Suggestions for the second quarter of the Courage Group:

Dear Courage group members,
The Courage Group manual is in the final editing and printing of the book will begin soon.

In the meantime, please study chapter two titled “Leadership” for the second quarter (April, May and June).

This chapter begins with an essay by President Ikeda titled “Valuing People First and Foremost” and is followed by many wonderful quotes from NHR regarding various aspects of leadership from home visitation and guidance to the spirit and purpose of taking leadership.

Suggestions for this quarter (and may vary by locale) are to study the essay in April and NHR excerpts in May by region and for the zone meeting in June you might consider the following:

1. Impressions about the essay.
2. Experiences about leadership.
3. Meaningful quotes from NHR
4. Each person write a paragraph about what leadership means to them after studying the essay and excerpts. Each person could read their paragraph at the meeting
5. Q and A on leadership with guest leader.

Thank you very much and have a great gathering!
Quarter 2
Leadership
VALUING PEOPLE
FIRST AND FOREMOST

This essay was published in the “Thoughts on The New Human Revolution” series in the Oct. 4 YEAR Seikyo Shimbun, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper. Newsletter 4851

Nichiren Daishonin writes: “If the spirit of many in body but one in mind prevails among the people, they will achieve all their goals, whereas if one in body but different in mind, they can achieve nothing remarkable” (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 618). This is a famous passage, radiant with an unchanging principle that holds true for all affairs, in all ages and lands.

The Soka Gakkai is a living, dynamic organization working to carry out kosen-rufu, to realize peace for all humanity and happiness for the entire world. There has never been, nor ever will be, an organization with a more sublime mission.

There are no days off in this noble struggle for the Law. The Soka Gakkai is a gathering of valiant champions of the Buddha, who are always forging ahead energetically and intrepidly over mountain after mountain of arduous challenges.

In order to initiate another great advance, we need a revitalized leadership lineup brimming with fresh vigor and determination.

In Japan, the young men’s division, student division, and future division have all embarked on a fresh, lively start with an array of new leaders. And our women’s and young women’s divisions, too, spearheading our drive toward a Century of Women, have begun to move forward with their characteristic exuberance.

In addition, new appointments have been made to the recently created position of Soka Gakkai vice general director. Many new leadership appointments have also been made at the ward, prefecture, general prefecture and region levels around the country. Currently, efforts are under way to appoint new leaders to the frontline headquarters, chapter and district levels of the organization.
At this time of fresh departure, unity is crucial. The great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote, “Those who cannot work harmoniously with their fellow human beings lose their true ability.” We cannot succeed, as the poet says, without unity. Let us completely unite our hearts, our prayers and our efforts!

Given the diverse array of positions in our organization, different leaders will be called on to play different roles. Some may be in the spotlight, while others work behind the scenes.

However, we are all praiseworthy champions of Buddhism who have emerged from the earth to spread the Mystic Law. Whether president or group leader, we are all equal as fellow members of the Soka Gakkai, dedicated to the cause of kosen-rufu.

Leadership positions within the Soka Gakkai are positions of responsibility. They are the emblems of courageous individuals who have voluntarily taken on the mission of expanding kosen-rufu and who battle against powerful negative forces to resolutely protect their fellow members.

Therefore, our Soka Gakkai activities—giving us the opportunity to take on leadership and responsibility for our movement—represent a noble means of Buddhist practice by which we can carry out our human revolution.

One day, I was with my mentor, Josei Toda, in the “president’s office” at the old Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Nishi-Kanda, Tokyo. Though at the time the Headquarters did not have an officially designated president’s office, I referred to the spot from where Mr. Toda usually led activities for kosen-rufu by that name. [From 1946–53, the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, which was located on the second floor of the same Nishi-Kanda building that housed President Toda’s business offices, was comprised of just two small rooms.]

Anyway, on that particular occasion, President Toda asked me, “Daisaku, would you take on the position of Kamata Chapter advisor and get things seriously moving there?”

On observing the low monthly figures for new membership, he decided that the time had come to put me in the forefront of activities. He appointed me to a chapter leadership position in Kamata, in Tokyo’s Ota Ward.

This was in January 1952. Some nine months had passed since President
Toda’s inauguration as second Soka Gakkai president and, contrary to his expectations, membership growth had slowed—or, rather, one could say, completely stagnated.

“How is the time to make a breakthrough! Now I will open the way to victory!” With this spirit, I decisively rose into action, making it my mission to fulfill my mentor’s expectations.

When taking on a new position, the first three months are decisive. Results are determined by the energy exerted at the start of any endeavor.

I recall the kick-off held at a community hall in Unoki, Ota Ward, just after my appointment in Kamata Chapter. We pledged there to advance like a mighty wave. I first of all proposed to the frontline leaders that we set a concrete goal: to increase our membership by two new households per unit during the month of February.

The first step in any challenge is to set clear goals. If the goals are vague, people will find them difficult to relate to and take on as a personal challenge. Consequently, they will not make serious efforts to realize those goals. At the same time, it is important not to impose goals on others. Goals must be presented in such a way that everyone can accept them and be enthusiastic about realizing them.

