

**Mrs. Kaneko Ikeda's 2012 Message to the Women's Division
and Young Women's Division**

At the start of a new year, I wish to convey my deepest respect and appreciation to all of you, the dedicated members of the women's division and young women's division who are striving so valiantly for kosen-rufu around the globe.

I am also chanting earnestly, together with my husband, that each of you will gain ever-growing benefits in faith, realize a state of life brimming with great happiness, and introduce as many of your friends as possible to the wonderful, hope-filled realm of the SGI.

With 2012 being designated the Year of Developing a Youthful SGI, I am reminded of Nichiren Daishonin's words to Nichigen-nyo, the wife of Shijo Kingo: "You will grow younger, and your good fortune will accumulate" (WND-1, 464).

I can't think of a more fulfilling and worthwhile way to live one's life than striving with youthful vigor day after day, year after year, in rhythm with the Mystic Law, and accumulating treasures of the heart alongside young people who will carry on the future of kosen-rufu.

I am deeply grateful that, thanks to everyone's daimoku, my husband continues to take the lead for kosen-rufu in good health with an unflagging youthful spirit. He is 84 this year, but has said that, having started his count anew from his 60th birthday,¹ he is once again 24.

In February 1952, 60 years ago, at the age of 24, my husband spearheaded a significant breakthrough in the Soka Gakkai's propagation efforts with the aim of actualizing our mentor Josei Toda's vision for kosen-rufu. I also participated in that historic drive—today known as the February Campaign of Kamata Chapter—as a young women's division member, along with my mother, who was the chapter women's division leader at the time.

My husband called out to the Kamata members: "We owe who we are today to the guidance of President Toda. The only way to repay our gratitude to him is by exerting ourselves to advance kosen-rufu. Let's do everything we can to adorn the month of President Toda's birth with a historic achievement!"

A powerful resolve to repay our gratitude to our mentor was kindled in our hearts. It united our entire chapter and enabled each of us to joyfully challenge ourselves and bring forth new, untapped power and potential.

¹ In Japan, a person's 60th birthday is considered a special milestone called "*kanreki*" (a return to the year of one's birth). Based on the ancient Chinese lunar calendar, the end of one 60-year cycle—consisting of five cycles of the 12-year Chinese zodiac—marks a new birth or beginning.

My husband offered three concrete guidelines for our campaign as he personally took the lead on the front lines of the struggle:

- (1) Start with chanting daimoku
- (2) Treasure and respect those in your immediate environment, including your neighbors
- (3) Confidently and fully share your experiences in faith

Freshly invigorated, we, the members of Kamata Chapter, went on to achieve the record-breaking monthly propagation result of 201 new member households. This was at a time when the largest chapters in Japan were advancing at the pace of around 100 households per month.

Mr. Toda was overjoyed. Our success also inspired members throughout the country, who realized that they could achieve similar results if they tried.

In “The True Aspect of All Phenomena,” the Daishonin writes: “Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism. You must not only persevere yourself; you must also teach others. Both practice and study arise from faith. Teach others [by talking to them about Buddhism] to the best of your ability, even if it is only a single sentence or phrase” (WND-1, 386).

Now, SGI members around the world, with youth leading the way, are carrying on the spirit of the February Campaign and creating dynamic waves of hope-filled dialogue, just as this passage from the Daishonin urges.

Hearing reports each day of the wonderful things our SGI youth are doing brings my husband immense joy. He is always happily saying: “A new age has come. What tremendous development we have achieved!”

Recently, he sent the following words of encouragement to a new young member: “This is a wonderful Buddhist practice, so please pursue it with complete confidence and peace of mind. Show appreciation to your parents, and become the kind of person who will make them proud.”

The Soka Gakkai’s very first youth division study seminar was also held in February 1952, in the midst of the February Campaign, with President Toda in attendance.

The main theme for that study seminar was science and religion; I fondly remember doing extensive research for the seminar and presenting it on the day. Although my presentation was far from complete, President Toda smiled at me and said: “The growing strength of the young women’s division members based on their study of Buddhism is the flower of hope for kosen-rufu.”

It was at that same study seminar that President Toda first declared his vision of global citizenship.

He also said at that meeting: “I will pass on the third presidency to a member of the youth division. . . . If everyone supports the third president, kosen-rufu will definitely be achieved.”

Six decades have passed since then. And, just as President Toda predicted, our movement for kosen-rufu—our SGI network for peace, culture, and education that exemplifies his ideal of global citizenship—has spread to encompass 192 countries and territories around the world.

I fervently believe that as long as we base ourselves on the spirit embodied by the first three presidents of the Soka Gakkai, the road to worldwide kosen-rufu will unfold limitlessly, no matter what obstacles we may encounter along the way.

Rector Chinara A. Shakeeva of the Kyrgyz-Russian Academy of Education, who visited Japan last year (in March 2011), is a respected educator who has praised the Soka path of mentor and disciple.

Dr. Shakeeva grew up in a farming village. Her mother taught her to be an independent person of strong convictions who valued inner human qualities. She also encouraged her daughter to dare to accomplish great things, steadily and patiently, one step at a time.

Dr. Shakeeva is extremely proud of her mother, who, even in difficult times, strove to make a positive contribution to society. She said that if she were to write a book about her mother’s life, it would be a heroic epic.

I heard that when Dr. Shakeeva visited the Soka International Women’s Center in Tokyo and viewed a display on the Gakkai spirit of mentor and disciple, she commented with deep feeling that the greater hardships people overcome, the brighter their lives shine. I couldn’t agree more.

What incredible courage and fortitude those who were affected by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami have shown in the face of unimaginably harrowing trials! Many of our members living in areas devastated by the disaster have risen above enormous personal loss and hardship to reach out to help others and assist their communities in this difficult period, thereby winning widespread trust and respect.

To one such admirable couple, my husband sent the following message: “Please keep pressing straight ahead on your present path. The time will come when you are able to change poison into medicine. When all your current worries are behind you, let us join together in a victory cheer—a victory cheer for your family.”

My husband continues to write his novel *The New Human Revolution* day after day, without pause. As he does so, I can feel his determination to leave behind a

monumental tribute to the victorious lives of our members, the noble yet unsung champions of humanity—not least the women of Soka, the mothers of kosen-rufu.

In closing, I would like to share some more words of my husband.

Last year in July, in a message to the young women’s division members who continue to exert themselves with quiet dedication, he wrote:

My friends, stand up again today!
Advance cheerfully again today!
Triumph completely in this most noble life,
and adorn it with an abundance of happiness!
—Praying that all of you may lead happy lives

And in February 2011, while I was meeting with a small group of women’s division representatives at the Soka International Women’s Center, my husband telephoned with a message, which I repeated directly to the members present: “Please become happy without exception. Please make each day of your life a meaningful and enjoyable one. Remember that practitioners of the Lotus Sutra must have the strength to transform even the most painful sufferings into joy. Three cheers to the women’s division! May your lives always be happy and victorious.”

I am chanting for the happiness of our young women’s division and women’s division members around the world in exactly the same spirit.

Let’s lead the most joyful, positive lives in the world, moving forward together in a beautiful spirit of harmony and camaraderie not found anywhere else.

My best wishes for your health and for the happiness of your families. Please take good care of yourselves.

Kaneko Ikeda
SGI Honorary Women’s Leader