

**SGI-USA GENERAL DIRECTOR DANNY NAGASHIMA—
NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE
TOGETHER LET'S BUILD AN IDEAL SGI-USA**

Happy New Year, and Happy New Millennium to all the readers of the *World Tribune* and the members of SGI-USA!

It has been 10 years since SGI President Ikeda charted a new course for us in 1990. I believe we have come a long way, and we appreciate all the pioneers' efforts especially those of Mr. George M. Williams and Mr. Fred Zaitso.

In the past decade, we have seen steady expansion of our membership amid a successful geographic reorganization and a number of new centers have been established throughout the country, including the Florida Nature and Culture Center, where members are able to refresh their faith. In addition, construction of the Soka University, Aliso Viejo, campus began and is scheduled to open in May 2001.

We have also made progress in the Soka Spirit movement as we protect the truth of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings; a grassroots study of the Lotus Sutra has begun with members learning from President Ikeda's "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra" series. We can also take pride in the fact that SGI-USA has participated in numerous interfaith conferences, including the third Parliament of the World's Religions held recently in Cape Town, South Africa; and finally, several Buddhist scholars have acknowledged our contributions to society and the world because of the hopeful and humanistic spirit of our organization. Congratulations on all these accomplishments!

I want to share my vision for our organization toward the year 2000 and beyond. In the next 10 years, I believe we can challenge ourselves to fulfill our mission toward taking the leadership of worldwide kosen-rufu with our mentor's heart. The following are my goals:

First, I am determined to create an American SGI organization of outstanding teamwork and great heart.

Second, I want this to be an organization where we treasure our own families and all people.

Third, I determine that we will protect our precious SGI members and not let them be deceived by Nikken and the priesthood. I am also determined to enable temple members to see how beautiful our organization is, and how wonderful President Ikeda is.

Fourth, I am resolved to create an organization where the leadership continuously self-reflects as we continue to ponder how best to realize President Ikeda's vision for the individual happiness of our members and American kosen-rufu.

To accomplish these goals, I believe we need to advance steadily and patiently with the understanding that we are building the foundation for the next millennium based on what we learned from both the victories and mistakes in our past.

In the early days of our young organization, we tended to be impatient. In our sometimes over-zealous desire to expand, the organization's growth was at times emphasized over that of the individual.

For those who feel they were hurt by that process, I sincerely apologize. If you ever feel there is authoritarian and abusive behavior in the organization, let's address the problem through dialogue with everyone involved; let's have the courage to bring up our concerns immediately and in a respectful way.

At any rate, all of us who make up this great organization of SGI-USA, whose eternal purpose is each individual's absolute happiness, must resolve to self-reflect as we advance

to ensure those mistakes of the past won't be repeated.

I believe that as long as we sincerely continue to fulfill our mission for kosen-rufu, all our efforts and experiences will become a source of good fortune.

The strength of the SGI-USA depends on the strength and success of the daily lives of our members. We want to be an organization of people who are first and foremost successful in their families, careers, schooling and personal growth. With this type of foundation, our precious organization will be strong and grow steadily. I believe that we have such capable people today and will develop even more in the future.

It is my determination to build an organization where leaders truly serve the members. On Feb. 12, 1990, President Ikeda said: "A true leader is someone who protects his members, praising them and being tolerant toward them. In contrast, leaders who exploit their positions in the organization, rebuking people and acting in a high-handed manner, not only cause the Buddha's children to suffer, but make causes for their own suffering in the future as well."

Let's work together once again to build a new SGI-USA. Sharing the same heart as our mentor, President Ikeda, I would like to work together with each member of SGI-USA for American kosen-rufu and create the kind of organization that each person can truly feel proud of.

President Ikeda loves America and we love President Ikeda, so let's create an America where President Ikeda's love for us and our love for him become one.

Since mutual trust is the basis for our success, let's launch together toward our shared cause in the spirit of the following passage by Nichiren Daishonin: "All disciples and lay supporters of Nichiren should chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with the spirit of many in body but one in mind, transcending all differences among themselves to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim. This spiritual bond is the basis for the universal transmission of the ultimate Law of life and death. Here in lies the true goal of Nichiren's propagation. When you are so united, even the great desire for widespread propagation can be fulfilled" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 217).

Toward May 3, 2001, I will continue to seek our mentor's heart. I will do my best to serve the members. Through actions like personal shakubuku, publications promotion and visiting our precious members' homes, while being a good husband and father at home, I will try to show how, based on the power of unity, we can create a great SGI-USA.

Once again, Happy New Year!