To that end, the central figure must have the firm resolve to take personal responsibility to achieve the intended target, even if he or she has to do it alone. The passion and enthusiasm emanating from such leaders inspires others to give their all for kosen-rufu.

We had just reorganized the Soka Gakkai into chapters, districts, groups and units, in descending order of size. The unit was at the very front line of the organization, corresponding to what we in Japan now call the block level.

President Toda wanted to give the frontline leaders confidence and a sense of personal responsibility; I, too, was convinced that this was crucial for the Soka Gakkai’s development.

I wanted the nearly 100 unit leaders in Kamata Chapter to take the starring roles and to be victorious. Instead of one person advancing a hundred steps, a hundred people would advance one step forward. I prayed earnestly and worked tirelessly within the chapter, determined that not even one unit would fall to the wayside, that each member would experience
benefit in faith.

The key to victory lies in uncovering fresh talent within the organization and pooling their abilities. The word organization tends to bring to mind an image of a monolithic, impersonal structure. However, in the Soka Gakkai, people are valued first and foremost.

All the leaders in Kamata Chapter—including group and district leaders—participated in unit-level activities. Discussion meetings were also held on the unit level, because this allowed for warmer, more personal encounters. In these smaller settings, it was possible to properly address individual problems and concerns through one-on-one dialogue.

Each person who was inspired with fresh resolve at these unit-level meetings rose up courageously to propagate the Law.

Merely ordering people about will not inspire them to action. This is even more so considering that people are emotional beings. If people feel put-upon and act only out of a sense of obligation, they are not going to display their true power.

When I took on my leadership responsibilities in Kamata, I was only 24. How was I going to inspire everyone to take action with genuine enthusiasm and purpose? I would do it through my own actions, through my own sweat and hard work, through producing actual results.

I had resolved to take full responsibility for reaching our goal. I felt sure that if I became a good example, the members would appreciate my efforts and place their trust in me.

I stood up resolutely, as befiting a youth and a disciple of President Toda, and wholeheartedly exerted myself: “Watch me! Just watch my actions!” The Daishonin writes, “You need not seek far for an example” (WND, 614). It is our own example of personal struggle—not somebody else’s—that produces sympathy and understanding in those around us.

As a chapter advisor, I worked closely together with Kamata Chapter Leader Takashi Koizumi toward realizing President Toda’s vision. The position of chapter advisor was a support role, much like that of a vice leadership position today.

In that capacity, it was my function to assist the chapter leader, based on the same shared ideals and objectives. I strove with the spirit “I will support the chapter leader, so that we become the best chapter in Japan!” I made
every effort to forge myself into a model chapter advisor.

As an ancient philosopher said, it is not the position that ennobles a person, but a person who ennobles the position. In other words, it is not the position that makes a person shine; it is the person who makes the position shine.

To think that an organizational position makes one important is a sign of authoritarianism. That is the behavior of someone who swaggers about cloaked in borrowed authority. Ultimately, this attitude only degrades the position’s value.

A month later, the results from our February campaign were presented. Kamata Chapter came in at No. 1, with 201 new member households!

Until that time, most chapters were unable to achieve even 100 new member households in a month. We had totally broken through that barrier and created a tremendous victory. We had achieved our unprecedented goal of introducing two new households per unit. Everyone was astonished.

No matter how difficult or painful the challenges along the way, once the goal is achieved, everything is transformed into joy and satisfaction.

Everyone was radiant with happiness and delight. Some unit leaders literally danced for joy. Nothing could have made me happier.

While I have written many times before on this February Campaign—the 50th anniversary of which we will mark next year—I have taken the liberty of doing so once again, in view of its significance in the history of our movement.

The German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote that as human beings our “first task is to be active.” To all of you, the noble leaders of kosen-rufu, I say, “Let us take action!”

Having adorned the first page of the 21st century with total victory, please continue to boldly write a history of personal growth and wonderful benefit in faith
One of the most important qualifications for a leader of kosen-rufu is to be able to create the conditions in which everyone can exercise their full potential.

