

TO UNDERSTAND THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
UNITY, FRIENDLINESS, STEADFASTNESS**

Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn, and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice. That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the truth and the purpose of God Himself.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 19

Now that they (the believers) have erected the administrative machinery of the Cause they must put it to its real use—serving only as an instrument to facilitate the flow of the spirit of the Faith out into the world.

Shoghi Effendi, *Directives from the Guardian*, p. 2

Learning Objectives and Suggested Activities

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To know the history of the election of the Universal House of Justice
- To know how the powers and prerogatives of the Universal House of Justice are described in the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Search for passages in the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that refer to the Universal House of Justice.
- Memorize a short passage from the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá or the writings of the Guardian about the Universal House of Justice.
- Research the countries that had National Spiritual Assemblies at the time and came to Haifa to elect the first Universal House of Justice.
- Learn how many countries participated in the most recent election of the Universal House of Justice.

WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To understand the unique role and function of the Universal House of Justice from study of its constitution and other authoritative texts

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Divide into groups; give each group a section of the constitution to read and present to the rest of the class.
- Read all or parts of one of the recent messages from the Universal House of Justice.
- Make a list of all the current activities and functions of the Universal House of Justice.
- Listen to a part of one of the recent presentations of a member visiting the country on behalf of the Universal House of Justice.
- Read and discuss “Dearly Loved Friends” (*Brilliant Star*, Jul/Aug 1991, pp. 13–20).
- Use an art or science medium to illustrate understanding of the description of the Universal House of Justice found in the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.



SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To discern the bounty of the Universal House of Justice as the sole legislative organ in the worldwide Bahá'í community, and how this sets apart the Order identified with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh from any of the existing systems of human government
- To perceive how the existence of the Universal House of Justice expands one's own consciousness of the oneness of the world and the universality of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh
- To reflect on the continuous nature of guidance from the Universal House of Justice through letters, especially the annual Ridván letters or letters announcing a new plan

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Make a table outlining the features of existing governments as compared to the Universal House of Justice.
- Perform "Ridván Letter Treasure Hunt" (*Brilliant Star*, May/June 1992, p. 7).
- Make a personal plan in response to the current plan from the Universal House of Justice.
- Study one of the compilations of messages from the Universal House of Justice and share main points. Less able readers may become familiar with the compilation's look and general content.
- Invite each pair or group of learners to study a letter from the Universal House of Justice and give the summary of its guidance. The collection of these topics can serve as an index to the compilation studied.



ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE

- To demonstrate understanding of the station and role of the Universal House of Justice

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Prepare a meeting or spiritual gathering to honor the Universal House of Justice during the fast.
- Write a letter to the Universal House of Justice affirming students' love for and service to this institution.
- Provide opportunities to demonstrate understanding of the station and role of the Universal House of Justice through the arts.
- Use a compilation of messages from the Universal House of Justice to answer questions.

TOPIC: THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY 1: THE SOURCE OF ALL GOOD

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To understand the unique role and function of the Universal House of Justice from study of its constitution or other authoritative texts

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To demonstrate understanding of the station and role of the Universal House of Justice

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of science; Use of questions and peer teaching

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Page 52
- Iron filings in a sealed transparent envelope
- Magnet
- Plain paper and pencils

Advance Preparation:

Place iron filings in a sealed transparent envelope, such as a vinyl paper protector or an envelope made from folded waxed paper. Tape the envelope closed. Iron filings may be made with a little work by filing a piece of iron in the same way that sawdust is made by sawing wood. Iron filings may also be purchased at science supply stores (e.g., online supply sources include: <http://www.sciencekit.com> or <http://scientificsonline.com>).



1. Welcome students. Encourage them to share one new thing they've learned over the past week—however small or insignificant, however large or important. Acknowledge all. Briefly discuss: Why is learning a good thing?
2. Explain that this class explores something that is “the source of all good.” Ask students to put up their hands if they know what that source is. Acknowledge all responses without confirming them. As you read the following statements one by one, encourage students to keep thinking about what it might be and to put up their hands each time they think they know what it is. Pause after each statement so that students can decide whether or not they want to raise their hands at that time.
 - the source of all good
‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 14
 - the last refuge of a tottering civilization
Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 89
 - the exponent and guardian of that Divine Justice
Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 22
 - the supreme organ of the Bahá'í Commonwealth
Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 96
 - highest legislative body of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh
Shoghi Effendi, Citadel of Faith, p. 94
 - the sole infallibly guided institution in the world to which all must turn
The Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, p. 90
 - the Head of the Faith and its supreme institution
The Universal House of Justice, Constitution of The Universal House of Justice, p. 4
3. After reading the last statement, encourage students to share their ideas. Acknowledge all. Affirm that these statements from the writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice refer to the institution of the Universal House of Justice. Discuss: Why do we think that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá calls the Universal House of Justice “the source of all good”?

4. Provide students with the transparent envelope containing iron filings. Explain that the world of humanity can be compared to this envelope with many, many unique individuals. Briefly discuss: How could we arrange these objects into a unified pattern? Acknowledge all responses; then provide a magnet. Briefly discuss: How could this object help?
5. Encourage students to take turns placing the magnet under the transparent envelope to see the pattern formed. Briefly discuss: How does this magnet help create a collective center for the iron filings?
6. Read aloud the following quotations:

For the law of God is a collective center which unites various peoples, native lands, tongues and opinions. All find shelter in its protection and become attracted by it.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 164

It is self-evident that humanity is at variance. Human tastes differ; thoughts, native lands, races and tongues are many. The need of a collective center by which these differences may be counterbalanced and the people of the world be unified is obvious. Consider how nothing but a spiritual power can bring about this unification, for material conditions and mental aspects are so widely different that agreement and unity are not possible through outer means. It is possible, however, for all to become unified through one spirit, just as all may receive light from one sun. Therefore, assisted by the collective and divine center which is the law of God and the reality of His Manifestation, we can overcome these conditions until they pass away entirely and the races advance.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 164
7. Explain that the Universal House of Justice was established by Bahá’u’lláh to unite humanity. Briefly discuss: How does the Universal House of Justice function as a collective center for the human race? In what ways do we see the Universal House of Justice as “the source of all good” and “the last refuge of a tottering civilization”?
8. Distribute copies of Resource Page 52. Explain that this quotation describes some of the important functions of the Universal House of Justice. In the whole group, read the quotation aloud twice. Invite students to share their questions about this paragraph. Also invite them to read aloud some of their favorite phrases. Discuss: Which duties are prescribed for the Universal House of Justice in this Tablet?
9. Invite students to work in teams of two. Encourage each team to write answers to the questions: What is the Universal House of Justice? How does the Universal House of Justice help establish unity in the world?
10. Invite students to read aloud their answers in the whole group. Applaud all.
11. Explain that many people wonder what will unite all the different peoples of the earth and that we can be the ones to tell them about God’s plan for the happiness and unity of all people. In pairs, small teams, or the whole group, practice answering the questions: When will people ever stop fighting?
12. Encourage students to think about their friends and family members and to reflect on ways that they can share their insights about the purpose of religion and the importance of the Universal House of Justice.
13. Conclude the activity with prayers for unity and for divine assistance.

