truly do this there will be no present moment, but only moment, a moment outside of the realm of past, present, or future. Live in THE moment.

Dallas and Oklahoma City by Rev. Kris Ladusau & Rev. Ken Nagata



The **Oklahoma Dharma Center** was started in 1975 by a group of Japanese members who met in the leader's (Kiiko Scott) home. Mrs. Yasuko Hildebrand was asked to move back to Oklahoma (from Wichita Falls, Texas) August 1999 and become the Shibucho. Mrs. Scott's husband had suffered a serious stroke and needed attention and care so she needed to step down.

Kris Ladusau began attending these meetings in 1984. Being an American, this brought the opportunity for expansion of English speaking membership. Eventually, members wanted to have a center for the Japanese ladies to meet and for new American members to gather, too. The Dharma Center was built in 2001 and became a shibu on July 4th 2001. OKC received status as a church on January 1, 2008, at that time Yasuko became Rev. Hildebrand.

Rev. Yasuko Hildebrand promised to dedicate 10 yrs to the Center. Staying true to her promise to her husband, she retired in December 2009 and Kris Ladusau took over the responsibility of the Dharma Center. Kris became a reverend in January 2010. Rev. Yasuko is now tending to her husband's needs since he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease several years ago.

OKC offers services in Japanese, English, and then several combined language services during the year. We are very grateful to have a wonderful place to share the Buddha's teachings with each other.

Dallas Hoza Group

Rev. Ken Nagata tells the history of the Dallas Hoza Group and the connection to Oklahoma City and San Antonio.

My father, Hiroshi Nagata, worked in Japan for the US government. In 1970-71, he was transferred from Tachikawa AFB (in outskirts of Tokyo) to Dallas. There was a big government facility located in Dallas. He was assigned as an auditor which meant primarily going to US bases in Europe: Greece, Spain, and Germany and to Greenland and sometimes to Asia. He traveled probably 8-9 months of the year. My dad retired in 1982 and returned to Southern California (San Bernardino) and started helping at the LA church.

Rev. Miyask, one of the translators of the Threefold Lotus Sutra (brown version) was the director of the "International Section" of Rissho Kosei-kai (predecessor to RK International). In the 1970s, he asked my mother Nobuko Nagata to allow our Dallas apartment to be used as a Hoza Center. She accepted and told him that she would do what she could.

Dallas Hoza Center Story (continued)

My sister and brother were young adults then and they helped mom by sending Japanese publications to various members spread throughout Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, and other regions.

With my dad gone most of the year, it made it very convenient for Mom to hold hoza sessions inviting members from Oklahoma City (Mrs. Scott) and San Antonio (Mrs. Jolly) and some local members in Dallas (Mrs. MacMicken being one of them). For the span of about 9 years, my mom guided, instructed, mentored Mrs. Scott and Mrs. Jolly. Scott and Jolly car pooled and gathered at mom's apartment for special prayers, ceremonies, marathon hoza sessions and to party with "JAPANESE" food mom made. Many of them said visiting Dallas apartment was like having Christmas/New Year's come together at once. They stayed overnight and slept where ever possible. It was a 3 bedroom apartment so members didn't have to stay at hotels/motels.

Once my mom and dad returned to Southern California, Mrs. Scott and Mrs. Jolly established their centers in OKC and San Antonio, became "SHIBUCHOS" and followed through with the Dharma mission. Sometimes the members from Dallas would come to Oklahoma to celebrate special days, and sometimes Oklahoma members would make the trip to Texas to visit. The group now is a mixture of Japanese and American members. At this time, they meet in Chieko MacMicken's home.

**Nobuko
and
Hiroshi
Nagata**



OKC Original Founding Japanese Members



**Can you
find Rev.
Yasuko
Hildebrand
in these
pictures?**





Rev. Yasuko Hildebrand was the first Reverend at OKC, Rev. Kris was the first US born minister.

This photo was taken at the ceremony for Rev. Yasuko's retirement and Rev. Kris' installation as OKC minister.