On that occasion, Shin’ichi also offered six points for leaders of kosen-rufu to value: personal guidance, small meetings, polite language, daily interactions, each individual family and each individual’s personal circumstances. Why is personal guidance so important? Since each person’s situation and circumstances are different, their problems and issues will also naturally be different. The steady advance of kosen-rufu depends upon each person dealing with and overcoming their unique problems and personal issues and coming to glow with hope and joy. That’s why personal guidance, suited to the individual, is so vital. The reason for valuing small meetings is that only when people can discuss matters freely and fully, until they are completely satisfied, can the movement grow extensively. If large meetings can be likened to arteries and veins, then small meetings represent the capillaries. Only when the capillaries are functioning smoothly can blood flow through the entire body. If small meetings aren’t fulfilling for members, the spirit of Buddhist faith and practice will not flow throughout the entire organization. Any organization that ignores small meetings is doomed to collapse in the end. For leaders, polite speech is essential. “The voice carries out the work of the Buddha” (ot, 4). We are able to carry out the sacred work of the Buddha through our voices. If our speech is impolite, we can even cause harm to Buddhism. A person’s speech reflects their character and humanity. As the Daishonin writes, “Misfortune comes from
SHIN’ICHI YAMAMOTO emphasized the fourth point, the importance of daily interactions, because human relationships are crucial in both Soka Gakkai activities and among friends, and those relationships are established and built through everyday interactions. Trust is fostered and strong human bonds are formed through constant efforts not only to meet and converse with others but also to maintain communication with them and encourage them through such means as letters and phone calls. Shin’ichi stressed the fifth point, valuing each individual family, because members can freely take part in Soka Gakkai activities in a way that doesn’t create problems at home only when leaders make an effort to understand and show concern for the situation of each family. The circumstances of each family are different. Their mealtimes and bedtimes, and their daily schedules are all different. Some families have those struggling with illness, while others have children studying for school entrance exams. In some cases, not every family member is practicing Nichiren Buddhism. When leaders visit families, they should always behave with impeccable courtesy and consideration, such as phoning in advance. Sometimes it’s better to just talk at the doorway without intruding on the family’s home life. It’s especially vital to show the utmost care and consideration to families who open their homes for discussion meetings and other Soka Gakkai activities. Shin’ichi’s last point of focus for leaders, respecting each individual’s personal circumstances, was based on the fact that respect for others is the fundamental guiding principle for all Buddhists. Leaders must never get emotional and scold members or treat their juniors in a disrespectful or dismissive way. As Nichiren Daishonin states: “Always remember that believers in the Lotus Sutra should absolutely be the last to abuse one another. All those who keep faith in the Lotus Sutra are most certainly Buddhas, and one who slanders a Buddha commits a grave offense” (wnd- 1, 756). Members who have dedicated their lives to kosen-rufu are all equally deserving of the highest respect. The Soka Gakkai is a network of individuals filled with the spirit of mutual respect. After presenting these six points for leaders to keep in mind and praising the
steadfast efforts of those in attendance, Shin’ichi left the headquarters leaders meeting.

“Soka Gakkai leaders also came there regularly and carefully observed Mr. Toda’s personal guidance sessions. Through watching him, they learned how to give personal guidance, the most fundamental Gakkai activity. The leaders who developed their leadership abilities in this way then went out to meet and talk with members themselves.

“When leaders and members are linked together through personal guidance, strong bonds are established. If their relationship is based only on guidance delivered at large meetings, or if people are connected just through the organization, their bonds will be weak because there is no opportunity to build genuine ties of trust and real human relationships”

“I have heard that a long-standing men’s division member sought guidance about his business troubles from his former chapter leader in the Soka Gakkai’s old vertical line organization instead of his current leader. This is a sign that ties in the organization are not as strong as they once were.

“I estimate that, now, four times as much guidance is given at meetings than is given to individuals personally. But if you make it your goal to reverse that ratio, you’ll be able to foster many more capable individuals and develop a stronger organization. Above all, you yourselves will be able to grow as leaders.

“Don’t just offer generic guidance. You need to really get to know the members and continuously encourage them in order to build a truly humanistic network. That’s what society today needs as well.” Heart-to-heart bonds and a truly humanistic network are formed when we possess a sense of mission to strive for the happiness of others.”

Vol 23 page 285
To augment the six guidelines for leaders of kosen-rufu that had been announced at the headquarters leaders meeting in July, another six were announced at the same meeting in August:

Take good care of your successors.

Take good care of the elderly.

Take good care in your daily words and actions.

Take good care in your personal appearance.

Take good care of women and young women.

Take good care of your workplace and society.

Vol 26, 234-235

“It’s important for leaders to think about those they don’t often have the opportunity to meet in person and make efforts to reach out and encourage them.

If leaders fall into the habit of focusing too heavily on meetings, they may only take those who are attending meetings into consideration. They may carry out activities based solely on those individuals. As a result, the organization will gradually veer away from its original aim of helping all members—and all people—to become happy. The organization itself will then be weakened.

A leader’s mission is to focus more on those out of the limelight than those in it, more on what’s below the sur-face than what’s on the surface, and foster everyone into capable individuals.

NHR 24 page 267

WHEN LEADERS SPEAK to the members, it is vital that they are able to impart joy and inspiration, and be so filled with conviction that all their listeners are reassured and filled with confidence. Since his days in the youth division, Shin’ichi always thought in earnest about what he should say at
meetings and the best way to present his message. In order to make his speeches fresh and appealing, he read widely and endeavored to describe Buddhist faith and practice by employing new insights and wise say-ings of great thinkers of the past. And in order to truly speak from the heart, he always strove to set an example in every struggle in which he participated. As first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi often used to say, guidance not based on personal experience is mere abstract theory. Putting our beliefs into practice is a part of the drama of life. When we feel engaged, we feel inspired. Of course, we will sometimes make mistakes, but the experience of not allowing those mishaps to hinder us, of getting back up again and fighting through to the end, inspires others. Stories about overcoming seemingly impossible odds can ignite the spirits of those who are feeling powerless and without hope, giving them courage to break through their own limitations. Shin’ichi firmly believed in talking about his mentor Josei Toda’s guidance with the members. He knew that a shared vision of kosen- rufu could arise by conveying Mr. Toda’s teachings and encouraging members to engrave them in their lives and hold them in common. He also made a point to speak of his mentor’s earnest dedication to the struggle for kosen- rufu and how much he loved all the members and would do anything to support them. Through his own experience, Shin’ichi strongly felt that learning about the guidance and the spirit of his mentor of kosen- rufu enabled him to bring forth tremendous cour-age, joy and life force in all of his actions. At every meeting he attended, he was determined, on Mr. Toda’s behalf, to wholeheartedly encourage all participants, impart hope, courage and self- confidence to them, and rouse them all to action. From the days of his youth, Shin’ichi poured his entire being into each and every meeting.

