Dear Region – Territory Leaders,

As was announced last month, moving forward we will provide a curriculum of Soka Spirit related material for youth who are conducting the study presentations at these meetings. The curriculum will include information about the roles that should be fulfilled by the youth division (MC, fukudoshi and study presentation) at these weekly chanting sessions, as well as weekly topics for the speakers to base their study presentation on. The Soka Spirit study topics will be pulled from current and past World Tribune articles, The New Human Revolution, and Ikeda Wisdom Academy lectures. The aim of this effort is to provide youth division members with an outline to create an informative and encouraging study presentation.

The October curriculum is attached. Thank you so much for all of your efforts!

Thank you,
National Youth Leaders
SOKA SPIRIT
CHANTING SESSIONS

► PURPOSE

1) Chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to establish the correct teaching for the peace of the land.
2) Hone our abilities to recognize devilish functions internally and externally.
3) Learn the essential spirit of President Ikeda and the SGI.
4) Unite around the current SGI-USA direction and focus.

► SUGGESTED AGENDA

• Daimoku and gongyo led by central figure (1 hour)
• Study presentation by youth member (5 min)
• Encouragement by region–national line leader (7–10 min)

► RESPONSIBILITIES

• Fukudoshi

Two–three youth should be assigned to support daimoku as fukudoshi for 20–30 minutes each. For tips on being fukudoshi, please see p. 2.

• MC

One youth emcee, with the support of seniors in faith, should be assigned to welcome the members and move the meeting along. For tips on being emcee, please see p. 2.

• Study Presentation

One youth, with the support of seniors in faith, should give a well-prepared study presentation (5 min) based on the Soka Spirit curriculum. Please see the Soka Spirit study guide.

• Encouragement

A region–national line leader of any division should share encouragement related to the current organizational focus and convey the spirit of the week or month.

Note: The Soka Spirit toso is a wonderful training opportunity for the youth. If there are no youth for the responsibilities above, please work with the region or zone to find youth support.
TIPS ON BEING EMCEE

- **The emcee's voice should be stirring, powerful and brimming with life force.**
  “Emcees must have the determination to bear full responsibility for the meeting and use their voices to transform the atmosphere into a place of joy in seeking the Law, a true Buddhist assembly” (The New Human Revolution, vol. 25, p. 187).

- **Get a good night’s sleep and eat a proper meal.**
  “An emcee needs to enunciate, so that everyone can hear and understand what is said. Facial expressions are also important. An emcee mustn’t look tired or unwell. When you’re going to take on the crucial role of emcee, you need to get a good night’s sleep the day before” (NHR-25, 189–90).

- **Pay special attention to timing during the meeting and be able to respond quickly.**
  “There are times when you need to jump right in and speak to keep the tempo upbeat, and times when you need to take a breath and pause. If you lack that crucial sense of timing, you can possibly ruin the meeting’s mood” (NHR-25, 191).

- **Chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo prior to the meeting.**
  “It’s vital that you chant with strong determination to make the meeting you’re moderating a success. The purpose of Soka Gakkai meetings is to advance kosen-rufu, and they are the contemporary versions of the assembly of the Lotus Sutra. As such, serving as an emcee at a meeting is to carry out the noble work of the Buddha” (NHR-25, 192).

TIPS ON BEING FUKUDOSHI

- **Maintain a consistent and dynamic rhythm together with the person leading.**
  “You must first listen carefully to the voice of the person leading gongyo and stay in rhythm with it. It’s important to neither get ahead nor fall behind. In addition, you should try to ensure that the rhythm of gongyo is dynamic and exhilarating like a fine steed galloping across the open plains” (The New Human Revolution, vol. 25, pp. 192–93).

- **Avoid slowing down.**
  “When a large number of people are participating, both the sutra recitation and chanting tend to gradually slow down, but you mustn’t allow yourself to be dragged along. You should try to lead everyone at a lively tempo” (NHR-25, 193).

- **Pronounce the words in the sutra clearly.**
  “It’s also necessary to pronounce the words in the sutra recitation clearly. You should strive during your own daily gongyo to do your very best at all times, making sure you aren’t slipping into sloppy pronunciation habits, and that you’re breathing in the appropriate places” (NHR-25, 193).

- **Strive for a resonant, clear, powerful, refreshing gongyo.** (NHR-25, 193)
October Curriculum: Week 1

Material: Cultivating Our Behavior as a Human Beings
September 20, 2019, World Tribune, p. 11
https://www.worldtribune.org/article/cultivating-our-behavior-as-human-beings/

Background: The Soka Gakkai continues to spread the principles of Nichiren Buddhism for the happiness of all people. In contrast, the priesthood has deviated from Nichiren’s writings.

Key Excerpts:
• Bodhisattva Never Disparaging’s Exemplary Behavior:
  “In sharing Buddhism to help one person after another awaken to their limitless potential, we may face those who criticize or respond negatively to us. President Ikeda points out that Bodhisattva Never Disparaging’s practice of showing respect to others is, in fact, the same as our practice of introducing people to Nichiren Buddhism” (June 2019 Living Buddhism, p. 53).

• The Oneness of Good and Evil:
  “With faith in the Mystic Law, Nichiren says, we can break through our fundamental darkness and bring forth our fundamental enlightenment. We do this through our daily Buddhist practice and our efforts to connect with others through dialogue”.

• The SGI’s Spiritual Independence:
  “The Soka Gakkai’s separation from the priesthood, its spiritual independence, became the catalyst for the organization to . . . greatly develop as a world religion. President Ikeda says, “Today, people are revitalizing their lives through their Buddhist practice and the beneficial power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Their humanistic behavior is touching those around them, while the joy they experience through their practice is spreading, inspiring others to stand up as well” (September 2019 Living Buddhism, p. 57).

