UNIT LEADERSHIP

First Steps in the Practice of the Bodhisattva Way
Dear Unit Leader,

We are so happy to welcome you to the family of SGI-USA leaders!

We are sure you will look back on this day as a new starting point in faith. We can never understand Buddhism through theory alone. Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin were people of action who lived among the men and women of their times. They encouraged the person right in front of them. The three mentors of the Soka Gakkai—Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Josei Toda and Daisaku Ikeda—have followed this path as well.

As a new leader, you will ideally support one to three members. Some of them may look forward to hearing from you and some may not. Regardless of each person’s condition, please chant for the happiness and victory of the members of your unit.

Most important, as a unit leader, please share this practice with your friends and family members. Propagation is the essential spirit of Nichiren Buddhism. Through your efforts for kosen-rufu, you are building a happy and peaceful world, while solidifying your own foundation of fortune and happiness!

SGI President Ikeda once wrote: “Nothing is nobler than taking the initiative for kosen-rufu. Nothing is stronger than earnest commitment. Nothing is more profound than painstaking effort. Such resolve is certain to open the way forward” (April 23, 2010, World Tribune, p. 10). We need the initiative, fresh creativity and determined actions of newly appointed leaders like you!

In your journey, your best resource comes right to your mailbox: the World Tribune each week and Living Buddhism once a month. You can find all of the guidance and encouragement for your faith and leadership in the publications.

Above all, we want you to enjoy your adventures and personal growth as an SGI-USA leader!

Sincerely,

SGI-USA National Team
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part One:
4       Why Do We Take On Leadership?

Part Two:
5       My District
6       My Unit Members
7       My Discussion Meetings

Part Three:
8       What Actions Do I Take Now?
Why do we take on leadership?

We take on leadership in the SGI to achieve our human revolution, while helping others strengthen their Buddhist practice, and transforming our families and communities on a fundamental level.

By taking on leadership with the same spirit as SGI President Ikeda, we develop into individuals who can achieve our aspirations in life and inspire limitless hope and courage in the hearts of others.

The district is the starting point.
The district is the driving force.
The district is the main bastion.
The district is the power source.
The district is the lifeline.
The district is the deciding point.

—SGI President Ikeda, from the poem “Ode to District Leaders”

Guidance from President Ikeda

When we look after and care for others—that is, help others draw forth their life force—our own life force increases. When we help people expand their state of life, our state of life also expands. That is the wonderful thing about the bodhisattva way. The practice for benefiting others is one and the same with the practice for benefiting ourselves.

To only speak of benefiting others leads to arrogance. It conveys a sense of self-righteousness, as if we are somehow doing others a favor by “saving” them. Only when we recognize that our efforts on others’ behalf are also for our own sake will we be filled with humble appreciation for being able to develop our lives.

Our lives and the lives of others are ultimately inseparable. It is vital, therefore, that we follow the bodhisattva way. (January 2015 Living Buddhism, pp. 55–56)
Welcome to the District Team!
Unit and group leaders have a mission to take care of the precious members in the district. You are the engine of SGI-USA’s development. Please support your district leaders! You are the hub of the district!

My district name: ___________________________  My district meeting place(s): ___________________________

My district leaders:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Division</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s Division</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Women’s Division</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Men’s Division</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My group leaders:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guidance from President Ikeda

Viewed in light of the causal law of Buddhism, the great good fortune you are now accumulating by looking after and treasuring many people predestines you to a state of being where you will be supported and protected by many people in each successive lifetime. Our Buddhist practice in this life is our training for becoming great leaders throughout all future existences. *(My Dear Friends in America, third edition, p. 472)*
**My unit members:**

The mission of leaders in the SGI-USA is to serve the members. Reaching out to even a single member to encourage them and help them deepen their faith is the work of the Buddha. Ideally, each unit leader will be responsible for communicating with one to three members. Meetings are not held at the unit level.