Vol 2 pages 111-112

“Ultimately, the ability to find capable people depends on whether we can see others’ strengths. And the only way to do this is to develop our own life-condition. “If anything, I feel we have a multitude of capable members, each like a precious diamond. They simply need to be polished. It takes a
Vol 2 page 148

The most pressing task right now, therefore, was to offer guidance in faith to each member and raise that person to become genuinely capable of taking responsibility to spread the Daishonin’s teachings throughout the world. Introducing new members and fostering capable people are like the two wheels of a bicycle. Only when both are moving in unison can kosen-rufu develop and grow.

Vol 4 page 157

It is the duty of leaders to support and serve these members. By doing so, they can accumulate benefit and good fortune. “What can I do to raise people’s spirits?” ‘What can I do to give people joy?’ — these should be a leader’s constant thoughts.”

Vol 5 pages 241-242

“This also applies to chapter leaders and vice leaders. It is your job as leaders to be aware of the number of groups and units in your chapters and the condition of each. If, as leaders—as central figures of the organization—you have a strong determination to help each member become happy, then there is no way you will ever allow yourselves to neglect your responsibilities. “Nichiren Daishonin sternly warns in his writings that some who profess to embrace the Lotus Sutra have actually lost their faith although they give the outward appearance that they maintain it (see WND-1, 941). I want to emphasize that those who accept the honored
responsibility of being a Soka Gakkai leader must never become base and self-serving, allowing their faith to decay.”

Vol 5 page 238-239

“Our aim is solely for each individual to actualize the three principles Mr. Toda left us by achieving a harmonious family life, personal happiness and an indomitable self. “I ask all the leaders here today to always bear in mind why we practice Nichiren Buddhism. I call on you to work hard to ensure that everyone receives great benefit through faith, that not one person falls by the wayside. That is my greatest wish.”

V1. P.61

The organization will change and develop in any number of ways depending on the ichinen, or deep-seated determination, of the central figure. People will follow a leader who always fights for them. But they will eventually perceive the real nature of someone interested only in personal fame and fortune and will stop supporting that person.

V1. P. 103

An organization is determined by its leaders. If the central figure resolves to stand up alone, then everything will develop from there.

V1. P.123

Although Shinichi naturally took leadership for the kosen rufu movement in his capacity as Soka Gakkai president, his real wish was to always support his fellow members from behind the scenes. Shinichi’s entire attitude was completely different from the authoritarian behavior displayed by many leaders in society.
Vol 6 page 76

"The most important thing of all, though, is giving personal guidance and encouragement. It goes without saying that we should encourage those who attend discussion meetings as much as possible, but I always tend to think of those who do not attend. That's why I've often visited such members, to encourage them personally. This is the most fundamental part of a leader's activities."

Vol 6 page 155-156

"There are two kinds of leaders - those committed to working tirelessly for the members and those who seek only to exploit them for their personal advantage. The difference may not be apparent at a glance, but it becomes glaringly so as time goes by. Leaders of the latter type always cause problems of one sort or another for members in their area. They are disliked and invariably wind up leaving the organization of their own accord. It's a no-win situation for everyone concerned. Leaders have to cast aside all selfishness and vanity, becoming strongly determined to devote themselves fully to the members. This is the true, correct way to practice Buddhism.

"In any event, you have to decide to work for you're your fellow members and do everything in your power to enable them all to fully reveal their potential. This is what it means to be a genuine leader."

Vol 6 page 190

To truly inspire others, leaders must first make their own lives burn with passion and conviction. To inspire others to take action, leaders must thoroughly engage themselves first. The Daishonin writes,"If the general
loses heart, his soldiers will become cowards" (MW-3, (96). The organization, ultimately, is a reflection of its leaders' determination. Leaders must constantly ask themselves: "Am I really determined to win?" "Am I praying strongly enough?" "Am I brimming with joy?" "Am I satisfied with everything I did today?" This was the art of leadership Shin'ichi had learned from President Toda.

Vol 7 page 114

“Meanwhile, I hope that those who become leaders will really care for the members in their organizations, and that they will do so without putting on airs or behaving highhandedly,” he went on. “Leaders exist to serve the members. Those who work for kosen-rufu are all Bodhisattvas of the Earth. They are all Buddhas. We can accumulate great benefit only to the extent that we strive to encourage and exert ourselves on behalf of our fellow members.

Vol 7 page 150

“We’re asking you to accept a leadership position based on your potential for the future,” he added. “Essentially, it all comes down to your resolve to give it your best.”

