SOKA SPIRIT
CHANTING SESSIONS

► PURPOSE

1) Chant Nam-myoho-rengyo-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)
September Kosen-rufu Gongyo Meeting Suggested Agenda
(both in-person and virtual)

Suggested Agenda:

• Faith Experience
• Announcements
• Gohonzon Conferrals (in-person only)
• *Video: “60th Anniversary of the Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons: “The Eternal Call for Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land.”” (16 min)
• Words of Encouragement

*Please coordinate with your region SVP (Soka Video Player) handler to prepare the video in advance. The video can be found under the following:

> Archive Videos
> Select “English” for language
> Under Category, select “Special Collection”
> Scroll down to “60th Anniversary of the Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons: “The Eternal Call for Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land””
> Click the image

Please have the emcee announce the following before showing the video:

“This video has been approved to show at this meeting. We ask that you do not make any video or audio recordings. Duplication and rebroadcast of this video in any way is prohibited. We appreciate your support and understanding. Please enjoy!”
September Curriculum: Week 1 (Sept. 5)

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

**Intro:** Today, we will review material from the study guide for volume 29 of *The New Human Revolution* in the September 2021 *Living Buddhism*, titled “Noble Is the Life That Knows Great Hardship,” found on page 49.

**Context:** During his trip to India in February 1979, Ikeda Sensei and his team visited a school for the blind, where he offered the following guidance.

**Ikeda Sensei writes:**
“Living with a visual impairment, you may face more obstacles and have to exert yourselves harder than others. But that’s precisely what makes your lives most noble. I hope you will lift your head with pride as you lead the greatest of lives.

“All people are equal. Everyone is battling some kind of trial or hardship. What matters is how you create your own hope and continue to live boldly to the very end. Those who can do this are true victors in life. ...

“Never be defeated. You must win in life. Losing to oneself is the cause of unhappiness. I will be praying for your victory.”

**Presentation (5 minutes):** For the presentation, please read all the sections above, starting with the Intro. To close the presentation, please respond to the prompt below.

- **In what ways have you created hope amid your challenges?**

**Reminder:** The Soka Spirit curriculum can be found at [www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/](http://www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/)
September Curriculum: Week 2 (Sept. 12)

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

**Intro:** Today, we will review material from the study guide for volume 29 of *The New Human Revolution* in the September 2021 *Living Buddhism*, titled “Creating Unity and Supporting Our Leaders,” found on page 51.

**Context:** At a December 1978 meeting, Ikeda Sensei warns against harboring resentment and jealousy toward fellow members, based on this passage from Nichiren’s writings: “Always remember that believers in the Lotus Sutra should absolutely be the last to abuse one another. All those who keep faith in the Lotus Sutra are most certainly Buddhas, and one who slanders a Buddha commits a grave offense” ("The Fourteen Slanders," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 756).

*Ikeda Sensei writes:*

“Soka Gakkai leaders should excel in their personal character, discernment and leadership ability, and should aim to become individuals who are respected and trusted by all, which will naturally require conscious effort. However, we are all ordinary human beings in the midst of our own human revolution; there will be those who lack politeness in their way of speaking or leaders that fail to show sufficient consideration for others. There may even be instances in which a leader upsets their fellow members. But if people harbor grudges or resentment as a result of this, that in itself becomes a form of slander. ...  

“When a leader’s shortcomings become a hindrance to members’ unity and cause activities to stagnate, it is important to think about what you can do to improve the situation. Don’t just shrug it off as ‘someone else’s problem’; rather than criticize the leader, offer them your support. That’s the proper behavior of a Buddhist practitioner who seeks the Law within.

“Since we are imperfect human beings advancing kosen-rufu in this corrupt and defiled Latter Day of the Law, there will no doubt be times when differences of opinion will give rise to emotional conflicts. However, we can carry out our human revolution precisely because we are faced with the turmoil and difficulties of living among many different people. I hope you will regard your problems in relationships with others as opportunities for growth and chant earnestly, transforming everything into fuel for advancement. Whatever happens, please persevere with pure and powerful faith, like a waterfall.”

**Presentation (5 minutes):** For the presentation, please read all the sections above, starting with the Intro. To close the presentation, please respond to the prompt below.

- **Rather than shrugging off a difficult relationship as “someone else’s problem,” what does it mean to offer support to or create unity with those with whom we struggle?**

**Reminder:** The Soka Spirit curriculum can be found at [www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/](http://www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/)
September Curriculum: Week 3 (Sept. 19)

We will view the video titled “Kosen-rufu Is a Struggle of Words for Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” (Voice-over). (9 minutes)

Since this video is a speech from Ikeda Sensei, closing encouragement should take come before the video on the meeting agenda.

Please coordinate with your region SVP (Soka Video Player) handler to prepare the video in advance. The video can be found under the following:

> Archive Videos

> Select “English” for language

> Under Category, select “Speech”

> Scroll down to (Voice-over) “Kosen-rufu Is a Struggle of Words for Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land”

> Click the blue Voice-Over image

Please have the emcee announce the following before showing the video:

“This video has been approved to show at this meeting. We ask that you do not make any video or audio recordings. Duplication and rebroadcast of this video in any way is prohibited. We appreciate your support and understanding. Please enjoy!”
September Curriculum: Week 4 (Sept. 26)

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

Intro: Today, we will review material from the study guide for volume 29 of *The New Human Revolution* in the September 2021 *Living Buddhism*, titled “Still I Am Not Discouraged,” found on page 52.

Context: Ikeda Sensei recounts the insights of his mentor, second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda, based on this passage from Nichiren’s writings: “Because I have expounded this teaching, I have been exiled and almost killed. As the saying goes, ‘Good advice grates on the ear.’ But still I am not discouraged” ("The Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 748).

Ikeda Sensei writes:
“On one occasion, [Mr. Toda] passionately declared that Nichiren’s conviction—‘Still I am not discouraged’—was crucial.

“[He] continued: ‘We have the tremendous good fortune to be the children of the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, Nichiren Daishonin. We are Bodhisattvas of the Earth. This passage from Nichiren represents the very spirit of the Soka Gakkai. However incompetent I may be, ‘still I am not discouraged’ in my efforts for kosen-rufu. We must be prepared to encounter a series of great persecutions, because we are dedicated to fulfilling the will of the Daishonin. We must have courage and perseverance.’ …

‘Life is filled with difficulties, large and small. In particular, having dedicated our lives to the great vow for kosen-rufu, we can never know what persecutions await us. Unexpected, arduous trials are a matter of course. But in the spirit of ‘still I am not discouraged,’ let us continue to advance courageously along our chosen path of mission.

“This has been my personal determination. I hope that you, my beloved fellow members, will strive to the end with these golden words as your lifelong guide.”

Presentation (5 minutes): For the presentation, please read all the sections above, starting with the Intro. To close the presentation, please respond to the prompt below.

• How can you apply Nichiren’s words “Still I am not discouraged” amid your struggles to share Buddhism?

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