

Preparation for Teaching

A Branch Course from Ruhi Institute Book Six

- Overcoming Barriers to Teaching
- Developing Individual Teaching Plans
- Forming Teaching Teams
- Working in Intensive Programmes of Growth

Aotearoa Institute

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TO THE COLLABORATORS

The purpose of this course is to assist the friends to become more effective teachers both as individuals and in teaching teams. It aims at identifying and removing the barriers to effective teaching and puts in place some practical steps that can be taken to improve successful participation in the teaching work, both as individuals and as members of teaching teams, and especially during Intensive Programmes of Growth.

This course can be run as an independent course, as a refresher for those who have already completed Book Six of the Ruhi Curriculum, or alternatively as part of Book Six.

The course has been developed after analysis of results from teaching teams in New Zealand and draws on international experience and materials as well as developing home-grown approaches.

The course aims to connect our teaching efforts more closely to the evolving processes of the Five Year Plan and to assist the participants to analyse barriers to effective teaching and then plan and rehearse situations that will overcome those barriers. The exercises and activities are designed to assist with both cognitive and practical elements to eliminate fear of failure and build confidence that will attract confirmations in our efforts.

It will be useful to encourage the participants to take part in the course with their teaching teams or to form teaching teams from among the participants at beginning of Unit Two and then to work and plan together. Teaching teams formed during the course may decide to continue teaching together or they may be temporary. Their purpose is to allow the participants to gain experience in collective teaching. It is recognised that people's circumstances change and people may eventually want to form other teaching teams to take advantage of different teaching opportunities.

This is not a complete course nor does it propose that this is the final version of such a course. It is written with a "humble posture of learning" and as such, the authors appreciate feedback and will evolve the course over time.

Arohanui
Aotearoa Institute
Ridvan 2007

"With so firm a foundation in place, the foremost thought in the mind of each and every believer should be teaching. Whether in their personal efforts they teach their friends in firesides, and then involve them in the core activities or use these activities as their primary instrument for teaching, whether as a community they make their work with children and junior youth the initial thrust in a cluster or focus first on the older generations, whether in their collective endeavours they visit families in teams as part of an intensive campaign or call on seekers in their homes periodically over time---these are decisions that can only be made according to the circumstances and possibilities of the friends and the nature of the populations with whom they interact. What all must acknowledge, irrespective of circumstance, are both the crying need of a humanity that, bereft of spiritual sustenance, is sinking deeper into despair and the urgency of the responsibility to teach with which we each have been entrusted as members of the community of the Greatest Name." The Universal House of Justice, Ridván Message 2007

UNIT ONE: INDIVIDUAL TEACHING

Section One: Identifying Strengths and Barriers

Many of us have read the Writings and even completed the full sequence of Ruhi courses but have not yet become fully engaged in the teaching work. Or if we have engaged, we may not be as effective as we would like to be. In the first part of this unit we would like to explore the reasons why this is so and then see what we can do about it. One of the ways we can quickly get to the heart of the matter is by identifying our strengths and our barriers. This will help us define what empowers us to teach and what hinders us in teaching.

Analysis of Strengths and Barriers

On the next page we suggest that you list all those factors that empower you or provide you with strength in teaching, such as prayer, memorisation of key passages, etc. Also you can list those factors that inhibit or restrain you from teaching.

By brainstorming a list of empowering and restraining forces and recording them on the chart in the appropriate column you can see in one place all the strengths and barriers that you encounter in teaching. Once the empowering and restraining forces have been identified, then discuss answers to the following questions:

- Are they valid?
- How significant is each of them?
- What is the strength of each force?
- Which forces can we alter?
- Which forces can be altered quickly?
- Which ones only slowly?
- Which forces, if altered, would produce rapid change?
- Which only slow change in the situation?
- What can we do to draw on our strengths and minimise our weaknesses?

Successful Teaching

Empowering Forces

Restraining Forces

Above you have identified a number of factors that help or hinder you in teaching. In carrying this out, many people identify the following barriers:

- *I am fearful of what others around me will think; being religious is not often accepted as people will think I am a little weird.*
- *I don't know how to get the conversation around to spiritual matters.*
- *I don't know how to give a good short but engaging answer when someone asks me about the Faith .*
- *I have intentions to teach but loose focus and the spiritual energy to do this; other things get in the way.*
- *When someone asks about the Faith I don't know how to advance the conversation beyond a few statements.*
- *I don't have any friends who are not Bahá'ís – or – I have run out of contacts – I have tried teaching all of my friends, colleagues and family and none of them are interested.*
- *I know a few people who are interested in the Faith – even come to core activities or firesides – but haven't made the leap to becoming Bahá'ís – I don't know what to do to help them make that leap.*

Below we take each of these and share some thoughts and develop some exercises that can help us overcome some of these barriers.

Section Two: Overcoming Fear

In a society where religious fanatics are a cause of misery and terror, it is understandable that people have a suspicion of religion. Yet these same people will often have their own religious or spiritual beliefs. Those who believe in God far outnumber those who don't. Our task is to overcome our own fear of how we may be perceived by others so that we may offer the beauty of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings so that others may also become in love with their Beloved.

The Universal House of Justice has written in their 27 December 2005 letter to the Continental Counsellors:

“...in our message of 17 January 2003 to the Baha'is of the world...we highlighted the growing sense of initiative and resourcefulness, as well as the courage and audacity, that have come to characterize believers everywhere. Qualities such as consecration, zeal, confidence and tenacity attest to the enhanced vitality of their faith. We have also acknowledged the role played by the training institute in evoking the spirit of enterprise underlying the rise in activity observed around the world--the concrete expression of that vitality.”

Write a sentence about how each of the following qualities highlighted by the Universal House of Justice can help us to overcome our fear of teaching the Faith:

Sense of initiative _____

Resourcefulness _____

Courage _____

Audacity _____

Consecration _____

Zeal _____

Confidence _____

Tenacity _____

Spirit of
enterprise_____

In groups, discuss why the Universal House of Justice has identified these qualities at this stage. Write your thoughts below.

One of the practices that assists many people to overcome their fears in facing situations is to visualise these situations and then role play them with others.

Spend the next five minutes visualising a situation of teaching a real person who you would like to share the message with. How do you introduce the Faith? In what circumstances? What might be their questions? How do you answer these to engage the individual? (if you have completed Course 2 – ‘Arising to Serve’, you may find reflecting on your experiences doing the practice useful) – 5 Minutes

Now that you have envisaged a situation, join with 2 or 3 friends in role playing the situation. - 30 minutes.

Jot down your key learning below:

Section Three: Engaging in Spiritual Conversations

The Universal House of Justice has written:

“... Equipped with skills and methods, effective and accessible to all, and encouraged by the response their actions elicit, the believers are entering into closer association with people of many walks of life, engaging them in earnest conversation on themes of spiritual import. With greater and greater spiritual perception, they are able to sense receptivity and recognize thirst for the vivifying waters of Baha'u'llah's message...” (27 December 2005)

How do we engage our friends in earnest conversation on themes of spiritual import? Think back over the last week and identify a few opportunities you might have had to develop conversations on themes of spiritual importance and offer Bahá'í perspectives and teachings of the Faith.

In groups of 2 or 3, role-play some of these situations and then jot down your key learnings below. You might want to refer to Book 2, Unit Three for ideas.

How might you overcome some of these distractions:

Section Six: Drawing on Spiritual Forces

It is important to remember that the power of Divine Assistance is ever ready to aid us and that each one of us, as we mirror the principles and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh in our lives and our efforts to teach, increases the spiritual forces which Bahá'u'lláh has released in this Day.

