

Dharma Center of Oklahoma



Visitor's Guide

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Welcome

Rissho Kosei Kai

*Dharma Center
of Oklahoma*

Enclosed are a few of the items that we give to newcomers. If you haven't had the chance to see our website yet, please take a look. There is a lot of good basic knowledge about us there:

<http://www.rkok-dharmacenter.org>

I don't know if you are new to Buddhism or if it has been a long time study for you – our group members are women and men who range in age from 4 to 75 years old.

Young ones are welcome. We will have a Dharma school lesson for them each week. We also like to have parents chant and meditate with children at the home altar. This is also good “family time.” When they get a little older, their attention span will be long enough and they will be comfortable coming into the Sunday ceremony with everyone if they prefer. There are home-study materials available for children.

Our dress is casual and we sit in chairs for the Ceremony. We have English language services on Sunday mornings at 10AM.

We chant excerpts from the Lotus Sutra (in English) followed by a brief meditation. After a short break for tea or coffee, we circle the chairs for a Dharma Circle (Hoza), Dharma talk or presentation of how to apply the teachings in everyday life.

If you have any other questions, please let me know.

Gassho,

Kris Ladusau

(405) 943-5030



Who We Are

Mission statement: - *Our purpose is to provide a place of meditation and spiritual growth through the study and practice of Buddhist principles. We seek to support each other and our community in the development of awareness, compassion and peace.*

We endeavor to share our experiences with others to build a bond of integrity and strength within our community; a positive approach to learning that can be taken out into the world. Because we are all connected, we practice responsibility in all aspects of our lives. When we cast a stone into the water, the ripples extend far beyond the original action. So, the effects of our actions often reach further than we realize. Through increased awareness and learning how to live in the moment, we have the chance to gain wisdom and compassion both for ourselves and others. The path of Buddhism is inclusive and available to all.

Buddhism

Buddhism was established 2,500 years ago in India and refers to the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. Shakyamuni Buddha was born a prince of the Shakya tribe in India. His father was so full of joy at his birth, that he named him Siddhartha, which means "Every Wish Fulfilled." He was given all that he desired and was shielded from the outside world. One day, he secretly left the palace to explore the city. There he witnessed poverty, sickness, and death. He was deeply distressed by all the problems of human existence. Being a very sensitive and compassionate

person, he began to search for an answer to the question, "How can I eliminate suffering?" At the age of 29 he left his home and devoted himself to liberating all human beings from suffering and to guide them to a truly meaningful way of living. In pursuit of this goal, he lived as a nomad, monk, and as an ascetic. At this point he had experienced both a life of excess and of extreme self-denial. He knew that living to either extreme was fruitless. He saw that the Middle Path was one of balance and harmony. Still searching for more answers, he began to meditate. It was during this meditation that he achieved enlightenment.

He realized that all sentient beings are endowed with wisdom and light, and it is only because of delusion and attachment that they do not see the truth. Having this deep insight, he understood the Universal Truth (Dharma) that is applicable for everyone, in whatever time and space.

The Buddha taught for about 45 years before his death at age 80. After his passing his disciples got together and compiled lists of his teachings into threads called sutras. Originally they were passed down orally, but beginning in the 1st century they were written down, with major groupings of sutras passed down through the ages in the different Buddhist traditions.

In the Lotus Sutra, a key sutra of the Northern Schools of Buddhism, the Buddha taught that it is possible for all people to attain Buddhahood. This is done through the manifestation of our Buddha Nature. By becoming aware of the wisdom and light within ourselves and bringing them into the present moment, we are able to clear away the delusion and attachments that inhibit us from

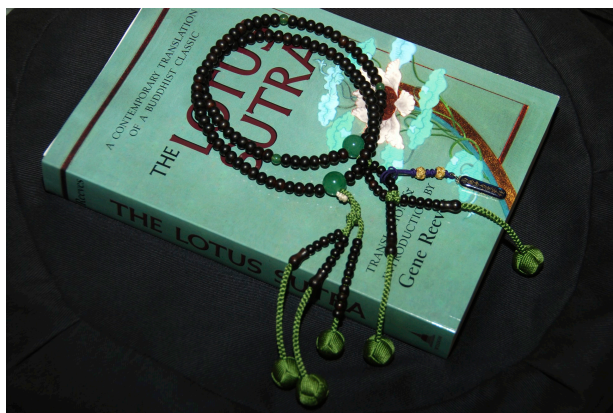
spiritual growth and enlightenment.

