

**SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAY  
'MY THANKS FOR OFFERING YOUR HOMES AS MEETING PLACES'  
YOUR HOMES AS MEETING PLACES**

*President Ikeda offers his deepest appreciation to all SGI members who hold SGI activities in their homes. 'The homes and venues our fellow members make available for Gakkai activities are precious places of Buddhist practice and centers for nurturing human potential,' he writes. 'They are beacons for the widespread propagation of the Daishonin's teachings in our communities and majestic citadels of the people's victory.'*

**BY DAISAKU IKEDA, SGI PRESIDENT**

1998 was another remarkable year of triumphs for the Soka Gakkai — a year in which we again worked hard to revitalize society by spreading the ideals of a new humanism.

The wellspring of all these efforts is the discussion meeting, an oasis where people can refresh and revitalize their lives.

I express my deepest appreciation to all those who have offered the use of their precious homes for meetings.

It is impossible to fully describe the trouble that these sincere members go to in making their homes available for this purpose. It is no easy thing to arrange parking space for automobiles or bicycles. Or to ensure that the sound of gongyo and Gakkai songs does not disturb the neighbors. They also need the full understanding and cooperation of their whole family.

All Buddhas and Buddhist gods — the protective functions of the universe — are surely praising these generous individuals who welcome members and guests to their home with warm smiles, sparing no effort to make sure all feel comfortable.

In the "Acceleration" chapter of *The New Human Revolution*, volume 6, I wrote about the moving story of revitalization that happened in a shantytown known as Dokan in Fukuoka, Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands. The area was filled with an unsightly array of tightly packed, dilapidated lean-tos, but lively discussion meetings were conducted there, just as in other parts of Japan.

A Soka Gakkai group leader and his wife, who made their living by running a fresh fish shop, offered their home — a small, refurbished warehouse — for meetings. Because most of the participants came barefoot, being too poor to own shoes, the tatami-mat flooring of their home soon became soiled with mud and grime and had to be replaced several times a year.

But the group leader and his wife never uttered a single complaint. They were solely concerned with serving their fellow members.

Many of the members were also too poor to have three square meals a day, so the group leader and his wife would make a simple stew of leftover fish and serve it to them. They even invited members to use their bath.

They were the first residents of Dokan to have a real home. Everyone was happy for them and used to say, "You've got yourself a palace," as proud of it as if it were their own. The group leader and his wife said they would never forget members telling them later, with deep appreciation, that attending meetings at their home had inspired them to strive in faith and see the hard times through.

The “Benefits of Responding with Joy” chapter of the Lotus Sutra teaches that those who, during a discussion of Buddhism, make room for others to sit will acquire immense benefits. How much greater, then, are the benefits of those who actually provide meeting places for such a discussion! They will surely be infinite, immeasurable.

Mrs. Chieko Nakagawa, a women’s division member who has made available for Gakkai meetings a private community center located on the banks of Fuefuki River in the town of Isawacho, Yamanashi Prefecture, in central Japan, has experienced such benefits. Mrs. Nakagawa’s late husband, Kiminosuke, started out after the war as an itinerant clothing salesman, eventually establishing his own clothing shop. All went well until he was struck down by illness, and their life became very hard.

In 1961, the Nakagawas joined the Soka Gakkai. From that point, they opened their home for discussion meetings and succeeded each month in introducing new people to faith in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. Mr. Nakagawa regained his health, and his business came back on track.

I visited the Nakagawa home in 1967. “I want you to become as happy as can be,” I said. Tears came to the couple’s eyes, and they voiced their strong resolve to spread the Daishonin’s teachings in their community. It was at that time, I have heard, that Mr. and Mrs. Nakagawa decided to build a private meeting hall that members could use freely, without constraint, in the cause of furthering the flow of kosen-rufu in their area.

Their determination, their creed, was not “What can the Gakkai do for us?” but “What can we do for the Gakkai?” They worked and prayed with all their might to realize their dream, and in 1982, 15 years after my visit, that dream at last became a reality. They built a magnificent private community center, large enough to seat 350 people.

Mr. Nakagawa continued to win over his illness and demonstrate the power of faith. He finally passed away eight years ago, at the age of 81.

Mrs. Nakagawa is 84, and she continues to energetically look after the community center. She enjoys a happy, fulfilled existence and still encourages and supports her juniors in faith.

Last October, I sent her a poem as an expression of my thanks for her long years of devoted service:

*May the fragrance of happiness  
Pervade Nakagawa Castle  
On the Fuefuki River*

Mr. Makiguchi also opened his home as a base for Gakkai activities, making available for that purpose two small, adjoining ground-floor rooms. Mr. Toda, too, even after resigning from the directorship of the Soka Gakkai, when his business fell into dire financial hardship, continued to hold discussion meetings at his home. The talks he gave during those times about the theory of life remain engraved in my memory with great clarity.

When I was still single and living in a one-room apartment, I held discussion meetings in my tiny home as well. Four or five people completely filled the space. I couldn’t help but feel sorry for those who attended in such cramped conditions, but the meetings were energetic and enthusiastic.

I spoke about the teachings of Buddhism with all my heart, striving earnestly to bring others to embrace faith in the Gohonzon. I firmly believed that, no matter how small and

shabby my room might have been, the gatherings I held there were a modern assembly of the Lotus Sutra.

After getting married and soon thereafter moving to a small house in Kobayashi-cho in Tokyo's Ota Ward, my wife and I continued to open our home for discussion meetings. When our children came along, it offered them an excellent way to experience the wonderful world of the Soka Gakkai firsthand.

The homes and venues our fellow members make available for Gakkai activities are precious places of Buddhist practice and centers for nurturing human potential. They are beacons for the widespread propagation of the Daishonin's teachings in our communities and majestic citadels of the people's victory.

I chant every day, with a feeling of the deepest gratitude, for all who offer their homes or other facilities for this purpose. I pray: "May the places you provide in service of kosen-rufu endure eternally as great palaces of benefit and good fortune. May your families prosper. Thank you, thank you so much!"