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)
June Curriculum: Week 1


Intro: This year marks 760 years since Nichiren Daishonin first submitted his treatise “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” on July 16, 1260. Finding in the Lotus Sutra the solutions to society’s problems, Nichiren submitted this treatise to the authorities. He urged them to embrace this sutra, which empowers each person to challenge their inner transformation (establishing the correct teaching) while striving to develop a society rooted in respect for all people (peace of the land). In June and July, we will study this treatise, which still applies today.

Passage: “The people of today all turn their backs upon what is right; to a person, they give their allegiance to evil. This is the reason that ... disasters and calamities occur. I cannot keep silent on this matter. I cannot suppress my fears.”

Context: The “evil” referred to here are beliefs and behaviors that reject the fundamental truth of the interconnectedness and sanctity of all life. Ikeda Sensei discusses how to address evil as Buddhists.

Ikeda Sensei’s Guidance: The spirit of refuting error and denouncing evil is the essence of Buddhism. It is also the Soka Gakkai spirit.

... With this spirit, [Nichiren] remonstrated with the highest authorities of the day. ...

“How dare anyone spread malicious lies that tear down good, decent people!”—driven by such thunderous anger toward injustice, we must expose, thoroughly condemn and eliminate such evils. Only then can we call ourselves true champions of justice.

Mr. Makiguchi remarked to the effect: “People of minor good resembling a mob of sheep stand by idly while the just are viciously persecuted by the insolent acts of evil people. This represents a grave future peril for our nation.” Don’t become a mob of sheep, afraid to speak out when the time demands. Don’t be people of minor good. For their presence endangers the nation’s future. This was Mr. Makiguchi’s clarion call. And, just as he warned, Japan, which was then under the rule of a militarist government, advanced headlong down the path to self-destruction. This is an undeniable historical fact. (Embracing Compassion: A Revolution in Leadership, vol. 1, p. 36)

Key Point: Battling evil internally and externally is the formula for enacting our human revolution, gaining benefit and transforming society. By deepening our faith, practice and study, we can utilize our inherent Buddha wisdom, and refute all evil based on the fundamental truth of the Mystic Law.

Preparation and Presentation (5 minutes): Read the Gosho and background, and seek from seniors in faith about the material. Please chant abundantly throughout preparation. For presentation, read passage, context, guidance and key point. Conclude with how this guidance can be applied in our lives.
June Curriculum: Week 2


Intro: This year marks 760 years since Nichiren Daishonin first submitted his treatise “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” on July 16, 1260. Finding in the Lotus Sutra the solutions to society’s problems, Nichiren submitted this treatise to the authorities. He urged them to embrace this sutra, which empowers each person to challenge their inner transformation (establishing the correct teaching) while striving to develop a society rooted in respect for all people (peace of the land). In June and July, we will study this treatise, which still applies today.

Passage: “The guest said: These disasters that befall the empire, these calamities of the nation—I am not the only one pained by them; the whole populace is weighed down with sorrow. Now I have been privileged to enter the orchid room and listen to these enlightening words of yours. You speak of the gods and sages taking leave, and of disasters and calamities arising in sequence—upon what sutras do you base your views? Could you describe for me the passages of proof?”

Context: Written in dialogue format between a guest and a host, Nichiren (the host) addressed this treatise to Hojo Tokiyori (the guest), one of the most powerful people in Japan at the time. Here, the guest asks the host to provide proof of his views by citing passages from sutras. The guest expresses gratitude in being able enter the “orchid room” (a place of a virtuous person) and to be imbued by the host’s enlightened insights.

Ikeda Sensei’s Guidance: This also describes the adversity and suffering humanity is facing at this very moment. The difference between now and [760] years ago, however, is that today, a solid network of people working to actualize the Daishonin’s aspiration for peace based on the humanistic principles of Buddhism exists in 192 countries and territories around the globe.

With the stream of disasters that we are currently experiencing and the social turmoil that has people everywhere on edge, what is needed now more than ever is a robust principle of the sanctity of life, a vibrant philosophy of hope and a humanistic alliance dedicated to working for the welfare of others. (May 27, 2001, World Tribune, p. 5)

Key Point: At times when the “whole populace is weighed down with sorrow,” our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth is to engage in dialogues that impart courage and hope, and help people relieve their suffering. We can “establish the correct teaching” by relying on Nichiren’s writings and our Buddhist practice.

