

## DIALOGUE, UNITY AND BASICS OF FAITH STRESSED

*SGI General Director Eiichi Wada visited Southern California, Nevada and Central America in December 1998 and welcomed the new year, meeting with SGI-USA members in the greater Los Angeles area. The following are some highlights of his guidance.*

- On the subject of expanding our network of trust and friendship in the community: This is the Year of Victory in the Community. In what way are each of us thinking of contributing to our communities? Unless we speak up, unless we listen to others, we can never know the hearts of those in the community in which we live. Through dialogue we can open others' hearts. You don't need to be eloquent. Sincerity is most important. Your natural sense of respect for others gives rise to dialogue. Saying hello, extending warm greetings to our neighbors and just showing our care for other people around us — through these simple actions and through developing our character as human beings, we can gain trust and expand our circle of friendship in the community.

- In *The New Human Revolution*, SGI President Ikeda says that visiting fellow members at home and offering personal encouragement are most important. Although inconspicuous, these efforts to nurture the roots of faith in people will naturally and eventually blossom. These two actions are the source of all other activities for kosen-rufu.

- Propagation is not simply getting someone to join the SGI and receive the Gohonzon. Once a person becomes a member, then the real work begins — encouraging and nurturing him or her in faith.

- In terms of organization, where there is dialogue, unity is created. There can be no unity without dialogue. Dialogue is a means to create unity. And unity is a source of benefit and joy.

- When we experience hardships at home or at work, we have to go back to the basics of faith, practice and study. Praying with confidence in the Gohonzon, we can tap wisdom and courage with which to confront and overcome our challenges. To become happy, we need to show victory in our daily lives. In this way we can prove the power of our practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

- Since the beginning of the Soka Gakkai, the cornerstone of the organization has been the chapter men's and women's division leaders. The Soka Gakkai started with only six chapters. Candidates for leadership were interviewed by President Toda and were appointed based on their character. Things have changed since then, but not the qualifications for leadership.

- As leaders, do you know which of the members in your chapter are chanting and participating in activities? Do you know which members are not? These are the people on whom you should focus your efforts. Help them to attend meetings, to study and to talk about the greatness of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. This is how you can achieve the development of kosen-rufu in your chapter.

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- Leadership positions in the SGI are positions of responsibility. Leaders should always be watchful about what they say to others. Even one word said with great sincerity and concern can encourage others for the rest of their lives. Even one word said without regard for others, uttered carelessly, can wound their hearts forever.

- To the men's and women's division members: Support the youth so they can become capable. Protect them so they can do activities freely. Please also support the Boys and Girls Group and Junior High and High School division members. When they enjoy activities, the future of kosen-rufu is secure.

- To the youth division members: Please respect the efforts of the pioneer members. Without them we would not have what we have today. Express appreciation for your seniors. Never look down on them. Never become so arrogant as to instruct them. Of course, youth must stand up against injustice.

- Everyone should value and respect the opinions of the women's division. Please don't get caught up in petty differences. There are lots of ways to eat a piece of cake. But the point is to get the cake into your stomach and not argue over whose method of eating is better. Remember that all of you are sincerely practicing as disciples of President Ikeda. Regardless of our different approaches, let's support and respect one another.

- Please continue to stand up against any negative influences and protect our fellow SGI members by educating one another about the temple issue.