



Sangha in Motion

Bimonthly eNewsletter for RK Members in the US

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 4

JULY-AUGUST 2014

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

HIGHLIGHTS

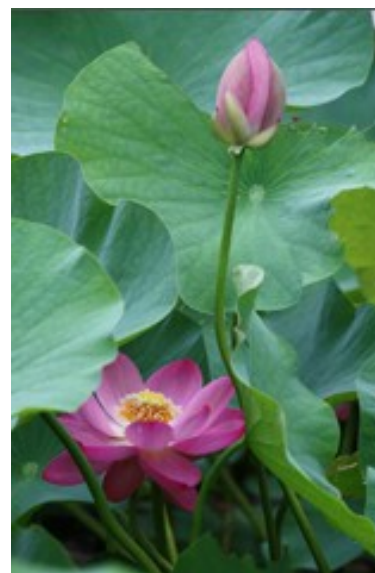
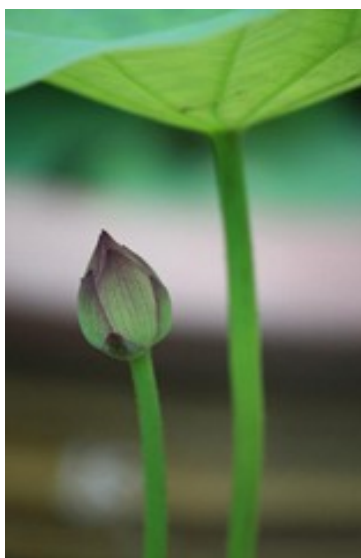
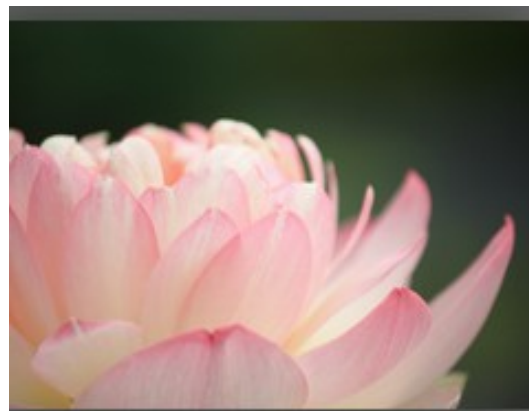
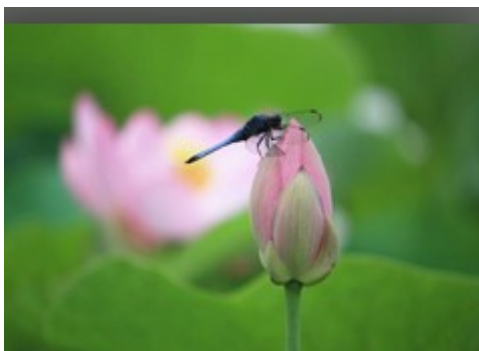
Obon Festival

Lots of news from
the Sanghas!

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Lotus in Bloom at the Great Sacred Hall



Guidance from President Niwano



Giving Leads to Wisdom

"Words from President Nichiko Niwano, August 2010 Guidance,

"Giving is one of the virtuous deeds categorized in the Six Perfections as the first practice that a bodhisattva undertakes. A Buddhist scripture says, 'Donation is the Pure Land on bodhisattvas,' which means that giving is important to those learning the Buddha's teaching, and can be called the bodhisattva practice closest at hand.

What, then, is the spirit of giving that supports this practice? It is compassion, consideration, and empathy."

"The spirit of giving arises from compassion and consideration for others so that we do not just stand by, but cannot help doing something for others. It may not be wrong to say that giving will give equal joy to the donor, and that moreover the donor and the recipient experience happiness together."

A friendly look, a cheerful face, kind

words, volunteer service, being considerate, giving someone a seat, offering a place to rest—these are the seven types of nonmaterial donation, the practice of compassion that we are taught anyone can put into practice. The point of this teaching is to know joy of giving as a manifestation of the compassionate mind, even without financial means.

Shakyamuni preaches the meaning of giving this way: "Those who share what little they have with others are practicing the Dharma. Even though people who are capable of making thousands of sacrifices have made hundreds of thousands of sacrifices, they do not receive even one hundredth of the merits received for such deeds from those with little."

What he means is not that we should give because we have much, but that giving even when we have little brings us greater merits.