Preparation and Presentation (5 minutes): Read the Gosho and background, and seek from seniors in faith about the material. Please chant abundantly throughout preparation. For presentation, read passage, context, guidance and key point. Conclude with how this guidance can be applied in our lives.
June Curriculum: Week 3


Intro: This year marks 760 years since Nichiren Daishonin first submitted his treatise “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” on July 16, 1260. Finding in the Lotus Sutra the solutions to society’s problems, Nichiren submitted this treatise to the authorities. He urged them to embrace this sutra, which empowers each person to challenge their inner transformation (establishing the correct teaching) while striving to develop a society rooted in respect for all people (peace of the land). In June and July, we will study this treatise, which still applies today.

Passage: “Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy, it would be better simply to outlaw this one evil.”

Context: At the time of this writing, many had taken faith in the priest Honen’s Pure Land teachings, which encouraged its followers to reject the Lotus Sutra and seek happiness after death in a mythical paradise. Seeing people give up on becoming happy in this lifetime due to misguided beliefs, Nichiren urged them to abandon “this one evil,” which stems from the “fundamental ignorance” that exists within all of us and closes our eyes to our own greatness, our Buddha nature. “Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy” and trying to use roundabout means to transform our lives and society, identifying and rooting out “this one evil,” which still persists as disrespect for the dignity of life, is the direct path to creating peace.

Ikeda Sensei’s Guidance: “Fundamental darkness” is the fundamental ignorance inherent in life, from which emerges disbelief in the dignity and value of human existence and a disregard for the lives of others. The greatest threat to peace is truly this fundamental ignorance.

The Daishonin says: “The single word ‘belief’ is the sharp sword with which one confronts and overcomes fundamental darkness or ignorance” (The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings, pp. 119–20). The great philosophy of the Mystic Law, which teaches universal respect for life, is the means for overcoming this destructive tendency. Spreading this ideal and elevating it to the spirit of the times is the way to create lasting peace. (Youth and Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 70)

Key Point: “Establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land” means overcoming our fundamental ignorance by awakening to our innate Buddha nature and helping others do the same through sharing Nichiren Buddhism.

Preparation and Presentation (5 minutes): Read the Gosho and background, and seek from seniors in faith about the material. Please chant abundantly throughout preparation. For presentation, read passage, context, guidance and key point. Conclude with how this guidance can be applied in our lives.
June Soka Spirit Curriculum: Week 4

Material: “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 17

Intro: This year marks 760 years since Nichiren Daishonin first submitted his treatise “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” on July 16, 1260. Finding in the Lotus Sutra the solutions to society’s problems, Nichiren submitted this treatise to the authorities. He urged them to embrace this sutra, which empowers each person to challenge their inner transformation (establishing the correct teaching) while striving to develop a society rooted in respect for all people (peace of the land). In June and July, we will study this treatise, which still applies today.

Passage: “Though I may be a person of little ability, I have reverently given myself to the study of the Mahayana. A blue fly, if it clings to the tail of a thoroughbred horse, can travel ten thousand miles, and the green ivy that twines around the tall pine can grow to a thousand feet.”

Context: In this treatise, the host (Nichiren) explains that the incorrect teachings taught namely by Honen (see June Week 3 context) are the cause for the calamities afflicting society. But the guest doubts the assertions of this host, an ordinary priest, believing instead in Honen who is highly regarded in society. In response, the host uses the analogies of a blue fly and green ivy to declare that even a “person of little ability” can experience immense benefit by studying the great philosophy of the Lotus Sutra, which teaches the vast potential of each individual. The host goes on to say that no matter how others view him, he will strive earnestly to keep the correct teaching from declining and to relieve the suffering of all people.

Ikeda Sensei’s Guidance: “The shared commitment of mentor and disciple is the essence of Buddhist practice. When we [seek our mentor], we can bring forth our infinite potential and progress in our human revolution and thereby establish a life state of absolute happiness.

“That is what I have done. That is why I am who I am today. ... Nichiren Daishonin writes, ‘A blue fly, if it clings to the tail of a thoroughbred horse, can travel ten thousand miles’ (WND-1, 17).

“If we share the same commitment as our noble mentor of kosen-rufu, we can attain a marvelous life condition that we could never have even imagined.” (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 25, p. 249)

Key Point: Our social status does not determine our value. What determines true greatness is the depth of the philosophy we uphold and the actions we take. When we unite with a mentor who dedicates their life to bringing happiness and peace to the world, we can expand our own state of life and bring forth untapped courage to challenge our obstacles and realize our dreams.

Preparation and Presentation (5 minutes): Read the Gosho and background, and seek from seniors in faith about the material. Please chant abundantly throughout preparation. For presentation, read passage, context, guidance and key point. Conclude with how this guidance can be applied in our lives.