Vol 7 page 160-164

Even in Japan, Shin’ichi strove wherever possible to open the floor for questions. This was to ensure that the meetings weren’t always just one-sided affairs with the leaders doing all the talking. He would then give detailed guidance in response to the members’ actual problems and concerns. In such exchanges, the character and substance of the person answering are truly put to the test. If the There may be questions that aren’t to the point. When fielding such a question, a leader should try to help clarify and organize the questioner’s points, aiming to identify exactly what he
or she is trying to say and wishes to know. There may also, on occasion, be someone who asks questions specifically designed to embarrass the leader or put him or her on the spot. Or someone who asks questions out of the desire to criticize and attack the Soka Gakkai and the Daishonin’s Buddhism. Such situations sometimes call for the leader to boldly refute the questioner’s claims. Another crucial challenge of a question-and-answer session is to ensure that one’s answers not only satisfy those who ask questions but are also understood and accepted by everyone gathered, serving to inspire everyone to stand up in faith. Leading a question-and-answer session therefore requires qualities like strong conviction in the power of faith; clear, logical thinking; and the flexibility to respond to all sorts of situations. Leaders must never forget that if they do nothing but issue activity directives or give one-sided guidance, they will end up alienating people.

Vol 8 page 54-55

“Just because one leader has a higher position within the organization than another does not mean his faith is necessarily stronger or that he is more important. I’m sure you are all better at talking and you probably know more about Buddhist principles, but that in itself does not amount to faith. “What matters is what you have actually done for the sake of kosen-rufu. How many people have you enabled to practice, how much have you inspired your fellow members to take action, to what extent have you taken.

Vol 8 Page 77-78

“That is the Soka Gakkai spirit. If we can keep this spirit burning forever, passing it on from member to member, to our children and our grandchildren, we will achieve kosen-rufu without fail. Please remember that leader is another name for those who are responsible for kosen-rufu. It is important that you always ask yourself how much you, as one of the central figures of our organization, have contributed to this movement.

Vol 8 page 122-123
Shin’ichi could see in Yamawaki’s demeanor a considerable degree of dishonesty, arrogance and duplicity, and at times would strictly advise him about these shortcomings. But mostly he would warmly encourage and try to guide Yamawaki. Everyone has weaknesses. It is easy to break ties with people, but if we were to turn our backs on every person we deemed to have faults, we would be unable to help anyone grow or develop. Believing in the inherent goodness of human beings is the secret to fostering people; it is also the spirit of a Buddhist. The more weaknesses or negative tendencies someone had, the more energy Shin’ichi put into encouraging that person. He tried thinking of ways to help the person realize his or her full potential, and gave the person opportunities to take responsibility within the organization. Shin’ichi was willing to forgive and embrace not only Yamawaki, but anyone who, despite having been deceitful in the past, awakened to the importance of living with integrity and began working wholeheartedly to contribute to kosen-rufu. But people often took advantage of this good faith. Shin’ichi, however, was not afraid of being hurt, and because he continued to put great effort into fostering people, he raised capable individuals who became active in the various areas of endeavor necessary for the realization of peace.

Vol 8 page 241

If we see a fellow member deviate even slightly from the guidance of the Soka Gakkai, it is important that we have the courage to point it out and advise against his or her actions immediately, no matter who they may be. By doing so, we will protect both the Soka Gakkai and that person.

Vol 8 page 273

“It is the role of a leader to convey that understanding, and impart courage, hope and conviction to each member. I want all our leaders to put
themselves in the place of those who are suffering and continue giving them the support and encouragement they need.”

Vol 11 page 210

Shin’ichi replied rationally: “To boldly attempt a risky undertaking in order to demonstrate one’s mettle may seem at a glance to be an admirable display of determination, but such foolhardy behavior always has its costs. Holding the festival in the rain may indeed have some significance, but, I repeat, what concerns me most is everyone’s health and safety. “I can’t permit even one of my precious, sincere fellow Kansai members to be harmed. That is how a leader must think.”

Vol 12 page 95

The only way to fully grasp the facts of any given situation is to see the reality for oneself. Making decisions based on hearsay and assumptions is certain to lead to errors, and cannot result in effective countermeasures. Always personally going to the front lines is the iron rule of leaders who stand on the side of the people.

Vol 13 page 210

SHIN’ICHI CONTINUED: “I think the problem escalated to this extent because the Headquarters was not informed sooner. “In any case, it’s crucial for leaders to never dismiss a report as insignificant, and to take prompt action while communicating closely with the Headquarters. This is how we gain the members’ trust. “How has the Soka Gakkai achieved such remarkable development? It’s because any and all incidents, whether occurring in a village in the northern Hokkaido wilderness or in the remote southern mountains of Kyushu, have been reported at once to the Soka Gakkai Headquarters so that prompt and appropriate measures could be taken. In other words, our advancement is due to our
detailed communication and reports coupled with immediate response and action. “An organization that is slow to communicate and whose leaders are slow to act can be said to be ailing. Actually, it is as good as dead. This is a sign that its leaders have fallen into a rut. In such a situation, people become careless, creating an opening through which devilish functions may enter. This ultimately causes the members to suffer, and the outcome can be detrimental.”

