

Rissho Kosei-kai Headquarters

2-11-1 Wada, Suginami-ku,

Tokyo 166-8537, Japan

Tel: +81-3-5341-1641

Fax: +81-3-3381-9792

info@rk-world.org • www.rk-world.org

Rissho Kosei-kai of Hawaii

Tel: 1-808-455-3212

info@mail.rkhawaii.org • www.rkhawaii.org

Rissho Kosei-kai Maui Dharma Center

Tel: 1-808-242-6175

Rissho Kosei-kai Kona Branch

Tel: 1-808-325-0015

Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Church of Los Angeles

Tel: 1-323-269-4741

rk-la@sbcglobal.net • www.rk-la.com

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Oklahoma

Tel: 1-405-943-5030

Kladusau@cox.net

www.rkok-dharmacenter.org

Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Church of San Antonio

Tel: 1-210-561-7991

tozuna@juno.com

Rissho Kosei-kai of San Francisco

Tel: 1-650-359-6951

rksf@earthlink.net

Rissho Kosei-kai of Seattle's Buddhist Learning Center

Tel: 1-253-945-0024

rkseattle@juno.com

Rissho Kosei-kai of New York

Tel: 1-212-867-5677

koseiny@aol.com

Rissho Kosei-kai of Chicago

Tel: 1-847-394-0809

murakami3370@hotmail.com

Rissho Kosei-kai of Boston

Tel: 1-617-288-2286

info@rkk-boston.org

Rissho Kosei-kai do Brasil

Tel: 55-11-5549-4446

hiromi_mat@ig.com.br • www.rkk.org.br

Rissho Kosei-kai do Mogi das Cruzes

Tel: 55-11-4724-8862

Rissho Kosei-kai of Taipei, Taiwan

Tel: 886-2-2381-1632

maio.maio@msa.hinet.net

Rissho Kosei-kai of Tainan, Taiwan

Tel: 886-6-289-1478

Rissho Kosei-kai of Kaoping, Taiwan

Tel: 886-8-734-1241

Rissho Kosei-kai of Taichung, Taiwan

Tel: 886-4-2222-3899

Rissho Kosei-kai of South Asia

Tel: 81-3-5341-1226

teruo.saito@kosei-kai.or.jp

Rissho Kosei-kai of Bangkok

Tel: 66-2-716-8141

thairissho@csloxinfo.com

Rissho Kosei-kai of Chittagong

Tel: 880-3-1285-0238

bimanrkkbimanrkk@yahoo.com

Rissho Kosei-kai of Dhaka**Rissho Kosei-kai of Kathmandu**

Tel: 977-1-552-9464

nepalrkk@mail.com.np

Rissho Kosei-kai of Colombo

Tel: 94-11-2-72-3035

rkkrsrilanka@visualnet.lk

Rissho Kosei-kai of Delhi

Tel: 91-11-2623-5060

sakusena@hotmail.com

Rissho Kosei-kai of Hong Kong

Tel: 852-2-369-1836

ada_ng@so-net.com.hk

Rissho Kosei-kai of Mongolia

Tel: 976-11-310147

rkkmongolia@yahoo.co.jp

Rissho Kosei-kai of Sakhalin

Tel: 7-4242-43-78-56

Rissho Kosei-kai (Genève)

Tel: 41-22-798-5162

rkkgva@bluemail.ch

Rissho Kosei-kai of the UK

Tel: 44-1865-241-131

rkk-uk@jais.co.uk

Korean Rissho Kosei-kai

Tel: 82-2-796-5571

krkk1125@hotmail.com

Korean Rissho Kosei-kai of Busan

Tel: 82-51-643-5571

Please access Rissho Kosei-kai's official website for further information on the Buddhist organization and an up-to-date international directory. <http://www.rk-world.org>

Rissho Kosei-kai

Buddhism for Today



Rissho Kosei-kai International of North America

4255 Campus Drive, #A245
Irvine, CA 92612 (949) 336-4430
www.rkina.org



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What Is Rissho Kosei-kai?

Basic Scripture

The Lotus Sutra is Rissho Kosei-kai's basic scripture. At its heart are three major concepts of the One (Buddha) Vehicle of Buddhism: First, all sentient beings are endowed with the buddha-nature, the seeds for becoming a buddha; they thus are able to attain perfect awakening, or buddhahood. Second, the Buddha is eternal, existing from the infinite past and appearing in many forms through the ages to guide and succor all beings through the wonderful Dharma. Third, the noblest form of Buddhist practice is the way of the bodhisattva, devoted to attaining awakening not only personally but with all sentient beings, and with all other living and nonliving entities.



