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)
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, which takes the form of a dialogue, 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). This month, we will continue our study of this treatise, which still applies today.

Passage: “You have associated with a friend in the orchid room and have become as straight as mugwort growing among hemp.”

Context: After expressing their shared concern, guest passionately expresses his beliefs while questioning the host’s beliefs and motives. The host answers, one by one, the doubts and objectives expressed by the guest, and by the end establishes a relationship of understanding, empathy and trust, which is described by the phrase “You have associated with a friend in the orchid room” (WND-1, 23). Just as the scent of orchids perfumes the room in which they are placed, the fragrance of the host’s compassion envelops the guest’s heart.

Ikeda Sensei’s Guidance: It is one’s admirable personal traits and character that open others’ hearts and change their thinking. And those qualities do not derive from one’s social status or position; rather, they are a manifestation of how one lives life.

The example of people who, whatever their circumstances or background, lead strong, positive, confident lives dedicated to the happiness of others and the welfare of society, cannot help but move and inspire those around them.

By embracing the Mystic Law and devoting our lives to fulfilling the great vow for kosen-rufu and realizing the ideal of “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land,” our lives acquire, without our even being aware of it, a fragrance as lofty and refined as orchids. Our dialogues start from compassionate prayer for others’ happiness. When we base our lives on the Mystic Law, all of our efforts to reach out to, speak with and enable others to form a connection with Buddhism will help them reveal their own inner potential. (November 2017 Living Buddhism, p. 39)

Key Point: In Nichiren Daishonin and the eternal mentors of the Soka Gakkai, we find examples of individuals relentlessly carrying out courageous dialogue with one person after another, for the sake of creating peace. At this crucial time in our country’s history, let us resolve again to become good friends to those we encounter and encourage them to become protagonists in changing their lives and contributing to the betterment of society.

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

**Material:** “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 24

**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, which takes the form of a dialogue, 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). This month, we will continue our study of this treatise, which still applies today.

**Passage:** "If the nation is destroyed and people's homes are wiped out, then where can one flee for safety? If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquility throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?"

**Context:** During Nichiren's time, Japan was on the brink of collapse. Observing the immense suffering of the people, Nichiren declared that we must seek out society's peace and security. Here, Nichiren is not referring to a limited nationalistic or political point of view. Rather, he is urging us to awaken to a worldview based on our greater self, where we strive to transform the life condition of all people.

**Ikeda Sensei's Guidance:** This passage means that if you are concerned at all for your personal security, you must first pray for the stability and peace of all society ... This clearly expresses the attitude and posture we should have as Buddhists. People of genuine religious faith do not care only for their own comfort and safety; they are not content to confine themselves to their own private realm. To be truly human means working and praying to solve the problems that plague all people and to achieve peace and prosperity for society. There is no Buddhism apart from human society. ...

The key to establishing peace and prosperity in our world, as expressed here, lies in the human heart—in people's prayer for order and tranquility in society—and in each person establishing a solid self-identity through the process of human revolution.

A person who prays for a peaceful and secure society and is considerate toward others will naturally become aware of the need to contribute to society and will act on that awareness. The Soka Gakkai's goal is to realize the peaceful society described in ‘On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land.’ Our mission is to rid this world of every human affliction—war, poverty, starvation, disease, and discrimination.

With this goal in mind, then, what's important is what we do to actually achieve it. Without real effort, it's all just a fantasy, an abstraction. (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 4, pp. 256–57)

**Key Point:** It is clear that the world is in need of courageous protagonists who can open a new path based on their human revolution. When we resolve to take on the society's issues as our own and earnestly chant for peace of the land, we can awaken to our own unique mission. At the same time, we must urge others to join us in doing our collective human revolution to fundamentally transform humanity's state of life.

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

**Material:** "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 25

**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, which takes the form of a dialogue, 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). This month, we will continue our study of this treatise, which still applies today.

**Passage:** "How pitiful that people should all go out of the gate of the correct teaching and enter so deep into the prison of these distorted doctrines! ... They lose their way in these mists and miasmas, and sink down amid the raging flames of hell. How could one not grieve? How could one not suffer?

