

# **Facilitation Guide**

## **The Spiritual Nature of the Local Assembly**

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*



# The Spiritual Nature of the Local Assembly

## OVERVIEW FOR FACILITATORS

---

### Purpose

- ★ To help members of a Local Spiritual Assembly gain a firmer grasp of the spiritual nature of the institution and to explore what members can do individually to help the Assembly rise to a higher level of maturity

This module focuses in depth on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s opening prayer for the Spiritual Assembly and also examines metaphors used in the Writings to describe Assemblies, such as being “channels of divine guidance.” Its purpose is to help members of a Local Spiritual Assembly gain a firmer grasp of the spiritual nature of the institution and to explore what members can do individually to help the Assembly rise to a higher level of maturity.

### 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 module. (p. 2)
- ★ **Overview for Facilitators.** The page you are reading. (p. 3)
- ★ **The Assembly Development Process.** A 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 module.** A two-page listing of the module objectives, an agenda outline with times of each segment of the module, and a listing of materials needed. (pp. 9-10)
- ★ **Facilitator’s instructions for segments of this module.** A series of pages that provide the purpose and instructions for each section of the module. (pp. 11-36)
- ★ **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 near 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 form for the Assembly to complete. (unnumbered pages at the end of the Facilitation Guide)

# The Assembly Development Process

---

*“ ... 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 five hours in length with the majority averaging about four 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

---

## 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.
- ★ Read through the workshop and its handouts 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. Feel free to duplicate the handouts on colored paper and interleaf them in the Facilitation Guide if this would make facilitation easier for you.
- ★ 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.
- ★ If the workshop segments you will be using require cards for games or exercises, prepare these beforehand. If workshop segments have demonstrations, practice these once or twice beforehand.

## Guidance for Facilitators, continued

---

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

**During the  
Session**

## Guidance for Facilitators, continued

---

### 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

- ★ 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 group A; if your favorite color is blue, join group B; if Casablanca is your favorite movie, join group C.)
  - If you have Assembly members from several communities attending a session, you may wish to have them work

### Closing the Session

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

- ★ 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 explain how to fill in the forms.

### After the Session

- ★ Complete the workshop report form and mail it with the participant evaluations 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 them for participation and include a copy of 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 The Spiritual Nature of the Local Assembly

## **Objectives:**

Participants will

- ★ Explore aspects of “a new state of mind”
- ★ Acquire a heightened awareness of Assemblies as channels and chosen instruments
- ★ Examine in depth the purposes and spiritual state of those gathered together as a Spiritual Assembly
- ★ Identify ways in which they can support the growth and maturation of Assemblies

## **Agenda outline** (Total time: 3 hours)

- ★ **Introduction** (15 minutes), p. 11  
An opportunity to introduce Assembly development resources, 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. 12-13  
A guided discussion to help participants grasp some of the implications of moving toward “a new state of mind.”
- ★ **The Assembly as a channel** (10 minutes), p. 14  
A visualization activity to help participants acquire a heightened awareness of those realities that flow through the channel of the Spiritual Assembly.
- ★ **‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s prayer for Assemblies** (60 minutes), pp. 15-28  
An activity to examine in depth the purposes and spiritual state of those gathered together as a Spiritual Assembly.
- ★ **Promises given to Assemblies** (5 minutes), p. 29  
Inspirational quotations to recall to mind and heart the divine assistance constantly available to Assemblies.
- ★ **Metaphors of Assembly functioning** (10 minutes), pp. 30-31  
A visualization activity to help participants perceive the power of metaphors and acquire a heightened awareness of Assemblies as chosen instruments.
- ★ **Becoming clear channels** (30 minutes), p. 32  
An artwork activity to consolidate and express what has been learned about the Assembly’s role.
- ★ **Rising to a new stage in the exercise of Assembly responsibilities** (30 minutes), pp. 33-34  
Small group discussion and a panel report focused on two objectives: gaining a keener sense of the importance of improved performance by Assemblies, and recognizing the relationship between deepening and transformation of individual Assembly members and the maturation of the institution as a whole.
- ★ **Journal writing activity and closing** (10 minutes), p. 35  
Time for participants to reflect on and commit to what each will personally do to help the Assembly play the role God has destined for it.

## Highlights, continued

---

*Extension sessions for use if more time is available*

- ★ *Developing a measuring tool to assess Assembly performance (20 minutes), p. 32*

*Development of a criteria list of capacities and abilities, taken from the Ridván 1996 letter, that Assemblies can use as a measuring tool.*

- ★ *Distinguishing features of the Bahá'í Administrative Order (25 minutes), p. 33*

*An activity to heighten appreciation of the uniqueness of the Administrative Order by contrasting it with previous religious and political systems.*

Times given above are minimums. Module 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 quotes in their handouts that are bolded as these are the most vital. Focusing on bolded quotes may also aid participants who are slower readers.

