

SGI-USA WOMEN'S LEADER MATILDA BUCK—NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE HAPPY NEW YEAR, CENTURY AND MILLENNIUM!

I hope all of you are anticipating a great year 2000. In his recent message to us in America, SGI President Ikeda asked us to “exercise bold, confident leadership and to do so with earnestness and sincerity, with courtesy and daring.” I love this combination of daring and earnestness. The dynamic of daring, supported by earnestness, is very powerful.

In his “New Year’s Goshō,” Nichiren Daishonin says, “The graceful cherry blossoms come forth from trees.” In winter the barren tree with its withered bark doesn’t look like it’s going to produce anything. But deep within the tree, with daring and earnestness, it continues to survive the winter snows with the desire to spring forth with beautiful blossoms. We are reminded of the great potential each of us has.

We are all leaders, even if we do not take responsibility in our organization, we are leaders of our own lives! As Buddhists who each day polish our humanity and support others, we are leaders in society. I hope this year we can practice with true earnestness and daring leadership. We should dare to rekindle our dreams, dare to dream of our own happiness and society’s happiness. With earnest prayer and effort we can make these desires a reality. Our women’s activities for the coming year will focus on the power of one woman who can seize this dynamic and make a difference.

Women’s Activity Guidelines for 2000

The women’s theme in support of “Raising the Curtain on the 21st Century — The Year of Youth” is the “Power of One Woman To Make a Difference.” When one woman can stand with unshakable faith she can transform her family, workplace and even the nation and the world. But standing up doesn’t mean standing alone. As President Ikeda’s message says, “I hope you will join them and, with the spirit of unity...‘many in body, one in mind’ — advance to create in America a model for the entire world.” Without teamwork we cannot make such a transformation. Young people will be attracted and nurtured by a harmonious, team-oriented environment.

❖ February Women’s Commemorative Meetings

Feb. 27, 2000, will be our 10th anniversary commemorating in 1990 the “Clear Mirror” meeting held at SUA. We recommend meetings at the district or group levels to ensure dialogue for all; each locale should feel free to discuss and decide what size meeting is most appropriate. We want to invite our friends, family and particularly our neighbors in our community. SGI publications will reprint President Ikeda’s “clear mirror” guidance as a resource for the meeting.

❖ Women’s Conferences at FNCC, February and August

Women’s conferences are scheduled at FNCC on Feb. 10–13 focused for group leaders and up. The August conferences will be held on the 10–13 and is open to any women. The upcoming February conference will feature seminars and dialogue on: The Power of One Woman To Make a Difference; Value-creating Soka Spirit; Creating a Winning Environment; Compassionate Action—Reawakening Our Mission for Propagation, the Ultimate Human Revolution.

❖ **Sophia Group**

President Ikeda founded the Sophia Group in 1990 so that women could gather for study and polish their intellect. By studying *The New Human Revolution* together, hundreds of women continue to deepen their understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and the Soka Gakkai spirit.

❖ **Women's Planning Board**

Women's planning boards coordinate and facilitate women's activities for a region and region leaders. The establishment of a committee is optional. Generally, the committee members are district and up leaders and serve for two years. However, any level leader may be considered. Together with the Sophia Group, this committee also provides opportunities to raise future leaders.

❖ **Mothers Group**

This group was established for mothers of children 5 years or younger. This is a support group where new mothers can share faith experiences in raising young children and maintaining their Buddhism practice during this challenging time. Activities vary across the country from small group "mommy and me" to guidance meetings with seniors, or educational seminars. In some places fathers also participate.

❖ **Boys and Girls Group** — This is a shared responsibility with other divisions.

The Boys and Girls Group was created for elementary school students so that they develop friendship with boys and girls who practice Nichiren Daishonin's teachings. Through this activity they deepen their understanding of Buddhism and apply it to their daily and school lives.