

Participant Handouts

*Loving Shepherds of the
Multitudes:*

**Fostering a Climate of
Love and Unity**

An Assembly Development Module Workshop

Fostering a Climate of Love and Unity

Overview for Participants

Purpose:

- ★ To create a deeper appreciation for the degree of unity to which we are called
- ★ To examine elements that enhance or undermine unity
- ★ To explore the role of the Assembly in fostering unity

This workshop focuses on building loving, cohesive communities. Through reflection on metaphors, it creates a deeper appreciation for the degree of unity to which we are called and an awareness of the consequences of achieving this level of unity. The workshop examines in depth various attitudes and behaviors that enhance or undermine unity, and it provides opportunities for individuals to reflect on changes they can make as a contribution to the process of community building. A brainstorming activity uncovers ways to practice active kindness individually and collectively. The workshop also explores the Assembly's role as a facilitator of community life in a wholly new mode.

What you will find inside your handouts:

- ★ Quotations and worksheets for the various segments of the workshop
- ★ An evaluation form to be filled out by you
- ★ An evaluation form to be filled out by the Assembly within two months after the workshop

If you would like to have information on additional workshops or other Assembly development resources, ask your Assembly Development representative or contact the Office of Assembly Development at (847) 733-3490, by mail at 1233 Central Street, Evanston, IL 60201, or by e-mail at OAD@usbnc.org.

Note: If time is short for any exercise, focus on the quotations in bold

The Call to a New State of Mind

“The evolution of local and national Bahá’í Assemblies at this time calls for a new state of mind on the part of their members as well as on the part of those who elect them. . . .”

“The evolution of local and national Bahá’í Assemblies at this time calls for a new state of mind on the part of their members as well as on the part of those who elect them, for the Bahá’í community is engaged in an immense historical process that is entering a critical stage. Bahá’u’lláh has given to the world institutions to operate in an Order designed to canalize* the forces of a new civilization.”

The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message to the Bahá’ís of the world, 1996.

“. . . Spiritual Assemblies must rise to a new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities as channels of divine guidance, planners of the teaching work, developers of human resources, builders of communities, and loving shepherds of the multitudes. They can realize these prospects through increasing the ability of their members to take counsel together in accordance with the principles of the Faith and to consult with the friends under their jurisdiction, through fostering the spirit of service, through spontaneously collaborating with the Continental Counselors and their auxiliaries, and through cultivating their external relations. Particularly must the progress in the evolution of the institutions be manifest in the multiplication of localities in which the function of the Spiritual Assembly enhances the individual believer’s capacity to serve the Cause and fosters unified action. In sum, the maturity of the Spiritual Assembly must be measured not only by the regularity of its meetings and the efficiency of its functioning, but also by the continuity of the growth of Bahá’í membership, the effectiveness of the interaction between the Assembly and the members of its community, the quality of the spiritual and social life of the community, and the overall sense of vitality of a community in the process of dynamic, ever-advancing development.”

The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message to the Bahá’ís of the world, 1996.

“An expansion of thought and action in certain aspects of our work would enhance our possibilities for success in meeting our . . . commitments.”

The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message to the Bahá’ís of the World, 1990.

“The burgeoning influence of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation seemed . . . to have assumed the character of an onrushing wind blowing through the archaic structure of the old order, felling mighty pillars and clearing the ground for new

* **Canalize:** to channel into a particular direction; provide an outlet for

“... the flourishing of the community, especially at the local level, demands a significant enhancement in patterns of behavior...”

conceptions of social organization. . . . Even the Community of the Most Great Name itself is experiencing the rigorous effects of this quickening wind as it ventilates the modes of thought of us all, renewing, clarifying, and amplifying our perspectives as to the purpose of the Order of Bahá'u'lláh in the wake of humanity's suffering and turmoil.”

The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message to the Bahá'ís of the world, 1992.

“Present-day conceptions of what is natural and appropriate in relationships - among human beings themselves, between human beings and nature, between the individual and society, and between the members of society and its institutions - reflect levels of understanding arrived at by the human race during earlier and less mature stages in its development. If humanity is indeed coming of age, if all the inhabitants of the planet constitute a single people, if justice is to be the ruling principle of social organization - then existing conceptions that were born out of ignorance of these emerging realities have to be recast.

“Movement in this direction has barely begun.”

Bahá'í International Community's Office of Public Information, January 23, 1995, in *The Prosperity of Humankind*, section III.

“. . . the flourishing of the community, especially at the local level, demands a significant enhancement in patterns of behavior: those patterns by which the collective expression of the virtues of the individual members and the functioning of the Spiritual Assembly is manifest in the unity and fellowship of the community and the dynamism of its activity and growth.”

The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message to the Bahá'ís of the world, 1996.

“. . . change, ever more rapid change, is a constant characteristic of life at this time. . . .”

The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message to the Bahá'ís of the world, 1990.

“Change is an evolutionary process requiring patience with one's self and others, loving education and the passage of time as the believers deepen their knowledge of the principles of the Faith, gradually discard long-held traditional attitudes and progressively conform their lives to the unifying teachings of the Cause.”

The Universal House of Justice, July 25, 1984, in *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986*, p. 634.

Metaphors of Unity

Focus questions:

- ★ To what degree of unity are we called?
- ★ What effect does this unity have on those within the Bahá'í community?
- ★ What effect does it have on people in the larger community?

“In these days it is incumbent upon everyone to adhere* tenaciously* unto unity and concord. . .”

Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 60.