Vol 17 page 66

It’s a terrible misfortune for members if their leaders don’t appreciate their efforts. Leaders must not be insensitive.”

Vol 18 page 256-257

A men’s leader who ran into Shin’ichi at the Soka Gakkai headquarters in Tokyo immediately asked: “Sen-sei, is there a secret to holding lively, hope-filled discussion meetings?” he had been working hard to hold the best discussion meetings possible, and the number of participants was gradually growing, but somehow the atmosphere at those meetings remained dull and lifeless. Shin’ichi replied: “There’s no special secret for making a discussion meeting lively. having said that, however, I think a meeting’s success lies in how many people share experiences of gaining benefit through faith. People who share their experiences brim with joy and energy. That feeling communicates to everyone else, and the joy spreads until the entire meeting becomes positive and vibrant. As a leader, it’s important to be firmly determined and to take action to ensure that each member receives benefits. This may seem like a long and round-about way, but it is really the direct path to bringing real energy and life to discussion meetings.”

Receiving benefits through faith is testimony to the truth and correctness of Nichiren Buddhism and the Soka Gakkai. As Nichiren writes, “Even more
valuable than reason and documentary proof is the proof of actual fact” (WND- 1, 599). Benefits create joy and hope. Discussion meetings, which are a microcosm of the Soka Gakkai, must therefore abound with experiences of members gaining great benefit through faith. Looking intently at the man, Shin’ichi then said: “First, you need to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo earnestly, exert yourself whole-heartedly in Soka Gakkai activities and accumulate your own benefits through faith. Then joyously share your experiences with others. “It is also crucial to foster fresh talent. An organiza-tion with enthusiastic new members will not stagnate. In other words, I hope you will focus on introducing Bud-dhism to others and helping them deepen their faith and develop their lives. To avoid falling into a rut, you can-not be passive. You need to take bold and courageous action yourself.” “I understand. I will do my best,” the man said in a ringing, serious voice.

Vol 18 page 254

How can we inspire and encourage those members before us who are weighed down with suff ering and worry? How can we change their outlook from darkness to light, from despair to hope and from defeat to victory? A genuine leader of kosen-rufu is someone who is able to do this. And that is the very purpose for which leaders exist.

Vol 19 page 166

Nichiren Daishonin writes, “If the general were to lose heart, his soldiers would become cowards” (WND- 1, 613). When leaders forget about the importance of spurring themselves on, everyone loses the will to keep fi ghting. That is why Shin’ichi was always strictest with himself and why he continued to push himself unfl ag-gingly. His tireless eff orts inspired the same energy among his traveling companions. The fl ames of a fi ghting spirit move from one person to another. If leaders have a true fi ghting spirit,
it will be instantly transformed into enthusiasm that will spread to every corner of the organization.

In one sense, introducing another person to Buddhism does not stop with that person joining the Soka Gakkai. Truly enabling others to practice means consistently guiding and encouraging them until they surpass oneself in ability. Meetings are of course important, but in reality not everyone can attend them. There are usually at least twice as many members in a local organization as the number who regularly participate in any given discussion meeting. Only by personally visiting and encouraging each member in our area can we solidify our organization. This will lead to the Soka Gakkai’s growth and development, and in turn, to the advancement of kosen-rufu. Soka Gakkai activities without personal guidance are like a masterpiece without the finishing touches.

Offering personal guidance is of course easier said than done. The Soka Gakkai is made up of all kinds of people. Some may refuse to meet or speak with other members, while others perhaps joined as children along with their parents but do not consider themselves believers. We may even come across members highly critical of the Soka Gakkai. Others may be suffering so deeply from financial difficulties or illness that they are bereft of any hope for the future. It is no easy task to visit the homes of such members, to try and make conversation, forge bonds of friendship, talk about the importance of faith, and teach them about gongyo and Buddhist principles. Doing so is far more challenging than talking with members we see at meetings or organizing various activities. But it is these very efforts that enable us to polish ourselves. In striving to help others grow, we grow too. Furthermore, struggling in this way constitutes true Buddhist practice. Promoting activities together with those who regularly attend meetings is simple, but this in itself will not enable the Daishonin’s Buddhism to spread. To concern ourselves only with such members would be comparable to the captain of a ship bound for a distant shore contenting himself
with sailing around the harbor. Leaders must realize that the main stage of Soka Gakkai activities is not meetings themselves, but the hard work that takes place beyond the meetings. The network of life-to-life bonds that is the Soka Gakkai was built through the efforts of individuals to visit and personally encourage their fellow members. Just as a broad interwoven nexus of roots that sink deep into the earth supports a mighty tree, it is the consistent and painstaking actions of members to offer personal guidance at the grassroots level that hold up the Soka Gakkai.

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Shin’ichi always bore in mind that those who face the biggest challenges deserve the most enthusiastic encouragement, and he knew it was his job to offer it to them.

