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-reng-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)
February Curriculum: Week 1

**Material:** June 2019, *Living Buddhism*, p. 53

**Context:** In a lecture for new members, SGI President Ikeda explains how sharing Buddhism with others ensures the happiness of both ourselves and others.

**Key Passage:** "My mentor, second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda, always taught us that if we had problems, we should share Buddhism with others, and that in so doing, we would be able to change our own karma.

"Sharing Buddhism is not about debating or defeating others in argument. It is encouraging and urging another person to awaken to the fact that we are all supremely respect-worthy beings who possess the Buddha nature. This is precisely what Bodhisattva Never Disparaging did. It is also a struggle to break down the icy walls of darkness or ignorance in our own lives, which take the form of apathy, passivity and other negative emotions.

"When we talk with others about Buddhism, we are actually grappling with our own ignorance and earthly desires. That's why it gives us the strength to surmount our own problems, enabling us to solidly transform our state of life and change our karma.

"In that sense, sharing Buddhism comes down to overcoming our own cowardice, laziness and delusion, thus enabling us to dispel the darkness or ignorance in our own lives and in the lives of others.

"Buddhist dialogue isn’t something we engage in only once we’ve attained enlightenment. Rather, it is an integral part of our Buddhist practice, which we carry out by connecting and talking with others in accord with our mentor’s teachings."

**Key Point:** Sharing Nichiren Buddhism and the benefits of our practice with others enables us to battle our inner negativity, transform our own state of life and enable others to be happy as well.

**Presentation (5 minutes):**
- Read the reference material and seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
- Read the context, key excerpt and key point. Conclude with a personal experience and how we can apply this guidance in our lives.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku throughout the preparation.
February Curriculum: Week 2

**Material:** *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 3, pp. 14–15

**Context:** SGI President Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto, gives key guidance on unity. If leaders, despite making earnest efforts for kosen-rufu, are not in harmony with each other, they can create “unintentional disunity.” Sensei addresses this in the following guidance.

**Key Excerpt:** “The chapter leader might say, ‘Let’s try hard in our Gakkai activities and reap the benefits of faith.’ If, on the other hand, the vice chapter leader sitting next to him then says: ‘Faith is not separate from daily life. Let’s strive diligently in our jobs,’ the messages will conflict.

“Or, the chapter leader might say, ‘I’d really like to see our chapter concentrate on study.’ But if the women’s leader then says: ‘Study without practice is abstract. It’s pointless if we don’t try to introduce others to this Buddhism,’ the members will be left feeling bewildered.

“This is a prime example of disunity. Although each statement fits Soka Gakkai guidelines, the apparently conflicting guidance will only confuse the members. This is because the leaders haven’t tried to harmonize. If they were in sync with one another, they could naturally express the above points more constructively.

“If, for example, when the chapter leader says, ‘Let’s promote study,’ the other leaders were to say, ‘Yes, and because we study to support our practice, let’s also chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and share Buddhism with others,’ no one would be confused. The statements don’t conflict; they complement each other.

“In baseball, the team with good teamwork is strong. When the first baseman fields a ball, a teammate will cover first base. This is acting in harmony. The team cannot win if the teammate stands by and does nothing, saying, ‘It’s the first baseman’s job to cover first base.’ And when a player comes to bat with a runner on base, the batter might bunt or hit a fly ball to advance the runner, even if it means the batter will be called out.” (NHR-3, 14–15)

**Key Point:** No matter what our position is in the SGI, the purpose of our kosen-rufu movement is to unite and work together in harmony for the peace of the land. Let’s ensure our districts have clear focuses and goals, and are united behind realizing them to experience tremendous actual proof this year!

**Presentation (5 minutes):**

- Read the reference material and seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
- Read the context, key excerpt and key point. Conclude with a personal experience and how we can apply this guidance in our lives.

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

Material: Tsunesaburo Makiguchi’s Mentor
https://www.worldtribune.org/article/tsunesaburo-makiguchis-mentor/

Context: In 1928, founding Soka Gakkai President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi was encouraged by a fellow educator to further study Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings. This encounter inspired him to learn more about Nichiren’s philosophy, and after studying the treatise “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” President Makiguchi decided to take faith. From there, he based his life on Nichiren’s writings and applied its teachings to his educational philosophy.

Key Excerpt: SGI President Ikeda writes: “Practicing faith in perfect accord with the teachings of the original mentor, Nichiren Daishonin, and striving with a spirit of selfless dedication are requirements for a genuine Buddhist teacher fit to inherit the Daishonin’s legacy. Without these qualifications, even the high priest, the chief executive of the head temple, becomes no more than the political head of a clerical bureaucracy far removed from Buddhism’s true teachings. It is utterly inconceivable that any trace of the heritage of faith could be found amid such circumstances” . . .

President Ikeda continues: “Mr. Makiguchi always based himself on Nichiren’s writings. It was impossible for him to find a mentor among the cowardly ranks of the priesthood who, fearing government persecution, kowtowed to the authorities by changing the silent prayers in gongyo, deleting portions of Nichiren’s writings and ordering the Soka Gakkai to accept the Shinto talisman.” (The New Human Revolution, vol. 2, p. 236)

Key Point: In contrast to the priesthood, who deviated from the fundamental spirit of Nichiren Buddhism, President Makiguchi was the only person who understood and lived Nichiren’s teachings, giving his life for the sake of kosen-rufu. By striving to unite with the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin and the three founding presidents, we can also overcome all obstacles and lead others to happiness.

Presentation (5 minutes):
• Read the reference material and seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
• Read the context, key excerpt and key point. Conclude with a personal experience and how we can apply this guidance in our lives.

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

Material: *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 8, p. 40

Context: SGI President Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto, explains the purpose and importance of winning in activities for kosen-rufu.

Key Excerpt: "Whether in our efforts to share Buddhism with others or to increase the number of members attending meetings, if we want to win, we need to first set a goal, muster our determination and chant daimoku in earnest. We must then bring forth our wisdom and bravely face the challenge while taking resolute action.

“Each obstacle we overcome brings us wonderful benefit and good fortune. It is through this process that we learn the formula for triumphing in life. Moreover, the tremendous conviction in faith we gain by exerting ourselves in our activities endows us with the strength to surmount any difficulty or hardship we encounter in life.

“Nichiren Daishonin writes, ‘Buddhism primarily concerns itself with victory or defeat’ (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 835). This is because kosen-rufu is a struggle against the devil king of the sixth heaven, the negative function that destroys life. In fact, human existence is itself a struggle. Realizing genuine happiness begins with challenging and winning over our own cowardice and laziness. Human revolution means to overcome the negative aspects of the self, and our Soka Gakkai activities are the arena in which we can do so.

“What matters most is that each of you exerts yourself wholeheartedly in faith, enjoys great benefit and an enriched life, and attains a boundless state of life overflowing with joy. I hope you will always remember that this is the reason we share the Daishonin’s Buddhism with others and why we engage in Soka Gakkai activities.” (NHR-8, 40)

Key Point: The purpose of participating in SGI activities is for each of us to wage an all-out struggle to defeat evil, carry out our human revolution and become happy.

Presentation (5 minutes):
• Read the reference material and seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
• Read the context, key excerpt and key point. Conclude with a personal experience and how we can apply this guidance in our lives.
Note: Please chant abundant daimoku throughout the preparation.