TOPIC: THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

ACTIVITY 2: ESTABLISHING THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know the history of the election of the Universal House of Justice

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To perceive how the existence of the Universal House of Justice expands one's own consciousness of the oneness of the world and the universality of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of manipulatives; Use of stories; Use of creativity and the arts; Use of reflection

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Page 53 and 54
- Plain paper
- Colored pencils, crayons, or markers
- Magnetic marbles, magnet toys, Tinkertoys®, Lego® blocks, building blocks, or other building materials

1. Welcome students. Invite them to reflect on conversations they've had with friends and family members over the past week. Discuss: In what ways were we able to share with others our ideas about the purpose of religion or the importance of the Universal House of Justice as a collective center for humanity or other spiritual ideas? Acknowledge all.

2. Distribute copies of Resource Page 53.

3. In the whole group carefully read aloud the quotations that provide the basic instructions for the election of the Universal House of Justice. Note that two of these quotations are from the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

4. Invite the class to explore these instructions in greater detail. Discuss:

- What does "universal" mean?¹
- What does "suffrage" mean?²
- How does "universal suffrage" apply to the election of the Universal House of Justice?

Listen carefully to student responses. Add the following points, if desired.

- Every Bahá'í in the world has the responsibility and the privilege to participate in the three-stage process that elects the Universal House of Justice.
- All believers participate in the election of the delegates to the National Convention (stage one).
- All delegates elected to National Conventions participate in the election of the National Spiritual Assembly in their country (stage two).
- All members of National Spiritual Assemblies across the entire world participate in the election of the Universal House of Justice (stage three).

Remind students of some of the titles given to the Universal House of Justice that were discussed in the preceding activity, listed below. Then discuss: How do these titles express the meaning of "universal" when we refer to a *Universal* House of Justice?

- the source of all good
'Abdu'l-Bahá, Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 14
- the last refuge of a tottering civilization
Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 89
- the exponent and guardian of that Divine Justice
Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 22
- the supreme organ of the Bahá'í Commonwealth

¹ Universal: including or covering all . . . without limit or exception (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

² Suffrage: the right of voting (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 6

- highest legislative body of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh

Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 94

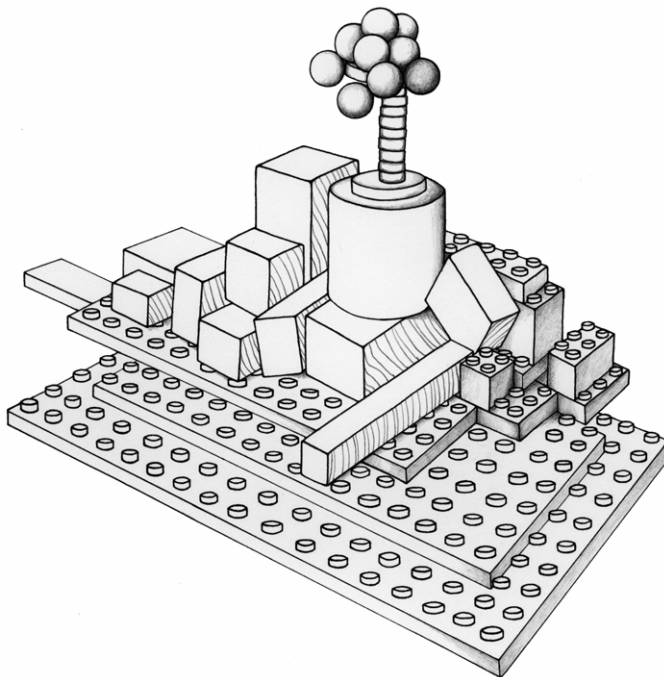
- the sole infallibly guided institution in the world to which all must turn

The Universal House of Justice, *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 90

- the Head of the Faith and its supreme institution

The Universal House of Justice, *Constitution of The Universal House of Justice*, p. 4

5. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said that “universal peace is impossible without universal suffrage.”¹ Briefly discuss: How does the election of the Universal House of Justice help build a peaceful world?
6. Organize students into teams, provide each team with magnet toys or other construction materials, and encourage them to create a model of this three-stage election process.



7. Invite students to share their models in the whole group. Applaud all!
8. Briefly discuss: In what ways are we—right here in our class—part of this worldwide system to establish universal peace?
9. Invite students to use the art materials provided to create a picture that represents themselves as part of this diverse, unified system.
10. As students work, read aloud the story on Resource Page 54 that describes the first election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963.
11. Invite students to share their drawings of themselves as part of a worldwide network of people building a new system for peace, unity, and justice. Acknowledge all.
12. Explain that one of the purposes of this class is for us to develop our spiritual powers, to become like magnets, and attract other people to also work for peace, unity, and justice. Discuss: What are some ways that we can attract others to work with us to build a better world?

Some options that students might suggest are: invite others to join us in this Bahá'í class; reach out to all people in friendship; select a virtue to practice, etc.
13. After discussing this question, encourage students to select one of these ideas for developing their spiritual powers of attraction. Encourage students to write their plan on the back of their drawing or incorporate it into their drawing. Encourage them to place their plans where they will see them each day for at least one week. Encourage them also to choose one part of their plan to share with the whole class. Take notes as students share their plans as a reminder for future classes. Explain that the group will have the opportunity to share their challenges and victories at the beginning of the next class.

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 134

TOPIC: THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

ACTIVITY 3: EVERY MAN, WOMAN, YOUTH, AND CHILD

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know the history of the election of the Universal House of Justice

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To reflect on the continuous nature of guidance from the Universal House of Justice through letters, especially the annual Ridván letters or letters announcing a new plan

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of consultation; Use of manipulatives; Use of play; Use of reflection; Involve service and teaching

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 30 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Page 55
- Two balls of different sizes, such as a tennis ball and a basketball or a soccer ball
- Several tennis balls or other inexpensive small balls, optional

Advance Preparation:

Practice the demonstration. Begin by showing that the small ball has latent energy and can bounce. This small ball can represent an individual student. Show that the large ball also has latent energy and can bounce. This larger ball can represent the community (parents, Local Spiritual Assembly, National Spiritual Assembly, and other institutions), all guided by the messages of the Universal House of Justice that focus our attention on the unfolding Divine Plan, of which 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the architect. Then place the little ball (representing the individual student) on top of the bigger ball (representing the community and institutions) and drop them on the floor in front of you. The energy of the large ball (community and institutions) combines with the energy of the little ball (individual junior youth) and increases its power many, many times: the little ball is shot into the air and across the room.

