

# **Facilitation Guide**

## **Fostering a Climate of Love and Unity**

An Assembly Development Module Workshop



“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.

“ . . . 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*



# Fostering a Climate of Love and Unity

## Overview for Facilitators

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### 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.

When facilitated with a group of 5-9 participants from the same Assembly, this workshop will require approximately 4 hours for the core material plus additional time for each optional extension. A larger or more diverse group will require extra time for group discussion and reporting back.

What you will find inside your Facilitation Guide:

- ★ **Frontispiece with key quotations.** A one-page sheet containing a quotation from a letter of the Universal House of Justice which provides the foundation of the workshops. (p. 2)
- ★ **Overview for Facilitators.** The page you are reading now (p. 3)
- ★ **The Assembly Development Process.** A one-page description of the process of Assembly development, the role of these workshops within that process, and how to request an Assembly Development Representative to facilitate the workshops. (p. 4)
- ★ **Guidance for Facilitators.** A four-page collection of suggestions for preparation before the session, tips for facilitating during the session, ideas for closing the session, and guidance on what to do with the workshop report form and evaluation forms after the session. (pp. 5-8)
- ★ **Highlights of this workshop.** A three-page listing of workshop objectives, an agenda outline with times of each segment of the workshop, and a listing of materials needed. (pp. 9-11)
- ★ **Facilitator's instructions for segments of this workshop.** A series of pages that provide the purpose and instructions for each section of the workshop. (pp. 12-40)
- ★ **Description of the Office of Assembly Development.** A two-page overview of the vision and mission of this office and the services it can provide. (unnumbered pages at the end of the Facilitation Guide)
- ★ **Evaluation Forms.** A two-page evaluation form for the facilitator to complete and return to the Office of Assembly Development and a two-page evaluation form for the Assembly to complete two months after the workshop. (unnumbered pages at the end of the Guide)

**Note:** You will also want to obtain a copy of the Participant Handouts.

# The Assembly Development Process

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*“ . . . enabling Assemblies to rise to a ‘new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities’ . . . ”*

The National Spiritual Assembly focuses its Assembly Development initiatives towards facilitating the development of “a new state of mind” on the part of Assembly members and the community, thereby enabling Assemblies to rise to the “new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities” envisioned by the Universal House of Justice.

The development process is designed to be furthered by presentation of a variety of module workshops, each module covering a distinct topic or function. Use of these workshops will help Assemblies to understand more clearly the spiritual nature of their institution, to improve their performance, and to attain an ever advancing level of maturity as the primary institutions of the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh. When used with the general community, the workshops will heighten appreciation for the station and responsibilities of local Assemblies and deepen the desire to support and assist these institutions in their growth process.

The National Spiritual Assembly highly recommends that each workshop be studied with a Bahá’í facilitator who resides outside the particular Bahá’í community, although these materials may be used by Assemblies on their own. A list of Bahá’ís who serve as facilitators, called Assembly Development Representatives, is available from the Office of Assembly Development of the Bahá’í National Center at (847) 733-3490 or by e-mail to [OAD@usbnc.org](mailto:OAD@usbnc.org).

Assemblies may choose to study these workshops as an institution, may invite other Assemblies in their area to study together, or may invite their community to join them in exploring the modules. Workshops may also be used at Bahá’í schools or Institutes. If they are used with both Assembly members and other community members, Assemblies are encouraged to set aside follow-up time at one of their future meetings to consider the impact and implications of what was learned on their collective functioning.

Workshops in this program range from two to four hours in length, with the majority averaging just over three hours. They are, however, adaptable to different timing needs. Workshops are divided into separate segments which can be selectively deleted if timing needs require this. Optional supplemental materials are also included for use if more time is available.

# Guidance for Facilitators

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## Before the Session

### Personal preparation

- ★ Take time to prepare yourself spiritually and materially to facilitate this workshop. Meditate on your role in facilitating the friends' thoughtful study and consultation. It may also be helpful to reflect on key quotations about Bahá'í consultation and education.
- ★ Read through the workshop and its handouts of quotations in advance of the session and ponder the themes in them.
- ★ Pray for assistance. Feel confident that the Blessed Beauty will guide and confirm you as you endeavor to serve the Faith.

### Preparation of the course and its materials

- ★ Become familiar with the workshop and its options and extensions.
- ★ The amount of time suggested for each segment of the workshop is a minimum only. If the number of participants in a workshop is large and many small groups will be reporting back, you will need to allow more time than the minimum to complete some segments.
- ★ If some of the participants are not proficient in English, consider ways to meet their needs. For instance, those who understand spoken English but do not read it easily could be paired with those who can read quotations aloud. These adjustments may affect the amount of time necessary to complete an activity or exercise.
- ★ Material which appears in italics is provided to supplement and extend the session if more time is available. Determine in advance how many expansions to the module, if any, are appropriate. Some factors to consider are available time, general level of experience and deepening of the participants, and local interest in a particular topic.
- ★ Have materials (such as a few extra handouts, art supplies, extra pens and pencils, small gift item) ready for each participant. It is wise to have slightly more of everything than you anticipate needing in case a larger than expected group of friends attend.

## Guidance for Facilitators, continued

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- ★ If the workshop segments you will be using require cards for games or exercises, prepare these beforehand. If segments have demonstrations, practice these once or twice beforehand.
- ★ Select devotional readings, prayers, and music you will want to use and make sure you have the equipment to play any music you might have.

### Preparation of the meeting room

- ★ If possible, ask to see the meeting room in advance. Arrive early to set up. Adapt the room set-up to meet your needs, if possible.
- ★ Create an inviting atmosphere of beauty, dignity, and warmth to welcome participants. Possibilities include photographs of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, holy places or great teachers, heroines and heroes; framed quotations, decorating the walls with objects of beauty, tablecloths, arrangements of fresh or dried flowers, lighting, candles, music from diverse cultural backgrounds, bowls of potpourri or drops of rose oil, seating arrangements, and refreshments.