---

**What is my role as a unit leader?**

The primary responsibilities of the unit leader are:

- To communicate with members in your unit about upcoming meetings in your district.
- To pray for the members’ happiness.
- To encourage them to seek guidance from seniors in faith.
- To share with members the importance of introducing others to Buddhism.

---

**GUIDANCE FROM PRESIDENT IKEDA**

The district lies on the forefront of our movement and has a direct connection with each individual. At the same time, it is endowed with all of the functions necessary to support our daily activities. You might say that all our struggles in the realm of faith have centered on the district and that it is within the district that each of us has grown.

If we liken the Soka Gakkai to an orchard, each district corresponds to a single fruit tree, while the fruit represents each of you. Without the tree, there will be no fruit. Everything depends on the tree. Similarly, the real basis of the Soka Gakkai is each district that composes it. One could even say that the district itself is the Soka Gakkai. (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 102)
My Discussion Meetings

The discussion meeting is the most important activity within the SGI. It is our way to deepen our faith as well as our contribution to building vital communities. It is the unique contribution the Soka Gakkai can offer the world as a path to peace.

Please support your discussion meetings by attending them along with the members of your unit.

Guidance from President Ikeda

[Second Soka Gakkai President Josei] Toda said: “The Lotus Sutra states, ‘If you see a person who accepts and upholds this sutra, you should rise and greet [them] from afar, showing [them] the same respect you would a Buddha’ (The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras, p. 365).

“Therefore, if you go to a discussion meeting and there are only, say, three people in attendance, you should be filled with joy and engage them in conversation. The same applies even if there is only one other person, for you can teach the truth of Myoho-renge-kyo to that one person.

“You should come home from a discussion meeting feeling happy and inspired from having shared in sincere conversation with fellow members—even with only one person or two. This is the kind of discussion meeting you should strive to hold—even if there is only one person who will listen to what you have to say. Just meeting that one person is important.” (My Dear Friends in America, third edition, pp. 316–17)
Part Three:

WHAT ACTIONS DO I TAKE NOW?

Support your district; the district is the starting point

“I also concentrated on the district as the starting point for new development when I embarked on my great journey for worldwide kosen-rufu in October 1960. To the surprise of the leaders traveling with me, when I arrived in Hawaii, my first overseas destination, I announced the establishment of the Soka Gakkai’s very first district outside Japan.” (SGI President Ikeda, Aug. 27, 2010, World Tribune, p. 4)

Contact members

Please give members in your unit a friendly call! Find out how they are doing. If they share their problems with you, please chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for their happiness. Invite them to upcoming activities and certainly connect them to your district and chapter leaders so they can get faith encouragement.

Visit members

Visiting members at their homes is an essential act leaders take to develop strong bonds of trust and understanding. When you visit the members, please ensure their Buddhist altar is set up in a respectful location and wholeheartedly encourage them. You can also invite your group leader or district leader to accompany you on the visit.

Prepare for the discussion meeting

“The individuals responsible for holding or leading a meeting should study and prepare sufficiently beforehand, summoning forth wisdom and creativity to ensure that it’s a great experience for everyone. The success of a meeting is determined by such advance preparations.” (President Ikeda, July 14, 2006, World Tribune, p. 2)

Support the discussion meeting

“It is at discussion meetings that many people encounter Nichiren Buddhism for the first time. It is at discussion meetings that the warm support and encouragement of fellow members inspire us to tackle and overcome personal problems and challenges. Discussion meetings establish oases of joy and security in our communities and make it possible for us to create immeasurable value in an unceasing rhythm, day in and day out, month after month. Discussion meetings—and, indeed, all Soka Gakkai meetings—are gatherings of Buddhas, in complete accord with the Lotus Sutra and the writings of Nichiren Daishonin. They are gatherings respectable beyond compare.” (President Ikeda, Oct. 2, 2010, World Tribune, p. 28)