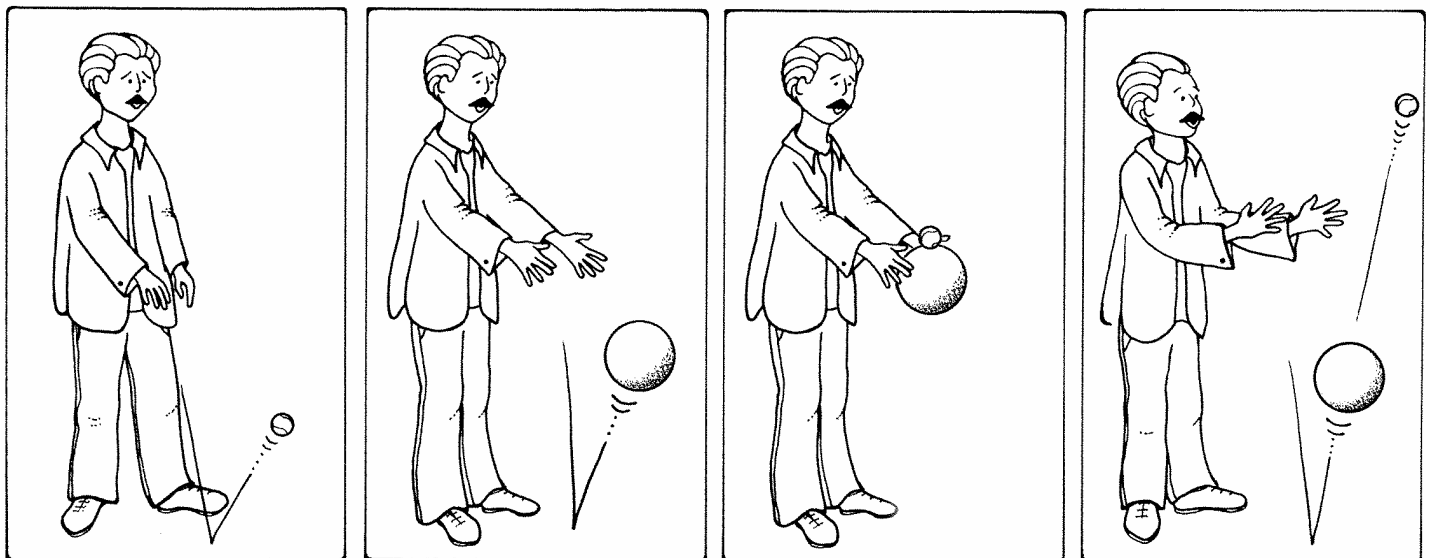
Repeat the demonstration with multiple tennis balls, if possible. Keep shooting the balls around the room for students to gather and return to you. If available, it will also be helpful to have your notes of student plans shared at the conclusion of the previous activity.

1. Welcome students. Invite them to share victories and challenges that they have encountered while striving to become like spiritual magnets that attract the hearts of all people to the love of God. Acknowledge all. Briefly discuss: Do we see ways that we can support each other, encourage each other, or work together toward our goals?
2. Explain that the efforts of the souls in this class are directly linked to the work of the people that raised up the National Spiritual Assemblies that elected the Universal House of Justice in 1963. Invite students to reflect: Who do we know that has toured the Seat of the Universal House of Justice? What do we think they felt at that time?
3. Remind students that 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains the process for electing the Universal House of Justice—our collective center for the peace and happiness of all the people in the world—in His Will and Testament. Also share with them that Shoghi Effendi worked his whole life to establish National Spiritual Assemblies—the pillars that support the Universal House of Justice.
4. Explain that many people all over the world moved to new countries to spread the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, establish Local and National Spiritual Assemblies, and ultimately raise up this “source of all good” and “guardian of that Divine Justice.”¹ Briefly discuss: How are our efforts to become like magnets for the hearts of others similar to the work of the people who helped establish the National Spiritual Assemblies that elected the first Universal House of Justice?

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 14

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5. Distribute copies of Resource Page 55. In the whole group, read aloud this selection from the Ridván 1988 message of the Universal House of Justice. After reading it aloud in the whole group, invite small teams of students to focus their attention on one of the three paragraphs quoted. Invite the teams to read their paragraph again, and then share one or more main points from that paragraph in the whole group. Then discuss:
 - How does this message from the Universal House of Justice build on the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi? Can we find examples of quotations that the House of Justice incorporated in their message? Why do we think that the Universal House of Justice includes quotations in their messages?
 - Why do we think that the Universal House of Justice says that every man, woman, youth, and child is summoned to this field of action?
 - What are some examples of words and actions that can reach out to others? Why are words important? Why are actions important?
6. Carry out the demonstration described in Advance Preparation above. Discuss: How do these balls demonstrate the power of the individual? How do they also show the power of the institutions and the community? How does the demonstration illustrate the role of the Universal House of Justice?
7. Encourage students to reflect deeply on the message from the Universal House of Justice. If the class completed the previous activity, encourage students also to recall their plans for spiritual empowerment. Discuss: How can we work together as a class to make our individual plans more powerful? How can we also draw on the strength of our families, and the community?
8. Record student ideas on chart paper. As a group, select one or more of these ideas to carry into action, either as individuals, as individuals on behalf of the group, or as a whole class.
9. Provide students with blank paper or student journals. Invite them to use words or pictures to write their action steps for the coming week.
10. After allowing time for student reflection and writing, conclude the class with prayers for divine assistance.



TOPIC: THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

ACTIVITY 4: GUIDANCE FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To perceive how the existence of the Universal House of Justice expands one's own consciousness of the oneness of the world and the universality of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To demonstrate understanding of the station and role of the Universal House of Justice

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í authoritative writings; Use of independent investigation

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copy of one of the compilations of letters of the Universal House of Justice or internet access for each team of students. These compilations include: *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*; *A Wider Horizon: Selected Messages of the Universal House of Justice, 1983–1992*; *Wellspring of Guidance: Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1968*; *Messages from The Universal House of Justice, 1968–1973*. Another useful resource is *A Guide to Studying Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963–1986*.

Advance Preparation:

Note that this activity requires either books or internet access to materials that are not provided in this Lesson Planning Guide. If these materials are not available, continue the class by simply moving to the next topic in this book.