“Become as true brethren in the one and indivisible religion of God, free from distinction, for verily God desireth that your hearts should become mirrors unto your brethren in the Faith, so that ye find yourselves reflected in them, and they in you.”

The Báb, Selections from the Báb, p. 56.

“How good it is if the friends be as close as sheaves* of light, if they stand together side by side in a firm unbroken line. For now have the rays of reality from the Sun of the world of existence, united in adoration all the worshippers of this light; and these rays have, through infinite grace, gathered all peoples together within this wide-spreading shelter; therefore must all souls become as one soul, and all hearts as one heart. Let all be set free from the multiple identities that were born of passion and desire, and in the oneness of their love for God find a new way of life.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 76.

“O well-beloved ones! The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.”

Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 218.

“Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body.”

Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 140.

“Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest.”

Bahá'u'lláh, Hidden Words, Arabic # 68.

“It is my hope that . . . these many rivers, each flowing along in diverse and separated beds, will find their way back to the

* **Adhere:** to cling to; to hold closely or firmly

* **Tenacious:** holding fast; characterized by keeping a firm hold; persistent, stubborn; cohesive; not easily pulled asunder

* **Sheaf or sheaves:** a bundle in which wheat or other grains are bound together after reaping

Metaphors of Unity, continued

“Bring those who have been excluded into the circle of intimate friends.”

circumambient* sea, and merge together and rise up in a single wave of surging oneness; that the unity of truth, through the power of God, will make these illusory differences to vanish away.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 30.

“One of the most paramount needs of the Cause . . . is that the friends should unite, should become really keenly conscious of the fact that they are one spiritual family, held together by bonds more sacred and eternal than those physical ties which make people of the same family.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, October 26, 1943, in *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 106; also in *Messages of Shoghi Effendi to the Indian Subcontinent*, p. 240.

“Wherefore, O ye beloved of the Lord, bestir yourselves, do all in your power to be as one, to live in peace, each with the others: for ye are all the drops from but one ocean, the foliage of one tree, the pearls from a single shell, the flowers and sweet herbs from the same one garden. And achieving that, strive ye to unite the hearts of those who follow other faiths.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 280.

“Bring those who have been excluded into the circle of intimate friends.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Bahá’í Education* (rev. ed. 1987), p. 43, #106.

* **Circumambient:**
surrounding or
encompassing

The Consequences of Achieving Unity

Read these quotations and assemble a list of consequences.

“So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth. The one true God, He Who knoweth all things, Himself testifieth to the truth of these words.

“Exert yourselves that ye may attain this transcendent and most sublime station, the station that can ensure the protection and security of all mankind.”

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 288.

“This is the one essential: for if unity be gained, all other problems will disappear of themselves.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 30.

“The guarantee of well-being and success in all your endeavours to serve the Cause of God can be stated in one word: unity. It is the alpha and omega of all Bahá'í objectives.”

The Universal House of Justice, May 19, 1994, in *Rights and Responsibilities: The Complementary Roles of the Individual and Institutions*, p. 37.

“If a small number of people gather lovingly together, with absolute purity and sanctity, with their hearts free of the world, experiencing the emotions of the Kingdom and the powerful magnetic forces of the Divine, and being at one in their happy fellowship, that gathering will exert its influence over all the earth. The nature of that band of people, the words they speak, the deeds they do, will unleash the bestowals of Heaven, and provide a foretaste of eternal bliss. The hosts of the Company on high will defend them, and the angels of the Abhá Paradise, in continuous succession, will come down to their aid.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 81.

“We love to see you at all times consorting in amity and concord within the paradise of My good-pleasure, and to inhale from your acts the fragrance of friendliness and unity, of loving-kindness and fellowship. Thus counselled you the All-Knowing, the Faithful. We shall always be with you; if We inhale the perfume of your fellowship, Our heart will assuredly rejoice, for naught else can satisfy Us.”

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 315-316.

The Consequences of Achieving Unity,

continued

“... the Bahá’í experience can contribute . . . to reinforcing hope in the unity of the human race. . . .”

“The great and fundamental teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are the oneness of God and unity of mankind. This is the bond of union among Bahá'ís all over the world. They become united among themselves, then unite others. It is impossible to unite unless united.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 156.

“If we Bahá'ís cannot attain to cordial unity among ourselves, then we fail to realize the main purpose for which the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and the Beloved Master lived and suffered.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, May 12, 1925, in *Living the Life*, p. 10.

“Most important of all is that love and unity should prevail in the Bahá'í Community, as this is what people are most longing for in the present dark state of the world. Words without the living example will never be sufficient to breathe hope into the hearts of a disillusioned and often cynical generation.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, October 20, 1945, in *Living the Life*, pp. 23-24.

“The experience of the Bahá'í community may be seen as an example of this enlarging unity. . . . Its existence is yet another convincing proof of the practicality of its Founder's vision of a united world, another evidence that humanity can live as one global society, equal to whatever challenges its coming of age may entail. If the Bahá'í experience can contribute in whatever measure to reinforcing hope in the unity of the human race, we are happy to offer it as a model for study.”

The Universal House of Justice, “The Promise of World Peace,” in *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986*, p. 695.

Practices that Undermine Unity: Criticism

Focus questions:

- ★ Who is hurt by this practice?
- ★ What damage does this practice do to unity?

“. . . [there exists in the American community] the tendency of the friends to criticize each other at the slightest provocation, whereas the Teachings call upon them to encourage each other. Such tendencies are of course motivated by a deep love for the Faith, a desire to see it free of any flaw. But human beings are not perfect. The Local Assemblies and the friends must be helped through your example and through loving counsel to refrain from such a pattern of criticism, which stunts the growth and development of the community.”

