

**LOOKING TOWARD THE NEW YEAR
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The announcement of new SGI-USA national leaders on the eve of the new millennium was a highlight of the 46th meeting of the Central Executive Committee on Dec. 3, with approximately 60 participants; over the weekend they joined some 120 other representatives at The Westin Hotel in Los Angeles for a year-end region leaders meeting.

SGI General Director Eiichi Wada, in his opening remarks to the CEC at the SGI Plaza in Santa Monica, Calif., stated, "In response to Fred Zaitzu's and Wendy Clark's report and determination to SGI President Ikeda on this new departure for the SGI-USA, President Ikeda expressed his deepest appreciation for their untiring efforts and achievements—for Mr. Zaitzu as general director the past seven years and Mrs. Clark as the nationwide women's leader for six years."

With a provision for the new position of advisor at the SGI-USA level being added to the Rules of the Religious Organization, Mr. Wada also announced the appointment of Fred Zaitzu as executive advisor and Guy McCloskey as advisor to the general director. (The executive advisor supervises and gives general advice about all the affairs of this organization for the sake of its development; the position of advisor assists in these duties. Both carry out their duties on behalf of the SGI leadership.)

Mr. Zaitzu pointed out the many significant dates in the coming year—the 70th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's establishment (Nov. 18), the 100th anniversary of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's birth (Feb. 11), the 25th anniversary of the SGI's founding (Jan. 26), the 40th anniversary of President Ikeda's inauguration as third Soka Gakkai president (May 3) and the 40th anniversary of the SGI leader's first visit to the United States (Oct. 2).

"As we have learned in the Goshō 'The Selection of the Time,' timing is very important," he said. "I felt I should not miss this great opportunity, this great timing, before the start of the new millennium, before this year ends, to transfer my leadership to a new general director. As you know, any transition is always accompanied by some difficulties, however, it is also an opportune time to create great, refreshing new energy throughout the SGI-USA for the future.

"Although it was beyond my capability, I served as general director these past seven years. I express my wholehearted appreciation to all of you and to President Ikeda for having had the opportunity to serve you in this capacity. And, together with you, I determine to give all my support to our new general director, Danny Nagashima."

Further new leaders' appointments (please see page 5) were announced by Mr. Nagashima, including Matilda Buck as the national women's leader, James Herrmann as the youth division leader, Ed Feasel as the youth division senior advisor and Tariq Hasan as the men's leader. Mr. Nagashima, thanking the longtime pioneers who paved the way for the spread of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in the United States, stated his resolve to do his utmost to serve the membership and expressed his need for guidance, advice and support from everyone.

The CEC reached a consensus to adopt the SGI theme for 2000: "Raising the Curtain on the 21st Century—The Year of Youth." This was followed by observations from several representatives regarding the temple and its membership, and much discussion about a firm plan of action, including studying the handbook *Confirming Our Path of Faith* and

the soon-to-be published *Untold History of the Fuji School*. It was agreed upon that the phrase *Soka Spirit movement* would be used in place of the *temple issue movement*, thus communicating to the membership the message of value creation, education and humanism in our challenge to carry out the correct practice of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

The quarterly organizational focus for 2000 will continue to be: propagation, using and promoting our publications, contribution and participation in discussion meetings with the spirit of "the power of one"—the notion of each individual taking full responsibility and making a difference in every aspect of his or her life, thereby creating happiness for self and others (please refer to activity guidelines in box below and speeches on pages 6–9).

There was much dialogue regarding improving the organization, becoming leaders with great heart for people. Discussion was held on helping guests begin their practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and supporting and strengthening the districts, creating new ones where possible in order that they be manageable due to expanding membership; and holding leaders training meetings on a regular basis.

At the year-end region leaders meeting held Dec. 4–5, reports were given on study department guidelines for 2000 and on a new group for members age 60 and over (both to be featured in the Dec. 24 issue). Presentations were also made by representatives from the public relations bureau and the publications center.

Harry Sakurai, executive director of the Florida Nature and Culture Center, announced that 35 conferences are scheduled for the facility next year; that over the past three-and-a-half years of operation, the FNCC had hosted some 112 conferences and welcomed more than 17,000 participants to its campus. He extended his deepest appreciation to all "for your continued efforts to support the FNCC, and for contributing to our success in responding to SGI President Ikeda's expectations of having it become a facility where the SGI-USA can foster and develop many capable individuals for the future."

Speeches by the newly appointed divisional leaders (please see pages 6–7) provoked much spontaneous laughter and applause, and encouragement by SGI Vice Women's Leader Yumiko Hachiya and SGI General Director Eiichi Wada (please see pages 8–9) ended the high-energy gathering.

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