1. Welcome students. Invite them to share their challenges and victories as spiritual “magnets” over the past week. Acknowledge all. Briefly discuss: In what ways have we noticed our individual power reinforced by the community, our families, or each other over the past week?
2. Explain that in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Will and Testament He tells us that the Universal House of Justice considers “all problems which have caused difference, questions that are obscure.”¹ Briefly discuss: How does it promote unity to have one institution ultimately responsible for answering questions that are not directly addressed in the sacred writings of the Bahá'í Faith?
3. In the whole group, discuss: Thinking of your own community or school, your own friends or the people you know, or the news reports you hear, what are some examples of “problems which have caused difference”?
4. On chart paper, list the difficult questions that students would like to ask the Universal House of Justice.
5. Organize students into pairs or small teams. Invite each team to select one of the questions listed by the class. Provide each team with one of the books of letters of the Universal House of Justice or access to these letters on the internet, available at www.bahai-library.org/?collection=UHJ_published.
6. Show students how to use the index or an electronic search to find letters that may address the team’s question. Show them how to go to the relevant passage and then skim the text before and after that passage to find an answer to their question. Note that they may need to check several passages before finding a response to the question they have in mind. If students have difficulty finding any relevant information, encourage them to select a different question from the class’s list. Circulate among student teams to provide encouragement and assistance as needed.
7. After allowing time for student work, invite the teams to read aloud the question they researched and also to read aloud relevant sentences from the passages they found that address that question.

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 19

8. Then in the whole group, read aloud the following quotation from the Universal House of Justice:

A believer cannot fulfill his true mission in life as a follower of the Blessed Perfection merely by living according to a set of rigid regulations, as you will recognize. It is neither possible nor desirable for the House of Justice to lay down a set of rules covering every situation. Rather is it the task of the individual believer to determine, according to his own prayerful understanding of the Writings, precisely what his course of conduct should be in relation to situations which he encounters in his daily life. He must continually study the sacred Writings and the instructions of the beloved Guardian, striving always to attain a new and better understanding of their import to him, and orient his life towards service to Bahá'u'lláh, praying fervently for divine guidance, wisdom and strength to do what is pleasing to God.

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice,
Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986, p. 414

9. Remind students that in addition to researching the Bahá'í writings and the letters of the Universal House of Justice when we have important questions, we also have the bounty of consulting about these questions in our families, with each other, and with our Local Spiritual Assembly.
10. Encourage students to think of one new thing they learned today and to nod their heads when they have that particular thing in mind. Invite students to share their new learning in the whole group and to share that new learning with at least one other person before the next class.

TOPIC: THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Resource Pages

Activity 1: The Source of All Good

The purpose of religion as revealed from the heaven of God's holy Will is to establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world; make it not the cause of dissension and strife. The religion of God and His divine law are the most potent instruments and the surest of all means for the dawning of the light of unity amongst men. The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquility of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God. Religion bestoweth upon man the most precious of all gifts, offereth the cup of prosperity, imparteth eternal life, and showereth imperishable benefits upon mankind. It behooveth the chiefs and rulers of the world, and in particular the Trustees of God's House of Justice, to endeavor to the utmost of their power to safeguard its position, promote its interests and exalt its station in the eyes of the world. In like manner it is incumbent upon them to enquire into the conditions of their subjects and to acquaint themselves with the affairs and activities of the divers communities in their dominions. We call upon the manifestations of the power of God—the sovereigns and rulers on earth—to bestir themselves and do all in their power that haply they may banish discord from this world and illumine it with the light of concord.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 129–30

Activity 2: Establishing the Universal House of Justice

And now, concerning the House of Justice which God hath ordained as the source of all good and freed from all error, it must be elected by universal suffrage, that is, by the believers. Its members must be manifestations of the fear of God and daysprings of knowledge and understanding, must be steadfast in God's faith and the well-wishers of all mankind. By this House is meant the Universal House of Justice, that is, in all countries a secondary House of Justice must be instituted, and these secondary Houses of Justice must elect the members of the Universal one. Unto this body all things must be referred. It enacteth all ordinances and regulations that are not to be found in the explicit Holy Text.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 14

Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn, and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice. That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the truth and the purpose of God Himself. Whoso doth deviate therefrom is verily of them that love discord, hath shown forth malice, and turned away from the Lord of the Covenant. By this House is meant that Universal House of Justice which is to be elected from all countries, that is from those parts in the East and West where the loved ones are to be found, after the manner of the customary elections in Western countries such as those of England.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 19

At whatever time all the beloved of God in each country appoint their delegates, and these in turn elect their representatives, and these representatives elect a body, that body shall be regarded as the Supreme Baytu’l-’Adl (Universal House of Justice).

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted by Shoghi Effendi, *Baha’i Administration*, p. 84

TOPIC: THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Activity 2: Establishing the Universal House of Justice

Bahá'u'lláh established the Institution of the Universal House of Justice in His writings. Under the guidance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament, Shoghi Effendi would establish a world-wide network of Local Spiritual Assemblies. Upon this base, National Spiritual Assemblies became the pillars upon which the Universal House of Justice was raised. By 1963, there were enough National Spiritual Assemblies to elect a truly *Universal* House of Justice.

The Hands of the Cause of God served as Custodians of the Faith in the years following the passing of Shoghi Effendi in 1957. Thus it fell to the Hands to plan the first election of the Universal House of Justice. They decided that the election would take place on the Centennial of the Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission in Baghdad in 1863.

The Hands also decided to hold the election in the large main hall and adjoining rooms of the Master's House. They had to remove all the twelve doors on all four sides of this large room so that everyone could see, hear, and participate fully in the election ceremony. One of the Hands recalled that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had once said, "This very hall will witness the election of the Universal House of Justice."¹ Hand of the Cause 'Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, widow of Shoghi Effendi, ordered dozens and dozens of red roses to decorate the Holy Places in 'Akká and Haifa. She also chaired the election ceremony. Prayers were offered in various languages, readings given about the nature of Bahá'í elections, and other instructions provided to make the balloting go smoothly.

All the members of all the National or Regional Spiritual Assemblies in the world—fifty-six of them—voted in this historic election. As the electors gathered in Haifa for the election, they embraced their sisters and brothers from across the world, rejoicing in this gathering of all races, nations, and peoples.

When it was time for the election, the members of the National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies were seated in alphabetical order in the large main room at the Master's House. The Hands of the Cause were seated as observers in the adjoining side rooms. With a pure-hearted, selfless spirit, the Hands of the Cause requested not to be considered for election.

The delegates, many of them in native costume, stepped forward as the roll call was read and cast their votes. Country by country, members of the Spiritual Assemblies carried their secret ballots forward and dropped them in the ballot box. Applause exploded for each Assembly in turn. Absentee ballots from delegates unable to attend were carefully sealed in double envelopes to ensure secrecy and also deposited in the ballot box. After all ballots had been cast, the ballot box was sealed in a locked room of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home while all the Hands and delegates present in the Holy Land proceeded to the Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí to give thanks for this great victory.

