




A vision for the future starts now

Zabine Maryam Van Ness
Seattle, WA 2008

True purpose of our global enterprise....to bind hearts together.



“...In such moments, we implore Him to illumine their souls with the light of knowledge and faith. Let them not underestimate the power inherent in the system they are putting in place for the propagation of His Faith nor mistake the true purpose of the global enterprise on which they have embarked. ...Let them not fail to appreciate the value of the culture now taken root in the community that promotes the systematic study of the Creative Word in small groups in order to build capacity for service....May they be diligent in their efforts to establish ties of friendship that show no regard for prevalent barriers for friendship and ceaselessly endeavor to bind hearts together in the love of God...”

10-20-2008 Universal House of Justice

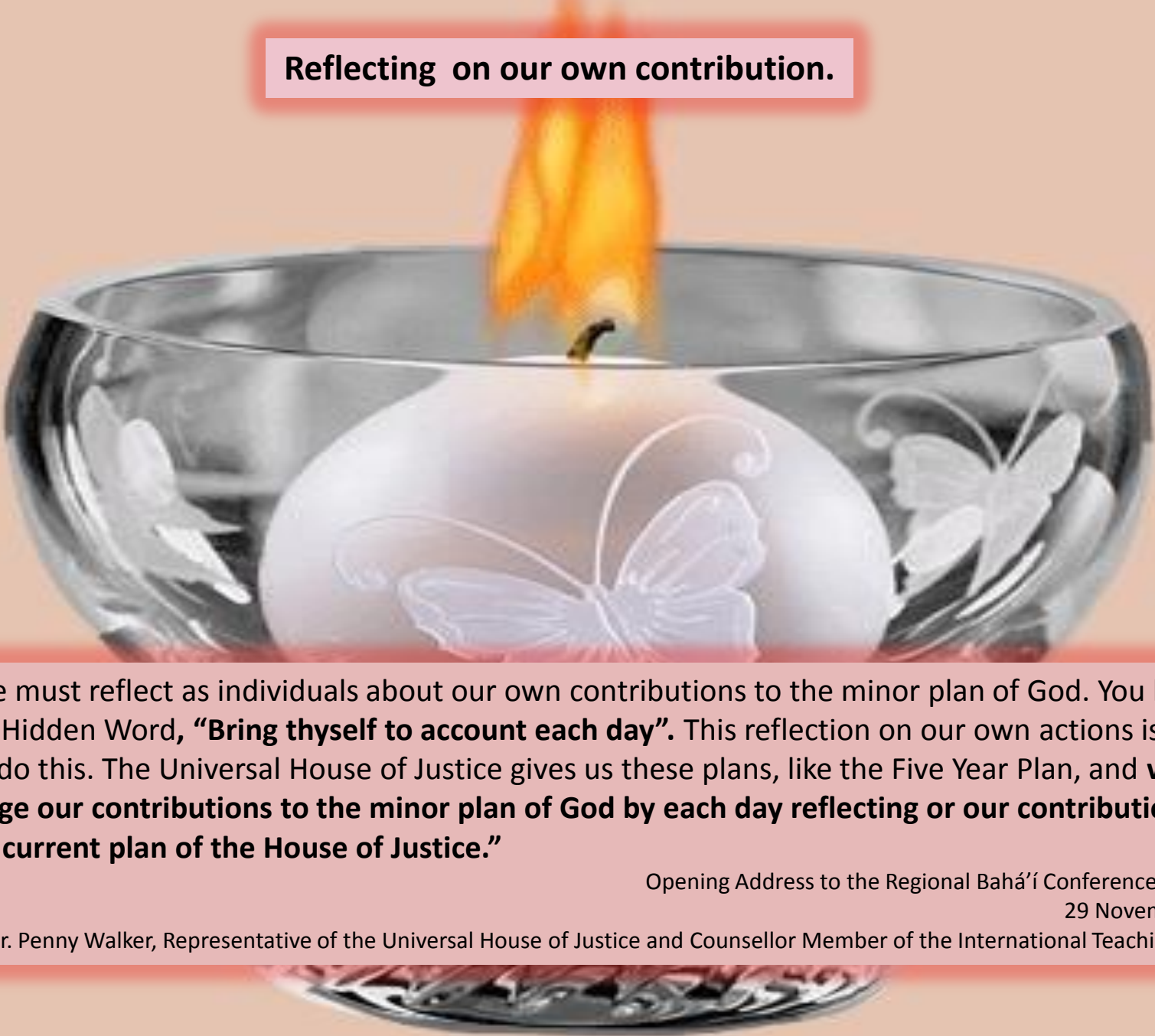


Foster movements on three fronts....

We were especially blessed to have received a message from the Universal House of Justice for the occasion, which has already been shared with you. That message served as the framework for our discussions, and led to a range of decisions designed to foster movement on three fronts:

1. To establish intensive programs of growth in a total of at least ninety clusters by Ridván 2008, which will require a minimum of thirty-five 'B' clusters to advance to that point.
2. To achieve breakthroughs in expansion in as many clusters as possible by this Ridván; and
3. To lay the groundwork for uninterrupted progress as we enter into the third year of the Plan.