The Universal House of Justice, May 19, 1994, in *Rights and Responsibilities: The Complementary Roles of the Individual and Institutions*, p. 46.

“The fact that we imagine ourselves to be right and everybody else wrong is the greatest of all obstacles in the path towards unity. . . .”

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**, *Paris Talks*, p. 136.

“The beloved Master pointed out over and over again that unity and love among the friends promotes harmony and the rapid spread of the Faith, and that when these are sacrificed and disputes, anger and violent criticism take their place, the Cause cannot move forward.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in *Letters to Australia and New Zealand*, pp. 57-58; also in *Messages to the Antipodes*, p. 230.

“Does not ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wish us, as He looks down upon us with loving expectation from His glorious Station, to obliterate as much as possible all traces of censure, of conflicting discussions, of cooling remarks, of petty unnecessary observations that impede the onward march of the Cause, that damp the zeal of the firm believer and detract from the sublimity of the Bahá’í Cause in the eyes of the inquirer?”

Shoghi Effendi, in *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 19.

“. . . criticism is allowed, but it should be addressed to the institutions of the Faith and not aired in the community where it might foment division and misunderstandings.”

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, May 12, 1988, in *Developing Distinctive Bahá’í Communities*, 4.18.

“Vicious criticism is indeed a calamity. But its root is lack of faith in the system of Bahá’u’lláh (i.e. the Administrative Order) and lack of obedience to Him – for He has forbidden it! If the

Practices that Undermine Unity: Criticism, continued

“... all this waste of strength thru criticizing others could be diverted into cooperation and achieving the Plan.”

Bahá'ís would follow the Bahá'í laws in voting, in electing, in serving and in abiding by assembly decisions, all this waste of strength thru criticizing others could be diverted into cooperation and achieving the Plan.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, December 18, 1949, in *Lights of Guidance* (5th ed.), p. 92, #314.

Practices that Undermine Unity: Backbiting

Focus questions:

- ★ Who is hurt by this practice?
- ★ What damage does this practice do to unity?

“As regards backbiting, i.e., discussing the faults of others in their absence, the teachings are very emphatic. In a Tablet to an American friend the Master wrote: ‘The worst human quality and the most great sin is backbiting, more especially when it emanates* from the tongues of the believers of God. If some means were devised so that the doors of backbiting were shut eternally and each one of the believers unsealed his lips in praise of others, then the teachings of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh would spread, the hearts be illumined, the spirits glorified, and the human world would attain to everlasting felicity.’ (Quoted in *Star of West*, Vol. IV. p. 192) Bahá’u’lláh says in the Hidden Words: ‘Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command ACCURSED ART THOU.’ The condemnation of backbiting could hardly be couched in stronger language than in these passages, and it is obviously one of the foremost obligations for Bahá’ís to set their faces against this practice. Even if what is said against another person be true, the mentioning of his faults to others still comes under the category of backbiting, and is forbidden.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, February 11, 1925, in *Lights of Guidance* (5th ed.), p. 88, #305.

“That seeker must . . . refrain from idle talk. For the tongue is a smouldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison. Material fire consumeth the body, whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heart and soul. The force of the former lasteth but for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endure a century.

“That seeker should also regard backbiting as grievous error, and keep himself aloof from its dominion, inasmuch as backbiting queneth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul.”

Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Iqán*, p. 193.

“O beloved of the Lord! If any soul speak ill of an absent one, the only result will clearly be this: he will dampen the zeal of the friends and tend to make them indifferent. For backbiting is divisive, it is the leading cause among the friends of a disposition to withdraw. . . . it would make the dust to settle so thickly on the heart that the ears would hear no more, and the eyes would no longer behold the light of truth.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 230-231.

* **Emanates:** flow out, issue or proceed, as from a source

Practices that Undermine Unity:

Backbiting, continued

“I hope that the believers of God will shun completely backbiting. . . .”

“I hope that the believers of God will shun completely backbiting, each one praising the other cordially and believe that backbiting is the cause of Divine wrath, to such an extent that if a person backbites to the extent of one word, he may become dishonored among all the people, because the most hateful characteristic of man is fault-finding. One must expose the praiseworthy qualities of the souls and not their evil attributes. The friends must overlook their shortcomings and faults and speak only of their virtues and not their defects.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Lights of Guidance* (5th ed.), p. 91, #312.

“When a difficulty is brought out into the daylight and freely discussed by a duly authorised and responsible group of people who are sincerely desirous of finding the best solution and are free from prejudice or personal motive, then there is a good chance of overcoming it, but discussion of the faults of others behind their backs, by unauthorised people who have no authority to take action in the matter, is surely one of the most fertile causes – probably THE most fertile cause – of disunity, and the importance of putting an end to this practice should be impressed on all Bahá’ís.”

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, February 11, 1925, in *Lights of Guidance* (5th ed.), p. 89, #308.

“You ask in your letter for guidance on the implications of the prohibition on backbiting and more specifically whether, in moments of anger or depression, the believer is permitted to turn to his friends to unburden his soul and discuss his problem in human relations. Normally, it is possible to describe the situation surrounding a problem and seek help and advice in resolving it, without necessarily mentioning names. The individual believer should seek to do this, whether he is consulting a friend, Bahá’í or non-Bahá’í, or whether the friend is consulting him.