Immediately following the election, the participants flew to London. They joined 7,000 fellow Bahá'ís from around the world for the first Bahá'í World Congress, April 28–May 2, 1963. There the new Universal House of Justice was introduced to the Bahá'í world.

Sources: 'Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, introduction to *The Ministry of the Custodians, 1957–1963*, pp. 20–22; Anita Chapman, *Leroy Ioas*, pp. 329–30; Florence Mayberry, *The Great Adventure*, pp. 184–87

¹ This personal memory should not be regarded as the exact words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Activity 3: Every Man, Woman, Youth, and Child

But the paramount purpose of all Bahá'í activity is teaching. All that has been done or will be done revolve around this central activity, the “head corner-stone of the foundation itself,” to which all progress in the Cause is due. . . .

Teaching is the food of the spirit; it brings life to unawakened souls and raises the new heaven and the new earth; it uplifts the banner of a unified world; it ensures the victory of the Covenant and brings those who give their lives to it the supernal happiness of attainment to the good pleasure of their Lord.

Every individual believer—man, woman, youth and child—is summoned to this field of action; for it is on the initiative, the resolute will of the individual to teach and to serve, that the success of the entire community depends. Well-grounded in the mighty Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, sustained by daily prayer and reading of the Holy Word, strengthened by a continual striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine Teachings, illumined by a constant endeavor to relate these Teachings to current issues, nourished by observance of the laws and principles of His wondrous World Order, every individual can attain increasing measures of success in teaching. In sum, the ultimate triumph of the Cause is assured by that “one thing and only one thing” so poignantly emphasized by Shoghi Effendi, namely, “the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendor of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh.”

The Universal House of Justice, *Ridván Messages*, Ridván 1988, pp. 2–3

TOPIC: THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Stories and Articles:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- “The Universal House of Justice,” May/June 1991
- “Dearly Loved Friends,” July/Aug 1991
- “Dr. David Ruhe,” July/Aug 2000
- “Youth Can Move the World,” July/Aug 2001
- “Elected to Serve,” Jan/Feb 2002
- “Effort, Activity, Unity,” Mar/Apr 2002
- “Cultural Diversity,” Jan/Feb 2005
- “Into the Future,” Sep/Oct 2005

Worksheets and Coloring Pages:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- “Grow Spiritually,” Mar/Apr 1998

Activities:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- “Ridván Letter Search,” July/Aug 1991
- “Ridván Letter Treasure Hunt,” May/June 1992
- “Hands of Loving-Kindness,” Jan/Feb 1998
- “Pattern of Growth,” Sp Ed 1999
- “The Promise of Peace,” July/Aug 2003
- “Peace in Action,” July/Aug 2003

Music:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- “The Covenant,” Sp Ed 1992

Drama:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- “Plans in the Cause of God,” Sp Ed 1997

Poetry:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- “A Letter from God,” July/Aug 1991
- “To Elect the House of Justice,” May/June 1998

Other Favorite Resources:

- Building Momentum: A Coherent Approach to Growth*
- The Constitution of The Universal House Of Justice*
- From Vision to Victory: Thirty Years of the Universal House of Justice*
- Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File*
- A Study Guide to the Constitution of the Universal House of Justice*

If you find any additional resources, please contact the National Bahá'í Education Task Force, or submit your findings to the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.

TO UNDERSTAND THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER BAHÁ'Í ELECTIONS

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
FREEDOM OF SPIRIT, LOYALTY, LEADERSHIP THROUGH SERVICE**

On the election day, the friends must wholeheartedly participate in the elections, in unity and amity, turning their hearts to God, detached from all things but Him, seeking His guidance and supplicating His aid and bounty.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1, p. 315

What the friends should do is to get thoroughly acquainted with one another, to exchange views, to mix freely and discuss among themselves the requirements and qualifications for such a membership without reference or application, however indirect, to particular individuals. We should refrain from influencing the opinion of others, of canvassing for any particular individual, but should stress the necessity of getting fully acquainted with the qualifications of membership referred to in our Beloved's Tablets and of learning more about one another through direct, personal experience rather than through the reports and opinions of our friends.

Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 47

Learning Objectives and Suggested Activities



KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE

- To become familiar with the Bahá'í writings regarding the purpose, form, and organization of Bahá'í elections

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Read quotations about Bahá'í elections from *Bahá'í Administration*.
- Make a list of the elements of the Bahá'í election on a poster.
- Study and discuss the elements listed on the poster to know their purpose.



WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To understand the qualifications required of those to be elected for Bahá'í administrative responsibility.
- To reflect on the non-electioneering in the Bahá'í administrative system and its relationship to upholding unity

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Identify the qualifications required of those elected for Bahá'í administrative service.
- Use pictures cut from magazines to choose those that, to learners, represent the characteristics of those to be elected. Create a collage using all pictures.
- Play the word puzzle game “Clues for Leaders” (*Brilliant Star*, Sep/Oct 1993 p. 32).
- Play “To Lead or Not to Lead” (*Brilliant Star*, Sep/Oct 1993, p. 11).
- Consult on the relationship between the characteristics of Bahá'í elections and other principles of the Bahá'í Faith.



SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE

- To discern the differences between the Bahá'í electoral process and that in other religious and secular organizations and institutions

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Divide the learners in two groups to role-play a secular election (speeches, campaigns) and contrast it to Bahá'í elections.
- Consult on the differences between the two and how these differences serve the different goals of Bahá'í elections.



ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To be able to explain the process of Bahá'í elections
- To render service to the Bahá'í community during annual elections

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Explain to the friends the Bahá'í electoral process as a fireside or deepening before the annual elections.
- Assist in the election organizational process by preparing the event, including finding and reading prayers and writings, and assisting or serving as tellers.
- During elections or at a pre-election deepening, display learners' collages showing the sorts of spiritual qualities desired for elected representatives.

TOPIC: BAHÁ'Í ELECTIONS

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY 1: CHAINS, FETTERS, AND FREEDOM OF CHOICE

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To become familiar with the Bahá'í writings regarding the purpose, form and organization of Bahá'í elections

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To discern the differences between the Bahá'í electoral process and that in other religious and secular organizations and institutions

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of reflection; Use of consultation; Use of drama; Use of peer teaching; Use of independent investigation

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Pages 67, 68
- Chart paper and markers
- Art supplies, as desired
- Simple props such as scarves, hats, cane, etc., if desired
- Note cards or paper and pencils

1. Welcome students. Invite them to think of a time that they were able to express one of their God-given spiritual qualities in service to others. Encourage them to think carefully of any time in the past or more recently and to share that example with the person beside them. Encourage students to take turns listening with care and sharing their memories with each other. Consider timing this pair-sharing exercise so that each person listens for 60 seconds and each person speaks for 60 seconds.