Commentary

That Donation is the first of the Six Perfections is important and significant. Donation brings us out of ourselves, out of our self. Once out of our self we recognize (consider) the other. This recognition of the other is President Niwano's first step in the spirit of giving.

Then we begin to relate to the suffering of another being, and begin to realize their suffering is ours, too. This is empathy, and it is the second step.

That our happiness is connected

by Mary Sigman

with the happiness of the other, and when they suffer, so do we, is compassion, step three.

When Donation is really a part of our practice, it means we are always ready to help. Our eyes will begin to see suffering we could not previously recognize. Our minds of delusion have taught us to ignore the suffering of others. Donation helps us to clear that delusion so we can see suffering, see it everywhere. That is wisdom.

It is then up to us to feel our hearts be moved and to provide help. And that is the bodhisattva way.



RKINA



From July 5- 7, International ministers, including U.S. ministers gathered in Ome, Japan for a Minister Training and Seminar led by Dr. Shoji Mori. Dr. Mori is researching the Founder's life and gave everyone the results of his findings thus far. Rev. Kosho Niwano joined his seminar and reflected many of her memorable encounters with the Founder.

The three day seminar was not just study and hoza, but on the afternoon of the second day the ministers had opportunities to do hiking, field golf on the grass, tai-chi type exercise and stretching, nature walking with environmental awareness, and some indoor activities.

President Niwano came in the morning of the last day to hear some of the ministers' reflections of the 3-day training and also offered a question and answer session. The ministers also held a large hoza in the evening of the 2nd day with Rev. Numata serving as hoza facilitator.



Hawaii

by Brad Tom

From July 18-19, Risho Kosei-kai of Hawaii hosted about 400 people each on both the Friday & Saturday for their annual Bon Dance event. The Hawaii sangha participated with offering candles for ancestors, food booths, games, and of course dancing by both the Risho Kosei-kai musicians as well as two Okinawan dance groups. It was a very large event and many of the church members participated by cooking, serving, setting up and tearing down everything associated with the event.



Obon Festival







"A musical instrument is created to be played... when it is played - as spirit moves through the instrument - the tree (from which the violin was made) also continues to live on. This is how everything is connected."

Oklahoma City & Denver by Rev. Kris Ladusau

Reflection on Donation

Today I gave away my violin.

I have had it with me since 1972. I began playing in 1963 on a school instrument and when I became serious about further training, my parents bought me a violin of my own.

This instrument was with me through university where I majored in violin performance, and it stayed with me through years of playing music professionally. I have spent many hours holding it next to me, experiencing the physical pain from long hours in the practice room, the pleasure of playing some of the most beautiful music ever written, and the overwhelming joy of creating music with others.

Through the years, my life took me in other directions. I had no time to practice, and to play professionally, practice is a necessity. Years passed, and in 2001, I put together a string quartet to play at the reception for the opening of the RK Dharma Center. In 2003, I played for my niece's wedding. The final time that I played was in the privacy of my home. My friend Curtis Blair had died and I played a song for him.

Recently, I had a dream that I gave away the violin. When I woke up - it felt right. I didn't have anyone in my family that played, so I could not pass it down that way. Then I remembered the daughter of a friend of mine. She is still young, but doing very well on her school instrument and is serious about continuing to play. I know it can be difficult for families to afford good musical instruments for their children. I called and asked if they would be interested in taking the violin for free. We met at the Dharma Center, and when I gave the violin to them, they were very happy and very grateful.

A musical instrument is created to be played. It cannot fully express the reason for its existence, sitting in a closet. Furthermore, when it is played - as spirit moves through the instrument - the tree (from which the violin was made) also continues to live on. This is how everything is connected.

I experienced tremendous joy playing music on that violin and I will always have wonderful memories.

I also experienced tremendous joy in giving away that violin to a young musician who will in turn, create wonderful memories in her lifetime.

And to see that happen is a universal gift to me - giving and receiving are one.



Rev. Kris visited the Denver Sangha on 6-15-14

Los Angeles



Mrs. Kayo Sato of the Family Education Institute in Japan offered seminars on Family Education at Rissho Kosei-kai of Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Denver Buddhist Centers. Members from San Francisco and San Antonio attended the seminar held in Los Angeles.