“The fifth concept is the conviction that were we to act upon the summons to the field of action issued by the House of Justice to "every individual believer - man, woman, youth and child", large numbers of individuals would enter the Cause. The focus of the group should be such that when souls are encouraged to contemplate their acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh as a Manifestation of God, they will be able to do so in a positive atmosphere of invitation. This atmosphere can be greatly enriched by a consciousness on everyone's part that we are constantly surrounded by the confirmations of the Holy Spirit and that if we supplicate to the martyrs and heroic teachers of the past, they will come to our assistance. This is a movement of spiritual forces, forces which are real and which will open doors.” (International Teaching Centre, *Encouraging the Formation of Teaching Groups*, 5 July 1989)

“In trying to assist the friends to develop visions of growth for their local and national communities or regions, we must remember that such visions can only emerge from a far greater vision of such realities as the greatness of this Day, the power of Divine Assistance, the potential inherent in every human being, and the powers that become available to us when we truly unite and work in a spirit of oneness. Evolving a vision of growth, then, is fundamentally a spiritual process, one that implies ever-increasing consciousness of the spiritual forces released by Bahá'u'lláh.” (International Teaching Centre, *Building Visions of Growth*, 1992)

“Above all, the friends need to remain ever conscious of the magnitude of the spiritual forces that are at their disposition. They are members of a

community "whose world-embracing, continually consolidating activities constitute the one integrating process in a world whose institutions, secular as well as religious, are for the most part dissolving". Of all the peoples of the world, "they alone can recognize, amidst the welter of a tempestuous age, the Hand of the Divine Redeemer that traces its course and controls its destinies. They alone are aware of the silent growth of that orderly world polity whose fabric they themselves are weaving." It is their institutions that "will come to be regarded as the hallmark and glory of the age" they have been called upon to establish. The "building process," to which they are consecrated, is "the one hope of a stricken society." For, it is "actuated by the generating influence of God's changeless Purpose, and is evolving within the framework of the Administrative Order of His Faith." (The Universal House of Justice, 27 December 2005)

What are we constantly surrounded by?

What are four realities of which we need a greater vision?

How would a greater vision and reliance upon these realities help in our teaching work?

What should we remain ever conscious of in our service to His Cause?

Who are the illumined souls that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá speaks of in the above prayer quoted by the Universal House of Justice?

What are some ways that we can draw on spiritual forces?

[Remember that action and movement for the Cause attracts confirmations and spiritual forces more than anything else – thus it is important that small steps, like the practices from Books 1 and 2 be carried out and reflected on. Strength comes from the confirmations that these small steps bring]

Section Seven: Making a Personal Teaching Plan

Some of the things that you may have listed under the empowering forces for teaching are:

- Reading the Writings daily
- Daily prayer for teaching and contacts
- Setting specific goals
- Setting specific times for teaching activities and putting these times in your diary or calendar

All of the above can best be encapsulated in an individual teaching plan. In creating a personal teaching plan first you need to survey the possibilities and your own circumstances.

“Let him survey the possibilities which the particular circumstances in which he lives offer him, evaluate their advantages and proceed intelligently and systematically to utilize them for the achievement of the object he has in mind.” (Shoghi Effendi, *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 51)

“Beyond opening the doors of the Bahá’í community to the outside world, the believers are also exerting themselves to reach out. Bahá’ís are striving to expand their social circles and ultimately their friendships, as friendship is the surest foundation for touching the hearts. To pursue these aims, individuals have begun to examine their priorities, including the services they are rendering the Faith, and to reorder their lives so as to allow themselves more time for interaction with their relatives, friends, and co-workers. Ultimately, what is the point of striving to become more effective teachers if we are not meeting people to teach?” (International Teaching Centre, *Building Momentum*, April 2003)

You may want to use the form below to make a list of people who may be receptive to hearing about the Faith or to being invited to core activities. These people will be from among your friends, family, neighbours and co-workers. They may already be from your existing community of interest – those who are not yet Bahá’ís but who regularly attend one or more activities.

You may also want to consider receptive populations that you already have a link with, such as, children, junior youth, youth, the elderly or receptive ethnic groups, such as Maori, Pacific Island, Chinese, Indian, etc. Bahá’í friends who do not attend meetings can also be considered.

Next you need to consider the degree of receptivity of each of the people on your list and to carefully decide the next step of interaction and invitation that is needed for each person. The exercises carried out in the sections above can help here.

“Equipped with skills and methods, effective and accessible to all, and encouraged by the response their actions elicit, the believers are entering into closer association with people of many walks of life, engaging them in earnest conversation on themes of spiritual import. With greater and greater spiritual perception, they are able to sense receptivity and recognize thirst for the vivifying waters of Bahá’u’lláh’s message. From among all those they encounter--parents of neighbourhood children, peers at school, colleagues at work, casual acquaintances--they seek out souls with whom they can share a portion of that which He has so graciously bestowed on humanity. Increased experience enables them to adapt their presentation to the seeker's needs, employing direct teaching methods that draw on the Writings to offer the message in a manner both forthcoming and inviting.” (Universal House of Justice, 27 December 2005)

The first step is to ask yourself what ‘skills and methods’ do you have and what do you need? What training and experience do you have? Reflect on your experiences with the practice exercises of the sequence of courses. Experience has demonstrated that the core activities and direct teaching methods from the institute courses are the most effective means of teaching.

The next step of interaction and invitation may range from inviting a new acquaintance for coffee, finding ways to be of service to someone that you know a bit better, inviting them to a meal, saying prayers with them, doing a series of home visits, inviting them to a core activity, or inviting them to become a Bahá’í. On your personal teaching plan, list the activities that are appropriate as a next step in developing your friendship and ability to teach each person.

New believers need to be included in this process until you feel they are confident and engaged with in the Baha’i community. Consider how you will involve them in your teaching endeavours as well.

“Most noteworthy in this regard is the spirit of initiative shown by believers who extend the range of their endeavours to assist others also striving to tread a path of service. Having acquired the capacity to serve as tutors of institute courses, they take up the challenge of accompanying participants in their initial attempts to perform acts of service until they, too, are ready to start their own study circles and help others do the same, widening in this way the scope of the institute's influence and bringing eager souls into contact with the Word of God. This particular aspect of the institute process, which serves to multiply the number of active supporters of the Faith in a self-perpetuating manner, holds much promise, and we hope that its potential will be realized in the coming Plan. "Let him not be content", are the words of the Guardian referring to every teacher of the Cause, "until he has infused into his spiritual child so deep a longing as to impel him to arise independently, in his turn, and devote his energies to the quickening of other souls, and the upholding of the laws and principles laid down by his newly adopted Faith.” (Universal House of Justice, 27 December 2005)

The final step is to be systematic. Chart out your plan, keep it where you will see it and remember it. Pray for each person every day. Set dates for contacting these people. Check your plan weekly and modify as needed. Remember to share your successes and insights about what you are learning in your teaching endeavours with the cluster growth coordinator or the institute coordinator. An example of a personal teaching plan is included below.

Exercise: Make a list of all the receptive people you know. Beside each name mark the degree of receptivity this person has shown and then what the next step you think could/should be taken to nurture them. Possible options (there may be more!) are:

- Pray for them daily
- Invite them to your home for coffee or dinner with the purpose of fostering a friendship and speaking to them about the Faith if it seems appropriate
- Visit them in their home with the same purpose
- Invite them to a fireside or Holy Day gathering in your home or another home
- Invite them to a core activity or to host a core activity, for example, if your contacts are children or parents of children, invite them to a neighbourhood children’s class
- Invite them to a Study Circle you are tutoring
- Begin a series of deepenings in their home because they are interested
- Invite them to join the Bahá’í Faith

Teaching Plan (Example)

1. Sarah Jones- new neighbour, don’t know about receptivity	Take fresh plums and visit- Saturday morning
2. Clyde family – Jane very interested	Invite to dinner- try next Thursday and tell them about children’s classes
3. Matthew Pahi – sister is a Bahai; has expressed some interest	Organise BBQ, Sunday next, invite Sam and Jenny too, invite Matthew to join Book One

Teaching Plan Template

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	

Having developed a personal teaching plan, you will want to review it every few months. This process allows you to reflect on what you have been learning and what new possibilities are present, and then to adjust your teaching plan accordingly. Experience is showing that timing the review of your teaching plan to coincide with the cluster’s cycle and reflection meeting, enables you to support the cluster goals in your individual teaching.