2. After all have shared their memories, briefly discuss in the whole group: Can we also think of times when we've tried to take a positive action but for one reason or another didn't achieve our goals? Have we ever felt tied down by circumstances or unable to move freely even when we want to do good deeds? How do we understand those experiences?

3. Listen carefully to student responses; then explain that Bahá'u'lláh endured chains and fetters to bring true freedom to humanity. He brought God's teachings about oneness, He gave us ways to live as individuals, and He established the Administrative Order as a system for the entire human family to live and work together in peace and harmony.

4. Read aloud the following quotations from Bahá'u'lláh:

The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, XLV, p. 99

This Wronged One, strengthened by the transcendent power of the Kingdom, is seeking to efface from among the peoples and kindreds of the earth every evidence of disorder, discord, dissension, differences or divisions; and it is for no other reason but this great, this momentous object that He hath again and again been cast into prison and many a day and a night hath been subjected to chains and fetters.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 260

5. Explain that a fetter is a chain, shackle, or other restraint for the feet. Remind students that Bahá'u'lláh suffered the galling weight of chains and fetters in the Síyáh-Chál, that unimaginably filthy Black Pit, and that He spent the rest of His life in exile and imprisoned, never again to return to the land of His birth.

6. Read the quotations a second time; then briefly discuss: What would it be like to be bound with chains and fetters? Why did Bahá'u'lláh allow Himself to be bound with chains and fetters? What are some of the details that we remember of His imprisonment? How does it make us feel to know that Bahá'u'lláh suffered imprisonment so that we may live a life of freedom today? In what way does our participation in the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh allow us to express the freedom that Bahá'u'lláh brought to all humanity?
7. Acknowledge student responses; then explain that Bahá'í elections provide us with one of our opportunities to exercise our freedom in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Distribute copies of Resource Page 67. Read the quotations aloud in the whole group and discuss the focus questions. Ask students to consider: How does it feel to know how sacred a freedom it is to have Bahá'í elections in our community?
8. In the whole group, create a chart that has two columns:

| Politics as Usual | Bahá'í Elections |
|-------------------|------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |

Brainstorm lists of characteristics for these two types of elections—political elections (Politics as Usual) and Bahá'í Elections. Record student ideas on the chart.

If desired, you may add to the “Politics as Usual” list such ideas as: political parties, nominating candidates, limited choices, expensive advertising campaigns, self-promotion, competition and conflict, work against opponent, disputed results, etc.

If desired, you may add to the “Bahá'í Elections” list such ideas as: freedom of choice, unity as the goal, silent and prayerful atmosphere, no parties, no self-promotion, no fault-finding, no opponent, no conflict, simple process, etc.

9. Organize the class into two groups. Encourage each group to select one of the elements of a secular election and create a brief (2–3 min.) role-play to demonstrate their selected element of a secular election, and then to show how a Bahá'í election takes that element to a higher level. Each role-play must include every member of the group. Students may use art supplies or other materials to create simple props as desired.
10. Invite students to present their role-plays in the whole group. Applaud all!
11. In the whole group, briefly discuss: How do these role-plays help us understand Bahá'u'lláh's gift of freedom of choice?
12. Continue the discussion: Who do we know that has participated in a Bahá'í election? Record a list of names of adults the students know who have participated in Bahá'í elections. Encourage students to ask one or more of these adults about their experiences with Bahá'í elections before the next class. Some possible questions for these adults might be: What is your experience with Bahá'í elections? How are Bahá'í elections the same and how are they different from political elections? How do Bahá'í elections help you express your freedom of choice in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh? Encourage students to record their notes of these conferences on copies of Resource Page 68 and to thank the people they interview.
13. Remember to invite students to share the results of these conversations at the beginning of the next class.

TOPIC: BAHÁ'Í ELECTIONS

ACTIVITY 2: SPIRITUAL QUALITIES AND BAHÁ'Í ELECTIONS

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the qualifications required of those to be elected for Bahá'í administrative service

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To be able to explain the process of Bahá'í elections

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of creativity and the arts; Use of peer teaching; Use of reflection; Involve service

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Page 69
- Poster paper or other paper
- Magazine pictures of nature, diverse people, etc.
- Glue or glue sticks
- Scissors
- Markers, pencils, crayons, and other materials, as desired

Advance Preparation:

Precut magazine pictures if possible. Alternatively you may provide magazines with suitable pictures for students to cut. Begin to consider when the class might host a deepening about Bahá'í elections for adults, youth, or children in the community

1. Welcome students. Invite them to share conversations they may have had with others about the nature of Bahá'í elections. Acknowledge all.
2. If students completed the previous activity, briefly discuss: As we've had these conversations with others, how has our own thinking continued to develop about Bahá'u'lláh's sacred gift of unfettered freedom of choice at the time of voting?
3. Continue the discussion: Thinking again about the freedom of the voter, what responsibilities might come with this freedom? Acknowledge all responses.
4. Explain that we will work together to learn more about the freedoms and responsibilities of voting in Bahá'í elections. Distribute copies of Resource Page 69. Read through the page together and assure that the students have a general understanding of the main points of each quotation.
5. Then encourage students to work in small teams to create a poster to highlight one of these quotations. Encourage students to read the quotation a second time and underline key

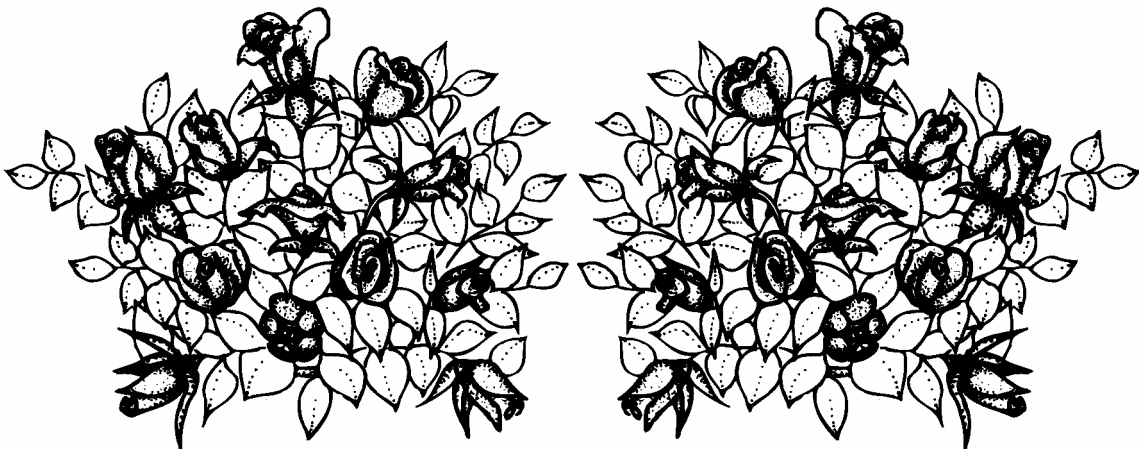
words or phrases. Encourage them to choose some of these key words to highlight on their poster and then to use magazine pictures to illustrate important points in the quotation.

