

Working Toward Worldwide Unity
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In a recent letter to religious leaders worldwide, the international governing body of the Baha'i Faith issued a plea for worldwide peace and unity. The twentieth century's enduring legacy, the letter stated, compels the peoples of the world to begin seeing themselves as the members of a single human race, and the earth as their common homeland. One doesn't have to look very far to see the dark clouds that hang over much of the world's population. These are not breezy, summer-rain clouds, but the fierce and swift moving tempests of violence, prejudice, hatred, economic turmoil, starvation, thirst, greed—the very things humans have been striving to rise above since the beginnings of time. This turmoil guides our newscasts and daily conversations. Pictures from every corner of the globe reveal people desperate, confused, and angry. Many in our own state and towns are struggling to put words to complex feelings and intense emotions. No matter on which side of the fence you stand as you gaze into the fog of international affairs, it is easy to see that our world is deeply troubled. A just response to our social and economic crises sometimes seems like a tiny flame in a strong wind, but the fuel for these solutions is a spiritual fuel for the fire.

Since its inception in the mid-nineteenth century, the Baha'i Faith has been urging people worldwide to search for answers within the spiritual guidelines of religion. The Baha'is believe that there is one God—that He is the one Creator—and that throughout human history He has sent his prophets to reveal His divine Will. So by definition, Baha'is believe in the Buddha, Krishna, Moses, Jesus Christ, Muhammad, as well as the prophet-founder of the Baha'i Faith, whose name is Baha'u'llah. This view of religion being 'one' spills over into our belief that humankind is one, that the barriers that divide us are of our own making—fostered by misinterpretation of God's message and by the more base and animalistic sides of our natures. Only by immersing ourselves into a spirit of unity and love and oneness—by listening to our most divine whisperings—can we walk into a brighter future.

Baha'u'llah wrote, "There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly Source, and are the subjects of one God." It is easy to see our common humanity as we look around our towns. We have people in the Seacoast from every part of the world. We may not have overwhelming diversity, but we are diverse. There are many different religious traditions right here in our midst. Our neighbors, school teachers, mechanics, and doctors hail from many geographical locations. Each night, when we turn on the news, we see people thousands of miles away who look like people we know—people who might live next door. Baha'is do not believe religious unity requires peoples of different religions to abandon their fundamental beliefs. We do not believe that a unified world means relinquishing our different cultures, languages, nationalities, or traditions. In its movement toward a globalization, the Baha'is encourage celebrating diversity while embracing the fundamental oneness of humankind. Working together in unity requires that we renounce our claims to exclusivity. The goal of all religions has always been the unity and well-being of humankind—to encourage a deep and abiding love for our neighbors, whether across the street or across the ocean.

Last year's letter to local and worldwide religious leaders, urged all peoples to come together. We believe we are at a pivotal stage of human development, and that our active and unceasing participation is required now. The answer is not easy—but the solution is simple—an active striving for love and tolerance, a commitment to the spiritual principles set down by

respective religions, and a commitment to the future of all humanity. “The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable,” Baha’u’llah urges, “unless and until its unity is firmly established.” Perhaps, we of the Seacoast can begin to take the steps necessary to foster the unity so desperately needed in our tumultuous world. Perhaps by celebrating our diversity, by coming together as spiritual entities, we can increase our chances of recognizing the ‘oneness’ of our religions, of our communities, our humanity, and our God.