### Creating and maintaining a spiritual environment

- ★ Warmly greet the participants. Be sure that the spirit of the Faith permeates the room. While conveying the content of the workshop is important, it is equally important that the style of interaction does not feel harsh, nervous, or rushed. Be a bringer of light to the hearts of the group.

### Facilitating discussion

- ★ These workshops ask facilitators to raise several questions to the group for possible consultation. If one question fails to elicit much response, move on to another one.
- ★ Express appreciation for each participant’s contribution.
- ★ Be mindful of who has spoken and try to give everyone an opportunity to offer a first comment before giving time for individuals to offer second or third comments. Depending on the size of your group, you may want to go around the room, inviting each person to comment briefly in turn.
- ★ As groups are consulting on quotations and focus questions, go from group to group and listen in, without interrupting the

### During the Session

## Guidance for Facilitators, continued

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consultative process. You may want to note comments or questions that arise and bring them up when the groups reassemble.

### Using time

- ★ When small groups are asked to consult or work on an art project in a certain amount of time, give each group a “5-minute warning” when their time is nearly finished. This could be done either by going from group to group as a reminder or by ringing a small bell.
- ★ Be flexible and sensitive to the needs and understanding of the participants. If a particular question or point engages the group in lengthy but topic-related discussion, it may be preferable to allow participants to continue to pursue an area that intrigues them rather than to cut off discussion and move on to another point or exercise. Participants often experience exploring less material but in greater depth as more satisfying than a hurried look at many aspects of a topic.
- ★ You may choose to make the decision yourself about whether to let a group spend more time on one area and skip later exercises or activities. You may also choose to involve the group as a whole in the decision: “Since this topic is generating a lot of interest, do we want to 1) spend more time here and not explore a later topic, 2) extend the time of our session and not skip any segments, or 3) move on from this topic, go through all the following segments, and end at our original agreed-upon time?”

### Dividing participants into small groups (*in addition to counting off*)

- ★ Put stickers on participants name cards or leave cards with stickers at their place and have them group themselves according to sticker design.
- ★ Divide into groups by the month/season in which one’s birthday falls.
- ★ In theater/auditorium seating, form groups around where participants are sitting.
- ★ Create funny groupings and ask people to choose the group that best describes them (Example: people who love apples are

## Guidance for Facilitators, continued

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group A; if your favorite color is blue, join group B; if Casablanca is your favorite movie, join group C; if dogs are your favorite pet, join group D.)

- If you have Assembly members from several communities attending a session, you may wish to have them work together as an Assembly or work in groups composed of different Assemblies, depending on the exercise and their preference.
- If you have a combination of Assembly and community members attending a session, you may wish to mix the groups together for some exercises and separate Assembly members from community members for other exercises.

### Closing the Session

- ★ Provide verbal instructions on how to turn the evaluation forms in.
- ★ You may want to give a gift to each participant of a card with a beautifully lettered quotation that pertains to the workshop.
- ★ Encourage Assemblies that went through this workshop in a group larger than their own membership to have a follow-up period at an up-coming meeting to consult on what was learned and how it can be applied to their own functioning.
- ★ Suggest choosing a date and picking a topic for the next Assembly development workshop.

**Please note:** Have the participant evaluation forms turned in to you and return them with your evaluation form. Be sure to use the machine readable forms. Give participants their Bahá'í Locality Code, and instruct them on how to fill in the forms.

### After the Session

- ★ Complete the workshop report form and mail it with the participant evaluation forms to:

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States  
Office of Assembly Development  
1233 Central St., Evanston, IL 60201  
OAD@USBNC.ORG. fax. (847) 733-3486, phone (847) 733-3490

- ★ Send a follow-up letter to the Assembly(ies) to thank it/them for participating and include a copy of it's/their evaluation form to fill out two months after the workshop.

**Thank you for serving the Cause by facilitating this Assembly development workshop!**



# Highlights of Fostering a Climate of Love and Unity

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## Objectives

### Participants will:

- ★ explore aspects of “a new state of mind”
- ★ gain a deeper appreciation for the degree of unity to which we are called
- ★ perceive the consequences of achieving this unity
- ★ identify practices which enhance or undermine unity
- ★ understand the respective contributions of the individual, the Assembly, and the community to the process of building unity

## Agenda outline: (total time: 4 hours)

- ★ **Introduction** (15 minutes), pp. 12-13  
An opportunity to introduce the Assembly Development process, familiarize participants with the objectives of this module, and present an agenda outline of topics and activities.
- ★ **The Call to “A New State of Mind”** (10 minutes), pp. 14-15  
A guided discussion to help participants grasp some of the implications of moving toward “a new state of mind.”
- ★ **The Writings on Unity** (35 minutes), pp. 16-19  
Reflection on metaphors that highlight the degree of unity to which we are called coupled with small group study of the consequences of achieving this unity.
- ★ **Practices that Undermine Unity** (45 minutes), pp. 20-22  
Small group study of behaviors and attitudes that undermine unity followed by personal reflection and action planning.
- ★ **Practices that Build Unity** (45 minutes), pp. 26-29  
Small group study of behaviors and attitudes that enhance unity, an activity to experience and express praise and appreciation, and time for personal reflection and action planning.
- ★ **Practicing Active Kindness** (20 minutes), pp. 31-32  
Group examination of sample ways in which individuals and communities can practice “active kindness” followed by paired brainstorming on this topic.
- ★ **The Role of the Assembly** (55 minutes), pp. 33-36  
Small group study of roles the Assembly, as distinct from the individual, plays in building unity and consultation on ways the Assembly can fulfill these roles.
- ★ **Closing** (15 minutes), pp. 38-39  
An artwork reflection and planning activity, inspirational quotations to provide assurance of divine confirmation for all efforts to foster love and unity in the community, and optional group singing.

