

DANNY'S JOURNAL
THE COURAGE TO REACH OUT
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I hope everyone is in high spirits and enjoying the new year!

I recently traveled to Seattle to participate in the newly formed Pacific Northwest Zone's kickoff at the Seattle Culture Center on Jan. 6, with more than 1,000 people in attendance.

At the meeting, I introduced one gentleman who had left the SGI in 1990 to practice with the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. Earlier that day, he had told me he hadn't understood the significance of the temple issue at the time, but he continually chanted to understand. Recently, he started to feel like something was missing in the temple, so he began to study Nichiren Daishonin's writings to find an answer.

It was at that time that an SGI member called him. She and another member had been chanting for him to return to the SGI. This gentleman was so encouraged after they talked that he decided to attend the kickoff that day. The Pacific Northwest Zone members gave him a warm welcome, and he mentioned to me that he felt as if he had come home.

This is such a beautiful example of the difference we can make in others' lives by having the courage to reach out. I strongly believe there are many people waiting for us to take such compassionate action. If we can develop this type of courage, our movement will grow immeasurably.

The next day, I participated in a leaders meeting for the newly formed Northern California Zone. To my surprise, there were more than 1,000 people in attendance there as well. These members have returned to the heart of SGI President Ikeda's visit to San Francisco on Oct. 5, 1960, one of his first steps toward worldwide kosen-rufu. They are determined to stand up, fulfilling their mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth to propagate and share the joy of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

On Jan. 18, I attended the annual observance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday at the King International Chapel at Morehouse College in Atlanta. Immediately following this ceremony was the opening of our "Treasuring the Future: Children's Rights and Realities" exhibition in the lobby of the chapel. All 1,000 students who attended the observance walked past it, and many of them stayed for the opening.

Baron Segar, director of the Southeast Region of UNICEF, shared that he was deeply moved by the exhibit and expressed his desire to cooperate more with SGI-USA in the future. It was a wonderful opening and I thank all the members in Atlanta who worked so hard to make this event a tremendous success!

Let's continue to advance steadily this year, enjoying growth in every aspect of our lives. Please take good care of your health, and I hope to see you soon!