“Meetings of consultation held at the cluster level serve to raise awareness of possibilities and generate enthusiasm. Here, free from the demands of formal decision-making, participants reflect on experience gained, share insights, explore approaches and acquire a better understanding of how each can contribute to achieving the aim of the Plan. In many cases, such interaction leads to consensus on a set of short-term goals, both individual and collective. Learning in action is becoming the outstanding feature of the emerging mode of operation.” (Universal House of Justice, 17 January 2003)

UNIT TWO: TEACHING TEAMS

One of the ways of maintaining focus and enhancing the effectiveness of our teaching is by working in groups or teaching teams. Teaching teams can be formed at any time in any cluster no matter what its category. In this unit we intend to address the following:

Why should we form a teaching team?

What are its benefits?

What do teaching teams do?

How does teaching in a team differ from individual teaching?

Teaching teams:

How do we form a team?

How does a teaching team make plans?

Where do I fit in? Should I continue with my own personal teaching plans?

It is useful for teaching teams to work through this unit together when possible.

Section One: Why Form a Team? - The Effectiveness of Teaching Teams

Teaching teams are proving to be an effective way to provide support for individual teaching efforts as well as allowing a group of individuals to work together with a diversity of capacity and talents. Teaching teams also allow for the opportunity for systematic reflection and goal setting. These excerpts from *Reflections on Growth, (Number 13, "God loveth those who are working in His path in groups"-- The Learning About Teaching Teams, August 2006)* demonstrate what we are learning about using teaching teams during intensive programmes of growth.

“ In some clusters teaching teams were initially viewed as synonymous with "street teaching" teams, often because of a lack of clarity regarding the term "direct teaching." Shoghi Effendi explained that direct teaching consists of "an open and bold assertion of the fundamental verities of the Cause." This can be done individually or in groups and does not depend on the setting. Street teaching may be one method but there are many other approaches. The concept of teaching teams that has evolved over the past few years can more accurately be understood as a support group, a few friends who come together during an intensive program of growth for planning, consultation, inspiration, and systematic action. Their teaching work may go on individually, in pairs, or in larger groups, but they meet regularly to consult on the progress of their personal and collective plans.

“From the accounts below it is apparent that the members of teaching teams receive encouragement and gain strength from one another. They pray together, exchange experiences, assess their learning, practice the skills

acquired in the institute courses, and thereby attract confirmations. Teaching teams are a direct response to the concern expressed in the following quotation from the Universal House of Justice:

“While the friends are generally conscious of the vital importance of teaching, yet, because of their frailties, many for the most part lack confidence, and feel they do not know what course of action to follow, or how to bring their efforts to a conclusion.”

“The learning demonstrates that when teams stay together for two or three cycles of a growth program, they become more systematic and gradually reap greater results. They maintain records of the contacts made, their visits, their teaching efforts, the results, and the follow-up. The needs and interests of every seeker or guest are considered in order to determine what the best approach is for that individual and who is the most suitable person to carry it out. Above all, the focus is not just on inviting people to activities but in learning how to elevate a conversation toward spiritual themes and in finding opportunities, daily, to share the Revelation of God for this day. “

In a few lines, summarise the benefits of teaching teams.

Section Two: Forming Teaching Teams

Continuing on from the same issue of Reflections on Growth, Number 13, about teaching teams, we learn more about how teaching teams are formed and the sorts of experiences they are having.

“It is not necessary to complete the sequence of courses before joining a team. These small teaching groups allow people to work closely with those who share common interests, culture, language, or the like. The main prerequisite is a desire to share the Message of Bahá'u'lláh with others. Following are some accounts of what has been learned about forming teams and preparing them to be effective for the expansion and consolidation phases of a growth program.

***“Malaysia.* In the initial cycles of the intensive program of growth, teaching teams were formed on an ad hoc basis normally at the reflection meeting. However, systematic follow-up proved difficult during the consolidation phase. This led to thoughts that teams had to be more structured. It was observed that the teaching teams with members from the same neighbourhood, who could hold core activities with neighbours, were more effective and sustainable than the ad hoc ones. Below is the experience of one team.**

“In a locality in Kuala Lumpur, a group of three housewives initially formed a teaching team to visit contacts during the day while their husbands and children were away. They were visiting acquaintances in the locality but not necessarily focusing on any particular neighbourhood. They found this occasional random visit hard to follow up on. After reflection, they decided to focus on one condominium where one of them lived. They then invited others who lived near this condominium, including the husbands and children, to join the team. They also decided to focus on junior youth and devotional meetings. As a result, a junior youth gathering with 11 participants was initiated. At their last devotional meeting, 20 people from the neighbourhood attended the gathering.

***“Senegal.* A teaching team in Dakar is made up of four individuals: a married couple, who hosts core activities (devotional gatherings and study circles) because their house is better suited for meetings, and two single males. The members carry out their activities individually, or in pairs, because each member has a different timetable.**

“One of our members looks out for receptive souls among his friends and colleagues. He invited a friend to the devotional gathering our team organizes. That person came several times and then joined a Ruhi Institute Book 1 study circle. Having completed Book 1, he showed interest in studying Book 4. Now this seeker himself has started to teach the Faith and brought a friend to our devotional gathering.

“A member of our team is from the Joola tribe, which has traditionally been very receptive to the Faith. He, accompanied by another member of our team, started home visits to one of his long time acquaintances, also a Joola. The latter showed a very open mind and willingly joined a Book 1 study circle and started attending our devotional gathering.

“The last two members of our team, the couple, also teach their friends and acquaintances, usually inviting them to the devotional gathering as a first introduction to the Faith. Receptive souls are then invited to the study circles, sometimes after having been invited to a fireside, which is an opportunity to give them "Anna's" presentation.

“Working as a team increases considerably the effectiveness of our teaching efforts, and widens their scope. It also results in bringing together seekers from various backgrounds, who enjoy studying together Ruhi Institute books and benefiting from one another's insights.”

Based on the above stories, write down a few things that can make the work of a teaching team more effective.

Section Three: How Will We Teach?

“When we turn to the experience of those clusters where intensive programs of growth have been launched, we see that an important element of that framework has been the mobilization of teaching teams during the expansion phase. Many believers have brought to this phase their experience from participating in home-visit teams as part of the practice component of Ruhi Institute Book 2 or in teaching teams that were formed at the end of Book 6. Although teams making home visits to share deepening themes with new believers frequently encounter other family members who can be taught the Faith, the teaching teams described in the stories in this newsletter have been especially formed for sharing the Message of Baha'u'llah with seekers.

“During this Plan, reports showed that believers are finding a welcome response to their teaching efforts when the approaches studied in the institute courses are put into practice. There are many accounts of individuals learning “Anna’s” presentation in Book 6 by heart so that they will have a framework for introducing the Faith when they become more confident in their teaching work.

“Equipped with skills and methods” that were “effective and accessible to all,” and encouraged by the response they received, the believers have been “entering into closer association with people of many walks of life, engaging them in earnest conversation on themes of spiritual import.” 27 Dec 2005, Universal House of Justice

“Memorizing passages from the Sacred Texts, a common aspect of the institute courses, has changed the manner in which many of the friends deliver the message. Rather than using only their own words, they use the Creative Word to explain the Faith to others, which has a profound effect. For example, the Bahá’í community of Houston, Texas, United States, hosted a city-wide interfaith meeting and dinner at their cent, which was attended by a large number of representatives of other faiths. A believer who had been a Bahá’í for over 30 years commented on how she and others were grateful that they had completed a Ruhi Institute course and could use quotations they had recently memorised in this teaching opportunity.