**Materials needed**

- ★ Sheets of blank paper for each person
- ★ Whiteboard, blackboard or flip chart and markers
- ★ Scotch tape
- ★ Four colors of highlighters – several sets
- ★ Cut out phrases from the prayer for the local Assembly (see Facilitator's Guide, pp. 24-26)
- ★ Raw fiber (wool, cotton, etc.) carding pads, and hand spinning tool OR several lengths of breakable cotton thread of different colors
- ★ Newsprint and colored construction paper
- ★ Crayons, colored pencils, or markers and other art supplies
- ★ Soft music for journal writing time
- ★ *Optional: A beautiful card or calligraphy rendition of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's opening prayer for the Spiritual Assembly to give as a gift to each participant ( p. 35).*

**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 (15 minutes)

---

### Purpose

- ★ To introduce Assembly Development resources
- ★ To familiarize participants with the objectives of this module
- ★ To present an agenda outline of topics and activities
- ★ To determine what questions and issues participants have on this topic

### Activities:

#### 1. Brief devotions

- ★ Open with brief devotions that you have selected or ask for a volunteer.

#### 2. Introduction (1-2 minutes)

- ★ Give a brief introduction to the resources of the Office of Assembly Development and the Assembly Development Modules. (See the description of the Office of Assembly Development which is attached toward the end of the module) Highlight that the purpose of the modules 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.
- ★ Note that a primary focus of this particular module is a close examination of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s opening prayer for the Spiritual Assembly.

#### 3. Overview objectives (3-5 minutes)

- ★ Read aloud the objectives of this module and have them posted. See page 9 of the Facilitaiton Guide for a list of the objectives. Make adjustments for any sections that are removed for timing considerations or optional extension sessions that are added.

#### 4. Review agenda (3-5 minutes)

- ★ Go through the agenda for the session, writing an outline of topics to be covered on a whiteboard or previously prepared flip chart. See pages 9-10 for an agenda. Make adjustments for any sections that are removed for timing considerations or optional extension sessions that are added.

#### 5. Invite questions (3-5 minutes)

- ★ Invite participants to share their questions about this topic.
- ★ Make a list of these and post them. 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”
- ★ To gain a deeper understanding of the Assembly’s roles and responsibilities

## Activities:

### 1. Discussion of quotations (5-10 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 take turns to read aloud the remaining quotations on the handout “The Call to a New State of Mind.” (Participant Handouts pp. 3-4). 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 quotes are read.*

### **Ask the group as a whole:**

- *How might “an expansion of thought” be stimulated?*
- *What might fall into the category of “the obscuring dust of acquired knowledge”?*
- *What are some of the assumptions and conceptions we have in general about institutions, their authority, and “what is natural and appropriate in relationships”?*
- *What assumptions and conceptions do we bring to our service as members of Assemblies?*

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

---

- *Where do these assumptions and conceptions come from?*
- *How do we remove “obscuring dust” and “clear the ground for new conceptions of social organization”?*
- *How comfortable is the process of “ever more rapid change”?*
- *Is resisting or hiding from this “onrushing” and “quickenning wind” an option for us? for humanity as a whole?*
- ★ *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.”*
- ★ *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 passage from the Ridván 153/1996 message (see 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 module.
- ★ Invite participants to share what they have underlined.

A word in the Participant Handouts:

\* **Canalize:**

to channel into a particular direction; provide an outlet for

## The Assembly as a Channel (10 minutes)

---

### **Purpose:**

- ★ To acquire a heightened awareness of those realities that flow through the channel of the Spiritual Assembly

### **Activities:**

#### **1. Visualization exercise**

- ★ Choose individuals to read aloud the first two quotations on their handout “Assemblies as Channels of Divine Guidance” (Participant Handouts, page 9).
- ★ Invite other participants to close their eyes and visualize the images used in these passages as they are being read.
- ★ Invite comments or feelings about these images and the responsibility inherent in them.

#### **2. Commentary**

- ★ Point out that the first quotation begins by mentioning three realities that flow out from Assemblies:
  - “fragrances of holiness”
  - “the lights of knowledge”
  - “the spirit of life”
- ★ Comment that to be the source of any one of these three would make the Assembly a powerful force, but this combination of knowledge, spirit, and holiness gives the Assembly a unique station and position in the community it serves.
- ★ Call attention to the remarkable statement that concludes this passage: “They, indeed, are the potent sources of the progress of man, at all times and under all conditions.”
- ★ Comment that the station of being a potent source of progress is not one that the Assembly will someday evolve into as it approaches maturity. This is the station that every Assembly begins to occupy even as it comes into being – at its most embryonic – simply because it is a divine creation and a channel of the grace of God. This is a station that every Assembly occupies, regardless of the size or maturity of the Bahá’í community it serves and regardless of the receptivity to the Faith of the people living in its area.
- ★ Suggest that local Assemblies may be one of the most unrecognized and untapped sources of progress in localities throughout the world – hidden treasures waiting to be discovered and used for the benefit of the townspeople of their area.

# ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Prayer for Assemblies

(60 minutes)

## Purpose

- ★ To examine in depth the purposes and spiritual state of those gathered together as a Spiritual Assembly

## Prepare materials in advance:

- ★ Take a copy of the passages from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's prayer for the Assemblies (Facilitator's Guide pp. 26-28) and cut the passages apart. Have ready a flipchart, these passages, and tape.

## Setting up the activity (5 minutes)

- ★ Mention that this prayer was revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for the “House of Spirituality” of Chicago. Shoghi Effendi translated this prayer and included it in his long letter of March 5, 1922, to the American Bahá’ís, one of his first administrative directives to the Western world. (*Bahá’í Administration*, pp. 20-21)
- ★ Comment that even though this prayer is often read at the beginning of Assembly meetings, rarely do Assembly members as individuals or the institution as a whole set aside time to ponder or discuss it, absorbing its full meaning. Suggest that a more profound understanding of this prayer should do much to create a higher appreciation for the majesty of the institution and the responsibility of its individual members.
- ★ Mention that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says of this prayer, “Whenever ye enter the council-chamber, recite this prayer with a heart throbbing with the love of God and a tongue purified from all but His remembrance, that the All-Powerful may graciously aid you to achieve supreme victory.”
  - **Ask:** What implications do these directions have for the type of personal preparation that individual members of the Assembly should make before the institution begins its session?
- ★ Comment that this prayer sets in motion a process of transition and transformation that turns nine individuals into a single, divinely-ordained body.
- ★ Give an overview of the meaning and tone set by the first five words.
  - Mention that the first five words “**O God, my God! We**” contain three statements.
  - Explain that the **first two words** are an invocation, reminding us in Whose presence we meet.

### Activities to study ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s prayer for Local Spiritual Assemblies

Bahá’u’lláh counsels, “At this meeting they should feel as if they were entering the Presence of God . . . The glances of God are directed towards this Assembly” (in The Local Spiritual Assembly, p. 6) and again, “They should consider themselves as entering the Court of the presence of God, the Exalted, the Most High, and as beholding Him Who is the Unseen” (Kitáb-i-Aqdás, p. 29, par. 30).

- Ask participants to mentally reflect on how often they have a sense of being in the presence of God during an Assembly meeting, both at the beginning of the meeting and throughout its duration.
- Mention that the **second two words** express the personal relationship each member has with his or her Creator.
- Note that the **last word** changes from first person singular to first person plural. Author John Kolstoe comments that at this point, “Everyone steps over the threshold of his individual relationship with God; the participants enter a united condition. With it comes a corporate, or single and united mind – a new entity, different from and superior to the sum of the nine parts.” (Consultation, p. 45)

**Activities:** (50 minutes)

### 1. Overview of the prayer

- ★ Comment that this prayer sets the tone for the Assembly’s consultation. It details the purposes and desired results of the gathering and gives insight into the sacred tasks the Assembly is about to undertake. Within this prayer are statements about:
  - who we are
  - the spiritual state we are in as we gather together
  - what our purposes are
  - the pleas or entreaties we make to God

### 2. Read and study the prayer

- ★ Refer participants to a copy of this prayer in their handouts (Participant Handouts, p. 5 ). Ask them to read through the prayer silently and take 3-5 minutes to underline or highlight phrases which refer to each of these four aforementioned categories (make available different colored highlighters).



## **‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Prayer for Assemblies, continued**

---

- ★ As participants work, copy onto a flipchart the grid outline from the sample completed table on the next page (Facilitator’s Guide, p. 18). This sample table is only for the facilitator’s use in preparing the flipchart.
- ★ Add the four questions that will form the left column of the table.
- ★ Add the three other bolded items from the right half of the table across from the fourth question. Have ready the cut up slips of passages of the prayer in the correct order (Facilitator’s Guide p. 26-28).

### **3. Completing the table**

- ★ When participants have finished underlining phrases, read aloud one cut out passage at a time. Ask a volunteer to tape the passage in the flipchart grid in the correct position, opposite the question this passage answers. As each is posted, add the comments and questions which follow on pages 20-25

## ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Prayer for Assemblies, continued

**Sample  
completed table  
for the study of  
‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s  
prayer for  
Local Spiritual  
Assemblies**

