



The Gift of Life. The Power to Live.

**Rissho Kosei-kai**

A BUDDHIST ORGANIZATION

Ms. Susan Hegner  
President, Board of Trustees  
Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater  
2470 Nursery Road, Clearwater, FL 33764  
U. S. A.

March 15, 2009

Dear Ms. Hegner,

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude for the generous cooperation given to Rev. Yukimasa Hagiwara and Rev. Shoko Mizutani when they visited Clearwater on 26 and 27 of February. As they shared with you at the meeting, we are very interested to dispatch a young staff member, Mr. Nicolas Ozuna, a recent graduate of our Seminary, *Gakurin*, to your congregation on a year-long, full-time ministerial internship.

Mr. Ozuna (born in August 1981) is a bright, energetic, and hard-working American young man who became a member of Rissho Kosei-kai while attending University of Texas at Austin. In April 2004, he came to Japan as a student of the two-year *Gakurin* International Course which is a seminary program for non-Japanese members. He studied Japanese in his first year and basic Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra in the second year. After completing the program, he returned to San Antonio and served as a youth leader for a year in the Dharma Center in San Antonio. In 2007, he enrolled in *Gakurin Honka* (main) course and received training to be a professional minister. For the next two years until March 2009, he did rigorous work in Japanese and learned Japanese Buddhism and culture as well as the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. He will soon be ordained as a Dharma Teacher. We believe he has great potential for sharing Buddhist Dharma in the United States

Our proposal has a three-fold purpose:

1. Parish Internship – Educational

We would like to have Mr. Ozuna experience and learn about professional ministry in a liberal religious setting. Over the years, several Rissho Kosei-kai staff members have done graduate studies at Meadville Lombard Theological School. Mr. Ozuna would be the first person to receive practical training in the UU ministry if your congregation were to accept him. In addition, we would also like him to take some courses at Meadville Lombard to develop a deeper theoretical understanding of ministry in a North American context.

This is the first case to have such an internship program with Unitarian Universalists. I suppose if it works, not only he but also we, Rissho Kosei-kai, will be able to gain knowledge and wisdom of your rich tradition which reinforces our Dharma sharing activities in the United States.

2. Buddhist Ministry – Sharing Dharma

We hope Mr. Ozuna will share the Buddhist Dharma embodied in the Lotus Sutra, which is the

most popular Buddhist scripture in East Asia countries, with your congregation and with the larger Tampa Bay community. The Rissho Kosei-kai emphasizes “socially engaged Buddhism” which is to help people apply the teachings of the Buddha in their daily lives through service and reflection.

It is our hope that he will be able to develop a Tampa Bay community of the Rissho Kosei-kai in the next couple of years.

3. Friendship – Closer ties between UUA and Rissho Kosei-kai

The Rissho Kosei-kai and the Unitarian Universalist Association have shared and enjoyed mutual friendship since the 1960s. The encounter between our Founder, Nikkyo Niwano and UUA’s first president, Rev. Dana Greeley initiated international interfaith movements including International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) and the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP). Through this endeavor, we see those ties of friendship being strengthened and deepened.

When we met with the Rev. Abhi Janamanchi, we came up with the following timeline:

April 2009	Mr. Ozuna graduates from the seminary
June 2009	Mr. Ozuna ordained as Dharma Teacher *Our Chairman, Rev. Yasutaka Watanabe will attend the UUA GA.
August 2009	Mr. Ozuna moves to Florida from Japan.
September 2009	Internship begins

The Rissho Kosei-kai would be responsible for Mr. Ozuna’s living and professional expenses. We request that he will be provided office space at the church and a place to offer Buddhist worship to the wider community.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our proposal. We are really excited about the prospect of deepening understanding and friendship between our religious traditions and working together to spread the message of peace and harmony in the Tampa bay region and around the world.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,



Kotaro Suzuki  
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International