Los Angeles

by Rev. Nick Ozuna



**Keiko
Kiyama
Japan
Emergency
NGO
Visits LA**

On June 15th, Ms. Keiko Kiyama from Japan Emergency NGO (JEN) was invited by Rissho Kosei-kai of Los Angeles to talk about the emergency relief efforts that JEN is doing around the world in such places as Haiti and the Sudan. Kiyama offered suggestions in how members could support their efforts by participating in the Donate a Meal Movement and other proactive measures. Former RK Los Angeles minister, Rev. Kodaka, shared more about the Donate a Meal Movements efforts at Rissho Kosei-kai Headquarters.



World Youth Day in LA



On May 18, thirteen Rissho Kosei-kai of Los Angeles youth members joined together in bodhisattva spirit to pick up trash on the streets around the Buddhist Center for World Youth Day. Afterwards, they enjoyed a



Ft. Myers Activities

by Mary Sigman



*Rev. Fujita
and Yasuko
Vendley
visit from
RK New
York.*

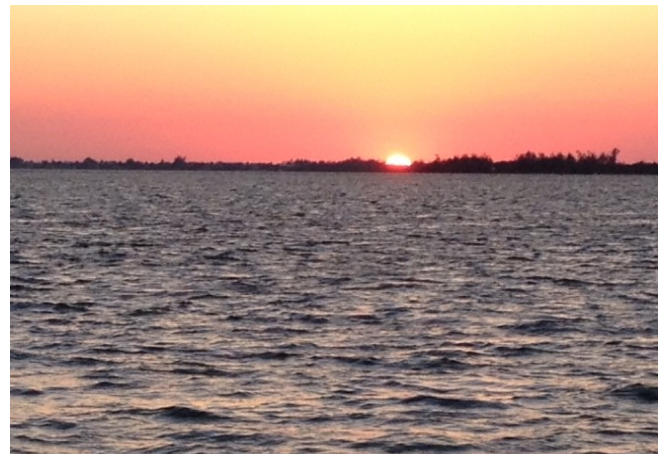
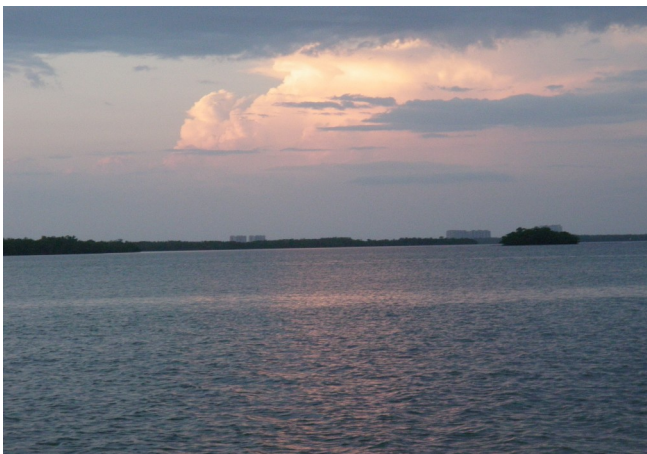


President Niwano wrote in his August 2014 Guidance about being grateful for the summer heat. Well, we certainly can relate to those words, as we are in the midst of the very warm and humid southwest Florida summer. We are grateful we have had no hurricanes thus far, and the most gorgeous summer clouds are now to be found. This gives spectacular sunsets most every evening. When we feel the coolness of a breeze, the coolness of cloud cover, or the relief of air conditioning, we are most grateful.

On June 14-15, we were visited by Rev. Fujita and Yasuko Vendley from RK New York. Our sangha was energized by the wonderful presentation this dynamic duo gave us, as we were instructed in a brief history of RK, Founder Niwano, and President Niwano. We look forward to future visits from them!

On July 17, we celebrated Ura-Bon-E (Ullambana) for the first time with all the RK centers. Our members felt very moved when hearing the names of their loved ones, and in our hoza we shared our lovely memories of them. We felt deep gratitude to our ancestors for their gift of life and love.

And we are grateful for our sangha members, every one of them. We welcomed into our sangha a new member recently, John Nelson. He will be 91 in November! You can read one of his lovely writings and learn more about him later in this issue. His weekly presence is a gift to us. He asked that I wait to take his photo until his mustache grows back. We have been focusing this summer on caring for one another in our sangha, helping to make our sangha a web of compassion. We thank Rev. Fujita and Yasuko Vendley for guiding us in this direction.



"Volunteers are not paid -- not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless."

Never underestimate the difference **YOU** can make in the lives of others. Step forward, reach out and help. This week reach to someone that might need a lift.