OKC Activities



Dr. Levering lecturing to the Oklahoma sangha

Gifts from the Vietnamese Buddhist Temple in Oklahoma:

A copy of the Lotus Sutra in Vietnamese - presented by Quang Pham



Book of poetry written on the Lotus Sutra in Vietnamese - presented by Phong Dao (visiting from California)





Tokyo student visitor Yukiko Koto with Rev. Kris and Rev. Yasuko



OKC's Fabulous Musician Janelle Jordan! Master of wind and percussion instruments playing the Japanese flute (shakuhachi) in Oklahoma



Kim Miller-Moffeit, Jan Rose, Mandy Leung RK booth at a health fair in OKC in 2012



OKC members Robin Smith and Jane Perri in Tokyo to receive recognition as Dharma Teachers

Klamath Falls OR by Anna Strom and Jane Perri

OKC Expands Across The Nation Klamath Falls

November 5, 2006 was the opening day of the RK Dharma Center of Klamath Falls by Jane Perri and Paul Oswald. The first location was in an old one room school house that was converted for use as the Unity Universalist Church. We alternated Sunday's with the UU using the building. It was a beautiful location full of natural sunlight but too far outside of town. As the sangha grew, we needed to find a location closer to the population center; so we moved into a space in downtown on Main Street. This is the current location of the DC. The Buddha and altar were enshrined May 17, 2008. Anna Strom took over the leadership of the DC in August 2009.

Today the Dharma Center of Klamath Falls is alive and well! We had a quiet year in 2012, and are hoping for more growth and development in 2013.

We are really enjoying our "Final Friday Film Festival" presentations. On the last Friday of each month, we show a film with Buddhist content and have group discussion afterward. Titles have been as varied as "The Dhamma Brothers" about a Vipassanā retreat for lifers inside a Georgia prison, and "Kung Fu Panda," about a very large cartoon panda trying to find his place in the world. Refreshments are served and the discussion is usually pretty lively!!

Having the RKK quilt in our center was another highlight of our year. Members enjoyed seeing the block we had worked on, along with all those from other places. Beautiful work, everyone!

"Third Thursdays" are very popular in Klamath Falls. During the warmer months, Main Street is closed to auto traffic on the third Thursday in the evenings. Merchants have sidewalk sales, food vendors abound, and there is music in the air! The Dharma Center has a table in front of our building, where we talk to passers-by about our center and answer questions about Buddhism and the Dharma. It is a lot of fun, and you always see someone you know.

Recently we held a business meeting to discuss the future of our center, possible new activities and directions. Although we love our current location, and our landlords have been very generous and kind to us, visitors must climb very steep stairs to get there, and it has been problematic for some. We are considering what options we may have on this matter. Also discussed were a book club, a meditation "field trip," and more ways to let people know we are here. Recently we learned that His Holiness the Dalai Lama will be visiting Oregon in May. We are hoping to have some members attend his public appearances to hear this great teacher.



Altar Enshrinement with members from OKC visiting plus Rev. Mizutani, Rev. Yasuko, and Rev. Kris.



Altar in our second location



Rev. Kris and Jane celebrating the installation of the altar.



Reverend Mizutani sharing lunch and stories with Tad Maupin

Denver CO

by Rev. Kris Ladusau

**OKC
Expands
Across
The
Nation
DENVER**

The **Denver Dharma Center** group was started by Taye Van Merlin after she left Oklahoma and moved to Denver for her work.

Recently, they moved to a new location and because Taye became very busy with her business; Jeff Stage and Diana Peterman stepped up to take the lead. The members in Denver are a combination of Japanese and American descent.

Altar in the new location



Grand Opening!



Opening ceremony at the new location

The clouds
and waters
now divide.

The sun
fans out its
beams. The
New Year has
begun.

- *Onte*



Rev. Kris enjoying a visit in 2012.