There are basic principles common to all sects of Buddhism. The most important and universal of these throughout the worldwide Buddhist community is taking refuge in the Three Treasures. The Buddha showed us the way to the truth, the Dharma or his teachings guides us on the path, and the Sangha is the friends with whom we share the way.

Other important universal tools are: The Seal of the Three Laws, The Four Noble Truths, The Eightfold Path, and The Law of the Twelve Causes.

Originating in India, the philosophy and teachings soon traveled to China, Korea, Japan, Southeast Asia, and into the western world. Buddhism is unique in its constant growth, function, and its adaptability to whatever culture it serves. Although exact numbers are unknown, it is estimated there are between 350 and 400 million Buddhists in the world.

The Lotus Sutra



The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, popularly known as 'the Lotus Sutra', is revered by millions of Buddhists as containing the core and

culmination of the Buddha's teaching. Together with the two shorter sutras that traditionally accompany it, Innumerable Meanings and Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Wisdom, it comprises one of the most important scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism and indeed, one of the major documents of world religion.

The Lotus Sutra consists of a series of lectures by Shakyamuni Buddha given toward the end of his forty-five years of teaching. At the heart of the sutra are three major concepts of Mahayana Buddhism: (1) all sentient beings can attain Perfect Enlightenment - that is, buddhahood; (2) the Buddha energy is eternal, having existed from the infinite past and appearing in many forms throughout the ages to guide and support people through the teaching of the Dharma; and (3) the noblest form of Buddhist practice is the way of the bodhisattvas ... those who devote themselves to attaining enlightenment not only for themselves but for all sentient beings.

The lotus flower is special to us because it is rooted in muddy water yet grows and opens to be a pure and beautiful flower. This is true of humanity as well. We have the capability to acknowledge our existence in this chaotic world and by study and practice of the path; we can grow and blossom into compassionate human beings with perfect freedom of mind.

Rissho Kosei-kai

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano and Rev. Myoko Naganuma founded Rissho Kosei-kai in Japan on March 5th, 1938. They saw the need for a Buddhist practice that would combine traditional Buddhist teachings and the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra in a way that could be applicable for average people in everyday life. Their desire was for a modern and

expanding world to find peace and harmony. Rissho Kosei-kai translated means - an organization based on the Dharma (Buddha's Teaching/Universal Truth), whose members strive to cultivate their character through encouraging and interacting with each other so that everyone can lead a better life, contribute to a better society and a peaceful world. This path is called the "Bodhisattva Way" ... compassion in action.

The basic characteristics of the organization are:

The Dharma, on which we are based, is found in the essential Buddhist teachings and the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra.

Rissho Kosei-kai emphasizes practical application of the teaching for the purpose of enriching people's lives.

The practice of "hoza" or "Dharma Circle" is where members help each other understand the teachings and their relevance in daily life. Within this circle, all life situations are met head-on with the realization that Buddha-Nature is found in everything, in every moment; and can change anything from crisis to opportunity. This provides the chance for us to see that the change of attitude and experience is proof of the bodhisattva way and its power to transform illusion into reality.

In order for people to live peacefully, we must learn to emphasize our common aspects rather than our differences. It is the belief of Rissho Kosei-kai that such a world can be realized not through armed might but through respect for humanity. In the final analysis, all great spiritual paths can be bound together by the common desire for human happiness and liberation. It is in this spirit that Rev.Nikkyo

Niwano established the World Conference of Religions for Peace in which Rissho Kosei-kai still plays a central role. The Lotus Sutra makes clear that all spiritual paths can lead to awakening and as a result interfaith dialogue remains a focus of RK.