6. After the teams complete their work, encourage them to share their work with the whole group. Applaud all! Then read aloud the following quotation twice:

I feel that reference to personalities before the election would give rise to misunderstanding and differences. What the friends should do is to get thoroughly acquainted with one another, to exchange views, to mix freely and discuss among themselves the requirements and qualifications for such a membership without reference or application, however indirect, to particular individuals. We should refrain from influencing the opinion of others, of canvassing for any particular individual, but should stress the necessity of getting fully acquainted with the qualifications of membership referred to in our Beloved's Tablets and of learning more about one another through direct, personal experience rather than through the reports and opinions of our friends.

Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 47

7. In the whole group, discuss: Why is it important for us to vote for people we actually know, rather than just vote for people that are famous? Why is it so important for us to make friends with people of every diverse minority?
8. Remind students that Bahá'í elections are held each Ridván, usually on April 20–21, for Local Spiritual Assemblies. Members of Local Spiritual Assemblies vote for the Regional Bahá'í Council each Day of the Covenant, November 26. Encourage the class to save these posters to use as part of a service project in preparation for one of these upcoming elections.
9. Read again the spiritual qualities that Shoghi Effendi says are necessary for those elected to serve Bahá'í institutions: unquestioned loyalty, selfless devotion, a well-trained mind, recognized ability, and mature experience. Briefly discuss: What are some examples of these qualities in everyday life?
10. Invite students to select one of these qualities to practice every day for the coming week. Provide students with journals or plain paper and encourage them to write their plans for practicing this quality in as much detail as possible. Invite students to share their plans in the whole group if desired.
11. Conclude the activity with prayers for divine assistance.



TOPIC: BAHÁ'Í ELECTIONS

ACTIVITY 3: LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the qualifications required of those to be elected for Bahá'í administrative responsibility

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í writings; Use of consultation; Use of reasoning; Use of drama

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Page 70
- Chart paper and markers

1. Welcome students. Invite them to think of a positive contribution they've made at home, at school, or in another activity over the past week. Warmly acknowledge all efforts.
2. Explain that this class will focus on the relationship between service and leadership. Pose the question:
 - What is leadership?Listen to student responses; then ask:
 - And what is service?Listen carefully; then ask:
 - Who are some of the leaders that we often hear mentioned on television? What makes them leaders? How do they get to be leaders?
 - How are servants portrayed on television?
3. After listening to student responses, distribute copies of Resource Page 70. Read the quotations aloud in the whole group, briefly explain new words, and then discuss the question:
 - How are these ideas the same and how are they different from what we hear on television?
4. Organize the class into small groups. Give each group a few minutes to create a one-minute role-play to show how leaders act on television. Share the role-plays in the whole group. Applaud all.
5. Show students the photograph on Resource Page 71 that shows the first elected Universal House of Justice. Briefly discuss: What evidence do we see of true humility and the spirit of service in this photograph?
6. Read again the first quotation on Resource Page 70. Then ask the same groups to create new one-minute role-plays that use the same setting to show how all individuals can be servants, and leadership can be in the group.
7. Enjoy the role-plays. Applaud all.
8. In the whole group, briefly brainstorm ways to show true leadership and service at school, at home, and in games and sports. List student response on chart paper.
9. Ask each student to select one act of leadership through service to carry out in the coming week. Invite them to work in pairs to tell each other their plans and come up with one practical way to support each other in these plans. Remember to invite students to share the results of their efforts at the beginning of the next class.

ACTIVITY 4: SERVING BAHÁ'Í ELECTIONS

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To be able to explain the process of Bahá'í elections; To render service to the Bahá'í community during annual elections

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of consultation; Use of creativity and the arts; Involve service to humanity

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Reference copies of Resource Pages 67–70
- Copies of Resource Page 72
- Chart paper and markers
- Colored paper
- Scissors, glue, and other art materials, as desired
- Posters created for Activity 2, p. 62, if available

Advance Preparation:

Identify the date of the next election either for the Local Spiritual Assembly or the Regional Bahá'í Council. Consider opportunities for hosting a community deepening about Bahá'í elections in the near future.

1. Welcome students. Invite them to share the results of their efforts to show leadership through service to others. Acknowledge all. Invite them also to reflect and call to mind at least one act of service that they've noticed in another person over the past week. Listen carefully, then briefly discuss: Why is it so important for us to notice the service of others?
2. Invite students to recall all the facts they know about Bahá'í elections. Encourage them to take turns sharing these facts in the whole group, so that every person has the opportunity to share one fact before any person shares a second fact. Acknowledge all.
3. Encourage students to review the reference copies of Resource Pages 67–70 studied in the previous activities. Invite them to share favorite quotations or parts of quotations from these Resource Pages.
4. Distribute copies of Resource Page 72. Read the quotations in the whole group. Briefly discuss: What new learning do we gain from these quotations?
5. Invite students to work as a class to prepare a short deepening program for adults, youth, children, or families in the community in the near future as preparation for an upcoming Bahá'í election. In the whole group discuss:
 - Who are the people we most want to serve—the adult voters in the community, a youth class, a children's class, people of all ages in a community gathering, or another group?
 - What sort of a gathering could we host—a special deepening on this topic, the devotional program for an upcoming election, a short presentation at the Nineteen Day Feast, a cluster gathering, or at our Bahá'í school, or something else?
 - How do we want to arrange this meeting—by suggesting a time to the Local Spiritual Assembly, school committee, or other group? Or do we prefer to select our own time and place and create special invitations for the people we want to invite?