New born baby blessing



Dayton OH

by Jane Perri

**OKC
Expands
Across
The
Nation
Dayton**

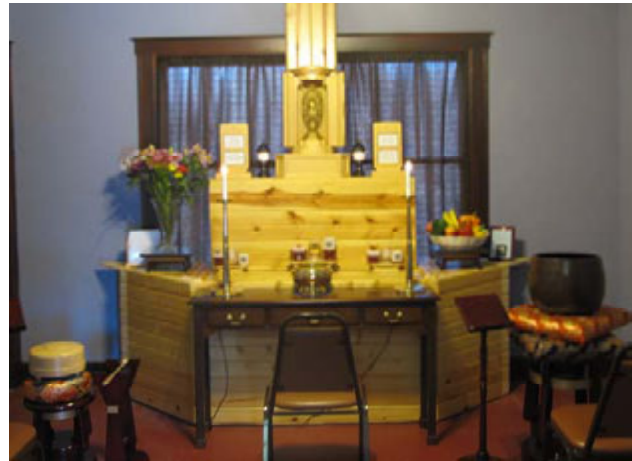
The Dayton Dharma Center opened March 21, 2010 by Dharma Teacher Jane Perri and Paul Oswald. For our first two years we rented a space across the street from our current location. We were very lucky to obtain our current building, 4 days before Rev. Kris came for our official Enshrinement of the Buddha and altar on Jan. 8, 2012. Those were four frantic days of scrubbing, repairing painting, and moving. Even Rev. Kris manned a mop and broom to get us ready to receive the Buddha!

We have a core of very happy and enthusiastic members and friends that enjoy spending time together on Sundays and outside the Center. Our fairly extensive lending library brings in new people who are interested in sharing and learning with us.

Our two largest events have been our ice cream social summer of 2012 and our off-site retreat weekend in a cabin at Buck Creek state park, in the fall of 2012. We are talking about holding another retreat in the upcoming spring.

It is my hope that by the end of the year, one of our members will step up to begin training to be a dharma teacher. There are several people, Shelley Gordon, Carrie Groesser, Kelly Bulger, Danny Mangelsdorf, Ash Jones, and Kathy Austin who regularly lead services and hoza now. These folks are a very integral part of who we are and they help to keep us moving forward.

Altar in new location





Home Altar Installation at the home of Ashley Jones



Shelley Gordon and Curt Mardis walking the labyrinth in the Meditation Garden



Break time at the retreat



Ice Cream Social—fun with kids!



Fiber art mural in development during the sangha retreat at Buck Creek State Park

Tampa Bay FL

by Rev. Nick Ozuna

RK Expands into Florida

Rissho Kosei-kai of Tampa Bay, located in Clearwater, Florida held its Grand Opening on December 13, 2009. How this event came to be is an unusual story in that prior to the opening of the center there was only one member, Rev. Nick Ozuna. Rev. Ozuna was appointed to the Tampa Bay area after graduating from Gakurin Seminary, however, his original mission was not simply limited to developing a new sangha in the area, but also simultaneously working with the Unitarian Universalists, serving as intern minister under Rev. Abhi Janamanchi. The UU church allowed Rissho Kosei-kai to rent space at their facility for what would become the Buddhist Center of Tampa Bay.

The Grand Opening welcomed over 70 participants, which featured Dr. Reeves' Keynote Address. Many of the early members of the Tampa Bay sangha were Unitarian Universalist members as well, however, there were also Rissho Kosei-kai members who were scattered throughout Florida, in Orlando and Fort Myers, who committed themselves to the Tampa Bay Buddhist Center, even if just once a month. The sangha grew steadily over



the next couple of years and had developed leaders and other committed members, all taking on different service roles and contributing as a warm and welcoming community. Rissho Kosei-kai of Tampa Bay has aimed to be an active sangha, engaged in weekly services, study groups, and outings/activities. The biggest and most ambitious event held by the sangha was the Japanese Cultural Festival in 2011. This outdoor event, which featured Japanese live music, food, dancing, and games, brought nearly 300 visitors to the Buddhist Center. Rissho Kosei-kai of Tampa Bay is currently preparing for another similar event in March 2013, which hopes to be even bigger and better!