“The skills of Books 1,2 and 6 were flying all over the place and the quotes were just pouring out of our mouths; were we the army of light or what!? As the evening progressed, it seemed that other people were just waiting for us to open our lips and speak. The power of the Word of God was truly the magnet that was attracting their hearts—the key that unlocks the hearts of men. They were all connecting their beliefs with the Bahai beliefs.

“Everybody was joyfully full—physically and spiritually. One of the participants of a study circle said afterwards, “This is why we are asked

by the Universal House of Justice to engage in the process---the skills, and insights gained have given me courage and such joy. Another participant said, "Thanks for making us memorise; the quotes were just coming out of my mouth."

(Excerpt from: *The Five Year Plan 2001-2006: Summary of Achievements and Learning*, Universal House of Justice, page 17-18)

“Experience suggests that the more closely teaching approaches and methods are aligned with the capacity acquired from the study of the institute courses the more rewarding the results.” (Universal House of Justice, 27 Dec 2005)

Based on the above accounts, write down how the skills acquired from the institute courses can help teaching teams to be more effective.

What are our potential teaching methods? Discuss with your team whether and how you might utilise the methods mentioned below in your teaching team:

Firesides _____

Home visits _____

Devotional Meetings _____

Study Circles _____

Children's Classes _____

Junior Youth Classes _____

Other Activities _____

Section Four: What is Our Plan?

Teaching Team Planning

Refer to your personal teaching plan and share with the people in your team one or two names of the most receptive people on your list and what you think would be most helpful for these people.

Receptive Person	Most helpful next step to nurture this person	By when?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		

Together discuss how your team could help and support these individual teaching efforts. With which people would a teaching team approach be useful? Begin to make notes about ways the team could support each person's efforts.

Make a plan for your approaches and set dates or deadlines for your efforts. Decide how the members of your teaching team will support each other in these plans. For example,

you may decide that you will visit some people in pairs, choosing those who have something in common with the person you want to visit. You may decide to develop a special devotional meeting together, or host a barbeque or cultural evening where you can invite a number of people.

When will you meet with your teaching team again? You may also want to meet together to pray, to study the Writings on teaching, to prepare teaching materials, or to practice your presentations. At regular intervals you will want to reflect on what you are learning and to review your plan and goals.

If you are working in a Cluster with an Intensive Programme of Growth you might like meet as often as you can to pray during the expansion phase and to set a time midway through the expansion phase to check in with each other and reflect on what you are learning and then again at the end of the expansion phase to reflect on the experience as a whole.

Again if you are in an Intensive Programme of Growth, at the meeting you have at the end of the expansion phase, set goals for the consolidation phase. Who among those you contacted during the expansion phase will need home visits? When will these be done? How will you support each other for the home visits? Be sure to set dates for completion and times for you to meet together and reflect on your progress.

Review the Strengths and Barriers brainstorm from Unit One and what you decided were your barriers and opportunities, then match these with your draft plan.

What do we now see as our barriers and what strategies will we use to overcome them? _____

What do we now see as our strengths and what strategies will we use to optimise them? _____

UNIT THREE: SYSTEMATIC GROWTH

Section One: Intensive Programmes of Growth

How do we fit into teaching cycles?
How will we manage our activity?

The practice of collective teaching has been evolving rapidly over the past few years. In A clusters all over the world, collective teaching takes place in the context of an intensive programme of growth. In their letter to the Counsellors on 27 December 2005, the Universal House of Justice outlines intensive programmes of growth.

“Sustained endeavour on the part of the individual, the community and the institutions to accelerate the institute process in a cluster, while contributing to its movement from one stage of development to another through well-proven means, culminates in the launching of an intensive programme of growth.

1. When does a cluster launch an intensive programme of growth?

“As currently conceived, an intensive programme of growth is straightforward, simple and effective, but implies a level of exertion that tests the resolve of the friends. Conforming well to the vision we presented five years ago, it employs a few measures that have proven to be indispensable to large-scale expansion and consolidation. It consists of cycles of activity, in general of three months’ duration each, which proceed according to distinct phases of expansion, consolidation, reflection and planning.”

2. What does the word intensive mean? _____
3. How do intensive programmes of growth ‘test the resolve of the friends’?

4. What are the phases of a cycle of activity?

5. In general, how long do cycles of activity last?

“The expansion phase, often a period of two weeks, demands the highest level of intensity. Its objective is to widen the circle of those interested in the Faith,

to find receptive souls and to teach them. Although this phase might include some element of proclamation, it should not be seen as a time to hold a few events for this purpose or to undertake a set of activities that merely convey information. Experience suggests that the more closely teaching approaches and methods are aligned with the capacity acquired from the study of the institute courses the more rewarding the results.” 27 Dec 2005, Universal House of Justice

6. How long does a typical expansion phase last?

7. What is the objective of the expansion phase?

8. What teaching approaches are used during the expansion phase?

9. What teaching methods are used?

10. What capacities are acquired from the study of institute courses?

“Plans being devised for this phase invariably involve the implementation of carefully designed teaching projects and campaigns of home visits and firesides, often through the mobilization of teaching teams. The pattern of expansion that unfolds, however, varies from cluster to cluster. Where the population has traditionally shown a high degree of receptivity to the Faith, a rapid influx of new believers is to be expected. In one cluster of this kind, for example, the goal of enrolling fifty souls over a three-week period in a locality was surpassed by the second day, and the team wisely decided to end the expansion phase in anticipation of activities related to consolidation. One of the primary objectives of this next phase is to bring a percentage of the new believers into the institute process so that an adequate pool of human resources will be available in future cycles to sustain growth. Those not participating in study circles are nurtured through a series of home visits, and all are invited to devotional meetings, to the celebration of the Nineteen Day Feast and to Holy Day observances and are gradually introduced to the patterns of community life. Not infrequently, the consolidation phase gives rise to further enrolments as the family members and friends of new declarants accept the Faith.”

11. Experience shows there are two patterns of expansion. In the first, the population has traditionally shown a high degree of _____ to the Faith, and a _____ of new believers is to be _____.
12. Where this first pattern of expansion is present, the next phase of consolidation aims to bring a percentage of the new believers into _____. Those who do not begin to participate in _____ are nurtured through a series of _____. All are invited to _____, to Nineteen Day Feasts and to _____.
13. Discuss with the other participants what ‘carefully designed teaching projects’ and ‘campaigns of home visits and firesides’ might be. The story from *Reflections on Growth #13*, page 7 may be useful.

“In other clusters, enrolments during the expansion phase may not be high, especially in the first few cycles, and the goal is to augment the number of those willing to participate in core activities. This, then, defines the nature of the consolidation phase, which largely involves nurturing the interest of seekers and accompanying them in their spiritual search until they are confirmed in their faith. To the extent that these measures are vigorously followed, this phase can generate a considerable number of enrolments. It should be noted, however, that as learning advances and experience is gained, the ability not only to teach responsive souls, but also to identify segments of the general population with heightened receptivity, develops, and the totality of new believers increases from cycle to cycle.”