“‘Abdu’l-Bahá does not permit adverse criticism of individuals by name in discussion among the friends, even if the one criticizing believes that he is doing so to protect the interests of the Cause. If the situation is of such gravity as to endanger the interests of the Faith, the complaint, as your National Spiritual Assembly has indicated, should be submitted to the Local Spiritual Assembly, or as you state to a representative of the institution of the Counsellors, for consideration and action. In such cases, of course, the name of the person or persons involved will have to be mentioned.”

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, September 23, 1975, in *Lights of Guidance* (5th ed.), p. 90, # 311.

Practices that Undermine Unity: Fault-finding

Focus questions:

- ★ Who is hurt by this practice?
- ★ What damage does this practice do to unity?

“O Son of Being! How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others? Whoso doeth this is accursed of Me.”

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic #26.

“. . . the House of Justice points out that learning not to concern oneself with the faults of others seems to be one of the most difficult lessons for people to master, and that failing in this is a fertile cause of disputes among Bahá'ís as it is among men and women in general.”

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, August 13, 1980, in *Lights of Guidance* (5th ed.), pp. 89-90, #309.

“In order to achieve this cordial unity one of the first essentials insisted on by Bahá'u'lláh and ‘Abdu'l-Bahá is that we resist the natural tendency to let our attention dwell on the faults and failings of others rather than on our own. Each of us is responsible for one life only, and that is our own. Each of us is immeasurably far from being ‘perfect as our heavenly father is perfect’ and the task of perfecting our own life and character is one that requires all our attention, our will-power and energy. If we allow our attention and energy to be taken up in efforts to keep others right and remedy their faults, we are wasting precious time. We are like ploughmen each of whom has his team to manage and his plough to direct, and in order to keep his furrow straight he must keep his eye on his goal and concentrate on his own task. If he looks to this side and that to see how Tom and Harry are getting on and to criticize their ploughing, then his own furrow will assuredly become crooked.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, May 12, 1925, in *Lights of Guidance* (5th ed.), p. 92, #318.

“On no subject are the Bahá'í teachings more emphatic than on the necessity to abstain from faultfinding and backbiting while being ever eager to discover and root out our own faults and overcome our own failings.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, May 12, 1925, in *Lights of Guidance* (5th ed.), p. 88, #306.

“If all human beings became perfect the moment they accepted the call of Bahá'u'lláh this world would be another world. It is in light of our frailty that ‘Abdu'l-Bahá appealed to

Practices that Undermine Unity: Fault-finding, continued

“ . . . each of us should concentrate upon improving his or her own life and ignore the faults of others.”

the friends everywhere to love each other and stressed the emphatic teaching of Bahá'u'lláh that each of us should concentrate upon improving his or her own life and ignore the faults of others. How many times the Master stressed the need for unity, for without it His Father's Cause could not go forward.”

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, July 24, 1973, in *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, 15.32.

The Example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“Let them call to mind . . . the example and conduct of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. . . .”

“Let them call to mind, fearlessly and determinedly, the example and conduct of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá while in their midst. Let them remember His courage, His genuine love, His informal and indiscriminating fellowship, His contempt for and impatience of criticism, tempered by His tact and wisdom.”

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (1984 ed.), p. 34.

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While in Chicago in 1912 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave this guidance to the friends:

“Some of you may have observed that I have not called attention to any of your individual shortcomings. I would suggest to you, that if you shall be similarly considerate in your treatment of each other, it will be greatly conducive to the harmony of your association with each other.”

Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 77, # 57.

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May Bolles Maxwell recounted this story of her pilgrimage, which lasted from December 1898 to early 1899:

“We had learned that to be with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was all life, joy and blessedness. We were to learn also that His Presence is a purifying fire. The pilgrimage to the Holy City is naught but a crucible in which the souls are tried; where the gold is purified and the dross is consumed. It did not seem possible that anything but love could ever again animate our words and actions. Yet that very afternoon, in my room with two of the believers, I spoke against a brother in the truth, finding fault with him, and giving vent to the evil in my own heart by my words. While we were still sitting together, our Master, who had been visiting the poor and sick, returned, and immediately sent for my spiritual mother, Lua, who was with us. He told her that during His absence one of His servants had spoken unkindly of another and that it grieved His heart that the believers should not love one another or that that they should speak against any soul. Then He charged her not to speak of it but to pray. A little later we all went to supper, and my hard heart was unconscious of its error, until, as my eyes sought

The Example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, continued

“Whenever you recognize the fault of another, think of yourself!”

the beloved face of my Master, I met His gaze, so full of gentleness and compassion that I was smitten to the heart. For in some marvellous way His eyes spoke to me; in that pure and perfect mirror I saw my wretched self and burst into tears. He took no notice of me for a while and everyone kindly continued with the supper while I sat in His dear Presence washing away some of my sins in tears. After a few moments He turned and smiled on me and spoke my name several times as though He were calling me to Him. In an instant such sweet happiness pervaded my soul, my heart was comforted with such infinite hope, that I knew He would cleanse me of all my sins.”

Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 53, # 25.

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“In ‘Star of the West’, Volume 8, No. 10, on page 138, there is a record of a reply given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in a private interview in Paris in 1913. He was asked ‘How shall I overcome seeing the faults of others – recognizing the wrong in others?’, and He replied: ‘I will tell you. Whenever you recognize the fault of another, think of yourself! What are my imperfections? – and try to remove them. Do this whenever you are tried through the words or deeds of others. Thus you will grow, become more perfect. You will overcome self, you will not even have time to think of the faults of others. . . .’”

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, August 13, 1980, in *Lights of Guidance* (5th ed.), pp. 89-90, #309.