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY of the BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES February 6, 2008
The Regional Bahá'í Councils

A lit candle in a glass holder with butterfly designs. The candle is white and has a bright orange flame. The glass holder is clear and has several butterfly designs etched into it. The background is a solid light orange color.

Reflecting on our own contribution.

“We must reflect as individuals about our own contributions to the minor plan of God. You know the Hidden Word, **“Bring thyself to account each day”**. This reflection on our own actions is how we do this. The Universal House of Justice gives us these plans, like the Five Year Plan, and **we can gauge our contributions to the minor plan of God by each day reflecting on our contribution to the current plan of the House of Justice.”**

Opening Address to the Regional Bahá'í Conference in Manila
29 November 2008

Dr. Penny Walker, Representative of the Universal House of Justice and Counsellor Member of the International Teaching Center.

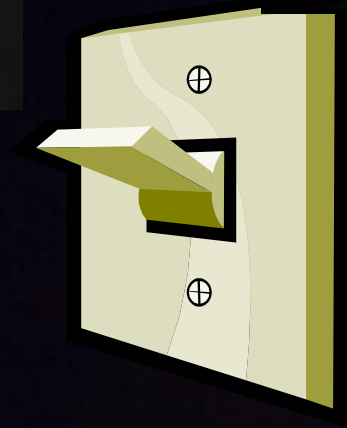
A dimly lit room, possibly a bedroom or a private study. In the foreground, a bed with white linens and a yellow pillow is visible. To the right of the bed, a small round table holds a single lit candle, casting a warm glow. The background features large windows covered with white curtains and framed by ornate, patterned borders. The overall atmosphere is quiet and contemplative.

We must ask them....

..."We must invite people to embrace the Faith. We must tell them who Baha'u'llah is and ask them to become Baha'is".

Ken Bowers, US-NSA secretary
Atlanta Conference, Dec 2008

Does it matter which source we use to light up the room?



... There is *no formula that we can learn and repeat to everyone in every situation*. The individuals with whom we have such intimate conversations are each in a particular spiritual state with varied needs and questions. As a teacher of the Cause, we must reflect constantly on how the verities of the Faith are to be explained to every seeker--what is to be said, and in what sequence should thoughts be expressed...

Ruhi Institute, *Teaching the Cause*, p. 87

Ways to introduce the " idea of teaching " to a new believer to think about friends, family, neighbors and co-workers.

I am a Social Activist and have lots of like minded friends.

I love seekers that are on a mystical journey like me.

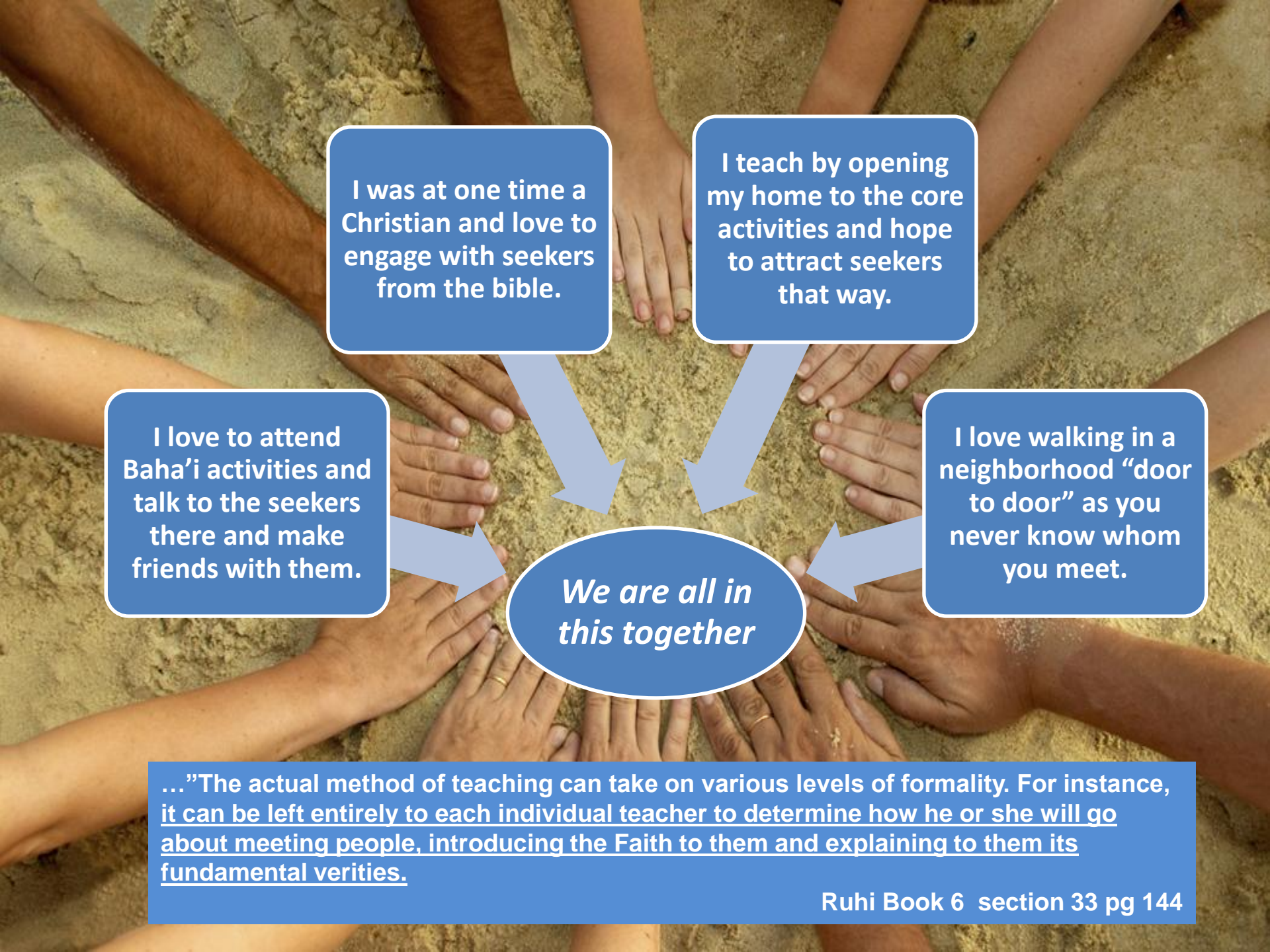
I love to cook for friends and just socialize with them.