## Highlights, continued

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**Extension sessions for use if more time is available:**

- ★ ***Further consideration of the call to “a new state of mind.” (variable amount of time) pp. 14-15***  
*A guided discussion examining existing assumptions and conceptions and the feelings evoked by the process of change.*
- ★ ***Overcoming Practices that Undermine Unity (45 minutes), pp. 23-25***  
*Brief stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s example and guidance coupled with group sharing of practices that have been helpful in the process of individual mindfulness and change.*
- ★ ***In the Garden of Thy Heart (10 minutes), p. 30***  
*An artwork activity to stimulate reflection on thoughts and feelings that have become established in the heart.*
- ★ ***Drawing on Spiritual Power to Build and Sustain Unity (25 minutes), p. 37***  
*Small group discussion of how the Assembly can help the community draw more fully on the forces of spiritual attraction in their efforts to foster unity.*

**Times given above are minimums** based on a group of 5-9 participants from the same Assembly. A larger or more diverse group will require extra time for group discussion and reporting back. Material which appears in italics is provided to supplement and extend the session if more time is available. If less time is available, you can skip whatever section seems to be less relevant to the needs of the group. You may also choose to direct participants to focus only on quotations in their handouts that are bolded, as these are the most vital. Focusing on bolded quotations may also aid participants who are slower readers.

**Materials needed:**

- ★ Whiteboard, blackboard or flip chart and markers
- ★ A variety of highlighters
- ★ 3 x 5 blank index cards (one card per participant)
- ★ Materials to decorate cards (pens, glitter, sequins, glue, etc.)
- ★ A large ball of yarn
- ★ Scissors
- ★ Soft music for reflection and planning time
- ★ Cassette or CD player

## Highlights, continued

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**Materials  
needed,  
continued**

- ★ *Optional: A beautiful card or calligraphy rendition of a quotation by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to give as a gift to each participant*
- ★ *Optional: Crayons, pens, or colored pencils*
- ★ *Optional: A copy of the tape “The Victory” by Barb Shanks, cued to the song “Gather Ye Together”*
- ★ *Optional: A copy of the tape or CD “Teaching Peace” by Red and Kathy Grammer, cued to the song “I think you’re wonderful.”*

**Note:** You will need to inform the sponsoring Assembly that Participant Handouts for each participant should be ordered directly from the Bahá’í Distribution Service prior to the workshop.

# Introduction and Objectives (15 minutes)

## Purpose:

- ★ To introduce the Assembly development process
- ★ To familiarize participants with the objectives of this workshop
- ★ To present an agenda outline of topics and activities

## Activities:

### 1. Brief devotions

- ★ Open with brief devotions that you have selected or ask for a volunteer. You might want to include the following passage:

“Gather ye together with the utmost joy and fellowship and recite the verses revealed by the merciful Lord. By so doing the doors to true knowledge will be opened to your inner beings, and ye will then feel your souls endowed with steadfastness and your hearts filled with radiant joy.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, in *The Importance of Deepening Our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith*, p. 2, #6.)

- ★ **Optional:** Use a musical rendition of this passage to create a joyful opening by cueing the cassette tape “The Victory,” by Barb Shanks, to the song “Gather Ye Together.”

### 2. Introduction (5-8 minutes)

- ★ Give a brief introduction to the resources of the Office of Assembly Development and the Assembly Development Module Workshops (see the description of the Office of Assembly Development which is attached toward the end of the Facilitation Guide). Highlight that the purpose of the workshops in the Assembly development process is to facilitate the development of “a new state of mind” on the part of Assembly members and the community, thereby enabling Assemblies to rise to the “new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities” envisioned by the Universal House of Justice.
- ★ A primary focus of this particular workshop is how the Assembly can facilitate the emergence and maintenance of a loving, unified community.

### 3. Overview objectives (1 minute)

- ★ Read aloud the objectives of this workshop and have them posted.
- ★ See page 9 for a list of objectives. Make adjustments for any

## Introduction and Objectives, continued

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sections that are removed for timing considerations or optional extension sessions that are added.

### **4. Review agenda** (1 minute)

- ★ Go through the agenda for the session, writing an outline of topics to be covered on a whiteboard or previously prepared flip chart.
- ★ See page 9 for an agenda. Make adjustments for any sections that are removed for timing considerations or optional extension sessions that are added. You may also need to make timing adjustments depending on the audience composition: a full Assembly vs. mixed groups of participants, experienced vs. newly-formed Assemblies, etc.

### **5. Sharing questions** (3-5 minutes)

- ★ Invite participants to share questions they have about this topic.
- ★ Make a list of these and, at the end of class, check to make sure that all have been answered or that the questioner has been referred to information elsewhere.

# The Call to “a New State of Mind” (10 minutes)

## Purpose:

- ★ To grasp some of the implications of moving toward “a new state of mind”

## Activities:

### 1. Discussion of quotations (5 minutes)

- ★ Have a participant read aloud the first quotation on the handout “The Call to a New State of Mind” (see Participant Handouts, pp. 3-4)
- ★ Invite participants to share thoughts and feelings about “a new state of mind” and the process of moving toward it.
- ★ Offer the thought that one implication is the need for all of us to listen to “old” quotes with “new” ears in order to find new insights in familiar quotations.

### *You may also choose to share two other thoughts:*

- ★ *First, a new state of mind is not a one-time paradigm shift – a condition of once we “get it,” we will necessarily “have it” forever – as much as a continuing process of reorienting our minds from what is to the vision of what the possibilities are, as described in the Writings and Ridván messages.*
- ★ *Second, it is normal to slide back into “old” states of mind – especially under stress – for quite a while. States of mind are habits, or default settings, which take conscious, deliberate effort and time to change.*

### *Optional extension: Further discussion of quotations*

- ★ *Have participants read aloud the remaining quotations on “The call to a new state of mind.” The following questions can be asked in any order, and you have the option to ask them after the paragraph in question or after all quotations are read.*
- ★ *Ask the group as a whole:*
  - *How might “an expansion of thought” be stimulated? (par. 3)*
  - *How do we “clear the ground for new conceptions of social organization”? (par. 4)*
  - *How comfortable is the process of “ever more rapid change”? (par. 7)*

## Correlating handout:

- ★ “The Call to a New State of Mind” pp. 3-4

## The Call to “a New State of Mind,” continued

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- *Is resisting or hiding from this “onrushing” and “quickenning wind” an option for us? for humanity as a whole? (par. 4)*
- ★ *Ask for thoughts on the process of “experiencing the rigorous effects” of an “onrushing” and “quickenning wind” ventilating “the modes of thought of us all, renewing, clarifying, and amplifying our perspectives.” (par. 4)*
- ★ *Ask for one word descriptions of the feelings that being part of such a process evokes. Acknowledge as a normal part of the change process all the feelings, whether they express excitement or reservations.*