Applying the Advice of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Apply the advice of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by following these four steps:

1. Think of one example of “words or deeds of others” that you currently feel “tried” by.
2. Consider an imperfection of your own.
3. Reflect on how you can remove your own imperfections.
4. Think of a reminder that will help you remember your own personal improvement plan “whenever you are tried through the words or deeds of others.”

Practices that Build Unity

Read your assigned portion of the following quotations and compile a list of practices mentioned.

For each practice on your list, answer these focus questions:

- ★ What effect does this practice have on the individual who performs it?
- ★ What effect does this practice have on other individuals or the community as a whole?

“Every one of the friends should highly praise the other and each should regard himself as evanescent* and as naught in the presence of others.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Consultation*, p. 8, # 16.

“Strive ye by day and night to cultivate your unity to the fullest degree. Let your thoughts dwell on your own spiritual development, and close your eyes to the deficiencies of other souls. Act ye in such wise, showing forth pure and goodly deeds, and modesty and humility, that ye will cause others to be awakened.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 203.

“. . . laugh, smile and rejoice in order that others may be made happy by you.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 218.

“One must see in every human being only that which is worthy of praise. When this is done, one can be a friend to the whole human race. If, however, we look at people from the standpoint of their faults, then being a friend to them is a formidable task.

“It happened one day in the time of Christ – may the life of the world be a sacrifice unto Him – that He passed by the dead body of a dog, a carcass reeking, hideous, the limbs rotting away. One of those present said: ‘How foul its stench!’ And another said: ‘How sickening! How loathsome!’ To be brief, each one of them had something to add to the list.

“But then Christ Himself spoke, and He told them: ‘Look at that dog's teeth! How gleaming white!’

“The Messiah's sin-covering gaze did not for a moment dwell upon the repulsiveness of that carrion. The one element of that dead dog's carcass which was not abomination was the teeth: and Jesus looked upon their brightness.

“Thus is it incumbent upon us, when we direct our gaze toward other people, to see where they excel, not where they fail.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 169.

* **Evanescent:**
vanishing,
disappearing,
scarcely perceptible

* * *

Practices that Build Unity, continued

“... they should see nothing but good in one another, hear nothing but praise of one another, and speak no word of one another save only to praise.”

“... the Cause of the Ancient Beauty is the very essence of love, the very channel of oneness, existing only that all may . . . bless one another, praise one another; that each one may loose his tongue and extol the rest without exception, each one voice his gratitude to all the rest; that all should lift up their eyes to the horizon of glory, and remember that they are linked to the Holy Threshold; that they should see nothing but good in one another, hear nothing but praise of one another, and speak no word of one another save only to praise.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 229-230.

“We can never exert the influence over others which we can exert over ourselves. If we are better, if we show love, patience, and understanding of the weakness of others, if we seek to never criticize but rather encourage, others will do likewise, and we can really help the Cause through our example and spiritual strength.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, October 26, 1943, in *The National Spiritual Assembly*, p. 35.

“Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face.”

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 285.

“Humanity is not perfect. There are imperfections in every human being, and you will always become unhappy if you look toward the people themselves. But if you look toward God, you will love them and be kind to them, for the world of God is the world of perfection and complete mercy. Therefore, do not look at the shortcomings of anybody; see with the sight of forgiveness. The imperfect eye beholds imperfections. The eye that covers faults looks toward the Creator of souls.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 93.

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Practices that Build Unity, continued

“Turn all your thoughts toward bringing joy to hearts.”

“If . . . a person setteth about speaking well of another, opening his lips to praise another, he will touch an answering chord in his hearers and they will be stirred up by the breathings of God.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 231.

“Human frailties and peculiarities can be a great test. But the only way, or perhaps I should say the first and best way, to remedy such situations, is to oneself do what is right. One soul can be the cause of the spiritual illumination of a continent. Now that you have seen, and remedied, a great fault in your own life, now that you see more clearly what is lacking in your own community, there is nothing to prevent you from arising and showing such an example, such a love and spirit of service, as to enkindle the hearts of your fellow Bahá’ís.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, September 30, 1949, in *The Importance of Deepening*, pp. 49-50, #154.

“. . . if you wish to give admonition or advice, let it be offered in such a way that it will not burden the bearer. Turn all your thoughts toward bringing joy to hearts.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 453.

“Cleanse ye your eyes, so that ye behold no man as different from yourselves. See ye no strangers; rather see all men as friends, for love and unity come hard when ye fix your gaze on otherness. . . . For each of the creatures is a sign of God, and it was by the grace of the Lord and His power that each did step into the world; therefore they are not strangers, but in the family; not aliens, but friends, and to be treated as such.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 24.

* * *

Practices that Build Unity, continued

“... become the source of... peace and comfort and joy, to every human soul. . . .”

“We must become entirely selfless and devoted to God so that every day and every moment we seek to do only what God would have us do and in the way He would have us do it. If we do this sincerely then we shall have perfect unity and harmony with each other.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, February 2, 1925, in *Lights of Guidance* (5th ed.), p. 111, #376.

“. . . man can receive no greater gift than this, that he rejoice another's heart. I beg of God that ye will be bringers of joy, even as are the angels in Heaven.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 203-4.

“The real secret of universal participation lies in the Master’s oft-expressed wish that the friends should love each other, constantly encourage each other, work together, be as one soul in one body, and in so doing become a true, organic, healthy body animated and illuminated by the spirit. In such a body all will receive spiritual health and vitality from the organism itself, and the most perfect flowers and fruits will be brought forth.”