“Key to the progress of an intensive programme of growth is the phase dedicated to reflection, in which the lessons learned in action are articulated and incorporated into plans for the next cycle of activity. Its principal feature is the reflection meeting--as much a time of joyous celebration as it is of serious consultation. Careful analysis of experience, through participatory discussions rather than overly complex and elaborate presentations, serves to maintain unity of vision, sharpen clarity of thought and heighten enthusiasm. Central to such an analysis is the review of vital statistics that suggest the next set of goals to be adopted. Plans are made that take into account increased capacity in terms of the human resources available at the end of the cycle to perform various tasks, on the one hand, and accumulated knowledge about the receptivity of the population and the dynamics of teaching, on the other. When human resources increase in a manner proportionate to the rise in the overall Baha’i population from cycle to cycle, it is possible not only to sustain but to accelerate growth.” (Universal House of Justice, 27 Dec 2005: paragraphs 21-25, and 27)

14. What is key to the progress of an intensive programme of growth?
-

15. What is the principle feature of the reflection phase?

16. Careful _____, through _____ discussions, serves to _____ unity of vision, _____ clarity of thought, and _____ enthusiasm.

17. Careful analysis of experience and review of vital _____ will help to suggest the next _____ to be adopted.

Now review Appendix Two: Intensive Programme of Growth Cycle Charts

Section Two: Systematically Measuring Our Progress

“Managing the growth process necessitates certain practical skills such as collecting statistics, because to monitor growth it is essential to be able to measure it.” (International Teaching Centre, *Building Momentum*, April 2003)

“Statistics measure our spiritual resources and potential. As the Army of Light prepares for its most significant conquests it needs to know its resources; as the processes of Entry by Troops draws closer we can see how important the training of every human being is for their service to the Cause.

“In this state every resource and every trained servant of Baha’u’llah is a valuable asset. ‘Abdul-Bahá once said of the Sultan of Turkey that not one of his ministers would get anything from the King, but he would give his front line troops anything they wished, so precious were they in the war effort. Likewise a trained soul – fed by prayer and spiritual practices, able to conduct devotional meetings, hold children’s classes and junior youth gatherings, run study circles and go to seekers homes to deepen them in the Faith; such a soul is a very valuable asset for the Cause!

“With this in mind we should approach the gathering of data for the Five Year Plan. Every soul progressing in the training institute or entering the community of interest through any of the portals is a potential resource for many souls to enter and be confirmed in the Cause of God, an instrument to touch another soul with the flame of love and ignite a process that will last forever. As such we must count our resources. Measuring the progress of training through counting the numbers completing different books; measuring teaching activity through ascertaining the number of home visits and teaching teams; assessing the numbers interested in the Cause through estimating the Community of interest; all provides us with the ability to assess our resources and chart our progress. Measuring the impact of these processes in the

community at large particularly feasts holy days and fund contributions help begin to see the growth of the community. Even when apparently little is happening, such as at the beginning of activity in a cluster, the collection of data provides us with a good benchmark from which to compare future progress.” Counsellor Alan Wilcox, 2006)

Review the following Teaching Team Reporting Form:

Form B1 - To be completed by a Member of Teaching Team

STATISTICAL INFORMATION FOR REPORTING PERIOD: (Date)

CLUSTER:

Name of the Individual or Team Members:

Does your team focus on a particular receptive population?

Number of people in your team's community of interest:

Number of homes visited by your team on regular basis for the purposes of teaching or holding deepenings:

Number of firesides held by your team during the cycle:

Number of people from your community of interest who declared their Faith in Bahá'u'lláh by the end of this cycle of growth:

Number of new believers who have entered the institute programme:

Regular activities held by your team during the cycle

Devotional Meetings				Study Circles			Children's Classes			Junior Youth Groups			Other
Number ¹	Total Participants ²	Com of Interest ³	Number of Homes ⁴	Number ⁵	Total Participants ²	Com of Interest ³	Number ⁶	Total Participants ²	Com of Interest ³	Number ⁷	Total Participants ²	Com of Interest ³	Homes Visited ⁸

1. "Number" represents the number of devotional meetings held on a regular basis. For example, a monthly meeting in the Bahá'í Centre, plus a weekly devotional in a Bahá'í home, plus a monthly devotional at the university or hospital, together count as THREE regular meetings.
2. "Total participants" represents the total number of individuals (including children) who attend the given activity. Those participating but not yet Bahá'ís should be included in the count.
3. "Community of Interest" represents the number of the "total participants" who are not registered as Bahá'ís.
4. "Number of homes" represents the number of homes where a devotional meeting is held with some degree of regularity.

5. "Number" represents the number of study circles running during the reporting period (whether started, completed or on-going).
6. "Number" represents the number of children's classes held on a regular basis A children's class is defined as a teacher and a group of students. "Children" can be any age up to 15.
7. "Number" represents the number of junior youth groups that meet on a regular basis. Only groups using the moral empowerment courses developed by the Ruhi Institute are included in the count.
8. "Homes visited" represents the number of homes visited with some degree of regularity for the purposes of deepening.
What other activities did your team engage in? (for example, one-off devotional meetings, social gatherings, etc)
Any other comments:

After reviewing the reporting table above, answer the following questions:

1. Why is it helpful to measure our activities?

2. What will our teaching team find out by recording this information?

3. How will our cluster growth committee or institutions be able to use this information?

4. Who will be responsible for making this report?

5. When will it need to be completed by?

6. Who should the report be sent to?

Section Three: What have we learned and plans for action

Take a few moments and note the key learnings that you have made during this study. _____

Share some of these learnings with the rest of the group.

Share what plans have been made, when the teaching teams will meet again, and clarify what your next steps will be.

End this session with prayers for teaching during which someone can read this last quote:

“Bahá’u’lláh has commended His followers to teach the Cause. Already thousands upon thousands are energetically applying the provisions of the Plan to open up avenues for them to guide souls to the Ocean of His Revelation. We look with expectant eyes to the day when teaching is the dominating passion in the life of every believer and when the unity of the community is so strong as to enable this state of enkindlement to express itself in unremitting action in the field of service. This then is our ardent hope for you and the object of our most fervent prayers at the Sacred Threshold.”

(The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message 2007)

Appendix One: Anna’s Story: An Aid for memorization

The Universal House of Justice is encouraging us to use Anna’s story as it is demonstrated to us in *Book 6: Teaching the Cause*. This is not because we must all teach in exactly the same way with exactly the same words, but rather so that we learn carefully the concepts that, when shared in a systematic, clear and confident way, will aid the seeker’s heart to be opened to a greater understanding of the spiritual truths of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation. It is in this context then, that Aotearoa Institute is encouraging those who complete Book 6 and are working in teaching teams to consider using this tool to memorize the concepts from Anna’s Story.

How to use this tool:

People can work in pairs – each with a copy of the document in hand and with one person asking the questions as a way to prompt the other person’s responses. Alternatively, one person can easily use the document to memorize alone. After an initial study of the second column, the pages can be folded in half lengthwise and the questions in the first column used to prompt responses. Gradually, individuals will be able to deliver all the concepts in the second column. After some experience of actually teaching using this particular structure, the teacher will become confident to use their own words as the concepts and sequence will have become internalized.

SECTION 7- Introducing the Bahá’í Faith

What is the Bahá’í Faith?

The Bahá’í Faith is a world religion, whose purpose is to unite all the races and peoples in one universal Cause and one common Faith. Bahá’ís are the followers of Bahá’u’lláh, Who they believe is the Promised One of all Ages. The traditions of almost every people include the promise of a future when peace and harmony will be established on earth and humankind will live in prosperity. We believe that the promised hour has come and that Bahá’u’lláh is the great Personage Whose Teachings will enable humanity to build a new world.

Who do Bahá’ís follow?

Who is Bahá’u’lláh?

How will Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings enable humanity to build a new world?

Bahá’u’lláh says: ***“That which the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith.”***

What Bahá'u'lláh teach about God?

The first of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings that I will describe is about God and our relationship with Him. Bahá'u'lláh teaches us that God is unknowable in His Essence. This means that we should not make images of God in our mind, thinking of Him, for example, as a man. In general, that which has been created cannot understand its creator. For instance, a table cannot understand the nature of the carpenter who made it. The carpenter's existence is totally incomprehensible to the objects he makes.