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Can you please tell me what the relationship between a chapter leader and a vice chapter leader should be?” Shin’ichi nodded energetically. “That’s a very important question,” he said. “In the future, more and more people will have vice-leadership positions in our organization while remaining active in their respective fields of mission. “Let me start by clarifying the basic attitude that vice leaders should cultivate. Just because they’re not the central leader, they should never hold back and be passively involved in activities, or distance themselves from the organization. When we grow estranged from the organization, we lose our sense of responsibility. Shouldering a responsibility for kosen-rufu at all times is a real barometer of faith. “You may think that disengaging yourselves from the organization is nice because you have more freedom, but at the same time you lose the opportunity to polish yourselves, carry out your human revolution, make real progress and achieve personal growth. As the years go by, the gap between those who have been separated from the organization and those who have remained will be quite conspicuous. Those who distanced themselves from the
organization are certain to regret it later. “Many of those who are vice leaders cannot spend as much time doing Soka Gakkai activities as they may wish, due to various circumstances such as their jobs. But even if their time is limited, they must never retreat even a single step in their determination.”

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SHIN’ICHI THEN WENT on to discuss how the central leader should treat vice leaders: “Central leaders should work closely together with vice leaders with care and concern for them so that they can exercise their abilities to the fullest, without holding back, and so that they feel completely involved. For example, young women’s chapter leaders may think it’s enough to coor-dinate with young women’s district leaders, but that’s not enough. The unified effort of central and vice leaders will be the driving force for making the organization strong and resilient, no matter what happens. “Central leaders should constantly confer with vice leaders and make sure that they have the same level of determination and self-awareness. That begins by sharing information, regularly soliciting the opinions and input of the vice leaders, and facilitating their involvement in every possible way. It would be a good idea to assign them to be in charge of something. But always be pre-pared to take fi nal responsibility yourself.”

“No matter how busy a central leader—for example, a chapter leader—may be, always value the vice leaders, never treat them in a high-handed or domineering fashion, and support them warmly. Even if a vice leader is older than you, treat her with the loving compassion of a parent and support her. That ability to accept and support others is the most important quality for central leaders.” It can be said that the strength of an organization depends upon the cooperation and close coordination of central and vice leaders. If the central leaders do every-thing themselves, they’ll become exhausted and end up burned out. But if they have several vice leaders who are working along with them in a coordinated way, activities can be held in
greater depth. The unity of the organization starts with the unity of central and vice leaders. From there, the unity of “many in body but one in mind” spreads out, and a solid organization, like the stone walls of an unassailable, invincible castle, can be built.

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At such times, it’s important to go to the place where people are struggling the most, no matter how difficult it may be. That’s the role of a true leader. If we don’t encourage members when they are in their darkest moments, when do we encourage them? Should we visit the area several years later and say, ‘Please don’t let the floods get you down’? In any undertaking, timing is crucial. Now is the time to encourage the Akita members with all our hearts. I am going.” The strength of the Soka Gakkai and the brilliance of Soka humanism are demonstrated in the prompt and earnest efforts of Soka Gakkai leaders to reach out to and encourage members who are struggling.

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Leaders need to exert themselves wholeheartedly on the front lines; otherwise, they cannot understand the hardships and sufferings people are going through. Such a lack of understanding, in turn, leads to a bureaucratic mentality, which causes an organization to decline. Stagnant water inevitably grows foul.

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Another time, a student attending one of Shin’ichi’s lectures at Kyoto University said: “To be honest, I do not like the Soka Gakkai as an organization. However, through attending your lectures, I developed a
desire to grow into a person who can protect you and work together with you for the happiness of others.” Shin’ichi responded immediately: “You say you want to protect me, but protecting the organization is protecting me. Protecting one, ten, a hundred or a thousand Soka Gakkai members is protecting me. This is because I have made the Soka Gakkai the sole purpose of my life. “Our aim of kosen-rufu can be called a bloodless revolution, but I am prepared to give my life for the sake of our members, for Buddhism and for society. Without such courage and determination, I could not lead our movement. I do not exist apart from the Soka Gakkai or its members. If you have even the slightest desire to protect me, I hope you will take a place at the front lines of this organization and work there to protect all our members.”

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“In particular, it is important that the men’s and women’s division greater block leaders, the guardians of our greater blocks, the indomitable citadels of Soka, have the awareness that they, too, are the presidents of the Soka Gakkai. “I rarely have the opportunity to meet with the members of the greater blocks on an individual basis, so I want you to be my representatives and speak to them, listen to their problems, rally them, inspire them and warmly encourage them. “Please think about what I would do as president of the Soka Gakkai, how I would encourage them and then strive to surpass me in that spirit.” The top leaders listened to Shin’ichi’s impassioned words, watching him intently. “Next, it’s vital that all the members experience benefit. To ensure this, you should talk to each of them at length and demonstrate for them the practice of chanting and propagating Nichiren Buddhism—of dedicating one’s life to the mission of kosen-rufu. This is a crucial way to creating benefit and becoming genuinely happy.”