— Pablo
 VERYBESTQUOTES.COM

Even the **SMALLEST** act of **CARING** for another person is like a drop of water -it will make ripples throughout the **entire pond...**

— Jessy and Bryan Matteo
 VERYBESTQUOTES.COM



No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another.

Charles Dickens

Family Matters—The Silent Buddha (Generosity)

Buddhist Tales for Young & Old
Prince Goodspeaker www.buddhanet.net



Once upon a time, there was a very rich man living in Benares, in northern India. When his father died, he inherited even more wealth. He thought, “Why should I use this treasure for myself alone? Let my fellow beings also benefit from these riches.”

So he built dining halls at the four gates of the city—North, East, South, and West. In these halls he gave food freely to all who wished it. He became famous for his generosity. It also became known that he and his followers were practitioners of the Five Training Steps.

In those days, there was a Silent Buddha meditating in the forest near Benares. He was called Buddha because he was enlightened. This means that he no longer experienced himself, the one called “I” or “me,” as being in any way different from all life living itself. So he was able to experience life as it really is, in every present moment.

Being one with all life, he was filled with compassion and sympathy for the unhappiness of all beings. So he wished to teach and help them to be enlightened just as he was. But the time of our story was a most unfortunate time, a very sad time. It was a time when no one else was able to understand the Truth, and experience life as it really is. And since this Buddha knew this, that was why he was Silent.

While meditating in the forest, the Silent Buddha entered into a very high mental state. His concentration was so great that he remained in one position for seven days and nights, without eating or drinking.

When he returned to the ordinary state, he was in danger of dying from starvation. At the usual time of day, he went to collect alms food at the mansion of the rich man of Benares.

When the rich man had just sat down to have lunch, he saw the Silent Buddha coming with his alms bowl. He rose from his seat respectfully. He told his servant to go and give alms to him.

Meanwhile, Mara, the god of death, had been watching. Mara is the one who is filled with greed for power over all beings. He can only have this power because of the fear of death.

Since a Buddha lives life fully in each moment, he has no desire for future life, and no fear of future death. Therefore, since Mara could have not power over the Silent Buddha, he wished to destroy him. When he saw this, the servant was frightened to death. He ran back to his master. The rich man asked him why he returned without giving the alms food. He replied, “my lord, there is a deep pit full of red hot burning coals just in front of the Silent Buddha.”

The rich man thought, “This man must be seeing things!” So he sent another servant with alms food. He replied, “My lord, there is a deep pit full of red hot burning coals just in front of the Silent Buddha.”

The rich man thought, “This man must be seeing things!” So

he sent another servant with alms food. He also was frightened by the same pit of fiery coals. Several servants were sent, but all returned frightened to death.

Then the master thought, “there is no doubt that Mara, the god of death, must be trying to prevent my wholesome deed of giving alms food to the Silent Buddha. Because wholesome deeds are the beginning of the path to enlightenment, this Mara wishes to stop me at all costs. But he does not understand my confidence in the Silent Buddha and my determination to give.”

So he himself took the alms food to the Silent Buddha. He too saw the flames rising from the fiery pit. Then he looked up and saw the terrible god of death, floating above in the sky. He asked, “Who are you?” Mara replied, I am the god of death!”

“Did you create this pit of fire?” asked the man. “I did,” said the god. “Why did you do so?” “To keep you from giving alms food, and in this way to cause the Silent Buddha to die!” Also to prevent your wholesome deed from helping you on the path to enlightenment, so you will remain in my power.”

The rich man of Benares said, “Oh Mara, god of death, the evil one, you cannot kill the Silent Buddha, and you cannot prevent my wholesome giving? Let us see whose determination is stronger!”

Then he looked across the ranging pit of fire, and said to the calm and gentle Enlightened One, “Oh Silent Buddha, let the light of Truth continue to shine as an example to us. Accept this gift of life!”

So saying, he forgot himself entirely, and in that moment there was no fear of death. As he stepped into the burning pit, he felt himself being lifted up by a beautiful cool lotus blossom. The pollen from this miraculous flower spread into the air, and covered him with the glowing color of gold. While standing in the heart of the lotus, the Great Being poured the alms food into the bowl of the Silent Buddha. Mara, god of death, was defeated!

In appreciation for this wonderful gift, the Silent Buddha raised his hand in blessing. The rich man bowed in homage, joining his hands above his head. Then the Silent Buddha departed from Benares, and went to the Himalayan forest.