The Universal House of Justice, September 1964, in *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1986*, p. 43.

“Let all your striving be for this, to become the source of life and immortality, and peace and comfort and joy, to every human soul, whether one known to you or a stranger, one opposed to you or on your side.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 256-257.

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Applying the Advice of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Apply the advice of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by following these four steps:

1. Think of someone whose imperfections capture your attention and get in the way of feeling a greater sense of unity.
2. Consider an area in this person’s life which is worthy of praise or in which he or she excels.
3. Think of the specific “white teeth” quality you will focus on when this person’s other qualities fill your view. For example, “When I feel impatient or irritated because John answers seekers’ questions in a rambling, disjointed way, I will focus on how his deep, abiding love of God shines through every word he says.”
4. Consider how and when you will praise the quality you identified either directly to the individual or indirectly when talking about him or her to others.

In the Garden of Thy Heart

Focus questions:

- ★ What is currently growing in the garden of my heart?
- ★ What have I deliberately planted there?
- ★ What may accidentally have grown up there?
- ★ What needs to be weeded out?
- ★ How often do I need to stroll through my garden and check its condition?

Draw a picture representing the garden of your heart, what grows there, or how it is tended.

“O Friend! In the garden of thy heart plant naught but the rose of love. . . .”

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Persian section # 3.

“First and foremost, one should use every possible means to purge one's heart and motives, otherwise, engaging in any form of enterprise would be futile.”

Shoghi Effendi, July 22, 1946, in Living the Life, p. 7.

“O My servant! Purge thy heart from malice and, innocent of envy, enter the divine court of holiness.”

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Persian section # 42.

“Beware lest ye sow tares* of dissension among men or plant thorns of doubt in pure and radiant hearts.”

Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 138.

“. . . wash us from the stain of such doubts as have hindered the suspicious from entering into the tabernacle of Thy unity.”

Bahá'u'lláh, Prayers and Meditations, p. 9.

* **Tares:** weeds

Practicing Active Kindness

Focus questions:

- ★ What are ways in which individual believers can practice “active kindness”?
- ★ What are ways in which communities can practice “active kindness”?

“The people of the world not only need the laws and principles of the Bahá’í Faith – they desperately need to see the love that is engendered by it in the hearts of its followers, and to partake of that atmosphere of tolerance, understanding, forbearance and active kindness which should be the hallmark* of a Bahá’í Community.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, December 5, 1952, in *Lights of Guidance* (5th ed.), p. 405, #1345.

“Let them at all times concern themselves with doing a kindly thing for one of their fellows, offering to someone love, consideration, thoughtful help.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 1.

“Think ye at all times of rendering some service to every member of the human race. . . . Let each one of God’s loved ones centre his attention on this: to be the Lord’s mercy to man; to be the Lord’s grace.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 3.

“What the believers need is not only, as you state, to really study the teachings, but also to have more peace-makers circulating among them.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, January 11, 1950, in *Lights of Guidance* (5th ed.), p. 90, #310.

“Be thou a summoner to love, and be thou kind to all the human race. Love thou the children of men and share in their sorrows. Be thou of those who foster peace. Offer thy friendship, be worthy of trust. Be thou a balm to every sore, be thou a medicine for every ill. Bind thou the souls together.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 26.

“Concern yourselves with one another. Help along one another’s projects and plans. Grieve over one another. Let none in the whole country go in need. Befriend one another until ye become as a single body, one and all. . . .”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Consultation*, p. 9, #20.

* **Hallmark:** an official mark or stamp indicating a standard of purity, used in marking gold or silver; any mark or special indication of genuineness or good quality; a distinguishing feature or characteristic

Sample Ways to Practice “Active Kindness”

“Unity-grams”

Selections from the Writings coupled with loving wishes and suggestions that the recipient offer prayers for the unity of the community and send the “unity-gram” on to other members of the community, either anonymously or with a personal note. See a sample on the following page.

Events to unite different groups within the community

An example: a family in Skokie, Illinois, decided to bridge a perceived gulf between Persian- and American-born believers, spurred by a youth who asked his parents whether more could be done to create unity. They held a unity gathering in their home, where Persian friends could tell of coming to America and American friends could share elements of their lives. Feasting on Persian delicacies, the believers heard stories of courage and patience and felt drawn closer together. The gathering was so successful that another family volunteered to make sure the gatherings continue regularly.

Events to honor a particular segment of the community

An example, youth in the greater Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, area organized a special night of honor for the region’s older Bahá’ís to help strengthen the bond among members of the community. The gathering ended with each older community member receiving a rose.

Add ideas that your group or other groups come up with that you would like to consider further:

Sample “Unity-Gram”

“O well-beloved ones! The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.”

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 164.

“How good it is if the friends be as close as sheaves of light. . . .”

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 76.

“Concern yourselves with one another. Help along one another's projects and plans. Grieve over one another. Let none in the whole country go in need. Befriend one another until ye become as a single body, one and all. . . .”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, in Consultation, p. 9, #20.

“. . . the Cause of the Ancient Beauty is the very essence of love, the very channel of oneness, existing only that all may become the waves of one sea, and bright stars of the same endless sky, and pearls within the shell of singleness, and gleaming jewels quarried from the mines of unity; that they may become servants one to another, adore one another, bless one another, praise one another; that each one may loose his tongue and extol the rest without exception, each one voice his gratitude to all the rest; that all should lift up their eyes to the horizon of glory, and remember that they are linked to the Holy Threshold; that they should see nothing but good in one another, hear nothing but praise of one another, and speak no word of one another save only to praise.”