I love to share with people that talk from the heart.

We are all in this together

"May all find a part to play. May all appreciate the contributions of others..."

Universal House of Justice, December 6th, 2008



I was at one time a Christian and love to engage with seekers from the bible.


I teach by opening my home to the core activities and hope to attract seekers that way.

I love to attend Baha'i activities and talk to the seekers there and make friends with them.

I love walking in a neighborhood "door to door" as you never know whom you meet.

We are all in this together

..."The actual method of teaching can take on various levels of formality. For instance, it can be left entirely to each individual teacher to determine how he or she will go about meeting people, introducing the Faith to them and explaining to them its fundamental verities.



I am more quiet
and shy and teach
by living the life.

I am outgoing and
love to discuss
and engage in
meaningful
dialogue.

I seem to be like a
social butterfly
and have a lot of
friends.

I seem to attract a
lot of broken
winged birds as I
understand their
needs.

***We are all in
this together***

"Just befriend, befriend. That's what we're all about."

Ms. Seowah Kahn - Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Dakotas
Chicago Conference December 2008

Some of us are “Head People” and some of us are “Heart People”



Why is Faith so complicated?

Who is this “Baha’u’llah”?
I have never hear of him before.

OR

I have so many questions and it needs to make sense to me. There are many pieces of this puzzle that I hope to get answers to.

The first time I heard it I knew I have always been Baha’i

I hear the name “Baha’u’llah” and I am ready to follow

I feel loved and accepted

It is said that the longest journey is from the head to the heart.

Nurturing our new believers into new teachers.

Neighbors

Family and Friends

Co-workers

Prayer
team.

Learning the many
ways to teach.

Learning to
observe and
recognize
receptivity.

I can “do
this”..I am
with my
buddy to
help our
seeker.

With the
help of my
buddy I can
facilitate
questions
into
answers
and enroll
them.

Road to recognition of
the Station of Baha’u’llah.

So many ways to be part of a Teaching Team.

- ☐ **Prayer Team.**
- ☐ **Planning the campaign.**
- ☐ **Taking a community survey.**
- ☐ **Become part of the “Phone Caring” campaign.**
- ☐ **Direct teaching using “Door to Door”.**
- ☐ **Doing home visits.**
- ☐ **Helping with deepening theme home visits.**
- ☐ **Planning confirmation visits.**
- ☐ **Helping the friends with finding family, friends, neighbors and co-workers.**
- ☐ **Learn to be more effective with reflection, evaluation and analyzing data.**