### **2. Read passage, underline, and share (3-5 minutes)**

- ★ Ask participants to read the second quotation, a passage from the Ridván 1996 message from the Universal House of Justice (Participant Handouts, p. 3) silently and underline or highlight what they feel are key words or phrases that have particular implications for the topic of this workshop.
- ★ Invite participants to share what they have underlined.
- ★ Offer the comment that for the workshop to have maximum impact, participants should, when reading or listening to the quotations, focus on their own life and what may need changing rather than reflect on how the community would be better if another believer lived up to the guidance in a particular quote.
- ★ Suggest that a focus on self improvement rather than the improvement of others is an important aspect of a new state of mind.

# The Writings on Unity (35 minutes)

## Purpose:

- ★ To perceive the degree of unity to which we are called
- ★ To understand the consequences of achieving unity

## Setting up the activities

- ★ Share with the group the following words of Bahá'u'lláh: “In these days it is incumbent upon everyone to adhere tenaciously unto unity and concord . . .” (*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 60; this is the first quotation on the handout “Metaphors of Unity”)
- ★ Give the dictionary definitions of adhere and tenacious (in PH):  
**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.
- ★ Comment that the Writings call us to achieve and cling tenaciously to a very high degree of unity. A variety of metaphors express the unity God intends.
- ★ Explain that a metaphor applies a word or phrase to an object or concept it does not literally describe in order to suggest a comparison. An example would be “a might fortress is our God.”

## Activities:

### 1. Group reflection on metaphors from the Writings (10 minutes)

- ★ Ask for volunteers to read aloud the quotations on the handout “Metaphors of Unity” (Participant Handouts, pp. 5-6).
- ★ Ask participants to listen for answers to the 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?
- ★ Invite participants to share their thoughts on each focus question in turn.

### 2. Individual reflection and paired sharing (5 minutes)

- ★ Ask each participant to choose a metaphor from these Writings to which he or she feels particularly drawn and ponder its implications.
- ★ Ask each participant to circle or highlight this metaphor on the handout.

## Correlating handouts:

- ★ “Metaphors of Unity” pp. 5-6
- ★ “The Consequences of Achieving Unity” pp. 7-8



## The Writings on Unity, continued

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- ★ Allow a few minutes for individuals to share with a partner the metaphor they picked and its meaning and implications to them.

### 3. Facilitator comments on coherent light (2 minutes)

- ★ Share the concept of coherent light, a form of light in which the electromagnetic waves are aligned so that they move in the same direction at the same time, like a laser beam. In contrast, regular light is incoherent, or going in all directions.
- ★ Ask participants to think about the difference between three conditions:
  - darkness
  - ordinary, incoherent light
  - coherent light
- ★ Comment that
  - Any degree of light – even one, small candle – allows possibilities beyond those which exist in a total lack of light.
  - Coherent light – light that is united in a single direction – has powers and capacities beyond ordinary, diffused light. For example, the beam produced by coherent light, such as a laser beam, is able to cut through very durable materials and yet can be used by surgeons in delicate operations.
- ★ Suggest that
  - The degree of unity to which Bahá'ís – and ultimately all humanity – are called is such that, when achieved, remarkable capacities in human beings will be released, just as coherence gives ordinary light new properties.
  - This degree of unity is obviously more than building communities in which individuals do not actively dislike each other.
  - This unity even transcends communities that are loving but without plans and systems that align and channel their talents, capacities, and hearts in one direction.

## The Writings on Unity, continued

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### 4. Small group study of the Writings (10 minutes)

- ★ Divide participants into groups of 3-4.
- ★ Ask each group to read the quotations on the handout “The Consequences of Achieving Unity” (Participant Handouts, pp. 7-8) and assemble a list of consequences.
- ★ Since there are several quotations, ask half the groups to begin reading on page 7 and half to begin reading on page 8.

### 5. Groups report back (5 minutes)

- ★ Have each group share three items from its list of consequences, going through groups in turn until there are no more items to report.
- ★ A sample list might include the following:
  - illuminate the whole earth
  - ensure the protection and security of all mankind
  - problems will disappear
  - guarantee of well-being and success
  - exert influence over all the earth
  - unleash the bestowals of Heaven
  - provide a foretaste of eternal bliss
  - breathe hope into the hearts of a disillusioned and often cynical generation
  - realize the purpose and sufferings of the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
  - provide proof of the practicality of Bahá’u’lláh’s vision of a united world
  - reinforce hope
  - rejoice the heart of Bahá’u’lláh

## The Writings on Unity, continued

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### 6. Summary comments (1 minute)

- ★ Comment that Bahá'u'lláh does not promise that the work of creating and maintaining unity will be easy.
- ★ Refer back to the quotation that began this segment: “In these days it is incumbent upon everyone to adhere tenaciously unto unity and concord. . . .”
- ★ Share the thought that adhering tenaciously implies holding on to unity even when we don't feel like it, even when strong forces pull us to let go.
- ★ Discovering the many and weighty consequences of achieving, or failing to achieve, unity will strengthen our resolve to “adhere tenaciously.”

## Practices that Undermine Unity (45 minutes)

### Purpose:

- ★ To identify behaviors and attitudes that undermine unity
- ★ To perceive how each practice harms the individual and the community

### Activities:

#### 1. Small group study of the Writings (20 minutes)

- ★ Divide participants into three groups and assign each group one topic: criticism, backbiting, or fault-finding.

**Note to facilitator:** The topic of backbiting has the most quotations, so slower readers or those less familiar with English could be assigned to the other two groups.

- ★ Refer groups to the appropriate handout page of quotations “Practices that Undermine Unity: Criticism” (Participant Handouts, pp. 9-10), “Practices that Undermine Unity: Backbiting” (Participant Handouts, pp. 11-12), or “Practices that Undermine Unity: Fault-finding” (Participant Handouts, pp. 13-14).
- ★ Ask each group to answer the same two focus questions:
  - Who is hurt by this practice?
  - What damage does this practice do to unity?