Therefore, you must quickly reform the tenets that you hold in your heart and embrace the one true vehicle, the single good doctrine [of the Lotus Sutra]. ... You must believe my words; heed what I say!"

**Context:** The correct teaching here means belief in the dignity and potential of every human life. Ignoring this universal truth, or upholding distorted doctrines, leads people deep into the fog and hell of suffering, conflict and confusion. For this reason, Nichiren instructs that we must bring our own heart in line with belief in the dignity and potential of all people.

**Ikeda Sensei’s Guidance:** What we have faith in indicates what we hold most precious, what values we cherish. It establishes our fundamental purpose and direction in life.

In other words, are we driven by egoism that seeks personal happiness at the exclusion and expense of others, or by compassion that is concerned with both our own and others’ welfare, refusing to build our happiness on the misfortune of others? The focus is on the transformation of our minds, our hearts, our values. It is the human revolution in a single individual. Without that, “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land” cannot be achieved.

When we transform our hearts and minds, what tenet or ideal should we base them on? According to the Daishonin, it is “the one true vehicle, the single good doctrine” (WND-1, 25). “The single good doctrine” here is the ultimate good taught in the Lotus Sutra—the principle that all people can bring forth their inherent Buddha nature and attain enlightenment. (February 2016 *Living Buddhism*, p. 39)

**Key Point:** The way to free ourselves from suffering and achieve the transformation in society that people yearn for is through our sustained efforts to live based on Nichiren's teachings as exemplified by the three founding Soka Gakkai presidents. This is because, by living based on the example laid out by the eternal mentors of kosen-rufu, we can transform our hearts and make the respect for the dignity of the life what governs our actions, ultimately leading to a change in our environment.

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

**Material:** “Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 25–26

**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, which takes the form of a dialogue, 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). This month, we will continue our study of this treatise, which still applies today.

**Passage:** “From now on, with your kind instruction to guide me, I wish to continue dispelling the ignorance from my mind. I hope we may set about as quickly as possible taking measures to deal with these slanders against the Law and to bring peace to the world without delay, thus insuring that we may live in safety in this life and enjoy good fortune in the life to come. But it is not enough that I alone should accept and have faith in your words—we must see to it that others as well are warned of their errors.”

**Context:** In the conclusion of this treatise, the guest’s initial anger and doubt is dispelled by the respectful and careful response of the host, causing the guest to make a vow to address the slander of the Mystic Law (opposition or denial of the correct Buddhist teaching) and establish the correct teaching as the foundation of his own life. He says further, that alone is not enough—we must quickly take steps to help others as well. In this way, Nichiren urges the need to engage in *shakubuku*—for the sake of ourselves, our friends, family and the world. There is no time to waste.

**Ikeda Sensei’s Guidance:** Sometimes your efforts to share the Daishonin’s teachings with your friends may be met with resistance. But your sincerity is sure to be communicated. The important thing is to engage in dialogue that is based on strong and deep prayers for your friends’ happiness. Words imbued with such prayer are certain to reach the Buddha nature in the depths of their lives. Whether they are aware of it or not, their Buddha nature will be activated. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo enables our voice, when we speak to others, to do the Buddha’s work. To be a youth is to boldly and courageously speak out for one’s beliefs. It is to engage others in dialogue for the supremely noble cause of establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land. (*Youth and the Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 68)

**Key Point:** Even if our sincere wish to share Nichiren Buddhism is misunderstood by others, through our continued efforts to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for their happiness and have heart-to-heart dialogue, we can turn even opponents into allies in our movement for kosen-rufu. We should be confident based on our study of “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” that there is no more certain way to accomplish peace than our daily efforts to transform ourselves and help others to do the same.

**Preparation and Presentation (5 minutes):** Read the Gosho and background from *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* and seek from seniors in faith about the study material. Please chant abundant daimoku throughout the preparation. For the presentation, read the intro, passage, context, guidance and key point. Conclude with a brief personal experience of sharing Buddhism.