Institute Process

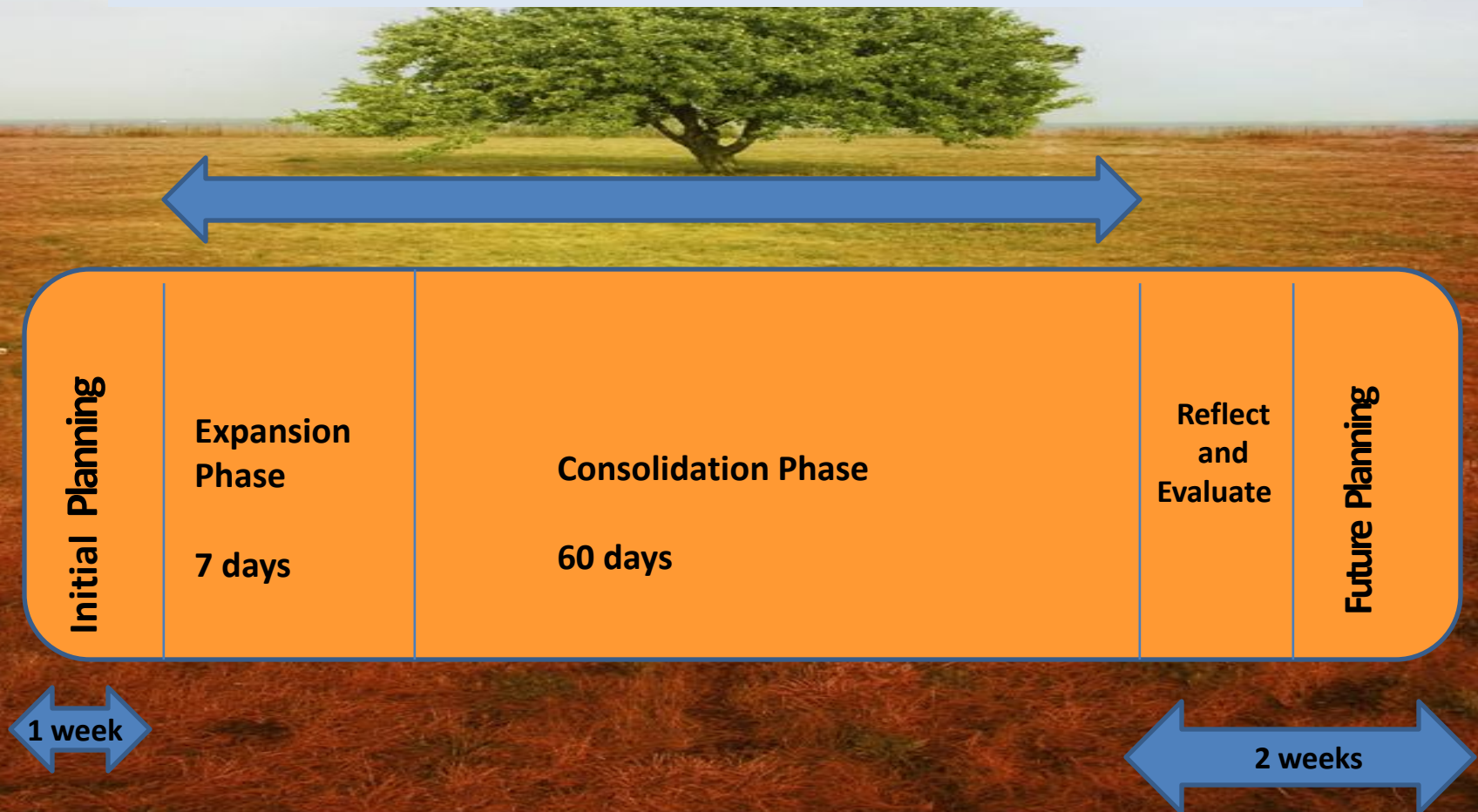


..To become an "A" cluster is just a journey...we have learned to base expansion on strength of human resources and not opportunities...."