**Note to facilitator:** If you will not be using Optional Extension Session One, “Overcoming Practices that Undermine Unity,” tell groups that if they finish answering their focus questions early, they may want to read “The Example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” (Participant Handouts, pp. 15-16). If they do not have time, encourage them to read this later as homework.

- ★ As groups work, label a flip chart page “Practices that Undermine Unity” and, going down on the left side, write “Criticism,” “Backbiting,” and “Fault-finding.”

#### 2. Groups share and discuss findings (20 minutes)

- ★ Reconvene groups. Have each, in turn, share answers to the focus questions. Write their findings on the right side of the flip chart opposite the appropriate practice.
- ★ Underscore the widespread nature of the damage done by these practices. Point out that they affect
  - the individual, group, or institution spoken about
  - the listener
  - the one finding fault, criticizing, or backbiting

## Practices that Undermine Unity, continued

### Materials needed:

- ★ Soft music
- ★ Cassette or CD player

### Correlating handouts:

- ★ “Practices that Undermine Unity: Criticism” pp. 9-10.
- ★ “Practices that Undermine Unity: Backbiting” pp. 11-12
- ★ “Practices that Undermine Unity: Fault-finding” pp. 13-14
- ★ “Planning Sheet for ‘Daily Deeds of Constructive Spiritual Living’” pp. 31-32

- ★ Note that even if the negative thoughts are not voiced aloud, they affect the individual who harbors or dwells on them.
- ★ Ask the group as a whole: “To what extent have your attitudes and feelings about the significance of these practices changed as a result of studying these quotations?”
  - Share the thought that these practices are so common in our culture that we have become desensitized to their harm. It is easy for us to slip into these practices without being aware of what we are doing. Greater awareness of the harm they do is a step forward toward a new state of mind.
- ★ Ask the group as a whole: “How is backbiting or fault-finding different from taking a concern about an individual to the Spiritual Assembly?”
  - Make the point that an individual is always free to take a concern to an institution and that this does not fall into the category of backbiting. On the contrary, Bahá’u’lláh has given the institutions as an appropriate channel for such concerns.

**Optional extension:** Ask participants to decide if the following statements are accurate or rationalizations:

- “I said something complementary along with my criticism, so it wasn’t really backbiting.”
- “I wasn’t backbiting because what I said was true - those are his real faults.”
- “I only discussed this with my spouse, so it wasn’t backbiting because married couples should not have secrets from each other.”

**Note:** If you will be using the 45 minute Optional Extension Session One, “Overcoming Practices that Undermine Unity” (see Facilitator’s Guide, pp. 23-25), do it at this time.

### 3. Personal reflection and action planning (5 minutes)

- ★ Refer participants to the page toward the end of their handouts called “Planning Sheet for ‘Daily Deeds of Constructive Spiritual Living’” (Participant Handouts, pp. 31-32).

## Practices that Undermine Unity, continued

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- ★ Ask volunteers to read aloud the three quotations on p. 31.
- ★ Ask participants to take 3-4 minutes to reflect on and answer the **first** question on p. 32: “How will I decrease a negative practice as my contribution to creating and maintaining unity in my community?”
- ★ Play soft music while participants work.
- ★ Close with Bahá’u’lláh’s assurance that we can make a new beginning:

“Verily I say, the tongue is for mentioning what is good, defile it not with unseemly talk. God hath forgiven what is past. Henceforward everyone should utter that which is meet and seemly, and should refrain from slander, abuse and whatever causeth sadness in men.” (*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 219-20.)

*Optional break: A short break could be taken at this point. If a break is not taken, it may be desirable to have participants stand and stretch in place.*

# Optional Extension Session One: **Overcoming Practices that Undermine Unity** (45 minutes)

## **Purpose:**

- ★ To call to mind the example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
- ★ To share practices that have been helpful in the process of individual change

## **Setting up the activities**

- ★ Offer the comment that most of us are familiar with the guidance found in a quotation on behalf of the Guardian:

“It is obvious that if we listen to those who complain to us about the faults of others we are guilty of complicity in their backbiting. We should therefore, as tactfully as possible, but yet firmly, do our utmost to prevent others from making accusations or complaints against others in our presence.”

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, February 11, 1925, in *Lights of Guidance* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.), p. 94, # 325.
- ★ Observe that discussions of practical steps the Bahá’í community can take to diminish this forbidden activity sometimes focus on cultivating the skill of stopping others from backbiting.
- ★ Suggest that if each believer devoted equal energy to decreasing his or her own incidences of backbiting, there would be fewer occasions requiring someone to stop us.
- ★ Note that the same principle of changing ourselves first applies to other practices that undermine unity.

## **Activities:**

### **1. Remembering the example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá** (10 minutes)

- ★ Refer participants to the handout “The Example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” (Participant Handouts, pp. 15-16). Read aloud the first quotation on the handout.
- ★ Choose participants to read aloud the three stories about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.
- ★ Suggest that the last story is a very practical example of reprogramming a habitual response to a stimulus. Draw the graphics below to illustrate these dynamics:

## **Correlating handout:**

- ★ “The Example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” pp. 15-16
- ★ “Applying the Advice of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” p. 17

# *Overcoming Practices that Undermine Unity,* *continued*

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## **Stimulus → Response**

See a fault in  
someone → Judge, criticize, comment on fault

- ★ Comment that when we see what we consider a fault in someone else (stimulus), our habitual attitude or behavior (response) may be to judge (silently or not), criticize, or comment on the fault to others.
- ★ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s advice is to substitute a new response of thinking of our own imperfections and how we can overcome them.
- ★ Add the new response to the graphic, as shown below.

## **Stimulus → Response**

See a fault in  
someone → Judge, criticize, comment on fault  
↓  
Think of our own imperfections and  
how to overcome them

- ★ This new response speeds our spiritual growth and, by keeping our focus on ourselves rather than the faults of others, promotes unity.
- ★ Allow 3-5 minutes for participants to complete the activity “Applying the Advice of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” (Participant Handouts, p. 17). This could also be done as a take home assignment.

