



Rissho Kosei-kai of New York

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February 2022 Newsletter



Hello, everyone. How are you? Hope you are doing well.

Thought we just welcomed the New Year, but January has already passed, and it is now February.

Although the period considered “The coldest season” of the year has passed, the cold weather will continue for a while. But from now on, as we head toward spring, it is also a period with changes in the workings of nature. Sunrise will come earlier and, in comparison to the end of the year, the evenings will become darker later and the days will gradually grow longer.

By the way, how was the Midwinter Recitation Practice? Some of you participated in the NY Center’s Zoom, trained at RKINA sponsored practice, or did the practice individually on your own. There were some who recited the entire Threefold Lotus Sutra, some who participated partially, resulting in making for various types of practice. However, it is also an indescribably refreshing annual event when through the recitation practice the members each purify oneself as a united body to welcome the new spring.

Recently, a new variant of coronavirus infection called the Omicron has spread all over the world, the pandemic continues and is entering its 3rd year. WHO has commented, that for the time being, they cannot say that the pandemic is heading toward the end. What will happen to the Beijing Winter Olympics scheduled to be held this month? Including diplomatic factors, the difficulty of the world becoming one through the Olympics is becoming apparent.

Although everyone is hoping for alleviation of COVID 19 as soon as possible, many people have passed away or have been hospitalized for medical treatment. Let us wholeheartedly pray for those who passed away that they may rest in peace and quick recovery for those currently undergoing medical treatment or recuperating at home.

On the 5th of this month, Rev. Kyoichi Sugino, who worked for the RfP International in NY for 23 years, will return to Japan. At the Sunday service on the 16th of last month, we set aside some time to say farewell. During his farewell speech, he reflected on his long-standing thoughts, at times choking with tears. He also shared some of his future aspirations. Many participants also shared their heartfelt words, and it became an enduring memorable moment

This month, I would like to share the words of farewell that I said at that time once again and praise Rev. Kyoichi Sugino's achievements so far.

To Rev. Kyoichi Sugino

1.16.2022

Tomokazu Hatakeyama

Rev. Kyoichi Sugino will return to Japan on February 5th, bringing to close his life of 23 years in NY. In Japan, hereafter, he will hold the key position of “President” at the “Gakurin Seminary,” which is the Headquarters’ training institution, to train and educate young people.

Here, I would like to introduce Rev. Sugino's efforts and achievements to everyone as my farewell message to him.

Rev. Sugino is from the Ota Dharma Center in Gunma Prefecture. While he was enrolled in Chuo University in Tokyo and living the life of a university student, he was also staying at the Yoseikan Dormitory in Sugina-mi for Gakurin Seminary, studying and practicing the Lotus Sutra

After graduating from the university, he became a Gakurin Seminary student who was assigned as a staff member.

While a student at Gakurin, he studied abroad in Wisconsin, USA, and London, England, and obtained a master's degree and returned to Japan.

After that, he was given a temporary assignment from Rissho Kosei-kai’s Headquarters as a JPO (Junior Professional Officer) dispatched by the Japanese Government to The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) whose Headquarters was in Geneva, Switzerland.

UNHCR is one of the United Nations Agency dedicated to protecting and supporting refugees with a deep cooperative relationship with Rissho Kosei-kai. For over 18 years, accommodations and support for settlement of Vietnamese refugees were provided by the Kominato Dharma Center, at their adjacent facility. For half a year, RK sent Kosei Hospital’s four doctors and nurses with Mrs. Takako Fujii, currently our RKNY member who participated as the coordinator, to conduct medical activities for Ethiopian refugees in Sudan achieving results.

Parallel to this, through our movement to send blankets to Africa, with participation from members all over Japan, we delivered over 2 million blankets to Ethiopia and other African countries, garnering trust and gratitude from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Based on these achievements, our organization decided to dispatch personnel to international organizations as part of our peace activities and Rev. Sugino was able to carry out the mission.

By the way, Rev. Nemoto, who will be assigned in April as Rev. Sugino’s successor to RfP International Headquarters, has also experienced working at UNHCR

In Geneva, Switzerland, Rev. Sugino worked under the late UN High Commissioner Sadako Ogata who was at the time a UNHCR representative.

Rev. Sugino is now confident and reliably undaunted no matter what may happen, but that was not the case from the beginning. It was through many experiences and efforts that he has arrived at his present qualifications and I would like to introduce a couple of such episodes.

I heard that during his early days at his new position, he was continuously feeling nervous. So, when he was giving a presentation in front of a large group for the first time, he wore his sash under his shirt and wore his jacket over to cover, continuously praying to the Buddha while he performed his role.

I also heard that before going to bed at night, he always read a book in English aloud to practice, an example of the efforts he made when no one is looking, doing things that are unexpected knowing him now.

When Rev. Sugino finished his work in Geneva and returned to Japan, he immediately received the following instructions on his next assignment from President Niwano.

It was the role of supporting Secretary General William Vendley of RfP International in NY.

Having received that role 23 years ago, Rev. and Mrs. Sugino arrived at JFK carrying their son Motoki who was only six months old.

As many of you know, RfP was established in 1970 from the proposal by the Founder. The headquarters office is positioned in front of the UN building and is an organization of interfaith cooperation that have developed to this day. Although it is a cooperative organization, our organization, led by the Founder, has been repeatedly contributing to various areas. One of those contributions had been to send our organization's outstanding personnel with the goal of developing a global organization.

Rev. Sugino has fulfilled this heavy responsibility as a Deputy Secretary-General. He visited various countries in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa where there were possibilities of conflicts between religions. While there, he promoted dialogues for peace • cooperation. Patiently, from one country to another, he encountered religious leaders and appealed for compromise and cooperation, and his heart and soul were poured into the establishment of each countries' committee and regional committees. At present, over 90 countries have joined; he had built a global international religious organization.

There lies Rev. Sugino's hidden deep faith and passion aiming for the world of the Lotus Sutra • the spirit of the One Vehicle taught by Founder Niwano. With the people he encountered, through his abundant knowledge and experiences, he encouraged people to understand and obtained agreement. He has a gift of a missionary mind.

He met the Pope at the Vatican, deepened his dialogue with the senior leaders of Islam and Buddhism, at times he fostered friendships with refugees and young people.

He precisely had fulfilled the important role as the Founder and the President's hands and feet.

Even at the NY Buddhist Center, as a leader of the English-speaking group, he has expounded the teachings and experiences of practice. As result, there are many people who have deepened their understanding of Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra.

In addition, last year, he passed the baton to James as the instructor and has been helping develop leaders of the next generation.

This time, Rev. and Mrs. Sugino's departure will be very painful for us. But let us take this opportunity to make greater efforts to develop further. I think the future growth and development of the NY Center would be the proof of our gratitude to them.

Rev. Sugino, I pray for your further success in the future.

Rev. Sugino, thank you very much for the last 23 years!

Gassho

Rev Tomokazu Hatakeyama

Minister RKNY