Rev. Ozuna served as Intern Minister for the Unitarian Universalists until the end of 2010 and since has devoted his attention solely to the Tampa Bay sangha. Over the past three years, some of the members have moved away, however, currently the active sangha consists of a growing number of new members. The new energy has revitalized the sangha, which is eagerly exploring the fundamental teachings of Buddhism and Rissho Kosei-kai, and still keeping active as always.

The future vision of the Tampa Bay sangha is to move continue to grow in both number and experience to the point that they will be able to acquire their own center and offer more and more activities and learning opportunities for the local community.



Grand Opening of RKTB



Rev. Suzuki's Visit



Grand Opening Ceremony



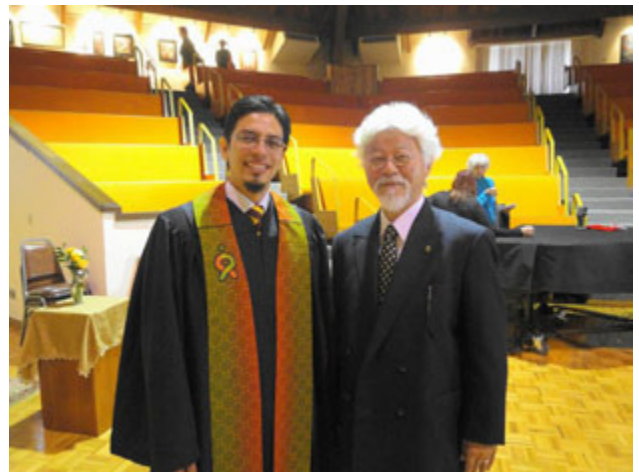
Buddha's Birthday



Tampa Bay Activities



Rev. Nick Ozuna's Dharma Talk



Rev. Nick Ozuna's Internship Graduation



Rev. Abhi Janamanchi's Visit



Home Enshrinement



Rev. Dr. Gene Reeves



Bowling for Bodhisattvas



Sangha Retreat



Car Blessing



Japanese Cultural Festival—J POP



Pond Project



Japanese Cultural Festival—Taiko



Japanese Cultural Festival—Tea Ceremony



Hoza



Buddhism Studies



Visit from Trina Ozuna



Circus McGurkis Festival



Buddhist Center Revitalization

Tampa Bay New Members

by Rev. Nick Ozuna

Frank Mavro

I'm 45 years old, married for almost 10 years, and have a 5 year old son. I'm a self-employed small business owner of a pet store. Learning about Buddhism has always been on my to-do list for many years. I would hear friends share Buddhist quotes or hear Buddhist chanting and it would register with me. I have mentioned to my spouse, over the last few years that I would like to learn more about Buddhism. Last year, as a gift, I received a Japanese cast iron tea set with a book that has daily Buddhist quotes.

I found Rissho Kosei-kai in a Unitarian Universalist service pamphlet. After five minutes into my first service at Kosei-Kai, I intuitively knew this was for me. I felt a deep connection to a spirit of harmonious people around the world. It was only amplified after hearing the beating of the drum.

My impression so far is that I have lots of gratitude for the opportunity to learn about Buddha's teachings and the Lotus Sutra. I think about Buddha, the Founder, and Rev. Ozuna, who have made it possible to help me bring change in my life. I've come to understand harmony and compassion for other people and to practice it in my daily life. Its help bring a positive change in my relationship with my family and the people around me.

Andre Newman

I have been a member of Rissho Kosei-kai since June 2012. From an early age I have read a variety of books and articles on Buddhist principles, but I never really became interested in Buddhism until 2009 when I read the book *Island* by Aldous Huxley. *Island* is a novel about a fictional utopia built on Buddhist philosophies, and as I read the book it made me wonder why we couldn't have a real utopia based on the same practical, compassionate, human behaviors that were described in the story.

I discovered Rissho Kosei-kai through Meetup.com, a website that matches a user's interests with local groups. It is my first time meeting with other Buddhists, and the experience has been nothing short of transcendental. I feel connected to a community that I never knew existed, and I have learned many invaluable lessons since the very first meeting. What thrills me most about Buddhism is how simple it is and how its principles can apply to any person regardless of culture, class, ethnicity, gender, or even religion. I hope to have many more great experiences with the sangha as we help each other walk the path towards enlightenment."