## **2. Group discussion (35 minutes)**

- ★ Read aloud the following three questions and then ask the group as a whole to discuss each one in turn:
  1. When you have not been aware of a shortcoming, what has been the most positive way it has been brought to your attention?



## *Overcoming Practices that Undermine Unity,* *continued*

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2. When you have been aware of a shortcoming, what has helped you develop a mindful awareness of when your behavior is not what you would like it to be?
  
3. When you have been aware of a shortcoming, what actions of others have helped you in your change process? What actions of others have not been helpful?

**Note:** when you are finished you will need to return to page 21, #3 to continue.

## Practices that Build Unity (45 minutes)

### Purpose:

- ★ To identify behaviors and attitudes that build unity
- ★ To perceive how each practice affects the individual and the community

### Materials needed:

- ★ Soft music
- ★ Cassette or CD player
- ★ A large ball of yarn
- ★ Scissors

### Correlating handouts:

- ★ “Practices that Build Unity” pp. 18-21
- ★ “Applying the Advice of ‘Abdu’l Bahá” p. 22
- ★ “Planning Sheet for ‘Daily Deeds of Constructive Spiritual Living’” p. 32

### Setting up the activities

- ★ Share the thought that refraining from the negative practices of criticism, backbiting, and fault-finding is an excellent beginning, but it only brings the atmosphere up to neutral. To create and maintain unity requires cultivating positive practices as well.

### Activities:

#### 1. Small group study of the Writings (15 minutes)

- ★ Divide participants into four groups.
- ★ Refer participants to the handout “Practices that Build Unity” (Participant Handouts, pp. 18-21). Since this handout has a large number of quotations, assign each group a portion of the sixteen passages to read. The first group should read the quotations on p. 18, the second group should read p. 19, the third should read p. 20, and the fourth group should read p. 21.

**Note to facilitator:** quotations on the general themes of praise and encouragement, creating joy, personal transformation and example, and looking for the good are divided among all four sets of quotations.

- ★ Ask each group to read their portion of the quotations and compile a list of practices mentioned.
- ★ After assembling their list, each group should then go through each of the practices and answer the following 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?
- ★ As the groups work, label a flip chart page “Practices that Build Unity.”

## Practices that Build Unity, continued

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### 2. Groups share their findings (15 minutes)

- ★ Ask each group to present its list of practices and their effects.
- ★ As each group reports, assemble a master list on the flip chart.
- ★ Share the thought that we look at life through a different filter when we are actively looking for things to appreciate and encourage rather than for things to criticize.
  - Even if these practices had no effect on others – which they do – they enrich the life of the one performing them.
  - Even if they were not a magnet drawing others to the Bahá'í community – which they are – who wouldn't rather live in a community that routinely is filled with appreciation and encouragement?

*Optional: Share the statement of poet John Milton “Good, the more communicated, more abundant grows.”*

*Optional extension: Invite thoughts on two questions:*

- *How can we create unity through shared laughter and joy?*
- *How might the Feast be used for this purpose?*

### 3. Experiencing praise and appreciation (10 minutes)

- ★ Have participants sit or stand in a circle. Give a ball of yarn to one participant.
- ★ Give these directions:
  - The participant with the yarn should toss the ball to someone across the circle, holding tightly to one end.
  - The recipient should take hold of the ball and listen as the one who tossed it shares something that he or she particularly likes about the recipient.
  - The recipient should then toss the ball to someone else, keeping hold of the string, and expressing something positive about the person selected.
  - The ball of yarn should be tossed around the circle until everyone has both heard and expressed praise and appreciation.

## Practices that Build Unity, continued

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- ★ Before participants let go of the yarn, take scissors and snip through the web. Give each person a piece of yarn to keep as a remembrance of the special words he or she heard.
- ★ Suggest that creating this web of love and good feelings might make an appropriate activity for the social portion of the Feast.

### ***Optional extension:***

*Invite thoughts on ways that women and men can encourage and express appreciation to each other for their efforts to build unity by doing their respective parts to establish the partnership of women and men.*

### ***Optional extension:***

*Invite thoughts on ways that blacks and whites (or other racial or cultural groups within your community) can encourage and express appreciation to each other for their efforts to build unity by doing their respective parts to establish oneness between the races.*

## **4. Take-home assignment (1 minute)**

- ★ Encourage participants to complete the take home assignment “Applying the Advice of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” (Participant Handouts, p. 22)
- ★ Suggest that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s story about Christ and the dead dog that one of the groups read earlier (Participant Handouts, p. 18) is a very practical example of reprogramming a habitual response to a stimulus.
- ★ Draw the following graphic on the board:

**Stimulus**                      ➔                      **Response**

Many negatives/few positives ➔ Focus on the negatives

- ★ Comment that when we are in a situation with many negative aspects and very few positive ones (stimulus), our habitual attitude or behavior (response) may be to focus on the conspicuous negatives.

## Practices that Build Unity, continued

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- ★ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s advice is to substitute a new response of actively choosing to focus on the positive element.
- ★ Add the new response to the graphic, as shown below.

### Stimulus

Many negatives/  
few positives

### ➔ Response

➔ Focus on the negatives



Focus on the positive

- ★ This new response of seeing “only that which is worthy of praise” or where others “excel, not where they fail” encourages growth in others and promotes unity.

### 5. Personal reflection and action planning (5 minutes)

- ★ Refer participants back to the handout “Planning Sheet for ‘Daily Deeds of Constructive Spiritual Living’” (Participant Handouts, p. 32).
- ★ Ask participants to take a few minutes to reflect on and answer the **second** question: “How will I cultivate a positive practice as my contribution to creating and maintaining unity in my community?”
- ★ Play soft music while participants work.

## *Optional Extension Session Two:* *In the Garden of Thy Heart* (10 minutes)

### **Purpose:**

- ★ To reflect on thoughts and feelings that have become established in the heart

### **Materials needed:**

- ★ Soft music
- ★ Cassette or CD player
- ★ Crayons, pens, or colored pencils

### **Correlating handout:**

- ★ “In the Garden of Thy Heart”  
p. 23

### **Setting up the activities**

- ★ Comment that love and unity in the community begin with the very private thoughts and feelings that individuals nurture within themselves about each other.