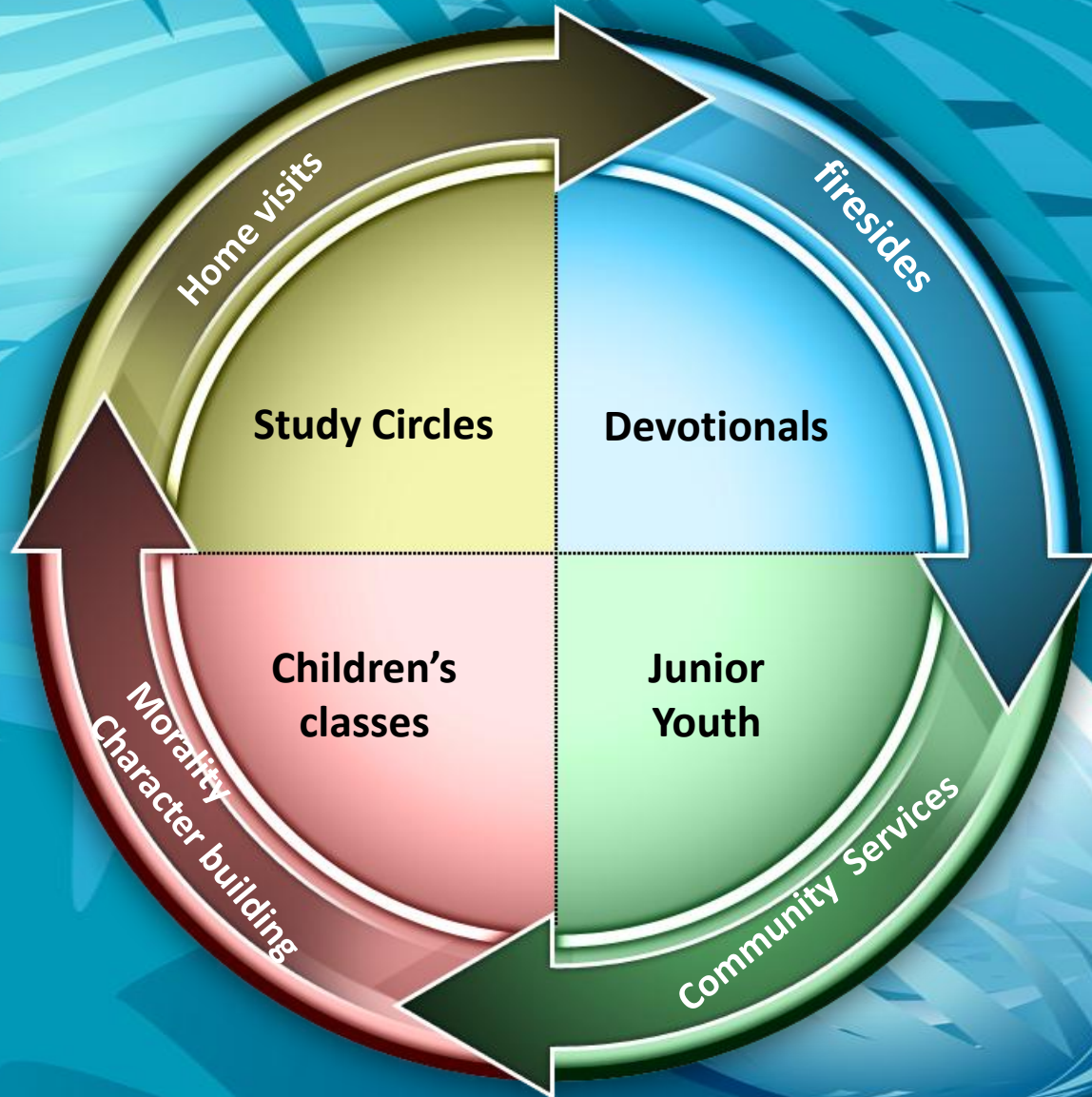
ITC member Stephen Hall , Portland Conference 12/2008

Phases of each cycle within Intensive Program of Growth

“As currently conceived, an intensive program 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.”



Four Core Activities





**Train and
inspire**

- Teach
- Confirm
- Sustain

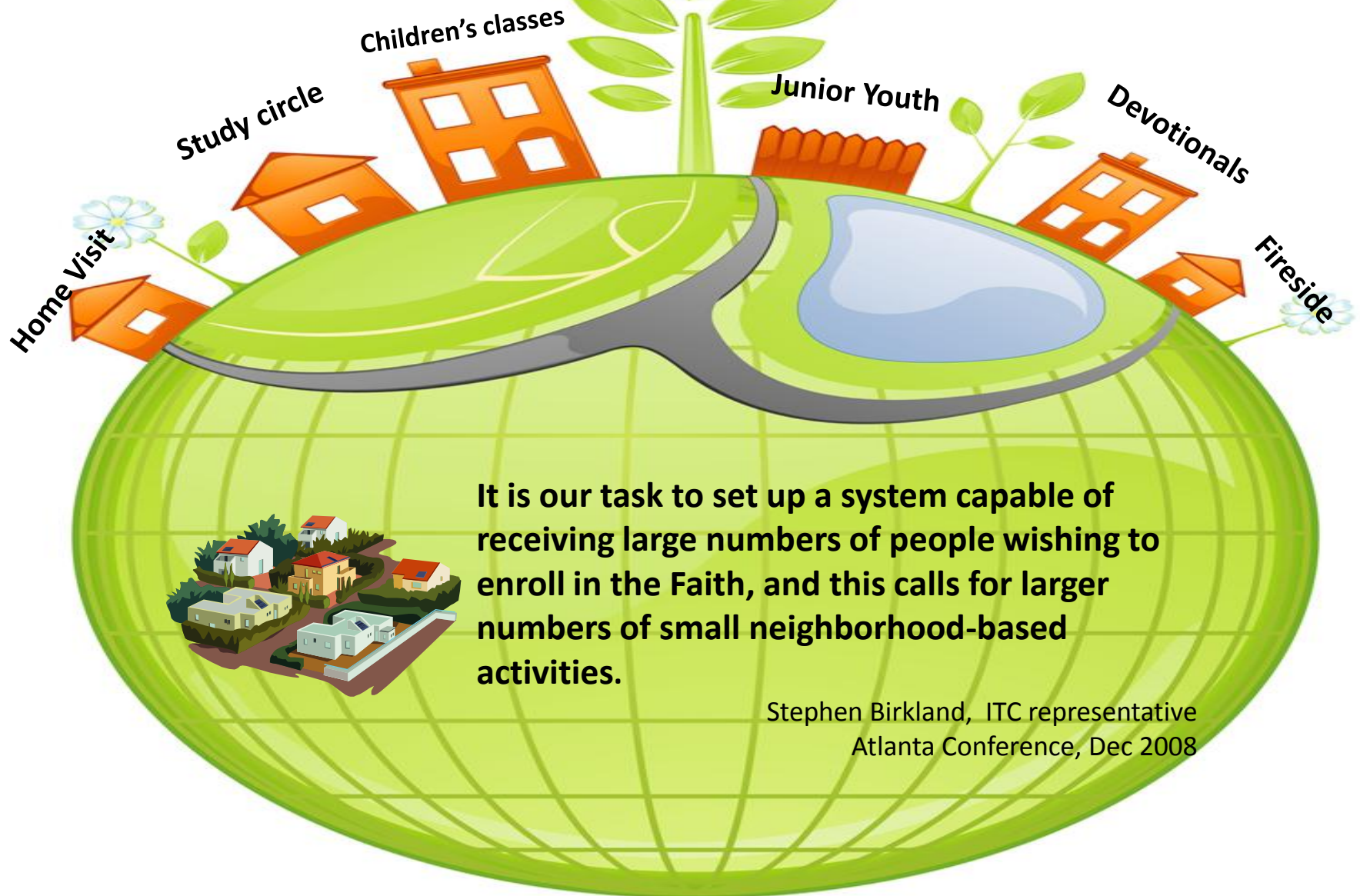
**Planning
stages for
systematic
teaching**

