

Nov. 18 Message
Welcome and Congratulations!
By FRED M. ZAITSU, SGI-USA General Director

Congratulations on your activities celebrating Nov. 18, the 68th anniversary of the founding of the Soka Gakkai. My deepest appreciation to everyone for your daily efforts in contributing to your communities and your unwavering dedication to peace!

I would also like to welcome and thank all the guests for attending November commemorative meetings this year. Please enjoy!

The Soka Gakkai, which literally means Value Creation Society, was originally established as an association of educators by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and his disciple, Josei Toda, on Nov. 18, 1930. Fueled by their experience and passion as educators, Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda earnestly applied the faith, practice and study of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to contributing to humankind's happiness and to the realization of world peace. This spirit is the origin of the SGI.

On Nov. 18, 1944, exactly 14 years later, Mr. Makiguchi died in prison while resisting the Japanese military government's religious oppression during World War II. His cherished disciple, Mr. Toda, inherited the spirit to preserve the purity of the Daishonin's teachings and emerged from prison to rebuild and develop the Soka Gakkai to a membership of 750,000 households before his death.

Mr. Toda's disciple and the current SGI president, Daisaku Ikeda, has continued to invoke this noble spirit to spread the Daishonin's Buddhism to 128 countries. This he has done by spending the last 51 years of his life, ever since he became a Buddhist, inspiring hope and confidence in the people he meets.

As practitioners of the Daishonin's Buddhism and as SGI members, commemorating this important day in the Soka Gakkai's history is a time to refresh our commitment to peace and the happiness of humanity.

Since the Soka Gakkai's beginning, small discussion groups have always played the most vital role in our organization's growth. Today's district discussion meeting is an arena where people from all walks of life can gather to share their experiences and joy in faith. This is the place where people can encourage one another and study the teachings and spirit of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Recently President Ikeda wrote in his essay "Sharing Our Faith": "Genuine Buddhist dialogue is discussing such crucial matters as the true values of life, what is right and wrong, based on our daily lives and our personal experiences. This is the ultimate practice of humanism...."

With this original spirit of the Soka Gakkai in mind, let's continue to challenge any difficulties in our lives and complete this year victoriously. I hope we will use this Nov. 18 commemorative activity as an opportunity to deepen our bonds of friendships and refresh our determination to advance together for the happiness of ourselves and others.

I am convinced that this will be a great departure for each of us toward 1999 and the 21st century.

Once again, congratulations and my best regards to everyone!

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