Focus of Devotion

Rissho Kosei-kai's religious faith is deeply rooted in the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha as the first human being awakened to the Dharma—the invisible entity that sustains us, guides us, and improves us. For Buddhists, it is natural to symbolize the Dharma through an image of Shakyamuni Buddha, who not only preached what became Buddhism but was a living exemplar of it. A symbolic image of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni is enshrined in the organization's Great Sacred Hall in Tokyo. The more than 240 Rissho Kosei-kai churches throughout Japan and overseas also each has a focus of devotion before which the members of some 180 million households dedicate themselves to religious practice to fulfill their mission of creating a peaceful, happy world.

1 The image of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni enshrined in the Great Sacred Hall as Rissho Kosei-kai's focus of devotion.

President and Founder



Rev. Nichiko Niwano, president of Rissho Kosei-kai and the Niwano Peace Foundation, has served as a president of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) and the president of its national committee in Japan. He is a president of the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace (ACRP) and chairman of Shinshuren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan). Born in Tokyo in 1938, he is the first son of Rissho Kosei-kai's late founder, Rev. Nikkyo Niwano. He succeeded to the presidency in the ceremony of the Inheritance of the Lamp of the Dharma in 1991.



Rev. Nikkyo Niwano, the late founder and first president of Rissho Kosei-kai, was born in 1906 in Niigata Prefecture, in northern Japan. His dedication to studying the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and applying them to daily life led him to found Rissho Kosei-kai, a lay Buddhist organization, in 1938, with Mrs. Myoko Naganuma. He later worked for world peace through interreligious dialogue and cooperation. He was awarded the Templeton Foundation Prize for Progress in Religion in 1979. A former president of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF), he was also an honorary president of the WCRP and honorary chairman of Shinshuren at the time of his death in October 1999.

2 President Niwano posing with members of a Rissho Kosei-kai local church.



Members' Daily Activities

Chanting the Sutra

Daily chanting from the Lotus Sutra is an essential practice for members of Rissho Kosei-kai. They read the sutra aloud each morning and evening before the Buddhist altar in their home or church. Through this practice members continue their aspiration to attain buddhahood, pray for help in undertaking bodhisattva practice for the sake of people everywhere, and accumulate merit to transfer the gift of spiritual joy to their ancestors, so they also can attain buddhahood. This is one reason that religious practice in their daily lives differs from simple

ethical or moral deeds and why their socially oriented activities go beyond the usual volunteer service.

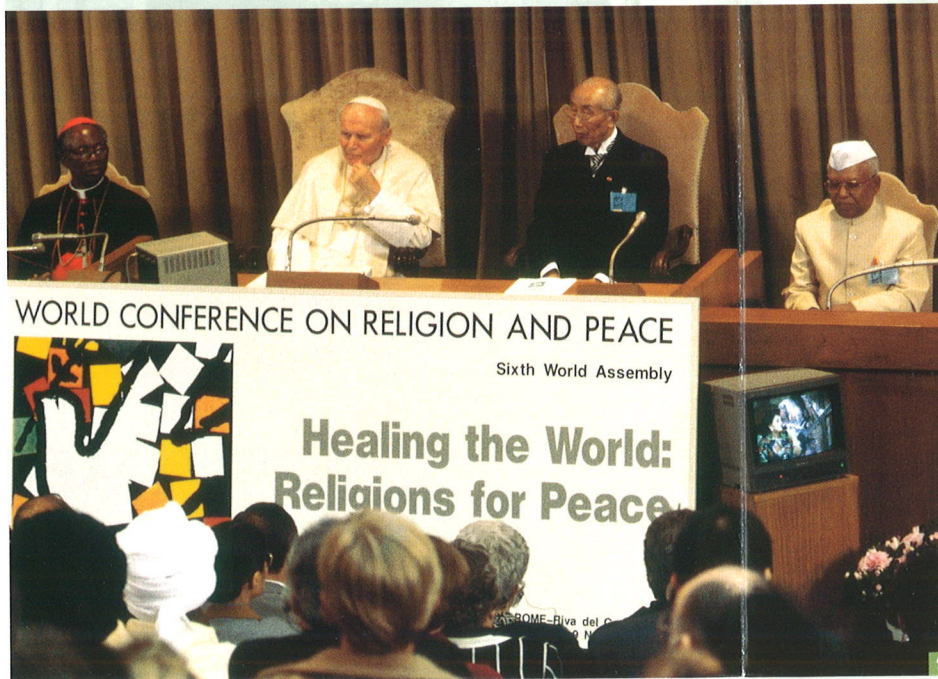
Hoza

An important religious activity of Rissho Kosei-kai is a special form of group counseling known as hoza, guided by experienced leaders. Its origin lies in Shakyamuni's method of teaching his disciples. Rissho Kosei-kai has adapted and revived it for people today so they can solve their problems and learn how to make practical use of the Buddha's teachings in everyday life.

