

To Boldly Entrust Youth With the Future
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Happy New Year! Last year was fantastic with the visit of SGI President Ikeda during the summer and the kick off of a new era in the youth division. This year, which has been named the Year of Advancement Toward the New Century, promises to be even greater. Let's put forth our full effort once again so that we will have no regrets.

We have started 1997 off in historic fashion by creating youth division guidelines that we can all, both young men and young women alike, implement together (Dec. 27, 1996, *World Tribune*). Based on these guidelines, let's take another step forward toward truly making the district our home base of activities.

In my discussions with youth division members throughout the nation, I can see that we all agree that revitalizing the districts is the key to creating a joyful movement of expansion in our organization. Let's each take personal responsibility for making our districts the most joyful places to practice.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit Japan for the Nov. 18 celebration of the establishment of the Soka Gakkai. President Ikeda was very healthy and in high spirits.

During my stay, I met with Soka Gakkai Youth Division Chief Yoshiki Tanigawa who told me that it is a Soka Gakkai tradition to boldly entrust youth with responsibility. He said that if we worry about a person's capability and, therefore, do not give him responsibility, then he will not grow. Instead, we should boldly entrust him with responsibility and do our best to support him in challenging his weaknesses.

Mr. Tanigawa went on to say that in Buddhism everything begins with self-awareness of our responsibility. When we challenge ourselves with this practice based on the awareness of our responsibility, we can draw forth the inherent potential in our lives. President Ikeda, of course, was given awesome responsibility during his youth and developed tremendous capability.

While I was in Japan I saw firsthand how the Soka Gakkai boldly entrusts youth with responsibility. For more than a year now, YMD members have been responsible for Goshu lectures at discussion meetings.

I attended one discussion meeting where a young man was delivering his Goshu lecture. He was terrified and during his lecture there were many moments of silence as he tried to figure out what he wanted to say. All the while, the members of the district sat smiling and encouraging him to continue.

At the end of his lecture, the young man made a determination to do better next time. The whole meeting place burst into applause.

What a scene! I was so encouraged to see the amazing support the entire district was giving to raise this one young man.

As youth, let's seek out opportunities like this to take on more responsibility and then expand our capability. As President Ikeda has reminded us time and again, youth is the period to challenge ourselves and grow.

With a great dream in our hearts, I'm sure we can challenge anything. So, let's have great goals and, together with our mentor, President Ikeda, create another page of history in 1997. Once again, happy New Year!

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