

Cluster Reflection Gathering Consultation

Attendance: 15 households

After devotions, we began with a presentation by Regional Baha'i Council Member Farzin Aghdas.

Farzin Aghdasi's message

This year we have had 5 significant messages from the House. The RBC has noted that there is a significant uptick in participation in core activities and events. The growth of core activities has been accelerating even in the midst of the pandemic. When the pandemic began we had 1500 core activities. We now have 3000. Gatherings are now attracting more participants. We are adjusting to a new reality. The problems of the world and nation and questioning caused by those problems, opportunity and technology, combine to create a perfect storm.

The House of Justice has asked for Baha'is to establish family devotionals in order to elevate the spiritual nature of community life at its most basic unit. Farzin shared a story about a Baha'i friend who began inviting friends and colleagues to online devotional/discussion groups. Whereas he had perhaps 5 people come to his home, he had 90 participants in an online devotional.

Farzin also shared that in New Delhi, a company hired to do a census of religions found that 500,000 people self-identified as Baha'is based on the question: What is your religious *practice*? They were attending Baha'i devotionals and so considered themselves Baha'is.

Group discussion

- Randa Nadimi shared that San Diego has a regional children's class that has over 100 children in it online.
- Jason Henderson shared that he and Brianna Gardener are starting a youth devotional to include prayers and discussion of and guidance on an important topic. This is for both Baha'is and non-Baha'is and they are seeking input in the form of participants. The hope is that when the SIP is lifted, the youth will move into a service mode.
- We reviewed current efforts ongoing in our community and asked for input regarding outreach beyond our immigrant outreach.

Auxiliary Board Member Nafis Zebarjadi posed the question: Now that we've established these venues and activities, what's next?

- We looked at this in light of guidance from the House of Justice.
- We've been asked to put Abdu'l-Baha at the forefront of our teaching efforts as the example of what human beings can be.

House of Justice speaks of these plans as a captivating drama, implying that we are writing this drama. What is the story in San Jose? What is the next chapter? What does an intensive program of growth look like?

- What are the elements of the framework for action?
 - Planning
 - Acting
 - Reflecting
 - Adjusting / Planning
 - Acting on the changes

- What are next steps?
 - Outreach to SiVIC and to local officials.
 - **Identify study circle participants ready to go to the next level**
 - Hosting their own devotionals, study circles, etc.
 - Moving from Ruhi study groups to more intense deepening in the Baha'i writings.

- In relation to the Expansion Phase of an IPG: What does intensity look like in the age of COVID?
 - Helping someone begin their own devotional gathering or study circle.
 - Encourage a Ruhi participant to become a tutor.

We encouraged people to pray and meditate about what they would like to do for the Faith and consider

- What resources they have and/or could offer.
- What resources they need.
- What audience they wish to reach.
- Who they would like to collaborate with, accompany or be accompanied by.

Some ideas:

- Individual family prayers.
- Weekly community devotionals online with no prepared program. Informal meetings for prayers and music. Specifically, meeting daily or weekly in the morning for prayers during Expansion Phase. One cluster did this and had between 5-10 people.
- Create individual plans for our personal next steps.
- How can we share the arts—dance, music, poetry, etc.
 - Jacquie offered to work with James and other resources to record a dance that could be used for Ayyám-i-Há.
- Friends are encouraged to send their thoughts and ideas to the LSA secretariat.
- Mobilize the Baha'i community members who were not at the meeting.

Reflecting on reflections. What worked? What didn't?

- More time for study and reflection.
- Be flexible for changing circumstances.