Matt McKenny

I work as a disc jockey at a variety of locations around the Tampa Bay. I am also a connoisseur of all things Japanese and have been trying to learn the language for some time now. I met Rev. Nick and his wife, Chika, while attending a Japanese Summer Festival in Tampa. They had a booth setup with information about Rissho Kosei-kai. I also found that Chika was a singer, and with my musical background we soon became friends. I then performed as a disc jockey at the Rissho Kosei-kai sponsored "Japanese Cultural Festival". Rev. Nick and Chika had encouraged me to attend for some time, but it wasn't until this October that I attended a Sunday Service. I really felt comfortable there and Chika even taught me a little Japanese each time, so it wasn't long before I became a member.

I find the members are very warm and compassionate and I enjoy listening to the practical teachings. Each week I do the M.C. and music roles for the Sunday Service and that fits me perfectly since that's what I do for a living. I look forward to learning and growing more with this sangha in Tampa Bay.

Ft. Meyers FL

by Mary Tracy Sigman

"Rissho Kosei-kai of Fort Myers sangha would probably fit under the RK of the Future category. We are a fairly new sangha, opening in September of 2010. We currently rent space from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Myers, an arrangement that thus far has been mutually agreeable and spiritually enlightening. I feel that both of our spiritual communities have learned and shared with one another. For some new US sanghas this may be one of the possible ways to get started. It is financially feasible, and gives a group the time it needs to grow, develop, and make its name known. With just a little over two years we are still in a process of growth, development, and name recognition.

Our sangha was initially a part of the New York Church, as I had moved from the Chicago area and had been a member of the Rissho Kosei-kai Church in Mount Prospect. After moving from Illinois to Florida in 2009, I was thrilled to join the new RK of Tampa Bay sangha. For that first year I commuted every other Sunday from Fort Myers to Clearwater and back. Though the long distance between us was one factor, I also thought perhaps there could be a need for a separate sangha group down in our area. With the blessings of Rev. Kamiya, then Reverend of New York Church, I decided to give it a try. I was encouraged to seek out the Unitarian Universalist Church in my area, if there was one, as a possible place to start, since our two churches have had a long-standing friendship since the days of Founder Niwano. Gratefully things all worked out—Buddha's arrangement!

Our first year was truly a year of constant learning for me. It involved trying to meet and network with as many UU's as I could in order to attract some visitors to our group. I had to learn how to get into a routine of sending in our weekly events to the UU calendar so everyone could know who we are and what we are doing. I had observed Rev. Nick Ozuna's program in RK Tampa Bay, and tried as best as I could to emulate his model. I shall always be very grateful to him and his sangha for that. I am also extremely indebted to Rev. Kamiya and New York Church. He somehow managed to find the time and have the energy to visit our sangha several times. His church also donated \$2,000 to our sangha as seed money to get us going. The guidance I received from Reverends Kamiya and Ozuna is also invaluable.

One important activity that our sangha has participated in is taking charge of the refreshments after some of the Memorial services for UU members. The UU church asked if our group would be willing to do that, and we did so three times during these first two years. We also have joined with the UU church and about 12 other churches in Lee County, Florida to work together for social justice issues. This interfaith work has been a wonderful way to meet other church groups in our area, as well as being a way to make our world a better place. The group is called LIFE, standing for LEE Interfaith for Empowerment.

Among our many challenges is the fact that the population of southwest Florida fluctuates quite a bit during the year. Our area is quite popular with those that live up in northern US, especially on the eastern and midwestern parts. Because of that we have what is called a "snowbird" population from January through March or early April. This can also include numbers of people from Canada, Germany, and other European areas. My first two July's while in Florida were spent primarily in Japan, completing my Associate Dharma Leader training. It wasn't until this summer when I was here all summer that I realized how really quiet it is here in the summer, especially in July, a time when many southwest Floridians go up north to visit family and friends. I had some very meager turnouts for services this past summer, and will still need to think over how I wish to proceed this next summer. Our group seems to ebb and flow just like the tides down here. I have tried to be innovative as I can to get the word out about our group, with ads in a local free paper, brochures, a site on Meetup.com, Facebook page, website (thanks to RKINA), church bulletins, and an ad magnet on the back of my car.