Still standing on the wonderful lotus, glowing with the color of gold, the generous master taught his followers. He told them that practicing the Five Training Steps is necessary to purify the mind. He told them that with such a pure mind, there is great merit in giving alms—indeed it is truly the gift of lift!

When he had finished teaching, the fiery pit and the lovely cool lotus completely disappeared.

THE MORAL IS: Have no fear when doing wholesome deeds.

Dear Abhi-Dharma

by Rev. Kris Ladusau



Dear Abhi-Dharma,

I am curious about something I saw in the Kyoten (chant book) recently. Can you please help me understand what it means? In the Sutra of Meditation on the Practice of Bodhisattva Universal Wisdom, it says: "... and bring the mother of bodhisattvas to mind." What is the "mother of bodhisattvas?"

Curious in California



Dear Curious –

That is a great question. I would like to offer two perspectives. The first would be a reference to a line in the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings (Three –Fold Lotus Sutra) Chapter 3 – “Ten Merits.” In this chapter, under the description of the 4th Merit received by those who study and practice, it says: *The king—the buddha and the queen—this sutra, come together and a bodhisattva is born of them.* So this points to the “mother of bodhisattvas” as being the **Lotus Sutra**. This would be the answer you would hear most often to your question.

I would also like to give an additional view found in the lines that follow your original Kyoten quote: ... *and bring the mother of bodhisattvas to mind. Countless surpassing skillful means are gained by reflecting on the Ultimate Reality of All Things* (also known as the Ten Suchnesses – found at the end of Lotus Sutra Chapter 2 – “Skillful Means”). Although this too, is part of the Lotus Sutra (first answer to the question), I want to point out the importance of the 10 Suchnesses in relation to bodhisattvas.

A part of our maturing into bodhisattvas is the development of skillful means which is useful in sharing the Dharma with others. From this perspective, I can also see the Ultimate Reality of All Things (Ten Suchnesses) contributing in the creation of bodhisattvas.

Gassho,
Abhi-Dharma



Art from the Sanghas by Rose Cirigliano

Ft. Myers Poet

John B. Nelson

"John B. Nelson will be 91 in November 2014. He became a member two months ago. Mary Sigman, one of our leaders in Ft. Myers picks him up every Sunday and takes him to RK recitations and Hoza. On his father's side, John is part Cherokee. He is and has always been greatly influenced by his paternal Native American culture, which fuses smoothly into Buddhism. John's poem "Today" is most appropriate in keeping with "Living the Lotus Sutra." No surprise that he gravitated toward Rissho Kosei-kai. J.B. Nelson often invites a friend to tag along. An amazing man who is living Tadori, too."

TODAY

And a voice cried out from the chasm of ebbing
darkness...

"Harken unto my words,
I am Today!
I am that which was anticipated.
I am the glean field of an irrevocable past.

I am Today,
when new hopes will spring forth in the hearts of many,
and where, with the hours of my being, the seeds
of the future will be sowed.

I am Today!
Make haste all who partake of me.
Be aware and be grateful
for what you have been granted.
Make all your choices with care
Because I am Today and today only,
and I will never be here again."



Art from the Sanghas by Rose Cirigliano

Dayton Quilt Artist

Jane Perri

Rose: Jane, how did you get started making quilts? Do you remember your first one?

My first quilt was completed in 1977 as a wedding gift for my sister. I did not have a sewing machine so the appliqué and quilting were all done by hand. I had absolutely no idea what I was doing but it came out OK. My sister loved it. The second one was for my brother for his first bachelor pad.

Rose: What is the one of which you are most proud?

The most difficult one is the one I just completed, a crib quilt for a new granddaughter born this June. Almost all of my previous quilts were pieced, embroidery, felted or a combination. This crib quilt was needle turned reverse appliqué, which I have not tried before. I made matching crib bumpers and a ballerina teddy bear which wound up looking like an alien ballerina. Thankfully, my kids liked it.

Rose: Where do you get the ideas for your quilt designs?

I subscribe to several quilting magazines and go to quilt shows, read books, and my photography also inspires me. I am in phase of making pictorial wall art quilts which has been a lot of fun. They only take me 4-6 months to make instead of 1-2 years.

Rose: Do you make a design first? Would you tell us a little of how you proceed and the process of quilt art?