<b>Who are we?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• servants of Thine</li> </ul>
<b>In what spiritual state do we gather together?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• with devotion to Thy Holy Face</li> <li>• detached ourselves from all besides Thee</li> <li>• united in our views and thoughts</li> <li>• with our purposes harmonized</li> </ul>
<b>What are our purposes?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to exalt Thy Word amidst mankind</li> <li>• that we may unite even as the waves of one sea</li> <li>• become merged together as the rays of Thine effulgent Light</li> <li>• that our thoughts, our views, our feelings may become as one reality</li> <li>• manifesting the spirit of union throughout the world</li> </ul>
<b>What are we asking of God?</b>	<p><b>Make us:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the signs of Thy Divine Guidance</li> <li>• the Standards of Thine exalted Faith amongst men</li> <li>• servants to Thy mighty Covenant</li> <li>• manifestations of Thy Divine Unity</li> <li>• resplendent stars shining upon all regions</li> </ul> <p><b>Aid us to become:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seas surging with the billows of Thy Wondrous Grace</li> <li>• streams flowing from Thine all-glorious Heights</li> <li>• goodly fruits upon the tree of Thy heavenly Cause</li> <li>• trees waving through the breezes of Thy Bounty in Thy celestial Vineyard</li> </ul> <p><b>Make:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• our souls dependent upon the Verses of Thy Divine Unity</li> <li>• our hearts cheered with the outpourings of Thy Grace</li> </ul>

## **Text of a prayer for Local Spiritual Assemblies**

*Whenever ye enter the council-chamber, recite this prayer with a heart throbbing with the love of God and a tongue purified from all but His remembrance, that the All-Powerful may graciously aid you to achieve supreme victory:*

O God, my God! We are servants of Thine that have turned with devotion to Thy Holy Face, that have detached ourselves from all besides Thee in this glorious Day. We have gathered in this Spiritual Assembly, united in our views and thoughts, with our purposes harmonized to exalt Thy Word amidst mankind. O Lord, our God! Make us the signs of Thy Divine Guidance, the Standards of Thy exalted Faith amongst men, servants to Thy mighty Covenant, O Thou our Lord Most High, manifestations of Thy Divine Unity in Thine Abhá Kingdom, and resplendent stars shining upon all regions. Lord! Aid us to become seas surging with the billows of Thy wondrous Grace, streams flowing from Thine all-glorious Heights, goodly fruits upon the Tree of Thy heavenly Cause, trees waving through the breezes of Thy Bounty in Thy celestial Vineyard. O God! Make our souls dependent upon the Verses of Thy Divine Unity, our hearts cheered with the outpourings of Thy Grace, that we may unite even as the waves of one sea and become merged together as the rays of Thine effulgent Light; that our thoughts, our views, our feelings may become as one reality, manifesting the spirit of union throughout the world. Thou art the Gracious, the Bountiful, the Bestower, the Almighty, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

*'Abdu'l Bahá*

# Commentary and questions for phrases from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's prayer for Assemblies

As passages are read and taped into position, add the following comments

## “we are servants of Thine”

- ★ Note that this phrase shows both what we are (servants) and who our master is (God).
- ★ Ask for thoughts on what it means to be a servant:
  - Who sets the agenda?
  - Who determines the priority of various tasks?
  - Who assigns responsibilities?
- ★ Note that our culture regards being a servant as a lowly, undesirable position, while Bahá'u'lláh indicates that servitude is the highest station attainable. 'Abdu'l-Bahá advises, “If thou seekest after a work which is brighter and more attractive, sweeter and more delightful than all the affairs, it is thralldom at the threshold of the Almighty and servitude to His Highness the Lord of Might.” (*Divine Art of Living*, p. 94, #9)
- ★ Comment that He also points out the relationship between a servant and his Lord: “The service of the friends belongeth to God, not to them.” (*Divine Art of Living*, p. 94, #8)
- ★ Refer participants to the handout “Additional Quotations” (Participant Handouts, pp. 6-7) for copies of the quotations that you are sharing.
- ★ Invite other comments or observations about being servants.
- ★ **Optional extension**

*Explore other aspects of service found in these four quotations:*

  - “That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race.” (*Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 116)
  - “Man’s merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches.” (*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 138)
  - “How great the blessedness that awaiteth him that hath attained the honor of serving the Almighty!” (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* p. 334)
  - “Say: The liberty that profiteth you is to be found nowhere except in complete servitude unto God, the Eternal Truth.” (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 336)
- ★ Note that while Assemblies are indeed the institution of the Rulers and are administrators of the Faith, they are called upon

## Commentary and Questions, continued

---

first to be servants. Even though they are given authority by God, they are not called to be bossy or dictatorial.

### **“with devotion to Thy Holy Face”**

- ★ Note that “devotion” signifies profound, heartfelt dedication and loyalty. Bahá’u’lláh advises, “They who are the beloved of God, in whatever place they gather and whomsoever they may meet, must evince, in their attitude towards God, and in the manner of their celebration of His praise and glory, such humility and submissiveness that every atom of the dust beneath their feet may attest the depth of their devotion.” (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 7)
- ★ Comment that devotion also implies a receptivity to inspiration and direction, especially when one has turned to “Thy Holy Face.” This Face is indeed the source of all knowledge and guidance.
- ★ *Optional extension*