**Build a
campaign**

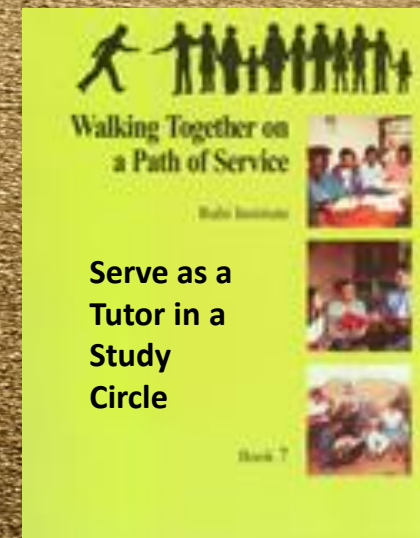
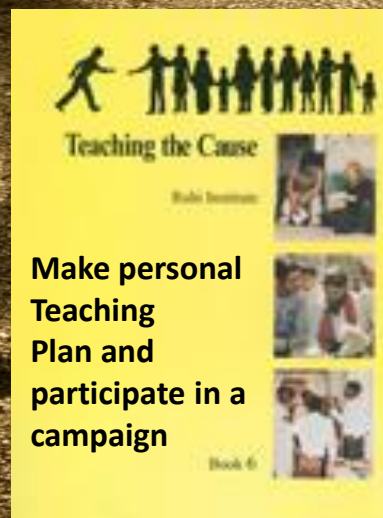
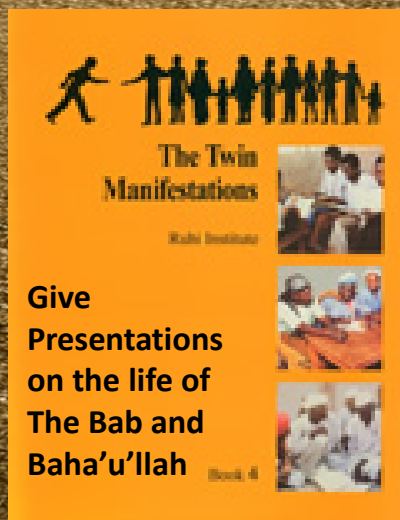
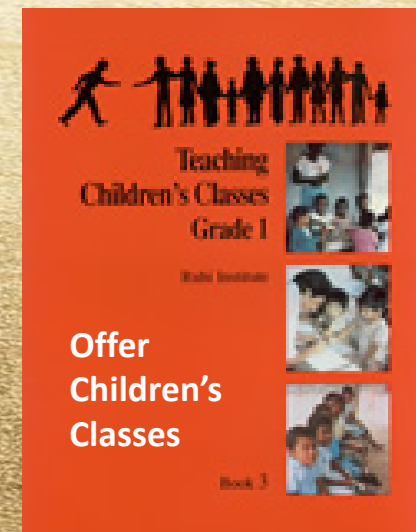
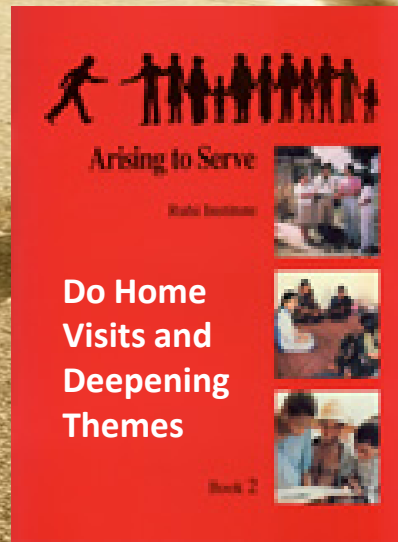
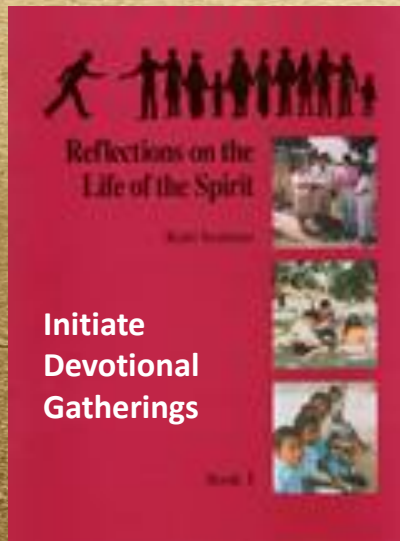
- Integrate new learning
- Try new building blocks
- Engage in team with new believers

