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# e-bulletin



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Picture: Yoichi Masumoto

**On New Year's Day, SGI-UK members made a great start to the Year of Total Victory of Soka and the Dynamic Development of Youth with joyful meetings at Taplow Court, at other SGI-UK centres and in districts around the country, writes Roy Stone.**

The meeting at Taplow was an international affair with guests from countries including New Zealand, Japan, Germany, Sweden, France, Korea, Italy and the USA.

SGI-UK General Director



## Joyful start to 2010

Robert Samuels said he felt that the past 10 years had been a preparation, and now the essential phase of our movement for Kosen-rufu of the UK was beginning.

The dynamic meeting showed members' strong determination to achieve all their goals for this significant year, the 80th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai and the 50th anniversary of Sensei becoming president.

After great guidance, inspiration and entertainments, everyone was in good spirits as the children received gifts, and the adults toasted the new year together.



Pictures: Pat Stone

# New Year message from Mrs Kaneko Ikeda

## A new and hope-filled Year of the Total Victory of Soka and the Dynamic Development of Youth has just begun!

My husband and I are chanting wholeheartedly that all of our precious fellow members around the world will enjoy a year of good health and ever-expanding good fortune. My personal determination for 2010 is that the prayers of the women of the SGI will lead the way to great victory in this 80th anniversary year of the Soka Gakkai.

There is a passage from Nichiren Daishonin's writings that I used to read together with my parents, who joined the Soka Gakkai out of their respect and admiration for its founder, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi: "Though one might point at the earth and miss it, though one might bind up the sky, though the tides might cease to ebb and flow and the sun rise in the west, it could never come about that the prayers of the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra would go unanswered." (WND-1, 345)

Having walked the path of human revolution and Kosen-rufu in accord with the guidance of the first three presidents of our organisation, I have experienced these words first-hand time and again over the years. Nothing is more powerful than chanting with single-minded prayer through every challenge we face. When we do so, we will see results without fail. I am reminded of the words that second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda often shared with the members of the Young Women's Division Kayo-kai: "No matter what happens, keep chanting daimoku."

Nothing will change if we just worry about our situation or complain to others about it. But when we sit in front of the Gohonzon and chant daimoku, everything starts to move in the direction of hope, progress, and victory. I'm sure you have all had such a profound experience yourselves.

In one of his writings, the Daishonin quotes the Great Teacher Dengyo of Japan: "When, in the family, honour is paid diligently to the teachings, the seven disasters will most certainly be banished" (WND-2, 1026). A woman who sincerely chants daimoku can absolutely change poison into medicine in her family as well as in her community.

I recently received an inspiring letter from a woman who has been serving as a district women's leader in the Kanto region of Japan for the past 19 years. Her husband abruptly left her 22 years ago, and she was faced with the daunting challenge of



Picture: Courtesy of Seikyo Press

raising five young children on her own. But taking to heart the Daishonin's assurance that "winter always turns to spring" (WND-1, 536), she chanted earnestly while giving her all to working, raising her family and participating in Soka Gakkai activities.

Today she has received recognition from the mayor of her city for being a model employee at the company where she works, demonstrating clearly the trust she has won from her fellow workers and citizens. In addition, each of her five children, basing themselves on the encouragement they have received from President Ikeda over the years and having been raised in the Gakkai family, have grown into fine adults who are taking action as leaders of Kosen-rufu and society.

Her second son has shared that he cherishes as his prime point in faith the words that President Ikeda addressed to him as a Future Division member: "Treasure your mother." He went on to study at Soka University with a deep sense of appreciation and gratitude. Currently, he is very successful as the president of an overseas branch of a leading Japanese company, and has been featured on television. He also continues to be a caring and considerate son.

In concluding her letter the Women's Division member writes: "At last spring has come to our family. Continuing to make President Ikeda's words my foundation, I will never be defeated as I keep striving for Kosen-rufu together with my five children, always engaging in the shared struggle of

mentor and disciple."

Practising Buddhism correctly means struggling against the three obstacles and four devils and the three powerful enemies. But no matter what challenges we encounter, we can chant daimoku to break through them. Prayer is the sharp sword and supreme strategy of the Mystic Law. We therefore have nothing to fear.

The first of the five guidelines for absolute victory for the Women's Division (presented to the Women's Division by President Ikeda in March 2009) is "Everything begins with prayer." In this profoundly important year of the Soka Gakkai's 80th anniversary, with united prayer based on the shared commitment of mentor and disciple, let's expand our life-state, our good fortune and our network of friendship, and attain tremendous victory in our lives and in Kosen-rufu.

My husband once wrote to a women's leader: "Live out your life with courage; this is the best path to happiness."

Even in Nichiren Daishonin's lifetime there were dedicated women disciples who staunchly supported and protected the Daishonin and their fellow believers.

