SOKA SPIRIT
CHANTING SESSIONS

➤ PURPOSE

1) Chant Nam-myoho-rengy-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-renal-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

Intro: Today, we will review material from The New Human Revolution, vol. 22, study guide in the November 2020 Living Buddhism, which can be found on pages 34–35.

Context: From around 1975, the Soka Gakkai began building community centers. Whenever Shin’ichi Yamamoto thought of Soka Gakkai facilities, he would recall an unforgettable exchange with his mentor, Josei Toda, that took place in 1949 when Mr. Toda’s businesses were in dire straits.

Excerpt From The New Human Revolution:
Mr. Toda hoped to build a large, spacious headquarters for the members as soon as possible, and he felt very bad about his inability to do so. Unaware of his feelings, some leaders complains that things were hopelessly inconvenient without a dedicated headquarters building, and that a fine structure that would astonish the public should be constructed without delay. Mr. Toda responded firmly: “We don’t need a building. That’s just a superficial thing. Wherever I am is the headquarters! That should be good enough, shouldn’t it? Spend more time thinking about strengthening our organization first.”

Whenever he heard Mr. Toda say something like that, Shin’ichi silently pledged: “Sensei, I’ll do my best. I’ll see to it that we have a full-time headquarters building where everyone feels free to gather.” ...

And today, there are numerous magnificent facilities, much larger than that original headquarters, in many places throughout Japan. (NHR-22, 7–8)

Preparation: Please read the material, seek from seniors in faith about it and chant abundantly throughout the preparation.

Presentation (5 minutes): For the presentation, please read all the sections above and answer the questions below:

1) Our founding presidents and pioneer members have built from scratch the SGI organization that we have today. Based on this, what are you most appreciative of?
2) What is your determination to advance kosen-rufu?

Reminder: The Soka Spirit curriculum can be found at www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/
November Curriculum: Week 2

**Intro:** Today, we will review material in *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 22, study guide in the November 2020 *Living Buddhism*, which can be found on page 44.

**Context:** On August 3, 1975, Shin’ichi Yamamoto met with the Gonen-kai (Five Year Group), members who met every five years following the Japan National Future Division Meeting in 1966. At the 1975 meeting, he talked about the mentor-disciple relationship based on this passage from Nichiren Daishonin: “If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth” (“The True Aspect of All Phenomena,” WND-1, p. 385).

**Key Point From The New Human Revolution:**
“Being of the same mind as Nichiren is the essence of our Buddhist faith and practice. The Soka mentors and disciples, starting with founding president, Tunesaburo Makiguchi, and his disciple and second president, Josei Toda, have dedicated their lives to carrying out the great vow for kosen-rufu in complete accord with the Daishonin’s spirit. …

“I also awakened to my mission as a Bodhisattva of the Earth through serving and protecting Mr. Toda and struggling alongside him for kosen-rufu. This mentor-disciple bond is the lifeline that runs through the faith and practice of the Soka Gakkai. I hope that you will also remain true to the path of mentor and disciple all your lives, awaken to the noble mission with which you were born into this world, and lead bold and indomitable lives.” (NHR-22, 188–90)

**Preparation:** Please read the material, seek from seniors in faith about it and chant abundantly throughout the preparation.

**Presentation (5 minutes):** For the presentation, please read all the sections above and answer the questions below:

1) Our founding presidents and pioneer members have built from scratch the SGI organization we have today. Based on this, what are you most appreciative of?
2) What is your determination to advance kosen-rufu?

**Reminder:** The Soka Spirit curriculum can be found at [www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/](http://www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/)
November Curriculum: Week 3

Today, we will watch a November 18th commemorative video.
November Curriculum: Week 4

**Intro:** Today, we will review material in *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 22, study guide in the November 2020 *Living Buddhism*, which can be found on pages 40–41.

**Context:** In November 1975, Shin’ichi Yamamoto made an unexpected visit to the city of Kure in Hiroshima Prefecture and held a gongyo meeting. On his car ride back to Hiroshima City, Shin’ichi made spontaneous stops as he passed by groups of individuals whom he could tell were Soka Gakkai members, and offered encouragement.

**Excerpt From *The New Human Revolution***:
All Soka Gakkai members are precious children of the Buddha. They’re all Bodhisattvas of the Earth. The noble effort of kosen-rufu is achieved by praising, protecting and encouraging them. That’s why Shin’ichi dedicated himself wholeheartedly to illuminating them with the light of encouragement, never overlooking a single precious member. …

Encouragement is the lifeline of the Soka Gakkai. Shin’ichi was determined to do all he could to transmit this spirit of protecting the members to all leaders. (NHR-22, 369–70)

**Preparation:** Please read the material, seek from seniors in faith about it and chant abundantly throughout the preparation.

**Presentation (5 minutes):** For the presentation, please read all the sections above and answer the questions below:

1) For you, what does it mean to follow the path of mentor and disciple, and how has it changed your daily life?
2) Ikeda Sensei has said that this next decade, toward the centennial of the founding of the Soka Gakkai, will determine the future course of humanity. What is your personal determination and vision for your life?

*Reminder:* The Soka Spirit curriculum can be found at [www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/](http://www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/)
November Curriculum: Week 5

**Intro:** Today, we celebrate our spiritual independence from the authoritarian Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, on November 28, 1991. Together, let’s confirm the significance of this important event.

**Excerpt from Ikeda Sensei’s Afterword to The New Human Revolution, published in the March 2019 Living Buddhism, pp. 15–16:** A major catalyst for the dynamic development of the Soka Gakkai, which was energetically advancing worldwide kosen-rufu, was its attainment of spiritual independence from the corrupt and ossified Nichiren Shoshu priesthood.

The Soka Gakkai had stoically endured the terrible treatment by priests who were openly contemptuous of believers. It had sought to maintain harmonious relations between the priesthood and the laity, and continued to sincerely support Nichiren Shoshu. All of this had been solely for the sake of advancing kosen-rufu, the cherished wish of Nichiren Daishonin. But priests of Nichiren Shoshu became increasingly dogmatic and flaunted their clerical authority. In the process, they even came to reject as slander of the Law the artistic and cultural works that were inspired by other faith traditions yet were considered by people around the world as the heritage of all humanity. Growing ever more authoritarian, they adopted an unjust policy of extreme discrimination against the laity, and sought to establish a system in which lay followers were completely subjugated by the priesthood, with the high priest at its zenith. This was a betrayal of Nichiren Daishonin’s spirit and a violation of the Buddhist teachings of respect for the dignity of life and the equality of all people.

If this were to continue, the fundamental principles of Nichiren Buddhism would be distorted in a way that it no longer resembled a teaching for realizing happiness and peace for all humanity. With the rallying cry of "Return to the spirit of the Daishonin!" the Soka Gakkai rose up to carry out a religious reformation and remonstrated with the priesthood. Nichiren Shoshu’s response to the Soka Gakkai, the organization striving for kosen-rufu in exact accord with the Daishonin’s intent, was to issue a call for it to disband, followed soon after by a notice of excommunication.

**Key Point:** The SGI is a movement that is inclusive of all people and cultures, and striving to establish lasting happiness for all humanity. The limited focus of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, however, is to preserve its authority over lay believers. The SGI’s spiritual independence liberated us to freely and fully reveal our unique identities as Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

**Preparation:** Please read the material, seek from seniors in faith about it and chant abundantly throughout the preparation.

**Presentation (5 minutes):** For the presentation, please read all the sections above and conclude with a determination or recent experience related to what spiritual independence means for you.

**Reminder:** The Soka Spirit curriculum can be found at [www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/](http://www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/)