### **Activities:**

#### **1. Review of the Writings** (1 minute)

- ★ Refer participants to the handout “In the Garden of Thy Heart” (Participant Handouts, p. 23). Ask a volunteer to read the quotations aloud.

#### **2. Facilitator comments** (1 minute)

- ★ Share the following information on bindweed, a common plant, with participants:

Bindweed [Latin name: *Convolvulus arvensis*] is a creeping or twining vine. Its flowers are small, white cups which look like Morning Glories. At first encounter, it looks pleasant and innocent, not weed like; and a gardener may be tempted to let it grow up among other plants.

Looks can be deceptive, however. Bindweed will quickly form a dense mat, covering and smothering other plants. In addition, it will send roots down 8-10 feet into the soil, making it difficult to get rid of the plant. If you simply pull out all of the vine that you can see, the roots will quickly send up new vines.

If bindweed has once been introduced into a garden, only constant vigilance will keep the garden healthy.

#### **3. Personal reflection and artwork** (8 minutes)

- ★ Give participants time to reflect on the focus questions and to draw a picture at the bottom of their handout of some aspect of the garden of their heart and their intentions of keeping it healthy. These pictures are for participants’ private use only.
- ★ Play soft music as participants work.

# Practicing Active Kindness (20 minutes)

## Purpose:

- ★ To consider ways in which individuals and communities can practice “active kindness”

## Setting up the activities

- ★ Refer participants to the handout “Practicing Active Kindness” (Participant Handouts, p. 24). Ask a volunteer to read aloud the first quotation.
- ★ Read the dictionary definition of “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
- ★ Share these observations:
  - “Active kindness” is an element of the atmosphere that is “the hallmark,” or distinguishing feature indicating genuineness, of a Bahá’í community.
  - “Active” implies translating the emotion of kindness into actions and behaviors.
  - “Active kindness” is a practical expression and natural outcome of our love and unity.

## Activities:

### 1. Group examination of examples of “active kindness” (3 minutes)

- ★ Share three examples of “active kindness” by referring participants to the handouts “Sample Ways to Practice ‘Active Kindness’” (Participant Handouts, p. 25) and “Sample Unity-Gram” (Participant Handouts, p. 26.)
- ★ Explain that “unity-grams” were one individual’s attempt to strengthen bonds of unity among believers. “Unity-grams” contain selections from the Writings, loving wishes, and the suggestion that the recipient offers 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. “Unity-grams” can be duplicated and mailed or sent as email.

## Correlating handouts:

- ★ “Practicing Active Kindness” p. 24
- ★ “Sample Ways to Practice ‘Active Kindness’” p. 25
- ★ “Sample Unity-Gram” p. 26

## Practicing Active Kindness, continued

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- ★ Mention that the other two ideas – events to unite different groups within the community or to honor a particular segment of the community – came from articles in *The American Bahá'í* describing individual or community initiatives.

### 2. Paired brainstorming (5 minutes)

- ★ Ask participants, working in pairs, to read the remaining quotations on “Practicing Active Kindness” and then to brainstorm other examples of “active kindness.”

### 3. Group sharing (10 minutes)

- ★ Ask each pair to share their ideas.
- ★ Encourage participants to add any ideas just mentioned that they would like to consider further to those included on the handout “Sample Ways to Practice ‘Active Kindness’” (Participant Handouts, p. 25).



# The Assembly's Role in Creating and Maintaining Unity (55 minutes)

## Purpose:

- ★ To perceive the roles the Assembly plays in building unity
- ★ To identify ways the Assembly can fulfill these roles

## Setting up the activities

- ★ Comment that the Writings repeatedly call Bahá'ís to distinction in our individual and collective lives.
- ★ Having looked at the choices and responsibilities of individuals, we will now consider what the Assembly can do to create loving, unified communities distinguished by their atmosphere of praise, encouragement, and appreciation.

## Activities:

### 1. Small group study of the Writings (30 minutes)

- ★ Divide participants into groups of 3-4.
- ★ Refer participants to “The Role of the Assembly” (Participant Handouts, pp. 27-28). Ask participants to underline or highlight the various roles the Assembly plays in creating and maintaining unity, as distinct from the roles of individuals.
- ★ Ask groups to also consult on the 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?

### 2. Groups report back (15 minutes)

- ★ Ask groups to share the roles they identified. Make a master list of these on a flip chart or board.
- ★ Ask groups to share their responses to each focus question in turn. Choose a different group to begin the reporting process each time.

### 3. Facilitator comments (10 minutes)

## Correlating handout:

- ★ “The Role of the Assembly” pp. 27-28

# The Assembly's Role in Creating and Maintaining Unity, continued

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- ★ Close this segment by highlighting several roles of the Assembly. As you mention each of these four roles, circle them on the master list, if they have already been identified, or add them to the list.

## **1. The Assembly as a role model of visible, internal unity**

- ★ The Assembly can lead by example.

## **2. The Assembly as a planner of unifying goals and strategies**

- ★ Individuals and communities need something to rally around in unity. By setting exciting goals and planning strategies that require the talents and contributions of all, the Assembly provides for a common point of reference and a shared sense of achievement.

## **3. The Assembly as a monitor of unity in the community**

- ★ One quotation on the handout used the metaphor of the Assembly as “the loving shepherd of the Bahá’í flock.” A shepherd constantly monitors the health of the flock and moves proactively against whatever threatens its safety or well-being.
- ★ The Assembly can monitor the existence and extent of positive and negative practices and, if needed, counsel individuals whose spiritual struggles with criticism, fault-finding or backbiting are undermining community unity.
- ★ In addition the Assembly can also monitor the general climate of the community through careful listening.
  - Speech is a powerful force. As Bahá’u’lláh notes, “One word is like unto springtime causing the tender saplings of the rose-garden of knowledge to become verdant and flourishing, while another word is even as a deadly poison.” (*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 173.)
  - Consider a glass of clear, pure water:
    - ◆ Imagine an ink fountain pen dropping small, black droplets of ink into the glass.