Exciting things we have done lately include my doing Tedori. I have been visiting the home of two of my members, and another interested family that is not a member (yet!), giving them instruction in basic Buddhism. I have also worked with one of my members that is in the Advanced Lotus Sutra training. I must say that working with all of them has enhanced my own knowledge and practice tremendously. I sometimes wonder who is learning more. Two other activities we have added this year have been a monthly movie night and monthly book night. For movie night we show movies of spiritual or social justice issues, and the book night has focused on selections from "The Best Buddhist Writings of 2011." We often draw a totally different audience for these events, so thus far there hasn't been much crossover from these activities back to our service on Sunday. Beginning in February we will also start a monthly silent meditation night.



Art from the Sanghas by Rose Cirigliano

Kimberly Littleton from Ft. Myers

The cards were first made in 2010 and my thought was just sending peace to all - the cards were sent to friends and family visualizing that peace expanding to those they know and so on and so on. I think about what difference I can make in what ever way I can.



**Origami
By
Keiko
Idesako
NY**



Here is a photo of an origami wedding bouquet by Keiko Idesako, NY Church.

The bouquet consists of mix-media: paper, beads slipped onto wires for the babies breath done by Yuri Sugino.

Keiko Idesako has been an Origami teacher for many years. A wedding planner discovered her work and commissioned Ms. Idesako to make one bouquet as a souvenir for a Turkish Bride and Groom. This particular bouquet took several hours to create.

Yuri Sugino is a beading artist and teacher.

Photography from Mary Tracy Sigman

These are from the Everglades and the canal behind our home.

**Spring
rain on my
roof be-
gins to
drum:**

**Drips
from the
willow,
petals
from the
plum.**

- Shoha



**How many
butterflies
have
winged
their way.**

**Over this
roofed
wall in a
summer's
day?**

- Basho



Art from the Sanghas

by Rose Cirigliano

O brightest moon of autumn, all night long

I've strolled around the pond, in search of song.

- Basho

NY'S Hiro Yoshimura



**Buddha
and
Naga
King**

**Original
Drawing
By
Hiro
Yoshimura**

"Buddha & Naga king (Snake king)"
The Buddha shortly after his enlightenment was meditating in a forest when a great storm arose. But graciously, Naga king (Snake king) Mucalinda gave shelter to the Buddha from the storm by covering the Buddha's head with his 7 snake heads. Since then snake sometimes represent as the protector & guardian of Buddhism.

2013 is the year of snake, it means steady progress and attention to detail are important, as well as focus & discipline. May you all be protected, guarded, and guided! Happy New Year!

from Hiro

Buddhist Sutras by Kogen Mizuno

It is one thing to sit at our computers and order a fresh, new copy of *The Lotus Sutra*. It is quite another to imagine and appreciate the hazardous journeys the various sutras traveled over more than twenty-five hundred years to arrive in our hands. And travel they did. First transmitted orally, then written on palm leaves and other materials, Buddha's sermons inched their way from India over steep mountain passes, through narrow canyons, over raging rivers, and across hot and thirsty deserts. To complicate matters, they also traversed different cultural and language barriers.

The book, *Buddhist Sutras: Origin, Development and Transmission*, is a masterpiece. It was written by Kogen Mizuno and, in 1982, published (in English) by Kosei Publishing. The author is a Japanese Buddhist scholar, and it shows. Some of us are not, and we easily recognize those who are. It is, therefore, our good fortune that he starts with the simple and goes to the more complex. Simple, such as the meaning of the word *sutra*.

Before Buddhism, the word *sutra* was used in Brahmanism, Jainism and later in various Indian schools of philosophy. "The Sanskrit word *sutra* originally meant a string or thread," explains Mizuno. "Important words or brief phrases strung together were thus called sutras by analogy with the string or thread with which a garland of flowers is made." And here it starts to get complicated for we learn, according to Mizuno, that these days the word *sutra* is "...rarely used in the above sense: it refers instead to all the sermons of Buddha." And there are 84,000 of them.

