

RENAISSANCE MEETINGS KEEP EVERYONE YOUNG

Like a fine wine adding flavor to one's palate long after the first sip has touched the tongue, the slow, mellow pace of a Renaissance meeting lingers. This is not a group of stressed-out Angelenos looking for immediate gratification. These folks really know how to enjoy the fine art of being together. Not that these folks necessarily have known each other that long, but they have shared practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism for decades.

At a recent Renaissance meeting, following gongyo, we ambled into the "family room" of the Santa Monica Community Center, where we sat on comfy sofas under framed pictures on mandarin-colored walls. Refreshments were passed around to all, as we settled in for an hour of camaraderie and warmth.

Ages 50- to 80-something, this gathering of Buddhist friends has been meeting monthly for more than seven years, encouraging each other in their dreams, so that the second 50 years of life will be even more meaningful than the first. The group dynamics are democratic and egalitarian, with each member contributing to the shared vision and workings of the meetings. There are no leaders, or, in other words, everyone is a leader.

About half of the Renaissance members are artists. Poet Joe Krengel read a poem. This gathering of great-grandparents also belted out their theme song, "The Spirit of Youth" (lyrics by Joe Krengel, music by Arnold Ross). No timid singers here, no shy Nellies; every Buddha nature sang out joyfully. The melody and lilt of the lyrics transported one to the World War II era, when many of the Renaissance members were in their 20s, dancing and partying to Big Band Swing, when all of their lives lay ahead. Now, singing in their 70s and 80s, the joy of the party is still going on.

— LYNETTE YETTER

The Spirit of Youth

Lyrics to the Renaissance meetings' theme song, written by Arnold Ross and Joe Krengel

*You're never too old to be young again...
If hope, in your heart, remains.*

*It's never too late to reach out again...
Why be the one who complains?*

*It's all in your mind, if you think you'll fail...
Get rid of those cobwebs, now!*

*Ahead is adventure! Prepare to set sail...
The future's before your bow!*

*Stand fast to the storm and you will succeed...
Your spirit of youth, unfurled!*

*You're never too old to answer the need...
Let happiness fill the world!*

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