There are over 600 Dharma Centers in Japan, and sixty-eight Dharma Centers overseas. The US National Center, Rissho Kosei-kai International North America, is located in Irvine, CA. Centers in the United States are located in Hawaii (Oahu, Maui and Kona), Seattle, Pacifica, San Mateo, Sacramento, Klamath Falls, Los Angeles, San Diego, Las Vegas, Tucson, Denver, San Antonio,



Oklahoma City, Dallas, Chicago, Dayton, New York, Tampa Bay, and Fort Myers.

Basic Practices

There are three basic practices for members of Rissho Kosei-kai. First is Sutra Recitation. In the Lotus Sutra you will frequently see mention of the Buddha practicing samadhi. Samadhi, is a Sanskrit word which means concentration or contemplation. Our basic practices are the samadhi of sutra recitation and the samadhi of the invocation of the *Odaimoku* (mantra) "*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.*" or focusing the mind by chanting excerpts from the Lotus Sutra



The practice of Sutra recitation can be done individually at home, and also with a group. The group practice is one you can experience with Sangha at the Dharma Center. For this practice we use the chant book (*Kyoten*), which contains passages reflecting the key concepts of the Lotus Sutra. These passages are preceded by an invocation and the Three Treasures and are followed by transferring merit and reciting the member's vow. Those are the key aspects of practice for Rissho Kosei-kai members. The purpose of chanting is to achieve a state of samadhi. In some Buddhist organizations, this state is achieved through sitting meditation, by following the breath, or reciting a mantra. In the words of RK's founder, Nikkyo Niwano:

Samadhi, then, is the state in which our entire spiritual being, including the hidden unconscious mind, is continuously concentrated on a certain virtue or teaching, as a result of which that virtue or teaching permeates our entire character and becomes an integral part of ourselves.

This is the purpose of our Sutra recitation, and our chanting of the mantra *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*. Our chanting is frequently accompanied by various instruments. The bell (*kane*) begins and ends the service, and also marks transitions between chapters. To help the Sangha chant in unison we hear the

block (*mokusho*) and the drum (*taiko*). The chant leader (*doshi*) guides the group.

You may also observe other items during the service. Members will usually be wearing a sash (*otasuki*), which for us is a modern representation of a monastic robe. Wearing this reminds us to be in a spiritual mind-set. The sash is inscribed with the mantra *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo* on the front and on the back, a sutra reference to practicing the *Bodhisattva Way*.

Another item you will see at the service are the member's beads (*Ojuzu*). These typically have 108 beads on them and represent the 108 delusions of the mind. Rubbing the beads together, then making a cutting motion with them symbolizes cutting off delusion and attachment.

Another part of any activity at RK is that of members putting their hands together in *gassho*. This is simply a way of showing respect for the activity you are doing and those around you - an acknowledgment of the Buddha-Nature found in all.

The second principle activity of Rissho Kosei-kai is guiding others in the Dharma (Buddha's Teachings). A primary method for this is the Dharma Circle (*Hoza*). In the circle members share the activities of daily life and address problems that arise by applying Buddhist teachings. The Dharma Circle will often follow the Sutra recitation practice. Another aspect of guiding others in the Dharma is establishing a personal connection with others, including helping others with their practice and inviting those who are interested to join us in our practice. Each individual on the path can share their experiences with others and be a teacher to those beginning the Buddhist Path.



The third RK practice is the study and practice of the Dharma, or the Buddha's Teachings. This includes both the basics of Buddhism and an in depth study of the Lotus Sutra. The basic class covers many core principles found in

Buddhism: the Three Treasures, the Seal of the Three Laws, the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, the Six Perfections, the Ten Suchnesses, and the Law of Twelve Causes. Hand in hand with this study must be the application of what is learned to our everyday lives and relationships. It is through this application of the Buddha's Teachings that we are able to truly understand their meaning.



