Dear Region through Territory Leaders,

As was announced in September, 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 November 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)
November Curriculum: Week 1

**Material:** Never Allow the True Teachings of Nichiren to Be Destroyed


**Context:** In a scene in *The Human Revolution*, second Soka Gakkai President Toda shares insight into the true nature of the priesthood with young Daisaku Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto.

**Key Excerpt:****

“It wasn’t outside enemies that threatened to destroy Nichiren Buddhism; it was the self-serving actions of cowardly, equivocating priests who were interested only in protecting themselves . . . It was President Makiguchi and the Soka Gakkai who rigorously protected Nichiren Buddhism, enabling it to survive. This is why we can say that the Daishonin’s spirit and genuine faith in his Buddhism exist only in the Soka Gakkai . . .

“There may appear a high priest who will attempt to use clerical authority to enslave the Soka Gakkai and try to manipulate it according to his whims. Particularly, when the priesthood has secured its financial base and gained a degree of wealth, it will surely try to sever its ties with the Soka Gakkai. Nor is it inconceivable that the priesthood might again take the lead in undermining the Law and become the abode of the devil king of the sixth heaven, just as it did during the war. But, we must never allow the true teachings of Nichiren to be destroyed.”

**Key Point:** While the priesthood compromised the teachings to protect themselves and sought their own self-serving interests, only the founding presidents and members of the Soka Gakkai selflessly dedicated their lives to kosen-rufu. Therefore, genuine faith and the true spirit of Nichiren Daishonin is found only in the Soka Gakkai. We ourselves must never give in to cowardice or self-serving behaviors, and never let up in fighting evil to protect the Soka Gakkai and the true teachings.

**Preparing the Presentation (5 min):**

- Read the reference material.
- Seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
- Share context of the scene, the key excerpt and key point.
- Conclude with personal determination based on key point.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku throughout the preparation.
Material: *On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime: SGI President Ikeda’s Lecture Series*, p. 22

Key Excerpt:
Given that chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo has such profound meaning, it is crucial to remember when we chant that Myoho-renge-kyo is our life itself. If we lose sight of this point, then no matter how much we may chant, we will have departed from the practice of chanting taught by Nichiren Daishonin.

Therefore, in “On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime,” Nichiren writes in stern warning, “Even though you chant and believe in Myoho-renge-kyo, if you think the Law is outside yourself, you are embracing not the Mystic Law but an inferior teaching” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 3). “Inferior” here means “incomplete.” The Mystic Law is the ultimate truth that is perfect and complete; in contrast, an incomplete teaching sets forth only a partial truth.

The above passage contains a profound philosophy that overcomes one of the serious pitfalls to which religion tends to succumb. It also embodies a crucial philosophy of faith for attaining genuine happiness.

Explanation: Nichiren Daishonin established the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to enable all people to directly tap into their inherent potential. If we think this potential is outside or separate from us, then we are not practicing Nichiren Buddhism, but an incomplete teaching.

Key Points:
• Our life itself is Myoho-renge-kyo, which is infinitely worthy and boundless. Thus, we do not need priests to activate or bestow it upon us.
• Practicing Nichiren Buddhism correctly requires taking full responsibility of our lives and forging the attitude that any change must begin with our own human revolution.
• Slandering and disrespecting fellow members, as well as our own lives, is slandering Myoho-renge-kyo.

Preparing the Presentation (5 min):
• Read the reference material.
• Seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
• Share the excerpt, explanation and key points.
• Conclude with a personal experience and how we can apply this guidance in our lives.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku throughout the preparation.
November Curriculum: Week 3

**Material:** May 2018 *Living Buddhism* (Part 1 of 2—To be continued in next month's curriculum)

https://www.worldtribune.org/article/struggle-establish-buddhism-people/

**Background:** Soka Spirit focuses on reaffirming the essential heart and spirit of Buddhism itself. To commemorate our spiritual independence on November 28, let’s review the basis of Soka Spirit.

**Three Points of Soka Spirit:**

1) **Continuing Nichiren Daishonin’s legacy of fighting evil:** “[Nichiren] taught that evil or devilish functions are essentially those things that prevent people from realizing absolute happiness in this life as well as anything that disrupts the propagation of a teaching that leads others to enlightenment.” (p. 25)

2) **Carrying out a religious revolution:** “Buddhism began from a tradition of religious reformation—to battle the tendencies toward formality, dogma and authoritarianism, and to always strive to return to the original spirit and intent of Shakyamuni Buddha. Part of Soka Spirit is to challenge the authoritarianism of those clothed in priestly robes and the noble effort to help those being misled by such priests.” (p. 26)

3) **Upholding the banner of a people-centered religion:** “The Buddhism of the people is a philosophy based on the teaching of universal enlightenment set forth in the Lotus Sutra, fully propounding the unsurpassed worth, dignity and equality of all people . . . The Buddhism of the people is a humanistic religion, in which people awakened to their mission play the leading role and open the way to victory for all people.” (p. 28)

**Key Point:** “It is through engaging in Soka Spirit activities and battling those ideas and behaviors that cause people to suffer that we can hone and develop our own abilities, our own humanism, thereby leading everyone around us toward self-empowerment and happiness, bringing limitless and eternal benefits to our lives and to those around us.” (p. 28)

**Presentation (5 min):**

- Read the reference material.
- Seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
- Share background, three points of Soka Spirit and the key point.
- Conclude with how we can apply this guidance in our lives.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku throughout the preparation.
November Curriculum: Week 4

Material: *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 2, pp. 169–70

Context: Jealous members tried to tarnish the reputation of a new, relatively inexperienced chapter women’s leader. SGI President Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto, explains the true nature of envy or jealousy, and how to overcome it.

Key Excerpt:

“Those who envy or are jealous of others, however, look for the cause of their happiness or unhappiness in others. This is the same as seeking the Law outside themselves. The emotions of those who regard the world this way tend to rise or fall with each changing circumstance and, when they encounter some difficulty or suffering, they take out their bitterness and resentment on others. They fail to look at themselves and reflect upon their own behavior. As a result, they do not grow or carry out their human revolution. Ultimately, they make themselves miserable.

Naturally, since the central figures or leaders of an organization are only human, they will have their strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes their lack of experience will be glaringly apparent. The question lies in what we do in such a situation—whether we simply criticize these individuals or help them and try to make up for their shortcomings?

To support the central figure from behind the scenes is to practice faith with the true unity of “many in body, one in mind” The path of human revolution lies in . . . striving each day to become a better person today than we were yesterday, even if only a little bit, and better tomorrow than today. Unlimited benefit and good fortune are found only in such unflagging efforts.”

Key Point: Human revolution consists of committing to self-reflection and improving ourselves based on Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings, as well as striving to create unity with others despite our differences.

Presentation:

- Read the reference material.
- Seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
- Share context of the scene and key 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.