

Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Meeting Stresses Responsibility

By DIANA ELROD

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“This meeting is a great vehicle for expression and support. I am not gay but am here for my cousin and his lover. I feel a tremendous respect for those who love others unconditionally, and I see that quality exemplified in the SGI.”

“This meeting is nothing short of a miracle! I feel renewed and inspired, and some of my friends (non-Buddhist) want to come to one of these meetings!”

“To me, the SGI is synonymous with diversity, and I love it!”

“I am very thankful for this meeting, because it fosters a new sense of community and creates a powerful forum for the shared expression of our specific and also profound natures.”

These are a few of the comments written in a book during San Francisco’s first gay/lesbian/bisexual SGI-USA meeting today. More than 150 attendees — of whom more than 30 were guests — met for an afternoon of experiences, determinations and a question-and-answer period to celebrate being gay, lesbian and bisexual Buddhists practicing together for kosen-rufu.

Much discussion centered on how to help the SGI grow and strengthen as an organization committed to diversity. Stressing the theme of personal responsibility, attendees pledged their support for and participation in a broad range of activities, from helping design a proposed website devoted to diversity issues to the possibility of compiling a book of gay/lesbian/bisexual experiences for publication.

Participants also engaged in an animated dialogue on ways to ensure we celebrate our uniqueness without separating ourselves from the organization. To that end, attendees embraced a six-point mission statement clarifying meetings like this as “an adjunct to our regular Buddhist practice”:

- 1) Support the district and the overall goals of the SGI.
- 2) Encourage and support gay, lesbian and bisexual members to practice and share their unique experiences as Buddhists.
- 3) Provide a meeting at which gay, lesbian and bisexual members can bring potential members for the purpose of introducing them to Buddhism.
- 4) Provide a foundation for broader diversity activities.
- 5) Provide a positive role model for gay, lesbian and bisexual youth within the organization.
- 6) Provide a mechanism for reaching out into the community, both within the SGI and outside, to bring more people into awareness about Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

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