- Analyze
- Reflect
- Evaluate

Neighborhood based activities



Institute Course Services





We need 100 Baha'is to sustain 1000.

..."So, in 1996 we started the Institute Process. The Institute Process is not just a series of courses. ***It is a process of building a capacity for service.*** It is a process for creating a pattern of life that not only transforms individual Bahá'ís, but the community as well. And what we have learned where we have had large scale growth is that the community cannot be sustained by nine people. ***We need 100 Bahá'ís sustaining 1000.***"

Opening Address to the Regional Bahá'í Conference in Manila
29 November 2008

Dr. Penny Walker, Representative of the Universal House of Justice and Counsellor Member of the International Teaching Center.

Only 10% are actively contributing to the needs of the 5 Year Plan.

..."But our numbers are so few. Only about 10 percent of the believers are actively contributing to the needs of the Plan. New believers must – immediately – start to build their capacities for service so the process becomes self-perpetuating..."

Rachel Ndegwa from Kenya, ITC representative
Atlanta Conference Dec. 2008



Fundamental prerequisite for a successful teaching campaign.



“Nor should any ... overlook the fundamental prerequisite for any successful teaching enterprise, which is to adapt the presentation of the fundamental principles of their Faith to the cultural and religious backgrounds, the ideologies, and the temperament of the divers races and nations whom they are called upon to enlighten and attract.”