Key Point: Soka Gakkai members are striving to cultivate their behavior as human beings while the priesthood is not. By engaging in our Buddhist practice, we can defeat our fundamental darkness and reveal our inherent Buddhahood. It is our humanistic behavior that will spread Buddhism.

Preparing the Presentation (5 min):
• Read the article and source material.
• Seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
• Share the key excerpts and the key point.
• Conclude with how we can apply this guidance in our lives.
Note: Please chant abundant daimoku throughout the preparation.
October Curriculum: Week 2

Material: On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime: SGI President Ikeda’s Lecture Series, p. 7

Key Excerpt:
In “The True Aspect of All Phenomena,” Nichiren writes: “Though it is thought that Shakyamuni Buddha possesses the three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent for the sake of all of us living beings, that is not so. On the contrary, it is common mortals who endow him with the three virtues” (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 384). This passage describes a shift from an authoritarian to a humanistic, people-centered religion. The teaching of Nichiren, who established the concrete means for achieving enlightenment in this lifetime, makes this shift possible.” (Lecture Series, 7)

Explanation:
• Three virtues: The benevolent functions of sovereign, teacher and parent a Buddha is said to possess.
  -Sovereign: the power to protect all living beings
  -Teacher: the wisdom to instruct and lead them to enlightenment
  -Parent: the compassion to nurture and support them
• The Buddha is not a supernatural being. The Buddha is able to manifest these virtues because human beings are worthy of respect and possess the potential for enlightenment. Thus, Nichiren clarifies that the three virtues of the Buddha only exist in the compassionate action to serve others.

Key Point: The practice of Nichiren Buddhism—consisting of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon and compassionate propagation or shakubuku—enables any one to bring forth their Buddha nature and manifest the three virtues. It is by no means limited to one individual.

Preparing the Presentation (5 min):
• Read the reference material.
• Seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
• Explain the concept contained in the excerpt.
• Relate the key point to a personal experience.
• Conclude with how we can apply this guidance in our lives.
Note: Please chant abundant daimoku throughout the preparation.
October Curriculum: Week 3

**Material:** *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 2, pp. 86–87

**Context:** SGI President Ikeda gives guidance to women’s division members about battling stagnation.

**Key Excerpt:**
“The period of President Toda’s harrowing struggle to rebuild his business after the war was also the most painful time in my own life. My health was extremely poor, my wages continued to be in arrears, and I pushed myself beyond my limits day in and day out.

“I once let some words of defeat slip in Mr. Toda’s presence. I’ll never forget his stern reproach: ‘Shin’ichi,’ he said, ‘faith is a never-ending battle against impasse. It is a struggle between the Buddha and devilish functions—between negative and positive forces. This is the meaning of the phrase *Buddhism is concerned with winning*’ . . .

“Everyone encounters an impasse at some point in life. Some people may experience a deadlock in business. A couple may come to a standstill in their relationship. Some may feel they have reached a stalemate in raising their children, in their relations with other people, in their propagation activities or in their study of Buddhist teachings . . .

“Buddhism’s greatest significance lies in overcoming such impasses by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, attaining a state of absolute happiness, and realizing the most meaningful of lives. Therefore, whenever you encounter a difficulty, I hope you will view it as a struggle against an impasse, as a battle against obstacles and, resolving that now is the time to win, boldly forge your path in life as you challenge your destiny head-on.” (NHR-2, 86–87)

**Key Point:** Times of impasse are opportunities to deepen our faith and transform the negative forces within our own lives.

**Preparing the Presentation (5 min):**
- Read the reference material.
- Seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
- Share the context of the scene and key excerpts.
- Relate the key point to a personal experience.
- Conclude with how we can apply this guidance in our lives.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku throughout the preparation.
Background: The priesthood is far removed from the original spirit taught by Nichiren Daishonin. Based on the teachings of Nichiren and Nikko Shonin, we can identify three key errors of the priesthood.

Three Key Errors:

1. The Absolute Power of the High Priest: “The high priest alone has the power to determine who attains Buddhahood and who does not . . . Without venerating and obediently following the high priest, practitioners cannot attain enlightenment.”

   - Correct Teaching: Nikko Shonin states, “Do not follow even the high priest if he goes against the Buddha’s law and propounds his own views.”

2. The High Priest Receives Exclusive Transmission of the Law: The fundamental principle of the Daishonin’s Buddhism is transmitted only to the high priest through a face-to-face conversation between the outgoing high priest and his successor.

   - Correct Teaching: “Nichiren repeatedly stresses that the Law is inherited through embracing the Gohonzon with faith . . . Nichiren Buddhism teaches that all people have equal access through their own faith and practice.”

3. Inequality of Priest and Laity: “An innate difference exists between the priesthood and laity in the Daishonin’s Buddhism.”

   - Correct Teaching: “The correct relationship between a Buddhist teacher and a disciple is expressed in the principle of the oneness of mentor and disciple, which means that both the teacher and the disciple equally share responsibility for kosen-rufu based on mutual respect and commitment.”

Key Point: It is important that we seek to develop a correct understanding of Buddhism through our study and practice of the principles that Nichiren himself taught.

Preparing the Presentation (5 min):

- Read the reference material.
- Seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
- Share background, three key errors and the corresponding teachings that refute those errors.
- Conclude with how we can apply this guidance in our lives.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku throughout the preparation.