What does unknowable in His Essence mean?

So God is the Creator but we cannot understand Him. Why did God create us?

Yes, God is the Creator of all things. He has made the heavens and earth, with its mountains and valleys, its deserts and seas, its rivers, meadows and trees. God has created the animals and plants and God has created the human being. The reason behind our creation we are told by Bahá'u'lláh is love.

What does Bahá'u'lláh say about our creation?

O Son of Man! I loved thy creation, hence I created thee. Wherefore, do thou love Me, that I may name thy name and fill thy soul with the spirit of life.

How does God's love reach us?

So although God's existence is far beyond our understanding, His love touches our lives and our beings ceaselessly. The way this love flows to us is through His Eternal Covenant. According to this Eternal Covenant, God never leaves us alone and without guidance. Whenever humanity moves away from Him and forgets His teachings, a Manifestation of God appears and makes His Will and Purpose known to us.

How does God's Eternal Covenant work?

What does 'Manifestation of God' mean?

The word 'manifest' means to reveal, to bring forth something that was not known before. The Manifestations of God are those special Beings Who reveal to humanity the Word and the Will of God; thus when we listen to Them, we are responding to the Call of God.

How do the Manifestations of God reveal God's Word and Will?

There is an example from the physical world that helps us to understand the concept of 'Manifestation' as taught by Bahá'u'lláh. In this world, the sun is the source of all warmth and light, without which life would not exist on the planet. Yet the sun itself does not descend to earth, and if we tried to approach it, we would be totally consumed.

But suppose we take a well-polished mirror and point it towards the sun. In it we will see the image of the sun, and the more perfectly polished the mirror, the more perfect the image will be. The Manifestations of God are like perfect Mirrors that reflect the light of God in all its Splendour. And all these Mirrors reflect the same Light. While God is beyond our reach, these perfect Beings come to us from time to time, live among us, give us guidance, and fill us with the energy we need to progress, materially and spiritually

What does this mean if I'm a Christian?(try using other religions as well)

ago through His Manifestation, Christ, Whose Station is that of the Son of God. Now you can receive the Teachings of a new Manifestation, Baha'u'llah, whose title means the Glory of God. Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings are in perfect harmony with the Teachings of Christ, but they address the condition of humanity today. If you think for a

Are the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh different from the Teachings in Christianity (or other religion)?

You are fortunate to have been raised according to the Teachings sent by God to humanity some two thousand years

moment about the plight of humanity, I am sure you will agree that the time is

right for another Manifestation of God to

have appeared.

What does Bahá'u'lláh say about the Day in which we live?

This is a passage from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh that speaks about the Day in which we live: *This is the Day in which God's most excellent favours have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things. It is incumbent upon all the peoples of the world to reconcile their differences, and, with perfect unity and peace, abide beneath the shadow of the Tree of His care and loving-kindness.*

SECTION 9- The Aim of the Bahá'í Faith

What is the aim of the Bahá'í Faith?

The next of Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings that I would like to present to you is related to the aim of the Bahá'í Faith, which is to unify humanity.

People are very different. How can we unify humanity?

In the Bahá'í Teachings we are told that we are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch. Although we differ from one another physically and emotionally, although we have different talents and capacities, we all spring from the same root; we all belong to the same human family.

How is humanity like a garden?

flowers of every form, colour and perfume, The charm and beauty of the garden lie in this diversity. We should not allow the differences that exist among us--in our physical characteristics, our temperaments, our backgrounds, our thoughts and opinions- to give rise to conflict and strife. We should see the members of the human race as beautiful flowers growing in the garden of

Humanity can be likened to a vast garden in which grow side by side

humanity and rejoice in belonging to this garden.

How do the Bahá'ís hope to unify humanity?

Although the oneness of humankind is an undeniable truth, the peoples of earth are so far from it that unifying them is no easy task. If you choose to join the Bahá'í community – and it would bring me so much happiness if you would do so – you will participate with the rest of us in our efforts to build and maintain unity. We are all striving to bring our thoughts and actions in line with our belief in the oneness of humankind. We are told that, when a thought of war enters our minds, we should immediately replace it with a thought of peace. When a feeling of hate begins to take shape in our hearts, we should immediately replace it with a feeling of love.

How do you bring your thoughts and actions in line with your belief?

We should do everything possible to overcome our prejudices. Prejudices of race, colour, nationality, culture, religion, and sex, these are among the greatest obstacles to building a better world.

Everybody has prejudices – how can we overcome them?

So many passages in the Bahá'í writings teach us how to walk in the ways of unity and how to help others take the same path. There is a wonderful passage from one of the talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá of Whom I will speak later, which I have memorized.

Does the Bahá'í Faith tell us how to build unity?

for the uniting of all the peoples, and for the gathering of them all under the shelter of the tent of universal unity. This is the work of the Divine Bounty, and we must all strive with heart and soul until we have the reality of unity in our midst, and as we work, so will strength be given unto us.

He says: *Bahá'u'lláh has drawn the circle of unity; He has made a design*

SECTION 11- The Life of Bahá'u'lláh

Where and when did Bahá'u'lláh live?

Bahá'u'lláh was born in 1817 in Tihiran, the capital of Iran. From His early childhood, He showed signs of greatness. He received some instruction at home but did not need to attend school, for He was endowed by God with innate knowledge. Bahá'u'lláh came from a noble family and when he was a young man, was offered a high position in the court of the King, but He refused it. He wished to dedicate His time to helping the oppressed, the sick and the poor, and to champion the cause of justice.

What is important about Bahá'u'lláh's life?

There are two aspects of Bahá'u'lláh's life which I would like to mention in particular. One is the suffering He endured. The other is the tremendous influence He had on the hearts and minds of people. These actually characterise the lives of all the Manifestations of God.

What were the sufferings of Bahá'u'lláh?

Bahá'u'lláh's sufferings began the moment He arose to proclaim the Cause of God. His life was one of exile, imprisonment and persecution. He was put in chains in a dark and dismal dungeon in Tihrán. He was exiled four times from land to land, finally being sent to the Prison City of Akká in the Ottoman Empire. So intense were His sufferings there that He has referred to Akká as the Most Great Prison.

What did Bahá'u'lláh say about His sufferings? *[note – the quotation from the Tablet of Ahmad refers to Adrianople, not Akká]*

In one of His tablets, we read:
“Remember My days during thy days, and My distress and banishment in this remote prison. And be thou so steadfast in My love that thy heart shall not waver, even if the swords of the enemies rain blows upon thee and all the

heavens and the earth arise against thee.”

Why did Bahá'u'lláh have to suffer so much?

Let me read for you what Bahá'u'lláh has said about His sufferings:
“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. He hath drained to its dregs the cup of sorrow that all the peoples of the earth may attain unto abiding joy, and be filled with gladness. This is of the mercy of your Lord, the Compassionate, the Most Merciful. We have accepted to be abased, O believers in the Unity of God, that ye may be exalted, and have suffered manifold afflictions, that ye might prosper and flourish. He Who hath come to build anew the whole world, behold, how they that have joined partners with God have forced Him to dwell within the most desolate of cities!”

What was the response to Bahá'u'lláh and His Teachings at the time?

Ottoman Emperor—to oppose Bahá'u'lláh and His Teachings. But the Light of Truth is not easily extinguished. The very water that is poured on this fire to put out its flame turns into oil and the fire burns with more intensity. Nothing could be done to stop Bahá'u'lláh's growing influence. The farther the authorities banished Him, the greater the number of people who were attracted to His Teachings and recognised His Power and Majesty. In spite of constant persecution, Bahá'u'lláh continued to reveal the Word of God for more than forty years and brought so much love and spiritual energy into this world that the final victory of His Cause is certain.

