

## FROM GENERAL DIRECTOR FRED ZAITSU THE SPIRIT OF DISTRICT PARTICIPATION

Surprisingly, we are already approaching the final quarter of 1999. Thank you for your support until now in this significant Year of Victory in the Community for the New Century throughout our worldwide SGI family. I appreciate all your sincere efforts for kosen-rufu on behalf of your members, friends and family, while fulfilling the many demanding responsibilities of life in this modern world.

To recent training course participants in Japan, SGI President Ikeda said: "You are all people who will definitely go down in the future histories of your countries. You are worthy of the highest respect. You are noble leaders who are praised and protected by Nichiren Daishonin and the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions." I want all of you to feel that this important message is meant for each of you.

The focus of our kosen-rufu activities during this last quarter of the year will be *participation*; specifically, participation in our discussion meetings. The quarter will begin in September and conclude during the month of November, when we will celebrate the anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding with our district meetings commemorating Nov. 18. I sincerely hope that all of us, especially those with leadership responsibility, can refresh our awareness and conviction in the significance of joyful participation in activities for kosen-rufu.

The discussion meeting is a proud tradition of the Soka Gakkai that was born at the very inception of our kosen-rufu movement. Soka Gakkai first president Makiguchi and second president Toda would travel long distances to carry out earnest dialogue with two or three people. At times there might only be one other person.

Mr. Toda once said: "No matter how few the participants, you should eagerly and earnestly talk with them. Even if there is only one, you should be determined to preach the essence of the Lotus Sutra to them. You should try heart and soul to make them understand, so that in the end both of you will feel immense joy. You should delight in knowing that there is even but one person who will listen to you and treat them with utmost consideration" (*The Human Revolution*, vol. 10).

While today's discussion meetings in most parts of the United States may be more developed than in those early days of the Soka Gakkai, I believe this founding spirit is still essential and continues to be applicable in home visits and other opportunities for one-to-one dialogue.

Our discussion meetings are yet another progressive contribution the SGI-USA makes to the American religious landscape. We host discussion meetings in more than 2,000 homes across America every month. These dialogues on developing our vast potential and working for humanity's happiness are a source of boundless hope for the future.

In *The New Human Revolution*, Shin'ichi Yamamoto states: "If all the leaders actively participate in and hold happy and enjoyable discussion meetings overflowing with the conviction in faith, then the scope of propagation will definitely expand.... This grass-roots movement has been the most essential underpinning of the Soka Gakkai until today. I hope that you will devote your utmost energies to making the discussion meetings more fulfilling and satisfying and that you will take the lead in producing a powerful new current of kosen-rufu."

I sincerely hope that by using these founding principles, as we prepare this year's

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November Commemorative Meetings celebrating Nov. 18, we will produce a renewed realization of joy and pride in our activities for world peace. It is then that we can truly expand hope and joy into our surrounding communities by working to maximize participation in the broad flow of our American kosen-rufu movement.

The key elements to this are home visits, one-to-one dialogue and our grass-roots discussion meeting movement. Please take good care of your health and be safe while you conduct your daily pursuits.

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