

**OUR DISTRICT
BERMUDA DISTRICT—BERMUDA
NEW DISTRICT BLOSSOMS IN BERMUDA
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On Sept. 23, the residents of the beautiful island of Bermuda in the North Atlantic Ocean awoke to the sound of raindrops falling on the white rooftops, the flora, the fauna, the trees, the sands and the seas. Throughout the early morning hours, the rain became torrential at times and left some roads and byways impassable.

However, at 10:00 a.m., the first SGI-USA members and guests began to arrive at 35 Valley Road in the parish of Paget. This was the day of the first-ever district discussion meeting and Gohonzon conferral ceremony in Bermuda. These were the people who will be known in the future as the pioneer members of Bermuda—three of whom joined the SGI family that day. The rain seemed to represent a cleansing away of negativity. These 15 pioneers would not be stopped by the drizzly, dreary skies that brightened as the day passed.

The meeting began with everyone chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo and reciting portions of the Lotus Sutra. Some of the guests immediately started to chant and do gongyo as if they had done it many times before. There was lively discussion and explanations of Buddhist practice. Betty Smith gave her experience. Thomas Dunn, New York's Brooklyn Downtown Chapter young men's leader, brought greetings from the members and his co-leaders of the chapter that will support Bermuda District. Gary Smith, the husband of Betty Smith, became the first new member of Bermuda District and received his membership certificate from Brooklyn North Area Leader Garry W. Lightbourne.

The first member to receive the Gohonzon was Raymonde Dill, who first chanted Nam-myoho-rence-kyo two years ago at a meeting in Aruba. The third member to join and receive a membership certificate was a young man named Milton Darrell.

SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima sent a message to the new district, in which he states: "Today's meeting is just the beginning for the growth of Bermuda. I know your organization may seem small now, but don't worry. As the Goshu states: 'At first only Nichiren chanted Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, but then two, three, and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others. Propagation will unfold this way in the future as well. Does this not signify "emerging from the earth"?"' (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 385).

After the meeting, the members and guests were treated to a scrumptious meal and gathered in small groups to learn more about the Daishonin's Buddhism. Sept. 23, 2001, will be a day that goes down in the hearts and memories of everyone present as a most auspicious day; a day that marked a truly new beginning for Bermuda.