What did Bahá'u'lláh do when He was persecuted?

Every effort was made by two powerful courts—those of the King of Iran and the

When did Bahá'u'lláh pass away?

Spot on earth is located near the city of Akká. Here are some pictures of the entrance to the Shrine and the gardens surrounding it. I would really like to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I hope, that someday, you will be able to do so too.

Bahá'u'lláh passed away in 1892. His Shrine, which we consider the Holiest

SECTION 13 The Life of the Báb

Did God prepare the world for Bahá'u'lláh?

Several years before Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed His Mission, God sent a special Messenger to announce His coming. This great Messenger took the title "The Báb" which means the gate. He was indeed a gate to the knowledge of God and to a new era in human existence. For six years He taught ceaselessly that the appearance of the new Manifestation of God was near and prepared the way for His coming. He told the people that they were witnessing the dawn of a new Age, the dawn of the Promised Day of God. He called upon them to purify their hearts from earthy vanities so that they could recognize Him Whom God would soon manifest.

How was the Báb like a gate?

What did the Báb tell the people?

Thousands upon thousands of people accepted the Message of the Báb and began to follow His Teachings. But the government of Iran and the powerful clergy who ruled over the masses rose against Him. His followers were persecuted and large numbers were put to death. The Báb Himself at the age of 31 was martyred by a regiment of soldiers who at the orders of the government, suspended Him in a public square and opened fire on Him.

What was the response to the Message of the Báb at the time?

What happened to the Báb?

What are some of the Words of the Báb?

So that you can see how penetrating the Words of the Báb are, I would like to recite to you two of his prayers:

“Is there any Remover of difficulties save God? Say: Praised be God! He is God! All are His servants, and all abide by His bidding!”

“Say: God sufficeth all things above all things, and nothing in the heavens or in the earth but God sufficeth. Verily, He is in Himself the Knower, the Sustainer, the Omnipotent.”

Should we memorize a prayer?

Many Bahá'ís know especially the first prayer by heart and say it either aloud or mentally in times of difficulties. If you want, we can pause a little and you can memorize it. It is really easy to do so.

What happened after the Báb was martyred?

Following His martyrdom, the remains of the Báb were recovered by His followers and taken from place to place, always hidden from the enemies of the Faith. Finally they were transferred to Mount Carmel in the Holy Land. Here I have some pictures that I would like to show you of His Shrine in Haifa and a few other Holy Places in that city and in Akká, which is across the bay. These twin cities are today the spiritual and administrative world centre of the Bahá'í Faith, the spiritual centre because it is here that the Shrines of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh as well as many other Holy Places, are located and the administrative centre because the Seat of the supreme governing body of the Faith, the Universal House of Justice, is also on Mount Carmel.

What is important about Haifa and Akká?

SECTION 15 The Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh

What is most central to our lives as Bahá’ís?

The idea most central to our lives as Bahá’ís is that we have entered into a Covenant with Bahá’u’lláh. As you know, in all other religions, after the passing of the Manifestation, His followers had thousands of disputes among themselves and, as a result, split the religion into many sects. The cause of disunity was sometimes the desire for leadership of certain ambitious individuals. But, when differences of opinion arose between even sincere believers about what the Words of the Manifestation meant, no one had been authorized by the Manifestation Himself to settle the disagreements, and this contributed to conflict and dissension. Each set of interpretations led to the creation of a different sect.

Why do you need a Covenant?

What causes disunity?

How did Bahá’u’lláh protect His Faith against such division?

Bahá’u’lláh has protected His Faith against such division by endowing it with a unique power, the power of the Covenant. Before His passing, He stated in the clearest terms, in writing, that after Him, all Bahá’ís should turn to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, His oldest Son, was thus named the sole Interpreter of His Words and the Centre of His Covenant. He had been raised by Bahá’u’lláh Himself, had recognised His Station even as a child, and had shared the sufferings of His Father. He was a most precious gift given to humanity, the perfect Exemplar of all Bahá’í Teachings.

What was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s role?

What was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá like?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá lived on this earth for 77 years. He was born on the same night the Báb declared His Mission in 1844 and passed away in November 1921. His life was filled with affliction but to everyone who entered His presence He brought the greatest joy and happiness. After the passing of His Father, the responsibility for the Bahá’í community fell on His shoulders, and He laboured day and night to spread the Faith throughout the East and the West. He

What did ‘Abdu’l-Bahá do after the passing of Bahá’u’lláh?

What is the significance of the letters and tablets that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote?

wrote thousands of Tablets to individuals and groups everywhere and clarified the Teachings of His Father. His interpretations are now an essential part of the Writings of the Bahá’í Faith.

How does the Covenant help the Bahá’ís to remain united?

By focusing on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as the Centre of Bahá’u’lláh’s Covenant, the Bahá’ís of the world remain united in their efforts to live a Bahá’í life and to create a new civilisation. We remember that as part of our promise to Bahá’u’lláh, we are to love one another and in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, we see the perfect example of one who loves. We remember that we must uphold justice, that we must be generous, that we must overlook the faults of others, and from the example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá we learn justice, generosity, and forgiveness. More than anything else, by keeping our focus on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, we are always aware of our covenant with Bahá’u’lláh that we will not allow the unity of His followers to be broken and that, united as a world wide community, we will labour until the oneness of humankind has been firmly established.

How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s example help?

Why should we keep our focus on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?

Who became the head of the Faith after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá passed away?

In His Will and Testament, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá named His grandson the Guardian of the Faith and after His passing, Shoghi Effendi became the authorized interpreter of the Teachings. For 36 years, he continued the work of His Grandfather, clarifying the Words of the Manifestation and firmly establishing His Faith in all parts of the planet. Five and a half years after his passing, the Bahá’ís of the world elected the Universal House of Justice, as envisioned by Bahá’u’lláh and clearly described by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the Guardian. The Universal House of Justice is the supreme institution of the Faith to which all the Bahá’ís of the world now turn.

What was Shoghi Effendi’s role?

What happened after Shoghi Effendi passed away?

What is the supreme institution of the Faith now?

SECTION 17 Bahá'í Laws

Are there any laws in the Bahá'í Faith?

Manifestation brings to humanity in order to guide it in the right path. Some of these laws and commandments are eternal; others change as humanity progresses and evolves. In the Faith we are taught that we should not think of Bahá'í laws as a series of do's and don'ts. Bahá'u'lláh tells us that His laws are *“the lamps of My loving providence among My servants and the keys of My mercy for My creatures.”* Nor should we obey these laws out of fear of punishment, for He clearly has stated in His Most Holy Book: *“Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty.”*

How should we think of Bahá'í laws?

Do we obey laws because we are afraid of punishment?

The most important aspect of every religion is the laws that the

What are some examples of Bahá'í laws?

the physical world, human beings have to eat every day. This is a requirement of the human body; if we don't, we will get sick and quickly die. We can say, then, that eating daily is a law of physical existence which has to be obeyed. In the same way one of the commandments of Bahá'u'lláh is that we should pray every day. Like our body, our soul needs constant nourishment, and prayer provides the nourishment for our spiritual growth. There are many beautiful prayers revealed by the Báb, by Bahá'u'lláh and by 'Abdu'l-Bahá which we can say when we are alone or recite in meetings. Some of these prayers are special, and some are obligatory. One obligatory prayer is recited by Bahá'ís every day sometime between noon and sunset. It says:

Why should we pray every day?

how do Bahá'ís pray?

Are all prayers of equal importance?

These ideas will become clearer if I give you a few examples of Bahá'í laws. In

worship Thee. I testify, at this moment, to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth.

There is none other God but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.”