*Share these two quotations about devotion:*

*“Only when the lamp of search, of earnest striving, of longing desire, of passionate devotion, of fervid love, of rapture, and ecstasy, is kindled within the seeker’s heart, and the breeze of His loving-kindness is wafted upon his soul, will the darkness of error be dispelled, the mists of doubts and misgivings be dissipated, and the lights of knowledge and certitude envelop his being.”* (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 267)

*“O ye peoples of the earth! Turn yourselves towards Him Who hath turned towards you. He, verily, is the Face of God amongst you, and His Testimony and His Guide unto you.”* (*Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 48)

### **“detached ourselves from all besides Thee in this glorious day”**

- ★ **Ask:** Has any Assembly member ever felt he or she achieved the condition of 100% detachment from all besides God at the beginning of an Assembly meeting?
- ★ Share the following quote from Shoghi Effendi:  
“The members of these Assemblies, on their part, must disregard utterly their own likes and dislikes, their personal

## Commentary and Questions, continued

---

interests and inclinations, and concentrate their minds upon those measures that will conduce to the welfare and happiness of the Bahá'í Community and promote the common weal." (Bahá'í Administration, p. 41)

★ **Ask:**

- How does this degree of detachment relate to the condition of being servants striving to please our Master?
- Does anyone feel he or she has ever reached this state of utter disregard?
- Is detachment strictly an all-or-nothing condition or could it also be viewed as a continuum along which we can persistently strive to progress?
- What effects does a lack of detachment have on the consultative process and the ability to receive divine guidance?

★ Suggest that the greater degree of attachment we have to an idea, concept, or person, the more apt we are to overlook or misconstrue whatever guidance is received pertaining to that subject. The more we are free of preconception or personal investment, the more we are able to see guidance in perspective and to give it proper place and weight.

★ Comment that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's description of this day as "glorious" is a reminder that however challenging the work before us may seem, we begin in an atmosphere of optimism and victory.

★ **Optional extension**

*Share these two quotations about the day in which we live:*

*"Reflect, can a more precious, a mightier, and more glorious day than this be conceived, so that man should willingly forego its grace, and deprive himself of its bounties, which like unto vernal showers are raining from the heaven of mercy upon all mankind?" (Kitáb-i-Iqán, p. 143)*

*"In this blessed, this glorious Day, deprive not yourselves of the liberal effusions of bounty which the Lord of abounding grace hath vouchsafed unto you. In this Day showers of wisdom and utterance are pouring down from the clouds of divine mercy." (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 85)*

### **“we are gathered in this Spiritual Assembly”**

- ★ Comment that we gather at the express command of God: “The Lord hath ordained that in every city a House of Justice be established wherein shall gather counsellors to the number of Bahá. . . . It behooveth them to be the trusted ones of the Merciful among men and to regard themselves as the guardians appointed of God for all that dwell on earth.” (Kitáb-i-Aqdás, p. 29)
- ★ Mention that Shoghi Effendi comments: “A perusal of some of the words of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on the duties and functions of the Spiritual Assemblies in every land (later to be designated as the local Houses of Justice), emphatically reveals the sacredness of their nature, the wide scope of their activity, and the grave responsibility which rests upon them.” (Bahá’í Administration, p. 20)

### **“with our purposes harmonized”**

- ★ Point out the use of plural word “purposes.”
- ★ Note that even when we are detached and concentrated on “those measures that will conduce to the welfare and happiness of the Bahá’í Community,” we each bring different perceptions of needs, different sets of priorities, and different ideas for strategies and lines of action. This diversity of views and opinions must be “harmonized” toward one end: “to exalt Thy Word amidst mankind.”
- ★ Comment that this end is our mandate in the broadest terms, the fundamental reason we are gathered together.

### **“become merged together as the rays of Thine effulgent Light, that our thoughts, our views, our feelings may become as one reality, manifesting the spirit of union throughout the world”**

- ★ After these other aspects of unity are included in the purpose category of the table, use fibers to offer a visual example of diverse elements merging and becoming one reality. Describe

## Commentary and Questions, continued

---

the process of turning raw wool or other fibers into thread, demonstrating as you talk:

- Raw fibers are a tangled mass of individual stands, diverse, unrelated, of differing lengths, and relatively weak (hold up the mass and break one or two strands).
  - Carding smoothes the fibers, aligning them so that they all go in the same direction.
  - Spinning them (which can be done by hand, not just by a wheel) combines and blends the individual fibers, transforming them into “one reality”: a strong, continuous piece of thread (pull on the thread to show its greater strength than raw fibers).
- ★ **OR** If raw fibers are not available, take colored lengths of cotton thread or strands of yarn tied together at one end, “finger comb” these straight and smooth, and twist or braid them into one strand. Be sure to use cotton thread, not nylon or polyester, as it breaks more easily.
- ★ Note that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mentions thoughts, views, and feelings becoming “one reality.” Invite observations about the relative strength of the “thread” if the strand of “feelings” is not included in the mix. Suggest that our unity must go beyond the level of intellectual agreement.