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 229-30.

“If you desire with all your heart, friendship with every race on earth, your thought, spiritual and positive, will spread; it will become the desire of others, growing stronger and stronger, until it reaches the minds of all men.”

Paris Talks, pp. 29-30.

You have just received a UNITY-GRAM.

Please take a moment to reread these passages. Feel the warmth of the love that radiates to you from your Bahá'í family. Sense the prayers for your growth and happiness that accompany this UNITY-GRAM. Consider offering a prayer for the unity of the community.

As you sit quietly, see which member of the community comes to mind as someone to whom you can send a copy of this UNITY-GRAM. It may be someone that you know well or someone you would like to get to know better. It may be someone you see often or someone you haven't seen for some time. It may be someone with whom you are very close or someone from whom you have felt distant. If more than one person comes to mind, send a UNITY-GRAM to each. You may want to include a personal note.

Ponder a moment on how many UNITY-GRAMs might flow through our community. What connections and patterns might they make? What results might they have?

“We love to see you at all times consorting in amity and concord within the paradise of My good pleasure, and to inhale from your acts the fragrance of friendliness and unity, of loving kindness and fellowship.”

Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings, p. 315.

The Role of the Assembly

Focus questions:

- ★ How can the Assembly serve as “a facilitator of the emergence and maintenance of community life in a wholly new mode”?
- ★ How can the Assembly cater to “the requirements of the spiritual relationships which flow from love and unity among the friends”?
- ★ How does the Assembly’s internal unity affect unity in the community?

“The appearance of a united, firmly based and self-sustaining community must be a major goal of a Spiritual Assembly.”

The Universal House of Justice, May 19, 1994, in *Rights and Responsibilities: The Complementary Roles of the Individual and Institutions*, p. 40.

“The Spiritual Assemblies are collectively the most effective of all instruments for establishing unity and harmony. This matter is of the utmost importance; this is the magnet that draweth down the confirmations of God.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 83-84.

“The divinely ordained institution of the Local Spiritual Assembly operates at the first levels of human society and is the basic administrative unit of Bahá’u’lláh’s World Order. It is concerned with individuals and families whom it must constantly encourage to unite in a distinctive Bahá’í society, vitalized and guarded by the laws, ordinances and principles of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation. It protects the Cause of God; it acts as the loving shepherd of the Bahá’í flock.”

The Universal House of Justice, Naw-Rúz message to the Bahá’ís of the world, 1974, in *Messages of the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1986*, p. 264.

“It can therefore be deduced that the importance of the Bahá’í administration is its value in serving as a facilitator of the emergence and maintenance of community life in a wholly new mode, and in catering* to the requirements of the spiritual relationships which flow from love and unity among the friends.”

The Universal House of Justice, May 19, 1994, in *Rights and Responsibilities: The Complementary Roles of the Individual and Institutions*, p. 39.

“Members of assemblies, national and local, must be the first to set a worthy example to their fellow-believers.”

Shoghi Effendi, in *Light of Divine Guidance*, Vol. 1, p. 155.

“Unity within the Assembly itself is, of course, of immediate importance to the wider unity your actions are intended to foster and sustain. At no time can any member of your Assembly afford to be unmindful of this basic requirement nor neglect to work towards upholding it.”

The Universal House of Justice, May 19, 1994, in *Rights and Responsibilities: The Complementary Roles of the Individual and Institutions*, p. 37.

* **Cater:** to supply something desired or demanded

The Role of the Assembly, continued

“. . . the continual refinement of unity and love is the core work of Bahá'í institutions.”

“Unity, both of purpose and of means, is, indeed, indispensable to the safe and speedy working of every Assembly, whether local or national.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, January 2, 1934, in *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 48; also in *Messages of Shoghi Effendi to the Indian Subcontinent*, p. 109.

“Our experience has taught us that the continual refinement of unity and love is the core work of Bahá'í institutions. Unity is the precondition of all progress. The expectation of unity, the perspective of unity, and the unswerving compliance with the requirements of unity are the disciplines that every member must master to enable the institution on which he or she serves to function as an instrument of the spirit of the Cause.

“As your work progresses, the requirements of unity will grow with each stage more demanding than the last. To meet this continually evolving challenge, each member must resolve to become a champion of ‘genuine love, extreme patience, true humility, consummate tact, sound initiative, mature wisdom, and deliberate, persistent, and prayerful effort.’ We are confident that divine blessings will flow from your efforts to become the individual and institutional embodiments of unity and love and will spread a regenerating influence throughout your regions.”

Letter from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, February 21, 2001, to the Regional Bahá'í Councils.

Drawing on Spiritual Power to Build and Sustain Unity

Focus questions:

- ★ How can the Assembly create the spiritual atmosphere necessary to help community members reach the highest levels of unity described by the metaphors studied earlier?
- ★ How can the Assembly help the friends develop the spiritual qualities required for this task?

“My thoughts are turned towards you, and my heart leaps within me at your mention. Could ye know how my soul glows with your love, so great a happiness would flood your hearts as to cause you to become enamored with each other.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 53.

“The thing the friends need – everywhere – is a greater love for each other, and this can be acquired by greater love for Bahá’u’lláh; for if we love Him deeply enough, we will never allow personal feelings and opinions to hold His Cause back; we will be willing to sacrifice ourselves to each other for the sake of the Faith, and be, as the Master said, one soul in many bodies.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, September 5, 1946, in *Living the Life*, p. 25.