So now the stage is set. Barely into this scholarly work we get just a glimpse of how much we don't know about sutras. Nearly every page turning opens new vistas of knowledge and understanding. Sutras. Buddhism. They go hand in hand, but there have been obstacles. Take language, for example. What is the main problem of translating Sanskrit into Chinese? Exactly what language did Sakyamuni speak? Do sutras contain the *exact words* of Buddha, or the *meaning* of what he preached? Are there spurious (not genuine) sutras?

In answer to the first question, Mizuno says that "...when Buddhist sutras were first translated into Chinese, in the early centuries of the Christian Era, the Chinese found Buddhist doctrines almost impossible to comprehend because the sutras introduced both terminology and philosophical concepts unknown in China." Answers to other questions are also found in the book. If we desire information, this book is a wish-fulfilling jewel of our dreams.

But there's more. As we read this book we receive more than new information and answers to questions. We also receive a *sense of awe* of the gargantuan effort, dedication and hundreds of years of travel, of translation and of transmission that it took to deliver the sutras and hence the Dharma to us, right here and right now.

Deep bows to all our Buddhist ancestors who did their work so well.

Nancy Anderson, a member of Rishsho Kosei-kai, received her Lay Buddhist Ordination at Shasta Abbey Buddhist Monastery in northern California. She produces and edits the monthly Dharma Center News for the Dharma Center of Klamath Falls (OR). She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from Montana State University and a Master of Arts Degree in Business Management/Human Relations from Webster University. She is a Certified Meditation Instructor, trained in Vipassana meditation instruction and certified by the University of Holistic Theology.

**People born in Snake years:
1905, 1917, 1929, 1941, 1953,
1965, 1977, 1989, 2001**

**February 10
Year of the Snake**

The Introduction of 2013 Year of Snake

2013 is the year of the black Snake begins on February 10th shortly after the New moon in Aquarius, the humanitarian of the zodiac. This 2013 year of Snake is meant for steady progress and attention to detail. Focus and discipline will be necessary for you to achieve what you set out to create. The Snake is the sixth sign of the Chinese Zodiac, which consists of 12 Animal Signs. It is the enigmatic, intuitive, introspective, refined and collected of the Animals Signs. Ancient Chinese wisdom says a Snake in the house is a good omen because it means that your family will not starve.



The Common Character of People Born in the Year of Snake

People born in the Year of the Snake are reputed to be thoughtful and wise and to approach problems rationally and logically, seldom instinctively. Such people are complex beings, they are clever and men of few words from their birth. Their business is always going well, but they are stingy very often. They are sometimes egoistic and conceited. However they can be very active in their friends' life. They are often too active, not believing other people and relying only on themselves. Snakes are also very insightful and naturally intuitive. If anyone has a sixth sense, it's those born in the Snake year. This is partly what makes them so mysterious. Snakes come in all varieties of colors and patterns. And maybe that's why people born in the Snake year love to appreciate beauty. People with the Chinese zodiac snake sign are very stylish, fashionable and have exceptional taste.

People born in the Year of the Snake also have a sure touch in money matters but are also inclined to be greedy and somewhat egoistical. Determined and ambitious characters of Snakes take their failures hard. They are usually very attractive on the outside and inwardly, that, taking into consideration their frivolity, can lead to some family problems.

The Cosmic Element and Color of 2013 year of Snake

The 2013 year of Snake is Water Snake, Water Snakes are lucky with finances, they always seem to have money flowing their way. They are adventurous spirits and love to take risks. They are also very intelligent and often a wellspring of creative ideas. Water Snakes love to socialize and meet new friends. They are proud of their achievements, and also very thoughtful and considerate of others.