It is a short and beautiful prayer and I'm sure you will know it by heart after repeating it a few times. (Use this type of approach if they are open and you have perhaps already taught them the Remover of Difficulties)

I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to

What else does of Bahá'u'lláh not allow?

Why is the prohibition on backbiting important?

What has become an established practice among most of humanity?

What happens when people talk about someone's shortcomings?

What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá tell us to do to avoid backbiting and promote unity and concord?

What does Bahá'u'lláh tell us about backbiting?

In another commandment, Bahá'u'lláh prohibits backbiting and calumny. This is important because, if you think about it, one of the greatest enemies of unity is backbiting. And unfortunately, it has become an established practice among most of humanity to talk about other people's faults in their absence.

Everybody seems to be concerned with everybody else's shortcomings, which are made bigger and bigger as they are constantly mentioned. 'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us to do just the opposite. If we see ten good qualities in someone and one fault, we should concentrate on the ten, and even if a person has ten faults and only one good quality, we should focus on that one quality.

no evil, that thou mayest not hear it spoken unto thee, and magnify not the faults of others that thine own faults may not appear great; and wish not the abasement of anyone, that thine own

***O COMPANION OF MY THRONE!
Hear no evil, and see no evil, abase not thyself, neither sigh and weep. Speak***

abasement be not exposed. Live then the days of thy life, that are less than a

fleeting moment, with thy mind stainless, thy heart unsullied, thy thoughts pure, and thy nature sanctified, so that, free and content, thou mayest put away this mortal frame, and repair unto the mystic paradise and abide in the eternal kingdom for evermore.

Does Bahá'u'lláh forbid anything else?
Why does Bahá'u'lláh forbid drinking alcohol?

course, substance abuse. Drinking alcohol is really one of the greatest social ills that exists today in the world. It is one of the most common causes of violence and the ruin of healthy family life. To tell you the truth, I have never understood why people would take something that interferes with their minds and makes them lose their ability to think clearly. Drinking makes people capable of acting in shameful ways, when we have actually been created noble. Here is a beautiful quote from Bahá'u'lláh's Writings about nobility:

What does Bahá'u'lláh say about the nobility of human beings?

***“O SON OF SPIRIT!
I created thee rich, why dost thou bring thyself down to poverty? Noble I made thee, wherewith dost thou abase thyself? Out of the essence of knowledge I gave thee being, why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone beside Me? Out of the clay of love I molded thee, how dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, mighty, powerful and self-subsisting.”***

You should also know that Bahá'u'lláh prohibits the drinking of alcohol and, of

What does the Bahá'í Faith say about educating children?

notebook a short passage from Abdu'l-Bahá's Writings that explains this well:

***“Therefore, the beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful must train their children with life and heart and teach them in the school of virtue and perfection. They must not be lax in this matter; they must not be inefficient. Truly, if a babe did not live at all it were better than to let it grow ignorant, for that innocent babe, in later life, would become afflicted with innumerable defects, responsible to and questioned by God, reproached and rejected by the people. What a sin this would be and what an omission!*”**

***“The first duty of the beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful is this: They must strive by all possible means to educate both sexes, male and female; girls like boys; there is no difference whatsoever between them. The ignorance of both is blameworthy, and negligence in both cases is reprobable. "Are they who know and they who do not know equal?"*”**

Another commandment of Bahá'u'lláh which is one of my favourites, is about the obligation of parents and society to educate children. Here, I have in my

What are you doing about this commandment?

After I reflected on this great commandment, I decided to do something about it. So I hold a Bahai children's class with a friend once a week and we have – (number) students. Would you like to come and help us with our class?

(If you are involved with a children's class or junior youth group, this is a perfect opportunity to invite your seeker to come and be of service. If not, you wouldn't use this paragraph.)

SECTION 19 – Building a World Civilisation and Invitation

What is the purpose of this discussion?

I am sure you are aware that I am inviting you to join a religion and not just accept a collection of nice ideals. In fact, the Bahá'í Faith is a very organised religion whose aim is nothing less than the unification of the entire human race. It will be helpful for you to think of the work of the Bahá'ís as the building of a world civilisation. The Universal House of Justice tells us that there are three participants in this work, each with a very important role.

What is the aim of the Bahá'í Faith?

What is the work of the Bahá'ís?

How many participants are there in this work?

Who is the first participant?

The first participant is the individual believer. It is the duty of this individual to remain firm in the Covenant, to strive daily to bring his or her life in line with Bahá'u'lláh's teaching, and to serve humanity, always conscious of the fact that life does not end with death and that one's relation with God is eternal. After death, our souls become free and continue to progress towards God for all eternity. Our lives here are very much like the life of an infant in the womb of the mother. For some nine months the child develops faculties—eyes, ears, hands and so on—to be used later in this

What is the duty of the individual?

What should we always be conscious of?

What happens after death?

How are our lives like the life of an infant in the womb?

What do we need to develop in this world?

How do we achieve our purpose which is to develop our spiritual faculties?

Who is the second participant?
Why are communities important?

What is the community closest to us?

What do we learn in our local community?

What other communities do we belong to?

What is constantly expanding?

world. In the same way, we are to develop here the spiritual faculties that we need to progress in the other worlds of God. Of course, we do not achieve our purpose by just thinking about it. We have to work, serve our fellow human beings, and share the knowledge we gain with others.

The second participant is the community. Human beings were not created to exist alone. We live in communities and must work together to build the new civilization. The community closest to us is the local one which consists of the Bahá'ís of our village or town. It is in the local community where we learn to cooperate with one another, to grow together and become united. In addition to being members of the local community, we are also members of the national community and then the worldwide Bahá'í community which is constantly expanding and attracting people from every religious background, race, and nationality.

Who is the third participant?

The institutions of the Faith, the Universal House of Justice tells us, represent the third participant in the building of the new civilization. This is a subject about which we will have to talk some more when we discuss the Covenant. For now let me just mention that included in the commandments of Bahá'u'lláh are many related to the way society should be organised. In the past, the Manifestations of God have not said much about how their followers should organise themselves and people have had to discover how to do this by themselves. But, in the case of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh has brought His own Administrative Order, which means that He has told us what institutions we must create, how they should function, and how humanity should be governed.

What are many of the commandments of Bahá'u'lláh related to?

What did Manifestations of the past say about how their followers should organise themselves?

What did Bahá'u'lláh bring to help this organisation?

What does it mean that Bahá'u'lláh has brought His own Administrative Order?

What is the supreme institution?

We have already spoken about the supreme institution, which is the Universal House of Justice. In each country, Bahá'ís elect once a year the National Spiritual Assembly, and in each locality, the Local Spiritual Assembly. This is the institution that you will get to know the soonest. There are no priests or clergy in the Bahá'í Faith and it is the Local Spiritual Assembly that guides the affairs of the community and watches over the well-being of the individual believers. A Local Spiritual Assembly consists of nine members elected in a prayerful atmosphere by secret ballot by all the adult believers in the community. Spiritual Assemblies are extremely important to Bahá'ís. Through them we learn how human affairs are to be administered and how a new order can be established in society, an order which

What do Bahá'ís elect once a year?

What institution will people get to know the soonest?

Who guides the affairs of the community?

How are Assemblies formed?

Why are Assemblies important?

What is the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh?

is to be known as the world order can be established in society , an order which is to be known as the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

Then say a prayer together and plan to get together another day:

“O God! Refresh and gladden my spirit. Purify my heart. Illumine my powers. I lay all my affairs in Thy hand. Thou art my Guide and my Refuge. I will no longer be sorrowful and grieved; I will be a happy and joyful being. O God! I will no longer be full of anxiety, nor will I let trouble harass me. I will not dwell on the unpleasant things of life.

O God! Thou art more friend to me than I am to myself. I dedicate myself to Thee, O Lord.

Appendix Two: Intensive Programme of Growth Cycle Charts

