



<< The best possible way to live here and now...>>

Even in this cold weather, I am certainly noticing some signs of spring. In Manhattan, the buds on the trees lining the streets are starting to sprout, little by little. Although coldness still remains, there are times when the wind feels comfortable on my skin, indicating the coming of a new season.

On March 5th, we celebrated the 76th anniversary of the Founding of Risho Kosei-kai. It was also the 50th Anniversary since the Great Sacred Hall was built, an event which manifested the wishes of the Sangha.

In reality and in name, this year is the 51st year, signifying the beginning of a new chapter. As President Niwano said in his Dharma guidance, I hope each and every member will seek the Way and aspire to be a person of true faith.

What is, then... **a person of true faith?**

In his Dharma guidance, President Niwano says:

It is not a faith for our own benefit

It is not the enshrined statue of the Buddha (transcendent existence) that liberates you

Teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha is the teaching of wisdom; to become enlightened to the Truth and to follow and live in accordance with the Truth, the Dharma.

In other words, it is not about looking at or judging things from our own point of view (our own convenience).

For example, I visit Chicago once a month for missionary work, but this year in particular, it snowed so often that there was a great possibility of flights being cancelled. When the flights are cancelled, we may complain and say: "Oh no! This is terrible! It will throw everything off the schedule!" We might blame and criticize the snow and say: "Why does it snow so much!" or "Snow's such a pain!" However, I would only be putting my own convenience first over everything else.

What if we look at things "as is" (in accordance to the Truth and the Dharma)?

Snow is just the result of a weather condition when the water vapor in the air becomes ice crystal and falls. Snow, in itself, is not good or bad. We then realize that to judge the snow as a problem is a self-centered way to look at things.

If we are able to see things in accordance with the Truth and the Dharma (see things "as is"), I believe our hearts and minds will be liberated and become flexible and we will be able to realize that we are caused to live by the Buddha.



Now, I would like to share a wonderful story from when I visited Florida the other day. The expansive blue sky was so clear and serene. The temperature that day in Jacksonville was 80 degree F, and it was already summer. Seven people gathered at Ms. R.F.'s house, and two people in that group were non-member friends whom Ms. R.F. had invited. We were altogether nine people including Ms. Idesako, the director of education, and myself. What gave me the greatest pleasure was that the moment I met the two new people, conversation flowed as though we were old friends and we were able to spend wonderful time together.

We held the annual memorial service for Ms. R.F.'s husband followed by Hoza. We all felt deep gratitude for the gift of life we have been given.





Here, I would like to focus on the friendship of the three people, Ms. R.F. and her two friends. They truly are wonderful friends! They met in America and have been good friends for over 35 years. Moreover, three of them are quite healthy and surprisingly youthful! I was charmed by their refined beauty. Their conversations were bright, gentle, and kind. Everything about their relationship was so wonderful that I couldn't help but feel we would want to make them our role models.

As I watched them I started to see some rules they followed to keep their mutually dependent relationship. Yes, I definitely saw them.

If a mistake is made or something is wrong, they acknowledge it and have the courage to correct it.

They accept and respect one another.

They do not complain.

That means they deeply know the correct way of doing things.

These, I thought, are indeed the conditions we believers should follow as well. I felt they showed me how to let go of myself to nature and live in accordance with the Truth and the Dharma.

This is truly the way to look at things "as is" and to be grateful for the here and now. It looked as though they couldn't help but feel joyful to be alive. They are "buddies" who are living their gift of lives now in the best way possible.