“WHAT IS the purpose of the Soka Gakkai organization? It is for kosen-rufu, and for all its members to receive benefit and become truly happy. That’s the aim of our Soka Gakkai activities. We must never forget this most basic point. “When we receive benefit, we gain heartfelt conviction in the greatness of the Gohonzon and the power of chanting
Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. We’re filled with joy and our confidence in faith deepens. “It is also important that we tell others about our experiences of receiving benefit and share one another’s joy and conviction. As we accumulate various experiences of receiving benefits, our conviction deepens, and when we know the joys of this Buddhist faith and practice, we naturally want to talk about it with others. Through that practice, our joy is further increased. “Strengthening the greater block depends, then, on how much benefit its members can experience, how much human revolution they can achieve and how joyful they are. “Concretely speaking, an ideal example of a really strong greater block is one in which, when you ask its members in a discussion meeting, ‘Can someone share an experience of receiving benefits?’ everyone eagerly raises their hand, excited to tell others. This is not something that can be measured by statistics.

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“When all is said and done, the single most important quality of capable individuals is that they have unsparingly dedicated their lives to the path of mentor and disciple for kosen-rufu.” There are many different ways of viewing capable individuals. One is from the perspective of character. Are they serious, sincere, enthusiastic, and persevering? Capable individuals can also be evaluated from the perspective of their abilities. Are they eloquent, dynamic, sensitive, or creative? And there is also the aspect of social standing, educational history, and financial status. But no matter what skills people possess or how high their social status, if the foundation of their faith is shaky, they can’t become truly capable people for kosen-rufu. Only by firmly establishing kosen-rufu as their basic aim can their character, abilities, and social standing be fully activated as a powerful force for realizing the happiness of others.

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YES, I’d like to ask you to be the district chief,” Shin’ichi said to Hiroto Hirata, who was clearly perplexed. “You may not know what to do yet, but
you can learn as you go. What you’ll need, first and foremost, is a strong determination to help each person in the district become happy. You should also try to become someone whom everyone can talk to, always thinking about how to enable each person to bring forth his or her potential. From now on, the organization in Hawaii will develop to the extent that you pray sincerely and take action. All your efforts will turn into your own benefit and good fortune.

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By the way, I was thinking of asking you to be a young men’s division group chief; is that all right with you?” “Yes, sir.” “In Japan, a group chief is usually responsible for about 100 members. You won’t have any members to begin with, but you’ll be a group chief nonetheless. Based on this awareness, it will be up to you to build a group through your own efforts. This is the true way of the Soka Gakkai organization.

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“He then began to talk about the proper attitude a leader should have toward faith. As he spoke, the full moon cast a dim white reflection on the water, and waves could be heard lapping quietly upon the beach. “I ask you to please spend your life from now on as a district chief who, together with me, lives for the members’ happiness. Most people find it is all they can do to worry about their own happiness and that of their immediate family. It is, therefore, no easy feat to live for the happiness of your friends and fellow members, for the sake of the Law and for kosen-rufu, while at the same time grappling with your own personal problems. “The fact is, however, that when you worry, pray and struggle for the sake of others, you are proving by your very actions that you have transcended the bounds of your own individual concerns and are opening the way for your own splendid human revolution. “The organization will change and develop in any number of ways depending on the ichinen, or deep-seated determination, of the central figure. People will follow a leader who always fights for them. But they will eventually perceive the real nature of someone interested only in personal fame or for-tune and will stop supporting that person.”
“Leaders must also carefully consider what they are going to speak about, and how to present it, so that the members will readily understand and accept what they have to say. It is important to continue making such efforts. When I have a meeting to attend, I always make sure that I am thoroughly prepared. I rack my brains and try to come up with creative ideas. “This is a leader’s duty. If a leader just talks about the same old thing and never offers anything fresh or new, it is discourteous to the listeners. It is a sign of an irresponsible leader who has fallen into force of habit.”

Shin’ichi then spoke sternly: “Taking responsibility as a leader in the organization is the quickest way to develop one’s life-condition. Rather than deciding it’s beyond you before you even try, it’s important to accept the position humbly and challenge yourself to the very limit of your ability. Two other men who have a great deal of experience will be there to help you, so I ask that you please make a resolute determination and try your best.”

TO FOSTER capable people, leaders need to meet with as many members as possible. Plants and trees grow when they have rich soil and the warm, bright light of the sun. Capable people are likewise nurtured through abundant encouragement and inspiration. That is why Shin’ichi spent every possible moment reaching out to and spending time with members.

“I’m only going to be in Ok-i nawa for four days and three nights, so I consider every moment to be crucial. I’d like to meet with as many members as possible and inspire fresh resolve in their hearts. I want to show you the difference a leader can make when they are sincere and earnest. “If you give your all to the task at hand, you will feel courage, strength and
wisdom well forth in your being, and you will be able to overcome any limitations you may have. Being serious and sincere are the requisites for leadership.”

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How can we inspire and encourage those members before us who are weighed down with suffering and worry? How can we change their outlook from darkness to light, from despair to hope and from defeat to victory? A genuine leader of kosen-rufu is someone who is able to do this. And that is the very purpose for which leaders exist.

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Please remember that leader is another name for those who are responsible for kosen-rufu.

Vol 18 page 166

The path of the oneness of mentor and disciple is the heart of the Soka Gakkai and the lifeblood of kosen-rufu.

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“To give one’s life to kosen-rufu and to live one’s life for kosen-rufu are two sides of the same coin. One is not different from the other. Both include the spirit to devote one’s life to propagating the Mystic Law.