I will make dozens of sketches in the thinking phase but they never end of looking exactly like anything I sketched. As the piece begins to speak, I let it go where it will. Typically, I am working on two quilts at a time, since there is a percolation period. Once the design is set on one of them, I begin to think about a third one. Rarely is there more than two days time between ending one and starting another because this is how I reduce my stress. I like to embellish the wall quilts with beads, crystals, paint, ribbons or anything else that comes looks good.

Rose: Not long ago, I saw a quilt you presented to Tokyo Headquarters. I know you played a big part in commissioning it from various cities where Rissho Kosei-kai has Dharma Centers. I saw this amazingly beautiful finished product hanging in headquarters. Would you explain exactly how you got inspired to take on a quilt of this major scale?

I was in Tokyo on an extremely hot and humid summer day, sitting in front of a rare air conditioner trying to cool off and finish developing my last lecture of the International Dharma Teacher's Seminar. My mind wandered to all of the great people I have met in RK from around the world, so many people coming together with the same intention, to improve their lives and the lives of others. We are all different but we are all the same. I just thought it would be a fun opportunity to bring global members together in a project that reveals this distinction and sameness.

Rose: How did you get other artists to contribute?

I talked to participants in the group to get their opinions, then took it to Rev. Suzuki. He thought it was wonderfully strange and approved the idea. I wrote up a description of the project and he took it to the ministers meetings and got their buy-in. Then the instructions were translated into the various languages and sent out. The individual blocks that came in were amazingly beautiful. The quilt is pictured here, I encourage readers to enlarge it to see the wonderful global contributions from twenty Dharma Centers.

Fabric Art

Quilts

by Jane Perri

Lotus Spiral
Needle Felted then
quilted
Won Best of Show
in local competition



Midnight Awakening
Pieced



Winter Sparkle
Pieced and
embroidered



Lotus Pond (center only)



Convergence—Pieced
Won Second Place in local competition

Icicles in Winter
Pieced



Riding on the Wings of a Crane



Playing the Blues
Pieced, appliquéd, embroidered, over 2400 pieces
Song "Playing the Blues" is embroidered around the perimeter



RK Around the World Project hanging in Fumon Hall Tokyo



Tapestry embroidered with metal thread then painted. Won "Best Of Show" in local competition.



Layette set for new granddaughter Adriana Jane "Swirls and Curls for Ana"



Winter Roses embroidered Won First Place in local competition



"Sunset on the Savanna" For granddaughter Emma Appliqué and pieced



"I Do Believe in Fairies" Appliqué and pieced



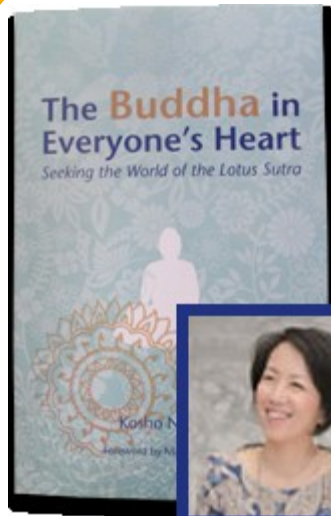
Karmic Cycles Pieced

Twin bed quilt made in 1983, pieced

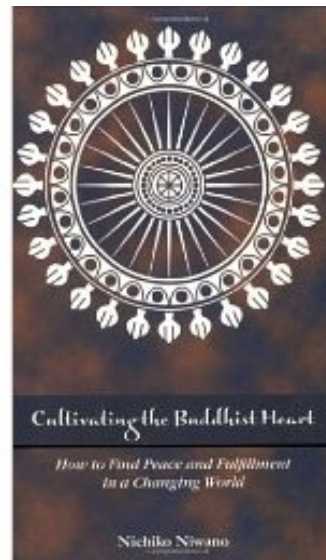


A Fan of Baltimore Pieced, embroidered and appliquéd

Bulletin Board



Rev Koshi Niwano's new book is now available for purchase. To obtain your copy contact your minister or RKINA



Cultivating the Buddhist Heart is now available as a Kindle eBook!

Purchase your copy on Amazon for \$4.99 and receive your instant download

RK in Action

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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 (Los Angeles CA)

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Orange County (CA)

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Tampa Bay (FL)

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 of Ft. Myers

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Oklahoma (OKC)

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Dallas

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Denver (CO)

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Klamath Falls (OR)

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Dayton (OH)