

SGI Centers in Singapore, Ghana To House Sanctuaries

**BY DAVE McNEILL
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A new SGI community center — with a sanctuary room staffed by a reformist priest — will soon open in Singapore, and plans are underway for a similar facility in Ghana, the Soka Gakkai's newspaper in Japan has announced.

According to the *Seikyo Shimbun* report, members in those countries felt compelled by local customs, which include a strong reliance on priests to conduct certain ceremonies, to request a priest and sanctuary of their own in order to better gain their society's understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Nichiren Shoshu's plans to build temples in those countries, and the confusion it might cause among the members, also motivated the local SGI organizations to request these new facilities.

Since 1991, when Nichiren Shoshu excommunicated the SGI, organizations of reformist priests who support the SGI have occasionally sent priests to various countries, including Ghana and Singapore. To staff these new buildings, the Association of Youthful Priests Dedicated to the Reformation of Nichiren Shoshu will dispatch two priests. The association was formed in 1992 when 10 young priests remonstrated against Nichiren Shoshu High Priest Nikken, calling for the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood to return to the Daishonin's original spirit of selfless action and the equality of priest and layperson.

Yuhan Watanabe has been conducting services and ceremonies for members in Singapore and assisting members in Buddhist study there. "I firmly believe that the true mission of a priest is to dedicate his life to the service of SGI members, who are promoting kosen-rufu in exact accord with the original Buddha's intent," he says.

The SGI organization in Singapore, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, approved construction of the facility in January 1996. The building, which opens this month, is three-storied, with a sanctuary on the first floor, a community center on the second and various conference rooms and a Gohonzon room on the third.

The SGI organization in Ghana has recently approved the construction of a similar building in Accra, its capital, and set up a committee to discuss the details of the construction. Reformist priest Yusei Sugawara will be dispatched there.

In both countries, the priests will operate under the auspices of the local SGI organizations.

According to SGI-USA General Director Zaitzu, there are no plans to build SGI sanctuaries in the United States, which has a long tradition of lay religious groups.

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