

Second announcement about SGI-UK activities

Dear Friends,

First of all, thank you to everyone for your support as SGI-UK has gone into this unprecedented phase of our development, with difficult circumstances facing all of us, but with a profound and burning vow for kosen-rufu nevertheless. It is clear that the Coronavirus situation is going to have an impact on all our lives over the next few months. Please share this announcement with all the members in your district.

This morning the National Divisional Leaders held a telephone conference call and agreed that we must now go even further to protect every precious member of SGI-UK and our families. We have decided that from midnight on the evening of Sunday 15th March there will be no face to face SGI-UK activities at all until it becomes clear that it is safe to hold them again.

Feel free to adopt this measure immediately if you wish. The reason we will wait until after the weekend is so that we can make sure that every member and naitoku in our districts is contacted and we have the opportunity to reach out to those who perhaps do not rely on email. Let's make sure that no one is left behind.

Let's see this situation as a creative opportunity for us all to deepen our faith. SGI-UK has done things in certain ways for many years. Now we must use our faith more than ever to keep the onward flow of our wonderful kosen-rufu movement.

In a recent issue of the Seikyo Shimbun (on 1st March 2020), President Ikeda shared this encouragement in a poem (tentative translation), which seems perfect for this time:

How can we enable
Everyone to advance
Dynamically and cheerfully?
It is crucial to take concrete action.
No matter what happens,
It is important to change poison into medicine
With the power of the Mystic Law.
The Soka family exists

To chant together
And to overcome difficulties.
Instead of giving space to prejudices,
We should encourage and support each other.
The bonds from heart to heart
Will create a society in which people can feel secure.
“Is everything all right?” “Are you well?”
“Please give your best!”
Let us always send words of encouragement.
When hearts are connecting
New energy will be created;
This energy
Will surely open a new path.
The act of encouraging others
Will generate courage in ourselves.
Encouragement changes
The person in front of us,
As well as ourselves.
What is important is
To bring relief to people’s hearts.
To strengthen and exhilarate them.
Even though we cannot meet,
A word or sentence on the phone
Can help to tear down the walls in front of us.
Sometimes, a short written message
Can change the life of others.
Just to listen patiently
To what the other person has to say,
Can relieve their heart.
Listening to someone is itself
A concrete realisation of what Buddhism teaches
And will help to take away sorrows and to give joy,
Encouragement gives security, hope and courage
To the people.
It elevates life-state
And draws out the power not to be defeated by anything.
Listening is an act to inspire the spirit of others.
One’s own heart that seeks for the happiness of others
Is the essence of encouragement. (1st March 2020, Seikyo Shimbun, tentative translation)

From this poem, let's draw out Sensei's guidance around three points: (1) prayer, (2) encouragement, and (3) listening.

As mentioned in the announcement made on 2nd March, a great example came from the SARS outbreak in Hong Kong and Taiwan with the 1-2-3 campaign. (Sometimes when this is explained, a zero is added – to point out the importance of not complaining!). Our Youth Division is taking up this 0-1-2-3 – let's join them!

Although we cannot meet as we have before, districts can still be creative around collective daimoku campaigns. There have been lots of examples of shared daimoku charts, filled in by a central person in a district, based on the reports by phone or text of how much daimoku individual members have chanted each day. There have been dramatic experiences of growth by a district having a shared goal, as well as members aiming for their personal determinations.

Let's use the time when we would otherwise have been at meetings to make phone calls, send cards or find new ways to encourage others, seeking creatively and wisely to find the best way for each person. This, with the daimoku we chant and our study of the Gosho and The New Human Revolution, will surely be the way to strengthen the links in SGI-UK and prepare us for the growth that will inevitably happen once society is less restricted, and our movement can grow once again.

We will keep sharing inspiration and encouragement with members more than ever. One key way is around the SGI Newsletters we regularly receive, with direct encouragement from President Ikeda. Monday is of course 16th March, Kosen-rufu Day, so please look out for encouragement and determination for our Youth Division (and all of us!).

Please also share your experiences for the Art of Living and e-bulletin.

Thank you all very much for your support and understanding.

With my prayers for the health and happiness of all our companions in faith, our families and everyone in the UK,

Warm wishes,

Robert

Robert Harrap
SGI-UK General Director

13th March 2020