### “seas. . . streams. . . goodly fruits. . . trees”

- ★ After these have been added to the table, ask participants to close their eyes as you read aloud the sentence from the prayer containing these metaphors.
- “Lord! Aid us to become seas surging with the billows of Thy wondrous Grace, streams flowing from Thine all-glorious Heights, goodly fruits upon the Tree of Thy heavenly Cause, trees waving through the breezes of Thy Bounty in Thy celestial Vineyard.”
- ★ **Ask:** What feelings or attributes did these images call forth in you as you listened?
- These might include richness, abundance, luxuriance, a sense of being unlimited, etc.



### **“unite even as the waves of one sea”**

- ★ Note that, while we already have gathered “united in our views and thoughts,” we also ask God to help us achieve certain spiritual conditions so that “we may unite.” Unity is both our ultimate goal – an end state – and our operating principle – the way we do things now, at the beginning, as we work toward our goal. As the House of Justice comments about unity, “It is the alpha and omega of all Bahá’í objectives.” (letter dated May 19, 1994)
- ★ Point out that we ask God for two spiritual conditions – “our souls dependent upon the Verses of Thy Divine Unity” and “our hearts cheered with the outpourings of Thy Grace” – so that we may unite. The state or condition of having dependent souls and cheered hearts enables us to achieve this level of unity and manifest it “throughout the world.”

#### ★ **Optional extension:**

*Ask what effect having discouraged hearts or souls dependent on something other than the Creative Word might have on the unity of the Assembly.*

#### **4. Closing activity (5 minutes)**

- ★ After all the phrases have been included in their category in the table and participants’ comments have been shared, read aloud the last sentence of the prayer, with its list of divine attributes.

“Thou art the Gracious, the Bountiful, the Bestower, the Almighty, the Merciful, the Compassionate.”
- ★ Comment that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has singled out and called our attention to these particular attributes of the One Whom we are entreating.
- ★ **Ask:** What feelings do these attributes stir in you?

Cut out photocopies of these strips to be used with the activities on page 16 "

servants of Thine

with devotion to Thy Holy Face

detached ourselves from all besides Thee

united in our views and thoughts

with our purposes harmonized

to exalt Thy Word amidst mankind

that we may unite even as the waves of one sea

become merged together as the rays of Thine effulgent Light

---

that our thoughts, our views, our feelings may become  
as one reality

---

manifesting the spirit of union throughout the world

---

- the signs of Thy Divine Guidance

---

- the Standards of Thine exalted Faith amongst men

---

- servants to Thy mighty Covenant

---

- manifestations of Thy Divine Unity

---

- resplendent stars shining upon all regions

---

---

. seas surging with the billows of Thy Wondrous Grace

---

. streams flowing from Thine all-glorious Heights

---

. goodly fruits upon the tree of Thy heavenly Cause

---

. trees waving through the breezes of Thy Bounty in  
Thy celestial Vineyard

---

. our souls dependent upon the Verses of Thy  
Divine Unity

---

. our hearts cheered with the outpourings of Thy  
Grace

---

## Promises Given to Assemblies (5 minutes)

---

### Purpose

- ★ To recall to mind and heart the divine assistance constantly available to Assemblies

### Activities:

#### 1. Read and discuss quotes

- ★ Refer participants to the section of their handout “We Are Not Alone” (see Participant Handouts, p. 8) and have these quotes with promises of divine assistance read aloud.
  - **Ask:** How does the image of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spreading His wings over the Assembly make you feel?
- ★ Invite thoughts and feelings on what it means to have ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as our “defender.”
- ★ Note that some of these promises are conditional.
  - **Ask:** What spiritual states are required to obtain the bounties promised?

**Note:** *A short break could be taken at this point or, if no break is taken, we suggest that you have participants stand and stretch.*

# Metaphors of Assembly Functioning

(10 minutes)

## Purpose

- ★ To perceive the power of metaphors
- ★ To acquire a heightened awareness of Assemblies as chosen instruments

### 1. Setting up the exercise (2 minutes)

- ★ Note that metaphors are often used in the Sacred Writings and in the letters of the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice.
- ★ Explain that metaphors connect an abstract concept to something concrete, known, and familiar. In contrast to the learning process of linear, sequential reasoning, metaphors provide a short-cut to changed perceptions. Metaphors change the way we visualize ourselves. They reframe our perceptions of reality, of the relationships between things, of the dynamics at work in the world, and of the way in which these dynamic processes unfold. Metaphors allow us to traverse great distances of understanding in a single insight.
- ★ Note that (in a quote they do not have in their handouts) the Guardian uses a metaphor as he counsels Assemblies and their members about how they should regard themselves:

“They must regard themselves in no other light but that of chosen instruments for a more efficient and dignified presentation of the Cause of God.” (Bahá’í Administration, p. 64)

### 2. Visualization exercise (6 minutes)

- ★ Visualization:
  - Ask participants to close their eyes and imagine a surgical tray.
  - Ask them first to note whether all the instruments are the same or not.
  - Ask them to imagine that each instrument has a “will” and to visualize the following situations:
    - ⇒ What happens if an instrument submits its will to the surgeon?
    - ⇒ What happens if the instrument cuts when and how **it** wants?
    - ⇒ What happens if the instrument goes limp and won’t perform its task when selected by the surgeon for a procedure?

