

BAHA'IS IN THE CITY

The Bahá'í Community holds weekly gatherings for prayer, meditation and inspirational readings. These are open to all and held across the city.

Books published by the Ruhi institute, a world-wide educational programme, focused upon developing the spiritual nature of individuals and the skills for service to their community, are also studied by small groups.

Bahá'í children's classes aim to contribute to the development of the spiritual nature of the child with stories, music, art and games forming an integral part of the curriculum. They are open to children of all backgrounds as a place to learn to embrace the equality of all people.

In addition there is the junior youth empowerment programme that aims to assist young people as they move from childhood to adolescence, developing their spiritual and intellectual qualities and their capacity for service to society. This is done through activities such as drama, games and service projects in the community. There are currently active groups in Birmingham and Solihull.

Baha'i texts can be accessed at the Birmingham Central Library, as well as on the local and national websites for information.

The Local Birmingham community can be contacted via our email or through the local website.

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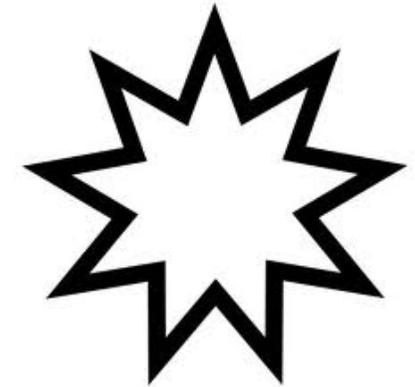
Originally founded in 1974, Birmingham Council of Faiths' objective is to promote knowledge and mutual understanding of the beliefs and practices of the city's many religious faiths.

Its belief is that through greater understanding of each other, a more harmonious and cohesive society can be created.

An additional strategy is to act as an interfaith hub, networking between the diverse faith organisations in the city and to serve as a focal point for information about their activities.

This brochure is one of ten covering the Council's affiliated faiths, which currently include Baha'is, Buddhists, Christians, Confucians, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and Zoroastrians.

Baha'is



one of
Birmingham's
faith
communities

BAHA'I BASICS

The Bahá'í faith was revealed in Persia in 1844 and has now spread across the globe to include followers from every race and background.

The founder of the faith, Baha'u'llah, is regarded by Bahá'ís as the most recent in the line of Messengers of God that includes Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, Jesus and Muhammad. Baha'is believe that all religions come from the One Same God and that they represent the progressive revelation of God's Will to mankind.

Baha'is do not regard God as a personage but rather as the 'Unknowable essence', that can be better understood through the Divine Teachers. The central theme of the Bahá'í Teachings is the unity of all mankind. This guiding-principle forms the basis of Baha'i activities.

Other key teachings include the equality of men and women, the need for universal education for all and an international auxiliary language, elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty and the harmony of science and religion.

Baha'u'llah wrote over 100 volumes and these have been translated into over 800 languages. Thereby, individuals can access the Holy text in their preferred language.

The most Holy book for Baha'is is The Book of Laws (*Kitab'i Aqdas*). However, there are many books of prayers, tablets and writing on numerous spiritual and social topics.

The Baha'i symbol is a 9 pointed star, with 9 regarded as a holy number for Baha'is.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

In the Bahá'í view, the purpose of this life on earth is for each individual to develop the spiritual and moral qualities that lie at the core of his or her nature. Bahá'u'lláh referred to the human being as a "*mine rich in gems of inestimable value*". As in most other religions, prayer and meditation are primary tools for spiritual development.

Baha'is are encouraged to read Divine scriptures morning and night, as well as reciting a daily obligatory prayer. Prayer is viewed as an individual offering, although prayer meetings are a way to share the spiritual atmosphere.

The translator of spiritual qualities is action. Baha'is are instructed to make 'deeds not words' their adornment. Baha'u'llah instructed His followers to reflect daily on their deeds and to evaluate the merit and worth of every action.

Baha'is believe in a spiritual afterlife, with our soul as the eternal part of our existence. The soul is believed to grow and develop through prayer and pure actions

One cannot inherit the Baha'i faith from birth. Baha'u'llah teaches that each individual must go on a personal spiritual journey and investigate the truth for themselves once they reach maturity, which Baha'is hold to be after the age of 15.

The family unit is considered the foundation for human society: the sanctity of marriage, recognition of the equality of the husband and wife, and the importance of unity in the family are emphasised.

SOCIAL PRACTICE

The Baha'i faith has no clergy. The affairs of the Birmingham community are administered through the Local Spiritual Assembly, to which nine adults are elected each year to represent the them. This system also exists on a National and International level.

The Baha'i calendar consists of 19 months of 19 days when Baha'is in a locality come together at the beginning of the Baha'i month at a meeting called a '19 day feast'. Here the community prays together, consults on community issues and socialises.

The final month in the Baha'i year is the period of fasting, lasting from sunrise to sunset on each of the 19 days. The 4 days leading to this month are called the intercalary days, when people have parties, give gifts, help the less fortunate and the sick.

The Baha'i New Year is celebrated on the 21st of March, which is the first day of Spring. There are 11 Baha'i holy days in total, including the Birthday of Baha'u'llah and the Ridvan period at which the declaration of Baha'u'llah is celebrated

Baha'is do not have churches or temples. Where there are large communities, there are buildings used as Baha'i centres, but in Birmingham the community meets in individual homes and sometimes halls for large events.

There are Houses of Worship in each continent. These are beautiful edifices with nine doors that are open to serve anyone, regardless of faith or belief.