# The Assembly's Role in Creating and Maintaining Unity, continued

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- ◆ The first few drops do not appreciably darken or cloud the water; but as the droplets continue to fall, they have a cumulative effect.
- ◆ Eventually the water reaches a point where it is undrinkable.
- Each comment made in a community is a droplet that adds more pure water to the glass or adds something that poisons the water.
- A few negative comments may seem harmless; but if they increase or become widespread, they both reflect and create a dispiriting attitude. They deflate enthusiasm and dampen creativity.
- The Assembly can act as the spiritual equivalent of a water quality control monitor.
- If the Assembly hears an increase in comments that seem to reflect a lack of unity and vitality, it can then quickly take action to address whatever is causing frustration or depression.

#### **4. The Assembly as a promoter and encourager of unity**

- ★ The Assembly can stimulate a positive, unified atmosphere in the community through encouragement, praise, appreciation, and grateful recognition of services rendered.
- ★ These can be directed to
  - individuals
  - groups
  - the community as a whole
- ★ They can be delivered
  - publicly or privately
  - formally or informally
- ★ They can cover
  - actual achievements
  - efforts still waiting to bear fruit

# The Assembly's Role in Creating and Maintaining Unity, continued

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★ The Assembly can highlight progress that is being made, even when the highest possible levels of unity remain to be achieved. Stories of new efforts or developments reinforce goals and intentions, create confidence, stimulate enthusiasm, and build community.

★ The Assembly can also reframe issues to accentuate the positive and the possible. For example:

“Why do so few people ever come to activities?”

**could be reframed as:**

“What was the most exciting and unifying activity that drew a wide variety of people? What can we learn from it? How can we build on what we learn to create activities that draw us together in shared joy and service?”

- ★ The Assembly can encourage unity both institutionally and as individual members.
  - The quotation that Assembly members are called “to become the individual and institutional embodiments of unity and love” implies that Assembly members have a role to play as individuals, even when the institution is not in session.
  - By unofficially serving as peacemakers, change agents, and role models, members can help knit closer the hearts of the friends and build bridges of unity between groups.

## *Optional Extension Session Three: Drawing on Spiritual Power to Build and Sustain Unity (25 minutes)*

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### **Purpose:**

- ★ To draw more fully on the forces of spiritual attraction in our efforts to foster unity

### **Activities:**

#### **1. Small group consultation (20 minutes)**

- ★ Divide into groups of 4-5.
- ★ Ask them to read silently the quotations on the handout “Drawing on Spiritual Power to Build and Sustain Unity” (Participant Handouts, pp. 29-30), highlighting key words and phrases.
- ★ Have them share highlighted words and phrases as a group and discuss the 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?
- ★ Instruct them to, as a group, come up with 1-2 recommendations or suggestions.

#### **2. Groups share suggestions (5 minutes)**

- ★ Allow time for each group to share the results of its consultation.

### **Correlating handout:**

- ★ “Drawing on Spiritual Power to Build and Sustain Unity” pp. 29-30

## Closing (15 minutes)

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### **Purpose:**

- ★ To reflect individually on implementing personal action plans
- ★ To provide assurance of divine confirmation for all our efforts to foster love and unity in the community

### **Activities:**

#### **1. Review of initial questions (2 minutes)**

- ★ Check to see that all questions raised at the beginning have been answered or that the questioner has been referred elsewhere.

#### **2. Reflection and memory verse artwork (10 minutes)**

- ★ Refer participants again to the handout “Planning Sheet for ‘Daily Deeds of Constructive Spiritual Living’” (Participant Handouts, pp. 31-32).
- ★ Ask participants to take a few minutes to reflect on the last question: “How will I use my unity metaphor, selected at the beginning of the workshop, to strengthen and assist me in my efforts?” When participants have finished, they can proceed to the following artwork activity. Outline their options before they begin their reflection time.
- ★ Share two artwork options and ask each participant to choose one. Both options involve:
  - a blank 3 x 5 index card
  - a memory verse and decoration on the front
  - action planning on the back

#### **Option 1:**

- Pick for a memory verse all or a portion of a passage of the Writings on practices that enhance unity. (Participant Handouts, pp. 18-21) Write this on the front of the card.
- On the back of the card, make a list of ways and means you can put your practice into action (examples could be at the Feast, through phone calls, at committee or Assembly meetings, personal visits, e-mails, etc.)
- Decorate or illuminate the front of the card.

### Option 2:

- Pick for a memory verse all or a portion of the passage containing the metaphor of unity you chose earlier and highlighted on either page 5 or page 6 of the handouts. Write this on the front of the card.
  - On the back of the card, make a list of actions you will take to bring your community closer to the degree of unity implied in your metaphor.
  - Decorate or illuminate the front of the card, perhaps including an image related to your metaphor.
- ★ Play soft music while participants work.
  - ★ Suggest that participants display their memory verse card where it will be seen frequently or tuck it in a prayer book.

### 3. Closing quotations (3 minutes)

- ★ Choose participants to each read aloud one of the closing quotations “Assurances of Divine Confirmations” (Participant Handouts, p. 33).

### *Optional music or group singing*

- ★ To practice unilateral encouragement and appreciation, play a recorded version and encourage participants to sing along to the song “I think you’re wonderful” by Red and Kathy Grammer. This song is on the tape/CD “Teaching Peace.” Words and sheet music follow p. 33 in the handouts.

### *Optional:*

*Give each participant a beautiful card or calligraphy version of a passage by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as a gift (an example suitable for photocopying onto attractive paper follows)*

### **Materials needed:**

- ★ A blank 3 x 5 index card for each participant
- ★ Art materials to decorate cards
- ★ *A tape or CD of “Teaching Peace” cued to the song “I Think You’re Wonderful.”*

### **Correlating handouts:**

- ★ “Planning Sheet for ‘Daily Deeds of Constructive Spiritual Living’” pp. 31-32
- ★ “Assurances of Divine Confirmations” p. 33

“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**