“The love which exists between the hearts of believers is prompted by the ideal of the unity of spirits. This love is attained through the knowledge of God, so that men see the Divine Love reflected in the heart. Each sees in the other the Beauty of God reflected in the soul, and finding this point of similarity, they are attracted to one another in love. This love will make all men the waves of one sea, this love will make them all the stars of one heaven and the fruits of one tree. This love will bring the realization of true accord, the foundation of real unity.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 180-181.

“Every other bond of friendship is limited in effectiveness, but fellowship based upon the love of God is unlimited, everlasting, divine and radiant.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 442.

“And when through the breaths of the Holy Spirit this perfect fraternity and agreement are established amongst men – this brotherhood and love being spiritual in character, this loving-kindness being heavenly, these constraining bonds being divine – a unity appears which is indissoluble, unchanging and never subject to transformation.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 391.

“Wherefore must the friends of God, with utter sanctity, with one accord, rise up in the spirit, in unity with one another, to such a degree that they will become even as one being and one soul.

Drawing on Spiritual Power to Build and Sustain Unity, continued

“So intensely hath the glory of Divine Unity penetrated souls and hearts that all are now bound one to another with heavenly ties. . . .”

On such a plane as this, physical bodies play no part, rather doth the spirit take over and rule; and when its power encompasseth all then is spiritual union achieved.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 203.

“So intensely hath the glory of Divine Unity penetrated souls and hearts that all are now bound one to another with heavenly ties, and all are even as a single heart, a single soul. Wherefore reflections of the spirit and impressions of the Divine are now mirrored clear and sharp in the deep heart’s core. I beg of God to strengthen these spiritual bonds as day followeth day, and make this mystic oneness to shine ever more brightly, until at last all shall be as troops marshalled together beneath the banner of the Covenant within the sheltering shade of the Word of God; that they may strive with all their might until universal fellowship, close and warm, and unalloyed love, and spiritual relationships, will connect all the hearts in the world. Then will all humankind, because of this fresh and dazzling bounty, be gathered in a single homeland. Then will conflict and dissension vanish from the face of the earth, then will mankind be cradled in love for the beauty of the All-Glorious.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 19-20.

Planning Sheet for “Daily Deeds of Constructive Spiritual Living”

“ . . . these traits cannot be acquired by any believer unless he makes a daily effort to gain them. . . .”

“ . . . translate the ideals of the Cause into daily deeds of constructive spiritual living. . . .”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, May 20, 1939, in *Centers of Bahá’í Learning*, p. 10, #25.

“The friends must, at all times, bear in mind that they are, in a way, like soldiers under attack. The world is at present in an exceedingly dark condition spiritually; hatred and prejudice, of every sort, are literally tearing it to pieces. We, on the other hand, are the custodians of the opposite forces, the forces of love, of unity, of peace and integration, and we must constantly be on our guard, whether as individuals or as an Assembly or Community, lest through us these destructive, negative forces enter into our midst. In other words we must beware lest the darkness of society become reflected in our acts and attitudes, perhaps all unconsciously. Love for each other, the deep sense that we are a new organism, the dawn-breakers of a New World Order, must constantly animate our Bahá’í lives. . . .”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, February 5, 1947, in *Lights of Guidance* (5th ed.), pp. 405-6, #1347.

“One can hardly imagine what a great influence genuine love, truthfulness and purity of motives exert on the souls of men. But these traits cannot be acquired by any believer unless he makes a daily effort to gain them. . . .”

Shoghi Effendi, July 22, 1946, in *Living the Life*, p. 8.

Planning Sheet for “Daily Deeds of Constructive Spiritual Living,” continued

Question One

How will I decrease a negative practice as my contribution to fostering unity in my community?

Question Two

How will I cultivate a positive practice as my contribution to creating and maintaining unity in my community?

Question Three

How will I use my unity metaphor, selected at the beginning of the workshop, to strengthen and assist me in my efforts in these areas?

Assurances of Divine Confirmations

*“... as we work,
so will strength
be given unto
us.”*

“Try with all your hearts to be willing channels for God's Bounty. For I say unto you that He has chosen you to be His messengers of love throughout the world, to be His bearers of spiritual gifts to man, to be the means of spreading unity and concord on the earth. Thank God with all your hearts that such a privilege has been given unto you. For a life devoted to praise is not too long in which to thank God for such a favour.”

‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 68.

“By looking for the good in others, by praising and encouraging our fellow believers in their endeavours, by acting mercifully and lovingly towards them, forgiving instead of insisting that they be brought to justice because we feel they may have wronged us, by trying all the time to purify the motives of our conduct in the hope that our services will be acceptable in the sight of Bahá'u'lláh, and by constant prayer that He may forgive our shortcomings and aid us to radiantly, patiently and selflessly promote the vital interests of our Cause, we can become the sources of unity in the community and instruments in the hands of the Almighty to use according to His Will and Purpose.”

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, December 25, 1983, in *Behold Me: Bahá'í Writings on Unity*, p. 88, #197.

“Become as waves of one sea, trees of one forest, growing in the utmost love, agreement and unity.

“If you attain to such a capacity of love and unity, the Blessed Perfection will shower infinite graces of the spiritual Kingdom upon you, guide, protect and preserve you under the shadow of His Word, increase your happiness in this world and uphold you through all difficulties.”

‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 24.

“Bahá'u'lláh has drawn the circle of unity, He has made a design for the uniting of all the peoples, and for the gathering of them all under the shelter of the tent of universal unity. This is the work of the Divine Bounty, and we must all strive with heart and soul until we have the reality of unity in our midst, and as we work, so will strength be given unto us.”

‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 54.