Immediately after the Daishonin submitted his treatise "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land" to the authorities 750 years ago, an angry mob attacked his residence in Matsubagayatsu, Kamakura (in August 1260). This event is known as the Matsubagayatsu Persecution. How did the Daishonin escape harm in this attack? He writes of that incident:

Certain influential persons banded together and, gathering a crowd of townsmen about them until they numbered several tens of thousands, came in the night to attack and put an end to me. But perhaps because the ten demon daughters had planned it that way, I was able to escape from danger. (WND-2, 1052)

President Ikeda has said that this reference to the workings of "the ten demon daughters" is very meaningful. His interpretation is that a female disciple learned of the impending attack in advance and risked her life to warn the Daishonin. Perhaps because she constantly prayed to be able to protect the Daishonin and took every step she could to do so, she was able to fulfill this important mission at a crucial moment. President Ikeda further suggests that the Daishonin didn't mention this disciple by name because he wanted to

## Mrs Ikeda's message

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shield her from possible retaliation.

Buddhist faith has nothing to do with one's position or status. My husband is always saying: "We must never forget that there are women all over the world who are making outstanding contributions to Kosen-rufu behind the scenes, unbeknown to others. Let's send them daimoku as long as we live."

Many thinking people across the globe are paying attention to the tremendous efforts of the women of the SGI. Among them is Dr Sarah Wider, former president of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society and professor of English and Women's Studies at Colgate University in Madison County, New York. Currently engaged in an ongoing dialogue with President Ikeda, Dr Wider has expressed profound sympathy with the SGI philosophy of value creation, saying to the effect: "All people have the potential to become value creators. When human beings lose sight of that potential, their more destructive tendencies come to dominate society. I think it is deeply significant that a gathering of people who have faith in human potential and are dedicated to its development is named the Soka Gakkai, or Value-Creating Society." Dr Wider has further applauded our movement, noting that the beautiful human connections shared by the women of the SGI are the foundations of a culture of peace.

As women are called upon to play an ever-growing role in our world we will no doubt face greater challenges and struggles. That makes it all the more important for the women of the SGI, filled with the pride that their behaviour sets an example in creating a culture of peace for all humanity, to encourage and support one another as they forge ahead undefeated and in high spirits in 2010.

Lastly, I would like to share some recent words of encouragement from my husband. The first is for the SGI Ikeda Kayo-kai members around the world:

Youthful, noble Young Women's Division members, as a result of your tireless efforts to advance Kosen-rufu, your lives will brim with happiness and good fortune for all eternity. The next is for Women's Division members everywhere: My appreciation to the precious Women's Division members who are advancing spiritedly, joyously, and earnestly for the noble cause of Kosen-rufu.

With my sincerest wishes for your good health,

**Kaneko Ikeda**  
Honorary SGI Women's Leader



## I owe award to my Buddhist faith

**SGI-UK member Claire Bertschinger has become a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the 2010 New Year's Honours List.**

She said: "I believe that I owe (receiving) this award to my Buddhist faith and practice over the years, particularly the inspiration I have received from the mentor/disciple relationship with President Ikeda, that is so central. Encountering Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and becoming a member of SGI-UK in 1994 has given my life true meaning and direction."

Claire, Vice WD district leader of Stansted Orchard District in East Anglia South, has written to Sensei to report to him about her award.

Claire worked with the International Committee of the Red Cross as a nurse in over a dozen war zones across the world including Ethiopia, Lebanon and Afghanistan. She cared for starving children during the 1984/5 famine in Ethiopia and, with limited food available, was forced to decide which children to feed. Claire featured in Michael Buerk's first BBC news report of the famine which inspired Bob Geldof to establish Band Aid and Live Aid.

She now works as the Director for the Diploma in Tropical Nursing course at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine where she prepares nurses from all over the world to work in hostile and difficult environments. She travels worldwide to raise awareness, secure funding for individual student sponsorship and help build new schools.

## SGI-UK to reduce carbon footprint

**SGI-UK General Director Robert Samuels writes:**

SGI is committed to raising awareness about sustainable development and other environmental issues, and have produced a film, 'The Quiet Revolution' and an exhibition, 'Seeds of Change', which several HQs and others have used in the UK.

SGI-UK has a relationship with the Earth Charter movement in the UK and working with other groups we have organised and hosted 3 interfaith activities at Taplow Court, focussing on sustainable development and the Earth Charter.