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►

TOPIC: BAHÁ'Í ELECTIONS

- How can we create a spiritual atmosphere for our presentation? Do we want to begin with prayers and music, and clean and beautify the environment?
 - How would we like to greet the people and make them feel welcome? Do we want to greet them individually at the door, invite them to be seated, and create an opening statement of welcome?
 - How would we like to share the writings we select? Shall we cut out quotations from our Resource Pages and mount them on colored paper? Shall we invite others to read? Do we want to rehearse them and read them eloquently to the group?
 - How shall we share the posters we created in Activity 2 about this topic?
 - Do we want to explain that Bahá'í elections with unfettered freedom of choice for the voters is one of the sacred gifts of Bahá'u'lláh? If so, how shall we offer this explanation?
 - Do we want to invite a question and answer session? If so, how will we handle the questions? What plan will we have for answering the questions we know as well as answering questions that may be new to us?
 - Do we want to serve refreshments? If so, what would we like to serve and how shall we arrange to serve it? If not, how else could we create the spirit of loving hospitality?
 - How shall we conclude our deepening?
6. Record student plans on chart paper.
 7. Identify individuals or teams to be responsible for each action selected. Remember that simple plans actually completed are more effective than elaborate plans that are never carried out.
 8. Complete as much preparation as possible during this class period and create a plan for completing any remaining preparations.
 9. Conclude the activity with prayers for divine assistance.

Resource Pages

Activity 1: Chains, Fetters, and Freedom of Choice

Focus questions:

What are some ways that we can free ourselves from the fetters of this world?

Why should we strive to free ourselves from the fetters of this world when we vote for members of a spiritual assembly?

How do Bahá'í elections provide unrestricted freedom for voters?

How does this freedom of choice promote justice in the world?

O My Servant!

Free thyself from the fetters of this world, and loose thy soul from the prison of self. Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no more.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian no. 40

What the friends should do is to get thoroughly acquainted with one another, to exchange views, to mix freely and discuss among themselves the requirements and qualifications for such a membership without reference or application, however indirect, to particular individuals.

Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 47

Let us also remember that at the very root of the Cause lies the principle of the undoubted right of the individual to self-expression, his freedom to declare his conscience and set forth his views.

Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 63

. . . Those candidates that have obtained the highest number of votes, irrespective of the fact whether they command an absolute majority of the votes cast or not, are automatically and definitely elected. . . . This method, [does not restrict] the freedom of the elector who . . . is called upon to vote for none but those whom prayer and reflection have inspired him to uphold. . . . Should this simple system be provisionally adopted, it would safeguard the spiritual principle of the unfettered freedom of the voter, who will thus preserve intact the sanctity of the choice he first made.

Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 136

Activity 2: Spiritual Qualities and Bahá'í Elections

Necessary Qualities for Election to Bahá'í Offices

It is incumbent upon the chosen delegates to consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespective of any material consideration, the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience.

Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 88

Extremely Desirable for Bahá'í Offices to Include Diverse Participants

Bearing in mind the extreme desirability of having the minority elements participate and share responsibility in the conduct of Bahá'í activity, it should be the duty of every Bahá'í community so to arrange its affairs that in cases where individuals belonging to the diverse minority elements within it are already qualified and fulfill the necessary requirements, Bahá'í representative institutions, be they Assemblies, conventions, conferences, or committees, may have represented on them as many of these diverse elements, racial or otherwise, as possible.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 35–36

Bahá'í Elections Based on Principles of Prayer, Unity, Amity

On the election day, the friends must wholeheartedly participate in the elections, in unity and amity, turning their hearts to God, detached from all things but Him, seeking His guidance and supplicating His aid and bounty.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1, p. 315

TOPIC: BAHÁ'Í ELECTIONS

Activity 3: Leadership and Service

Every human creature is the servant of God. All have been created and reared by the power and favor of God; all have been blessed with the bounties of the same Sun of divine truth; all have quaffed from the fountain of the infinite mercy of God; and all in His estimation and love are equal as servants. He is beneficent and kind to all. Therefore, no one should glorify himself over another; no one should manifest pride or superiority toward another; no one should look upon another with scorn and contempt; and no one should deprive or oppress a fellow creature.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 63

The first quality for leadership, both among individuals and Assemblies, is the capacity to use the energy and competence that exists in the rank and file of its followers.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2, p. 53

There is certainly a place in the Cause for outstanding people, and we need more of them. But the administration must function on a consultative basis, not leadership.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2, p. 271

Let us also bear in mind that the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation.

Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 63

GOAL: TO UNDERSTAND THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER
TOPIC: BAHÁ'Í ELECTIONS

Activity 3: Leadership and Service



First Universal House of Justice, Elected in 1963
Reprinted with permission of the Bahá'í International Community (<http://media.bahai.org>)

TOPIC: BAHÁ'Í ELECTIONS

Activity 4: Serving Bahá'í Elections

These Spiritual Assemblies are aided by the Spirit of God. Their defender is 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Over them He spreadeth His wings. What bounty is there greater than this? These Spiritual Assemblies are shining lamps and heavenly gardens, from which the fragrances of holiness are diffused over all regions, and the lights of knowledge are shed abroad over all created things. From them the spirit of life streameth in every direction. They, indeed, are the potent sources of the progress of man, at all times and under all conditions. What bounty is there greater than this?

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 80

. . . Every declared believer of 21 years and above, far from standing aloof and assuming an indifferent or independent attitude, should regard it his sacred duty to take part conscientiously and diligently, in the election, the consolidation and the efficient working of his own local Assembly.

Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 39

. . . Every organized community enlisted under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh should feel it to be its first and inescapable obligation to nurture, encourage, and safeguard every minority belonging to any faith, race, class, or nation within it. So great and vital is this principle that in such circumstances, as when an equal number of ballots have been cast in an election, or where the qualifications for any office are balanced as between the various races, faiths or nationalities within the community, priority should unhesitatingly be accorded the party representing the minority, and this for no other reason except to stimulate and encourage it, and afford it an opportunity to further the interests of the community.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 35

One's vote should be kept confidential.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1, p. 317

Once Assembly elections are over the results should be conscientiously and unquestionably accepted by the entire body of the believers, not necessarily because they represent the Voice of Truth or the Will of Bahá'u'lláh, but for the supreme purpose of maintaining unity and harmony in the community.

Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 72

LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Stories and Articles:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- “Elected to Serve,” Jan/Feb 2002
- “Spiritual Assemblies,” Jan/Feb 2002
- “Local Spiritual Assemblies . . .” Mat/Apr 2003
- “Spiritual Assembly Quiz,” Mar/Apr 2003
- “Into the Future,” Sep/Oct 2005

Activities:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- “The Assembly Game,” Nov/Dec 1993
- “The Institutions Pop-Up Page,” Sp Ed 1997
- “Profile of a Leader,” Jan/Feb 2001

Video:

Elections: The Bahá'í Model

Other Favorite Resources:

- Cultivating Distinction: Bahá'í Electoral Practice: Participant Packet*
- The Local Spiritual Assembly: An Institution of the Bahá'í Administrative Order: A Compilation*
- National Convention: A Statement and Compilation from the Bahá'í Writings*
- World Order*, vol. 37, no. 1
- The Bahá'í Electoral Process: Bahá'í Comprehensive Deepening Program*

If you find any additional resources, please contact the National Bahá'í Education Task Force, or submit your findings to the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.