



# Rissho Kosei-kai of New York

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## December 2021 Newsletter

Hello, everyone! How are you doing?

We have just one more month of the year 2021.

It has been almost two years since COVID-19 became a pandemic and spread all over the world. Since then, vaccines were developed and their inoculation has advanced. And yet, variety of conditions have emerged, with areas where they have been effective and areas where the infections are not yet controlled.

During these nearly two years, numerous people have passed away and there are many people who are being treated in the hospitals. First of all, let us pray for those who lost their precious lives due to the COVID-19 infectious disease so that they may rest in peace. Let us also pray for the speedy recovery of those who are presently hospitalized and those who are recuperating in their homes

For Rissho Kosei-kai, the month of December is the start of the next year: this year will be the Year 2022. Founder Nikkyo Niwano decided to designate December as the start of the organization's New Year with the idea of starting with the preparations before January 1<sup>st</sup>, so that we can smoothly welcome the New Year celebrated by rest of the society.

Therefore, around mid-November, the annual training for our organization's ministers and leaders at Headquarters are held. This is when the guidance for members' practice of the faith and the objectives for the following year are announced, and President Nichiko Niwano gives us his Dharma guidance.

In this year's guidance, the President indicated the appropriate approach to our practice during the coronavirus crisis: cherishing the 'here and now' spirit of the Place of the Way, to deepen our introspection especially with the present circumstances while putting our faith into practice in our homes and society, and endeavoring all with positive attitudes.

Kosho-sama also stated our aspirations for hereafter. The words in her message that left a deep impression on me were the following she so powerfully said: Rather than being able to say I learned about the Lotus Sutra and know a lot, let us be people who "live the Lotus Sutra" and think how much more can I embrace and practice the Lotus Sutra in our daily lives and lifetime.

At that time, I recalled the often quoted words for peace activity. "In the world there are many people who aim for peace, but instead of the 'Peace Speaker' who always say for peace, for peace, or the 'Peace Payer' who is willing to only donate money toward peace, let us be 'Peace Maker' who truly practice toward peace with firm footing!" This is the spirit of the lay Buddhists who are practitioners that live the Lotus Sutra.

At the training, there were announcements of the names of reverends with new assignments as the Minister of the Centers and the reverends who had retired. There were no changes among the reverends assigned overseas, including the United States.

However, for the Headquarters staff this year, our NY Center's Rev. Kyoichi Sugino was newly assigned as the President of Gakurin (Seminary for Leaders of Rissho Kosei-kai) and will now have the job to train the leaders of the organization.

For 23 years, Rev. Sugino fulfilled his great responsibility as the Deputy Secretary General of RfP (Religions for Peace International) at their NY Headquarters. He was often running around in Europe, Middle East, Asia, precisely as a 'Peace Maker,' putting his best efforts toward realization of world peace.

Hereafter, I believe he will focus his energy on Founder Nikkyo Niwano's aspiration of cultivating the younger generation as personnel to carry on the work toward world peace.

Mrs. Sugino, who we call Yuri, will return to Japan as well. She has performed the duty of Administrative Director for our NY Center and has made major contributions for the underlying support of overall administration for many years. She has now been assigned and will be working as a staff member for Rissho Koseikai International (RKI) at Headquarters.

Nonetheless, because Yuri has been, until now, carrying out most important portions of the management of the NY Center, to simply hand over the duties to someone else would be difficult. Therefore, I plan to request • appeal the possibility of coordinating with Headquarters so that while she holds a position at the International Department, she may be able to cover a portion of the NY Center's work as well. Yuri is actually planning to leave for Japan in March, so we will have some time to prepare for that.

For 23 long years, they have actively participated at our Center, and I am sure everyone has many memories. We would like to send Mr. and Mrs. Sugino off on their new journey with deepest gratitude and best wishes for many blessings.

As I recall, 23 years ago I had welcomed the Sugino family to the NY Center as its minister at the time. Now, over time, I am sending them off, again as the minister of NY Center. I am feeling the wondrous workings of the Buddha.

We always learn about "impermanence" and "the suffering of parting from those we love," but the difficulty of accepting "changes" is very real. However, we are also taught that change, itself, is not good nor bad, but how we accept the change is of importance. Let us grasp this change positively, in the best of our ability, as energy to connect us to a new step to advance.

There is a fable in China about Saiyo's horse.

A family lived in a certain village in China. One day, one of their male horses ran away. The father told his son not to despair, for good things will happen again. A short time later, that male horse returned with a female horse.

The son was overjoyed and while he ran around on the horse, he was thrown off, injured his leg and became disabled. The father told his son not to despair, for one never knows what turns out to be a misfortune or a blessing. Before long, war began. The young men in the village were drafted and all died at war. However, because of his disabled leg, the son did not have to go to war and was saved from dying at war.

That is the story.

For the NY Buddhist Center, the news is a big pinch, but let us accept it as a next opportunity, and as we carefully reflect on this past year, let us restore our energy to welcome next year's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the NY Buddhist Center.



Gassho

Rev. Tomokazu Hatakeyama

Minister RKNY