Such awareness has to manifest in behaviour and therefore we arranged through the Carbon Trust for an energy consultant to conduct a carbon survey for us at Taplow Court. The resulting report includes 6 recommendations about how we can significantly reduce our carbon footprint. The SGI-UK trustees have agreed an amount in next year's budget to enable us to begin to implement the suggestions made. Not only should these changes significantly cut our carbon footprint, but in less than eighteen months they should save us money. In the light of this SGI-UK has signed up to the 10:10 campaign, pledging to cut our carbon footprint by 10% in 2010. For more information about this campaign go to [www.1010uk.org](http://www.1010uk.org)

## Watch out for M.A.D.

**Making A Difference is a series of six five-minute films which feature SGI-UK members who are making a significant difference in society – from helping ex-crack users and their families in an inner London borough, to establishing a global project based around forgiveness and reconciliation, writes Diane Southam.**

What the subjects of these films all have in common is their Buddhist practice and the inspiration they have gained through the example set by President Ikeda.

Besides being a wonderful advertisement for this Buddhism, these films can also inspire each of us to continue trying to make a difference – no matter how small – because every effort counts towards creating a happier society. The films can be seen on the SGI-UK website – [sgi-uk.org](http://sgi-uk.org) – and will shortly be available on YouTube.

Pictures: Justin Thomas



## Courage – the Key to Victory in Life!

**West London members made waves of change ripple across the south of France with their first ever Area Trets Course, writes Jenny Stark**

The course, from November 29 to December 3, felt like a solidly serious one, yet was filled with so much support, friendship and camaraderie. The strength of the heart was evident, reflecting the comments of WD Area leader Diane Rowley: "The thing that makes a great course is each one of us!"

From the host of first timers to the pioneering members, all formed part of the chain of capable people for world peace – like the rock-solid mountain ranges of Saint Victoire!

Vice WD Area leader Catia Isaia reminded us that the dignity of life is more important than ever today and to put that at the base of all our activities,

while YWD Area leader Yoshiko Kelly proclaimed that "Youth are the truth" and shared her heartfelt experience as a young disciple of Daisaku Ikeda, convincing us that once we open our hearts to our mentor, they will never close.

London WD leader Sanda McWilliam and Area adviser Vivienne Alcorn guided our doubts back to the power of prayer with their concrete guidance. With the full moon illuminating our evenings and the glittering sun greeting us, how could we lose? In the words of Jimmy Golding, we've got the Golden Machine (the Gohonzon)! After a night of rip-roaring entertainment from the sensational SGI stars, we awoke to a new rosy dawn of fresh determination for 2010, ready to battle on as Buddhas of absolute confidence and absolute freedom!



**Kat Carvosso, Hammersmith and Fulham HQ – first time at Trets: I am determined to use my fears as stepping stones to great victory!**



**Hide Whone, Acton and Chiswick HQ: I have developed a stronger spirit to tell more people about this practice.**



**Len East, Harrow and Wembley HQ: The theme contained exactly what I needed – courage and resolve – to move forward.**



**Shizue Graham, Hillingdon HQ: I am determined to improve my English to carry on communicating with many people.**

Picture: Helen Rowley



**Over 50 members of Edinburgh Chapter held their chapter day at Leith Academy with the theme: Giving from the heart – sharing our victories towards the 80th anniversary, writes Jenny Church. We enjoyed a beautiful song from the Future Division and their parents, and Keiko, who comes from the Kansai in Japan, delightfully entertained us playing the koto, a traditional stringed instrument.**

## World News

**Marciana Marina, Italy:** The town of Marciana Marina named President Ikeda an honorary citizen in recognition of his work promoting intercultural dialogue and global peace.

**Tokyo, Japan:** The Goethe-Gesellschaft of Weimar, Germany, awarded President Ikeda the Goethe Medal in recognition of his contribution to peace and his embodiment and profound understanding of Goethe's philosophy.

**Tokyo:** Mexico's Enrique Díaz de León University bestowed an honorary doctorate on President Ikeda for his outstanding leadership in promoting peace and inspiring young people.

**Pennsylvania, USA:** Pennsylvania State University proclaimed October 28 Gandhi, King, Ikeda Peace Builders Day. The proclamation was presented to Dean Lawrence Carter of Morehouse College, sponsor of the Gandhi, King, Ikeda: A Legacy of Building Peace exhibition.

**California, USA:** The California State Assembly presented President Ikeda and Mrs Kaneko Ikeda with Certificates of Recognition for their promotion of intercultural dialogues.

**Tokyo:** President Ikeda received an honorary professorship from Xi'an Peihua University of China for service as an ambassador of peace and friendship.

## January Art of Living: Opening Our Hearts – Opening a New Era



**Opening Our Hearts – Opening a New Era – the January Art of Living to kick off the SGI Year of the Total Victory of Soka and the Dynamic Year of Youth looks at the significance of this milestone year in the development of Kosen-rufu and how our determinations and visions shape the start of the new decade, our own future and the future of our world.**

Featuring President Ikeda's New Year message, it's packed with encouragement so that each day can be one of 'dynamic development' and 'total victory'!

## Buddhism on Radio 2

SGI-UK member Toni Green will quote from the Goshō and Sensei's writings on Radio 2's Pause for Thought on January 11 and 27 and February 3.