Members of a hoza group usually sit in a circle, creating an intimate atmosphere for open communication. As a member of the circle raises a topic, varying from personal problems at home or work, through difficulties in human relationships, to questions of faith and ethics, and to the merits of religious practice, the other members of the group listen and respond with the compassion taught by Shakyamuni Buddha, trying to understand the speaker's problem, situation, and emotions.

Hoza, a manifestation of living Buddhism, differs from ordinary group counseling. Members pray for the troubled person and seek solutions to the problems described, based on application and practice of the Buddha's teachings.

Rissho Kosei-kai also conveys the wisdom gained through hoza to members of such international organizations as the WCRP and the IARF, among others. Hoza is widely considered a method that could serve as an effective means of easing regional and international tension and ending conflicts.





Dialogue and Cooperation

Collaboration with Others

All of Rishso Kosei-kai's peace activities are based on the teachings in its basic scripture, the Lotus Sutra: Truth is universal and all religions are manifestations of it. All life springs from the same source, and thus all people are related and belong to one family. The Lotus Sutra declares that everyone is inherently imbued with the bodhisattva wish.

The organization's dedication to dialogue and cooperation with other religious and nonreligious organizations is a natural corollary of the teachings. That is why, ever since its founding, Rishso Kosei-kai has sought to cooperate with other religions and to work with the United Nations and a variety of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Rishso Kosei-kai believes that true peace can come about only through such cooperation among groups and individuals.

Over the years Rishso Kosei-kai has sincerely engaged in such interreligious dialogue and cooperation for peace. In Japan, it is an active member of Shinshuren. Overseas, it works with the WCRP and the IARF.

In the late 1960s, Rishso Kosei-kai began to advocate the Brighter Society Movement, a public-spirited undertaking through which local Rishso Kosei-kai churches cooperate with local governments, welfare organizations, and volunteer groups throughout Japan. Members render voluntary services, organize special events, cosponsor lectures for young mothers, and coordinate activities to strengthen community solidarity and improve the quality of life.

Campaigns for Sharing

Donate a Meal Campaign

One of Rishso Kosei-kai's peace activities is the Donate a Meal Campaign. Members forgo one meal a day on particular days each month and contribute the money saved to the Rishso Kosei-kai Peace Fund through their local churches.

The campaign is a movement carried out in the bodhisattva spirit that gives members a chance to share, in a small way, the suffering of many in developing countries who go hungry because of poverty or famine.

Donations are pooled in the Rishso Kosei-kai Peace Fund to assist a variety of aid and peace projects and serve as the driving force behind the organization's other peace projects, including the Campaign for Sharing Blankets with People in Africa and the Little Bags of Dreams Campaign.

- 3 Members officiate as chanting leaders and subleaders for other assembled members.
- 4 In a hoza circle, members share what they have learned and discover new meanings and dimensions in their lives.
- 5 President Niwano and other Asian religious leaders join hands to pray for world peace at the sixth assembly of the ACRP held at Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 2002.
- 6 President Niwano and the leaders of the four major religious groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina meet to encourage peace in their country at Rishso Kosei-kai headquarters in 1998.
- 7 A young girl in the former Yugoslavia holds a Little Bag of Dreams presented by Rishso Kosei-kai members that contains stationary, toys, and other useful small items.
- 8 Rishso Kosei-kai annually sends volunteer groups to Africa to distribute collected blankets to people in need. A member of the 2003 group places a blanket around the shoulders of a man at a village in Ethiopia.
- 9 Pope John Paul II and Founder Niwano presided at the opening session of the Sixth World Assembly of the WCRP (formerly known as the World Conference on Religion and Peace) in the Vatican's Synod Hall in 1994. More than 700 delegates and guests attended.

Background image: The Great Sacred Hall in Tokyo, the main center of Rishso Kosei-kai's religious activities.