Gassho,
New York Church Minister
Etsuko Fujita

Activities of New York Church in March 2014

- 3/1 First Day of the Month Memorial Service was held followed by discussion on President Niwano's Dharma Talk.
- 3/4,18 Meditation sessions were held at 6pm.
- 3/2-7 James Lynch, Jr. and Michael Ryan (from New York Branch) and Mr. Matsunami and Mr. Mukai (from Chicago Branch) went to Headquarters as representatives of RKNY to participate in the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Great Sacred Hall
- 3/5 Anniversary service of Rissho Kosei-kai's Founding was held. Thereafter, Steering Committee meeting was held.
- 3/7-9 Rev. Fujita and Yasuko Vendley went on missionary visit to Chicago.
- 3/9 Celebration Service for 76th Anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai's Founding was held. James Lynch, Jr. and Michael Ryan shared their faith experience as representatives of RKNY at the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Great Sacred Hall.
- 3/12-13 Rev. Fujita and Keiko Idesako went on missionary visit to Florida. 7 people gathered at Reiko Fontaine's home. Rev's account of this visit is in her message for this month.
- 3/14-16 All US Chairpersons of the Board meeting and All US Ministers' meeting were held at the RKINA Center. Rev. Fujita, Yoshiko Murakami, Katsu Kosaka and Yoshi Iimura participated.
- 3/16 Sunday service followed by Hoza was held.
- 3/21-23
21(Fri) Board Meeting was held at 2pm. Annual Meeting of Members was held at 7pm.
22(Sat) In the morning, Rev. Fujita gave a lecture under the theme, "51st Year since the Enshrinement of the Gohonzon in the Great Sacred Hall." She explained the guidelines for each of the 20-year milestone stages in the history of Rissho Kosei-kai since the founding until the present. The present stage is "Cultivating the fields in the heart and mind of each and every person." When our heart is dry and brittle (when we are irritable), we are unable to accept anything (we blame others). When our heart is moist and nourished, no matter what happens, we will be able to "gently" accept. If we look inwardly into our own hearts first, instead of looking outward at others, we are cultivating the fields of the heart and mind within us. That is, by looking deeply into our own hearts, we will become spiritually nourished. Whether we are able to nourish our hearts and minds or not is based on how we accept our encounters. Do we blame others? Or are we reflecting on ourselves so we can become spiritually enriched?
In the afternoon, we held a Joint Hoza followed by private Individual Hozas with Rev. Fujita (with interpreters).
- 23(Sun) Special Springtime Memorial Service (ohigan-e) was held. Mrs. Nishitani, who had been visiting NY Church from Japan and practicing with us, shared her faith experience.
Thereafter, Conferment Ceremony for Certificate of Appointment was held.
As of April 1, NY Church established a new organizational structure. New York Branch was launched. Under the umbrella of NY Church, the missionary work will now be deployed by two branches – NY Branch and Chicago Branch.

The newly appointed church leaders received their official roles:
 Administrative Director: Yuri Sugino, Educational Director: Keiko Idesako, Branch Leader: Yasuko Vendley, Director of External Affairs: James Lynch, Jr., Chief of Dharma Center: Masayoshi Iimura.
 English Area Leaders: James Lynch, Jr., Rose Cirigliano, and Suhas Barua with Judy Yukiko Yoshitsu as Block Leader for all English Area Leaders.
 Japanese Area Leaders: Eiko Naito and Kayo Wekarski with Yoshie Norton as Block Leader for all Japanese Area Leaders.



3/4
 James, Michael, Matsuhashi, Mukai
 attended the 50th Anniversary .
 Webex show them



3/23 Special memorial service
 (Higan-e)



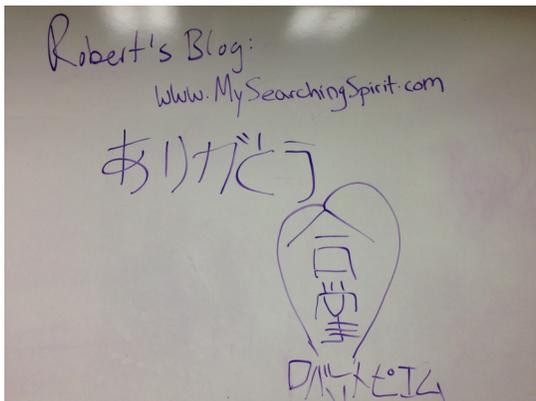
3/22 Lecture by Rev.



3/9 Sharing faith by James and Michael



3/23 Sharing faith by Nishi-tani



3/23 Receiving the
 official roles



3/25 Robert Piemme departed to Japan
 to attend special education in two
 years. This is a message from Robert.

April 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 First Day of Month Yasuko(Yukiko)Yoshi MC Yuri 6pm	2	3	4 Memorial day of Founder Keiko(Yoshi)Yuri MC Yukiko	5 CLOSED
6 1pm Celebration of Buddha's Date of Birth Sharing Faith James,Rose, Joh (Yasuko) MC Michael	7	8 Buddha's Date of Birth Yukiko(Yuri)Yasuko MC Yoshi	9 Monthly Memorial Service Yoshi,Yasuko,Yukiko MC Yuri	10 Memorial Service for Co-Founder (Keiko)Yoshi,Yuri MC Yasuko	11	12 CLOSED
13 1 p m Sunday Service President Dharma Talk James,Michael,Rose MC Joh	14	15 The Eternal Buddha Shakymuni Day Steering Committee Rev.(Yasuko)Keiko) MC Rose 6pm Meditaion	16	17	18 3pm <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Leader Seminar</div>	19
20 8:30am-12pm Leader Seminar 1pm Traffic Safety Lecture II (E,J) Rev.Keiko,Yoshie MC Yukiko	21	22	23	24	25	26 CLOSED
27 Closed	28	29	30	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Rev. Fujita Japan 3/26-4/14</div>		