Dictionary to the Kyoten

Buddhahood – Perfect or Supreme Enlightenment

Buddha-Nature - The inherent ability of all beings to attain enlightenment

Bodhisattva – *Bodhi*, awakened or enlightened; *sattva*, living being. (1) A being in the final stage prior to attaining buddhahood. (2) One who seeks enlightenment not only for oneself but also for all sentient beings.

Bodhisattva Mahasattva – Bodhisattva Great One. A perfected bodhisattva who has voluntarily delayed entering nirvana in order to help liberate others from suffering.

Dharma – (Law) Sanskrit term that can represent Universal Truth; the Buddha's teachings.

Eagle Peak – (Vulture Peak), Mount Grdhrakuta - in India, location for part of the Buddha's teachings in the Lotus Sutra.

Emptiness – The idea that nothing has its own fixed, unchanging, isolated existence but is connected through cause and effect to everything else. As everything else is impermanent and connected, everything will be constantly changing and everything is a part of everything else. Understanding this principle, for example, you would look at a wooden table and see the great web of life that it is connected through; everything from the craftsman who made it, the sunlight giving life to the trees in the forest, and the centuries of technological progress that allowed its creation. Without each participant in the process along the way, the table would not exist.

Great Vehicle – The meaning of the Sanskrit term Mahayana which is the name of the northern branch of Buddhism

Kalpa – An eon. A measurement commonly used in ancient India to denote extraordinarily long periods of time.

Karma – (Action) As practitioners, we consider actions with intention, which produce effects.

Kotis – Millions of years

Dharma Flower Sutra – Another name for the Lotus Sutra

Parinirvana – Literally “complete extinction.” Perfect quietude, when all illusion is destroyed. This word is frequently used to signify the physical death of Shakyamuni.

Sangha – Originally the community of monks (bhikshus) and nuns (bhikshunis) but now used to describe both lay and monastic followers. Friends on the path.

Six Realms – The six realms refer to the six realms one may be reborn into in the next life. In the Kyoten they also refer to mental states one can move among even moment to moment in response to events happening around and to us. The realms are: Heaven (joy), Asuras (fighting), Humans (normal), Animals (ignorance), Hungry Ghosts (greed), and Hell (anger).

Sutra – Literally “thread.” Various scriptures containing the teachings of the Buddha.

Three Treasures – The Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

One Vehicle – embracing all paths as different stages on the many roads to enlightenment, also known as Ekayana Buddhism.

Names in the Kyoten

Superior Practice, Boundless Practice, Pure Practice, Steadfast Practice – The four great perfected bodhisattvas who attend Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra. These are the four figures on the sides of the Gohonzon (see below) and represent the four great vows.

Devadatta – A cousin of Shakyamuni who became his disciple but later turned against him and tried on several occasions to have him killed.

Gohonzon – refers to the statue (or image) of Shakyamuni Buddha you see on the altar and the aura or halo behind it with the four great bodhisattvas and Abundant Treasures. The Gohonzon represents the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and the ability everyone has to awaken to the truth.

Kannon – (also known as Guan Yin in China) she is a bodhisattva of Compassion. Able to appear in whatever form needed, Kannon originated as the male Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara in northern India.

Manjushri – A perfected bodhisattva characterized by great wisdom. In the text, he is described as having attended countless buddhas and is always in attendance with Shakyamuni Buddha.

Maitreya – A perfected bodhisattva in the Lotus Sutra, who will appear to teach the Dharma after the passing of Shakyamuni. He is also said to be a Buddha of the future.

Myoko Naganuma – Co-founder of Rissho Kosei-kai.

Nichiren – A 13th Century Japanese monk for whom Nichiren Buddhism is named. He developed his practice based on the study and chanting of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiko Niwano – President of Rissho Kosei Kai and son of Founder Rev. Nikkyo Niwano.