## Metaphors of Assembly Functioning, continued

---

- ★ Discussion of the exercise
  - Have participants open their eyes. Invite any comments.
  - **Ask:** What implications might this image of being chosen instruments have to the individual members of the Assembly?
  - Encourage Assembly members to consult together at a future Assembly meeting about any implications this metaphor might have to the functioning of the Assembly collectively.

### 3. Closing the exercise (2 minutes)

- ★ If these points do not surface, make a few summation comments:
  - Each instrument is different from the others so that the Divine Physician can perform a variety of specialized functions.
  - Each instrument's usefulness is dependent on its willingness to let itself be used by another, to prefer the will of the Physician to its own will. Instruments which want to cut at will – or which refuse to perform when needed – not only impede healing but can cause harm. Instruments which perform without regard to their own interests or egos, which are guided by the One Who is All-Knowing, can be part of miracles.
- ★ *If time permits, read the sentence (not in participant handouts) which immediately follows the one just cited, in which the Guardian uses another metaphor to show how Assemblies and their members should not regard themselves:*

*“They should never be led to suppose that they are the central ornaments of the body of the Cause, intrinsically superior to others in capacity or merit, and sole promoters of its teachings and principles.” (Bahá’í Administration, p. 64)*
- ★ *Comment that the administrators of the Faith are not the fanciest ornaments on top of the Christmas tree, nor are they superior to those they serve. Refer back to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s prayer and the use of the term “servant” as opposed to “master.”*

## Becoming Clear Channels (30 minutes)

---

### Purpose

- ★ To consolidate and express what has been learned about the Assembly's role

### Activities:

#### 1. Set up for activity (2 minutes)

- ★ Refer back to the metaphor of Assemblies as “channels of divine guidance.”
- ★ Have the group break into small work groups of 3-4 people.

#### 2. Read, discuss, and express in art (15-20 minutes)

- ★ Ask each group to read the handout “Assemblies as Channels of Divine Guidance,” (see Participant Handouts, p. 9) to consult on the following questions, and to express the results of its consultation in a poster or other piece of artwork. Have art materials ready and available.
  - What is the purpose of a channel?
  - What does it contain? What flows through it? What does it bring into the world?
  - What does it keep out?
  - What would happen if the channel didn't exist?
  - What might clog the “channel of divine guidance” that is a local Spiritual Assembly?

#### 3. Large group sharing by small groups (10 minutes)

- ★ Allow time for each group to share and explain its creation.



# Rising to a New Stage in the Exercise of Assembly Responsibilities (30 minutes)

## Purpose

- ★ To gain a keener sense of the importance of improved performance by Assemblies
- ★ To recognize the relationship between deepening and transformation of individual Assembly members and the maturation of the institution as a whole

## Setting up the activity (2-3 minutes)

- ★ Refer back to the excerpt from the Ridván 153/1996 message (Participant Handouts, p. 3) and comment that rising to “a new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities” implies a process of moving from lesser to greater stages of maturity.
- ★ Point out that the organic process of moving through developmental stages is continuous and ongoing. At each stage in its development an organism has particular capacities and particular growth tasks and responsibilities.
- ★ Mention that in explaining the significance of entering the fourth epoch of the Formative Age the House of Justice comments: “The epochs of the Formative Age mark progressive stages in the evolution of the organic Bahá’í community and signal the maturation of its institutions, thus enabling the Faith to operate at new levels and to initiate new functions. The timing of each epoch is designated by the Head of the Faith. . . .” (*Messages from the Universal House of Justice*, p. 712).
- ★ Comment that the House of Justice keeps the Bahá’í world and its institutions informed of where we are in our development and what our priorities should be at any given stage – what, developmentally speaking, we should be attending to, what capacities we need to develop, what tasks we must carry out – so that we are prepared for the next step forward in the organic growth of the Cause.

## Activities:

### 1. Read and discuss (20 minutes)

- ★ Have participants return to their small work groups, read the quotations on the handout “Moving Towards Maturity: Improving Assembly Performance,” (Participant Handouts, pp. 10-12) and answer the following focus questions:
  - Why is it imperative that Assemblies improve their performance?
  - On whose efforts does the proper functioning of Assemblies largely depend?
  - What can members of Assembly do as individuals to improve Assembly functioning?
  - What effects will their efforts have?

