

**HISTORY OF THE 'IMAGINE PEACE' WOMEN'S CONFERENCE  
SHAPING A HAPPY FUTURE IN THE PRESENT  
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**The concept for the 'Imagine Peace' Conference was born six months ago. Several women wanted to do 'something different' for their women's commemorative meetings this year.**

SGI-USA members know that causes made in the past result in the present, and causes made now determine the future. The "Imagine Peace" women's conference in Washington, D.C., was a cause consciously shaping the future. The desire of Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Virginia SGI-USA women to explore relationships between peace and Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism through workshops, seminars and performances became reality on Feb. 25, emerging from a concept born just six months earlier.

This idea of "Imagine Peace" began to take shape when several women wondered how to respond to SGI members' desire to do "something different" for the annual women's commemorative meetings in February. The idea of a conference followed from SGI President Ikeda's assertion that the SGI is a great women's peace movement.

To see if others wanted to hold a large event with the theme "Imagine Peace," a kick-off was held on Sept. 10, 2000. More than 400 women filled the main hall of the community center, spilling into the lobby. To focus the event closely on the grass roots, questionnaires were distributed to find out what interested people and how they could contribute. By the end of that meeting, all agreed to hold a women's peace conference and call it "Imagine Peace."

Seven planning committees formed immediately. The logistics committee imagined 2,000 participants, then searched for a facility to house them. They found the World Bank building, where a handful of SGI-USA members work. These members have met at the World Bank every Thursday on their lunch hour for the past three years to chant, reserving the Bank's meditation room. They place a sign on the door that says, "Buddhist Prayers in Session." As the group continued, they developed many warm friendships with other employees, and so several Bank groups readily co-sponsored the conference.

The week before the conference, SGI-USA Women's Leader Matilda Buck offered a spirited message by conference call to about 300 Washington, D.C., women. "It's ordinary women empowering other ordinary women who will make peace a reality," she said. "We have prepared for the last 10 years for this meeting, and the effects will be felt 20 years from now."

On the day of the conference, more than 2,500 people attended. In opening remarks Tina Smith, Washington, D.C., Region Vice Women's Leader, quoted her grandmother, "When history is happening—pay attention!" At that moment—created from arduous past efforts, carried forward by present joy and fulfillment, and holding bright hope for the future—"Imagine Peace" was surely "history happening," and rousing applause as the meeting opened proved that everyone was paying attention.

SGI President Ikeda has said, "My sole desire for the members of the women's division is that they become the happiest people in the world" (*Buddhism Is The Clear Mirror That Reflects Our Lives*, p. 5). The joy of success that glowed in the faces of the women who had worked so hard to create this conference was evidence that his wish has come true.