Nikkyo Niwano – An enlightened teacher, founder and first President of Rissho Kosei-kai. He led RK from its founding in 1938 until passing the lamp of the Dharma to his son in 1991. In addition to RK, he founded the World Conference on Religions for Peace, an interfaith organization to promote cooperation and harmony between different religious faiths. He passed away in 1999.

Kosho Niwano - The granddaughter of Rev Nikkyo Niwano and the President designate of Rissho Kosei-kai.

Shakyamuni - Name of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama. Also means 'Sage of the Shakyas'. The name Shakyamuni is commonly used in Mahayana Buddhism.

Shariputra – One of the Buddha's principal disciples.

Tathagata - A title or epithet of the Buddha, meaning 'one who has thus come' or 'one who has thus gone'.

Tathagata Abundant Treasures – A buddha from the past that appears in the Lotus Sutra to witness Shakyamuni's teaching of the Lotus Sutra. He appears anytime the Truth is taught.

Universal Wisdom - A bodhisattva of the virtues of wisdom, concentration, and practice, and his appearance symbolizes the importance of a thorough practice.

World-Honored One – One of the ten traditional titles of the historical Buddha.

FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

Q - How do I join? Is there some kind ceremony when joining?

A – There is a membership form included with this visitor's guide. At that time, you will be presented with a sash and a Kyoten (chant book).

Q - Where does the money come from to operate the Dharma Center?

A – The Dharma Center is operated strictly on a voluntary basis. Member's donations cover the costs of operating the facility, educational opportunities for members, and putting money aside for necessities and future expansion.

Q - Are members expected to tithe as in other churches?

A – Tithing is not a part of the Buddhist tradition, however, the act of donation or expressing generosity is the first practice of the Six Perfections or bodhisattva way. Donation is not just about financial generosity but giving of oneself and helping others in the Dharma. This practice also develops the ability to release attachments.

Q - What is the purpose of burning incense?

A – It is both purification and an offering of a pleasant scent.

Q - Why do you chant?

A – Chanting is another way of entering samadhi, the state in which delusive thoughts are abandoned and the mind remains focused in the realm of 'right view and right thought'. Some groups focus on meditation to achieve this state, we however practice chanting excerpts from the Threefold Lotus Sutra and the mantra *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*.

Q - What is the dress code for the service?

A - There is no dress code for the Dharma Center, only our own personal dress code that considers and respects fellow members of our Sangha and the state of mind we are trying to create. While not required, members participating at the altar during the Chanting Service will consider what is appropriate to that duty and frequently wear black.

Q - Why are there so many different Buddhist sects?

A - Over 2,500 years, Buddhism has traveled around the world and during that time there have existed differences in interpretation and emphasis in the practices of the many groups. Buddhism has also been subjected to a variety of different cultures that also influence its practice. Regardless, Buddhism has maintained a group of core teachings common across all its different forms; Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures, The Seal of the Three Laws, The Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path and the Law of Twelve Causes.

Q - Who are the people we ask for guidance at the beginning of each activity?

A - The Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni is the life force of the Universe and the essence of Buddha-Nature within each of us, as revealed by the historical Buddha Shakyamuni. In our Dharma lineage, Founder Niwano is the enlightened teacher and founder of Rissho Kosei-kai. President Niwano is the current spiritual head of RK and Dharma heir of the founder.

Dharma Center Schedule

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Sunday	10am	Chanting Service	Weekly
	11am	Dharma Circle (Hoza)	Weekly
Monday	7pm	Dharma Circle (Hoza)	Weekly
Tuesday			
Wednesday	7pm	Basic Buddhism Class ₂	Weekly
Thursday	7pm	Meditation ₃	Weekly
Friday	7pm	Lotus Sutra Study	Twice Monthly ₄
Saturday			

1. Other events are scheduled on a non-repeating basis. For more information and announcements visit the website at www.rkok-dharmacenter.org
2. A list of the classes and schedule may be found on the website.
3. Requires no experience. Instruction available.
4. The most current schedule is available on the website

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2745 NW 40th St

Oklahoma City, OK 73118

Phone: (405) 943-5030

Fax: (405) 943-5303