# Rising to a New Stage in the Exercise of Assembly Responsibilities, continued

---

## 3. Panel report (5 minutes)

- ★ Have a panel composed of one member from each group share answers to the focus questions.
- ★ *Optional extension: Developing a measuring tool for Assembly performance (20 minutes)*
  - *Have small groups develop a criteria list of capacities and abilities, using these quotations and the extracts from the Ridván 1996 letter (Participant Handouts, p. 3), that an Assembly could use as a measuring tool to evaluate the maturity of its own performance. (10 minutes)*
  - *As groups share their results, make a master list of the items on a flip chart, with subsequent groups reporting only items not already on the list. (10 minutes)*
  - *Suggest that each item on this list could be rated on a scale of 1-9, with 9 being the highest level of maturity in functioning.*

## 4. Overview of Assembly self analysis (2-3 minutes)

- ★ Encourage Assembly members to consult together at a future Assembly meeting about what the Assembly itself can do collectively to improve its functioning.
- ★ Refer participants to the “Self Assessment Tool for Local Spiritual Assemblies” available from the Office of Assembly Development (sample attached). This tool takes points from the Ridván 153/1996 message and puts them in categories with questions to focus consultation. It comes with an attachment of related quotations, divided into the same categories, that assists Assembly members in understanding the terms employed by the House of Justice. The tool can be used at one or more regular Assembly meetings or as part of an Assembly retreat.
- ★ Encourage Assemblies to use some assessment tool to measure their current level of performance now and to repeat the process on a regular basis, perhaps every six months to a year, to measure their progress. The type of measuring tool used is not as important as the process of visualizing in clear detail the standard toward which they are striving, identifying the level of their current functioning, and planning the steps they will take to move forward to the next level.

## *Optional Extension Session: Distinguishing Features of the Bahá'í Administrative Order* (25 minutes)

---

### **Purpose**

- ★ To heighten appreciation of the uniqueness of the Administrative Order

### **Activities:**

#### **1. Small groups read and discuss quotes** (15 minutes)

- ★ Have small groups read the quotations on the handout “Distinguishing Features of the Bahá'í Administrative Order” (Participant Handouts, pp. 13-14 and answer the following focus questions. Ask half the groups to answer the first question and half to answer the second.
  - What features make Bahá'u'lláh's Administrative Order different from previous **religious systems** of administration?
  - What features make Bahá'u'lláh's Administrative Order different from previous **political systems** of administration?

#### **2. Groups report back** (10 minutes)

- ★ Have groups report their findings and invite comments.
- ★ **Ask:** As your understanding of the uniqueness of the Bahá'í Administrative Order has grown during this exercise, what emotions have been stirred up within you?

## Closing (10 minutes)

---

### Purpose

- ★ To consolidate what has been learned
- ★ To make individual plans to translate learning into behaviors

### Activities:

#### 1. Journal writing time (5 minutes)

- ★ Play quiet music as a soothing background while participants write their insights and intentions stimulated by the question “What will I personally do to help the Assembly play the role God has destined for it?” (Provide blank sheets of paper if they need it)
- ★ Comments to stimulate journal writing (made at the beginning of the journal writing time)
  - Encourage participants who are Assembly members to think in terms of both their preparation outside the Assembly meeting and their functioning during the meeting.
  - Encourage non-Assembly members to think about ways they can support their Assembly and ways they can prepare themselves for potential future service on an Assembly.

#### 2. Check to see that all questions raised at the beginning are addressed (5 minutes)

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

#### *Optional:*

- ★ *Give each participant a beautiful card or calligraphy version of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s opening prayer for the Spiritual Assembly as a gift (example suitable for photocopying onto attractive paper is attached)*

#### 3. Closing prayer or quotation

- ★ Read one or have one selected for someone else to read.

*Whenever ye enter the council-chamber, recite this prayer with a heart throbbing with the love of God and a tongue purified from all but His remembrance, that the All-Powerful may graciously aid you to achieve supreme victory:*

O God, my God! We are servants of Thine that have turned with devotion to Thy Holy Face, that have detached ourselves from all besides Thee in this glorious Day. We have gathered in this Spiritual Assembly, united in our views and thoughts, with our purposes harmonized to exalt Thy Word amidst mankind. O Lord, our God! Make us the signs of Thy Divine Guidance, the Standards of Thy exalted Faith amongst men, servants to Thy mighty Covenant, O Thou our Lord Most High, manifestations of Thy Divine Unity in Thine Abhá Kingdom, and resplendent stars shining upon all regions. Lord! Aid us to become seas surging with the billows of Thy wondrous Grace, streams flowing from Thine all-glorious Heights, goodly fruits upon the Tree of Thy heavenly Cause, trees waving through the breezes of Thy Bounty in Thy celestial Vineyard. O God! Make our souls dependent upon the Verses of Thy Divine Unity, our hearts cheered with the outpourings of Thy Grace, that we may unite even as the waves of one sea and become merged together as the rays of Thine effulgent Light; that our thoughts, our views, our feelings may become as one reality, manifesting the spirit of union throughout the world. Thou art the Gracious, the Bountiful, the Bestower, the Almighty, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

*'Abdu'l Bahá*