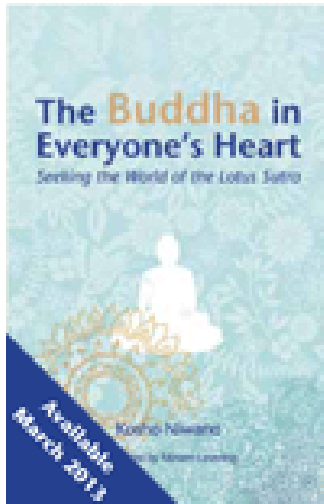
The color of the 2013 year of Snake is Black. Black color is the Space, Arctic night, darkness on the Abyss, this is a color of deep waters. The Black Snake will bring people unexpected changes, instability, and changeability. That is why it is important in the year of Snake to plan everything beforehand, and evaluate adequately before taking any actions. You need to be more careful and cautious than ever.

The Overall Trend in 2013 Year of Snake

The 2013 Snake of year has ability to read complicated situation quickly in a controlled manner which is good for business. Signing documents of any kind requires very thorough attention. 2013 horoscope predict it is a good year to begin important detail work. Research and investigation are supported. The Snake has sneaky energy that can be to your advantage. Look for the holes in the loop. A new-found ambition to greatness will inspire you to be all you can be, and provide you with the follow through to actually achieve your goals, And, 2013 year of the Snake also supports added responsibility,

But 2013 Snake need to watch for fanatical commitments since Snakes inclination to spend money quickly than earn them may produce tensions in personal relationships. Create a safe space to work from this 2013 year. The Snake likes protection, needs to feel safe and secure to utilize its special analytical skills. This is the year to make headway in slow and methodical ways. Things will definitely be accomplished as you focus forward.

Bulletin Board



The Buddha in Everyone's Heart

Seeing the World of the Lotus Sutra

by Kosho Niwano

AVAILABLE MARCH 2013

Pre-order available via Amazon,
or contact RKINA.

RK in Action

- The Dayton Center will be participating in the Wright State University Interfaith Dialogue in the spring.

Beginning with this issue, we will highlight various RK Dharma Centers and Churches. It is our hope that by the end of the year, we will be able to give you a glimpse into every RK center, both large and small, in the US. We will start with Oklahoma City, Denver, Klamath Falls, Dayton, Dallas, Tampa and Ft. Myers Florida in this issue.

How to Subscribe

To subscribe to this newsletter contact the minister at your Dharma Center or visit the RKINA website. www.rkina.org

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Submit articles, calendar events, questions for “Dear Abhidharma” and creative works through your Dharma Center representative. “Dear Abhidharma” questions can also be sent directly to Rev. Kris Ladusau. krisladusau@gmail.com
Suggestions and comments are always welcome. Please send them to Jane Perri jane.perri@rkina-dayton.com

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Traveling ?

Try visiting
one of your
sister sanghas!



Locations and Calendar of Centers

Rissho Kosei-kai International of North America (Irvine CA)

[Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Orange County \(CA\)](#)

[Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Tampa Bay \(FL\)](#)

[Rissho Kosei-kai of Ft. Myers](#)

Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Church of Hawaii (Pearl City, Oahu)

[Rissho Kosei-kai Maui Dharma Center \(HI\)](#)

[Rissho Kosei-kai Kona Dharma Center \(HI\)](#)

Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Church of Los Angeles (CA)

[Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of San Antonio \(TX\)](#)

[Rissho Kosei-kai of Buddhist Center of Arizona \(Tucson\)](#)

[Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Colorado \(Denver\)](#)

[Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of San Diego \(CA\)](#)

[Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Las Vegas \(NV\)](#)

Rissho Kosei-kai of San Francisco (CA)

[Rissho Kosei-kai of Seattle's Buddhist Learning Center \(WA\)](#)

[Rissho Kosei-kai of Sacramento \(CA\)](#)

[Rissho Kosei-kai of San Jose \(CA\)](#)

[Lotus Buddhist Circle of San Mateo \(CA\)](#)

[Rissho Kosei-kai of Vancouver \(Canada\)](#)

Rissho Kosei-kai of New York (NY)

[Rissho Kosei-kai of Chicago \(IL\)](#)

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Oklahoma (OKC)

[Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Dallas](#)

[Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Denver \(CO\)](#)

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