Reflect and Evaluate

Train and sustain

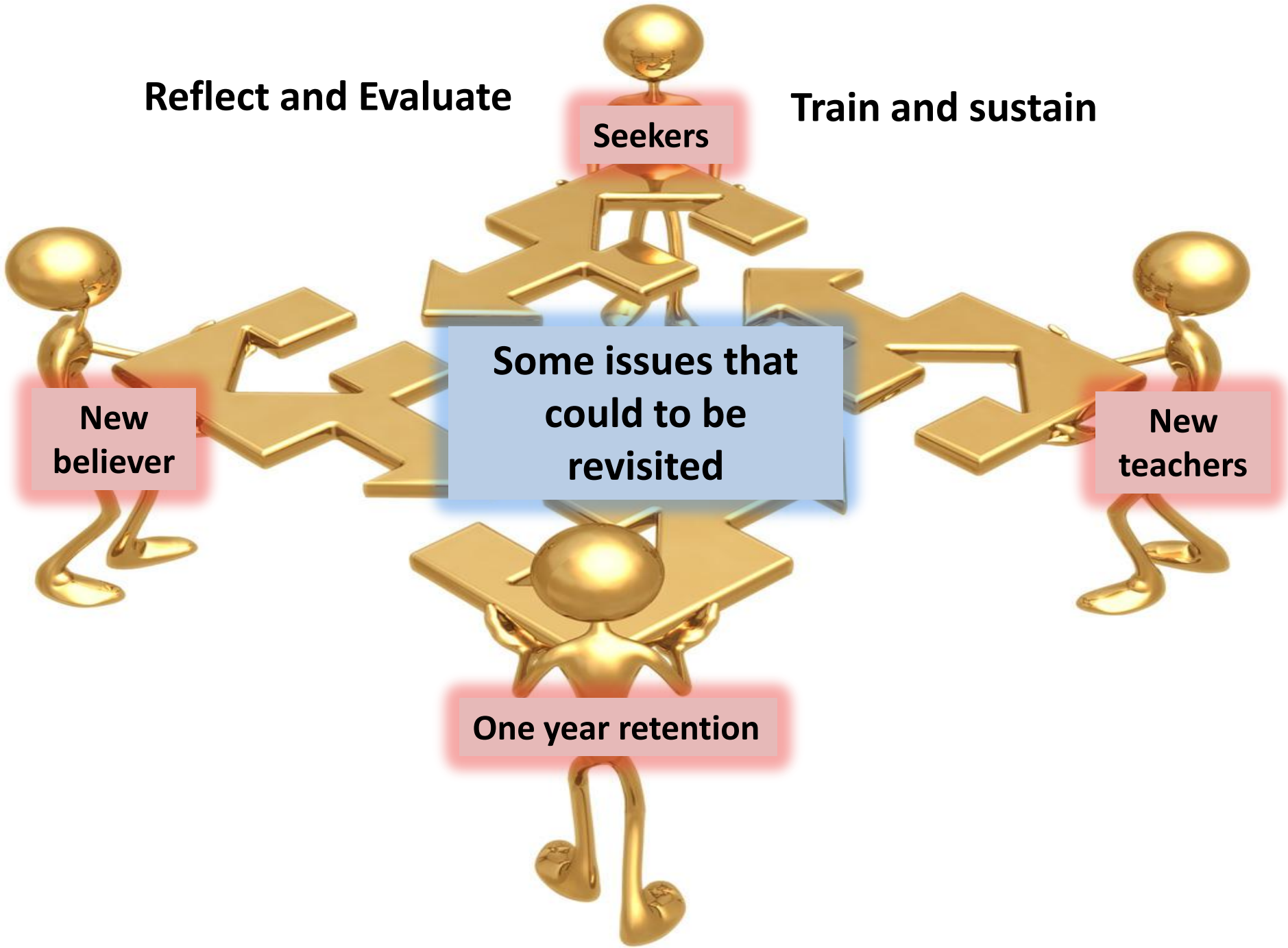
Seekers

**New
believer**

**New
teachers**

**Some issues that
could to be
revisited**

One year retention





Some points to remember when we are with our seekers.

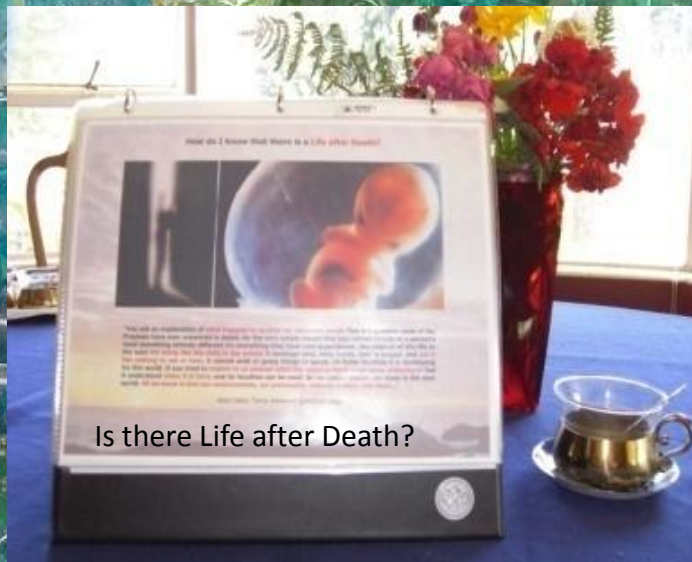
- Take your time to recognize receptivity.
- Give your seeker a chance to empty their cup.
- Take your time to refill that “empty cup” directly from the Writings.
- Recognize and act when you are seeing that “Spark of Faith.”
- Once our seekers recognizes that Baha’u’llah is the Manifestation for this day he/she is ready to become a Baha’i. The rest can wait till later. Note the new registration cards.
- Continue to stay close to them in this transition phase into the community. Accompaniment is vital.

How your seeker engages with the Writings



Starting the Journey

- First your seeker brings forward many questions.
- He reads the Writings or quotes out loud. You just share the key issues from each quote.
- He ponders, meditates and reflects.
- Soon all of his questions will lead to the recognition of the Station of Baha'u'llah .



Time to catch the "Spark of Faith"

- The answers will come together and touch the soul.
- A spark of Faith will enter the heart and an eternal spiritual bond is ignited.
- Invite your seeker to join his newly discovered "Face of the Beloved."
- More questions will follow, but we have eternity to find those meanings and often hidden mysteries.

Anna's Presentation

- God, our relationship with Him and His Manifestations; Baha'u'llah as the Promised One of all ages.
- Unity as the Primary aim of Baha'u'llah's teachings, oneness of humanity...eliminate prejudice.
- Story of Baha'u'llah - His suffering ...His revelation and its influence on people's hearts and minds.
- Story of the Bab; His Station as the Gate leading to the Promised One...
- Covenant of Baha'u'llah; life and station of Abdu'l-Baha; the station of the Guardian; establishment of the Universal House of Justice.

Concepts to convey:

- Laws and commandments as a sign of God's love; a few examples of spiritual and social laws. (such as obligatory prayer, prohibition against backbiting and intoxicants, and importance of education)
- Religion building a World Order:
- Roles and benefits for the individual believer; roles and benefits for the community; roles of the institutions and benefits for society.

"The American Baha'i"

May/June 2008 p. 36

"Teachers in clusters around the world are finding "Anna's presentation" from Book 6 of the Ruhi curriculum to be a helpful model for direct teaching. As teachers gain in experience, they learn to adapt the presentation according to individual circumstances..."

Some seeker issues that we might want to consider for discussion.

Devotionals often are not a place to find answers to questions that our seekers have.

Book 1 only covers 3 specific topics, but our seekers have many more questions than that.

We often make seekers feel that their questions are for “later” when in truth they are important to them now.

Anna’s Presentation is wonderful to share verities of the Faith and covenant issues. It is not designed to answer personal questions that many seekers have.

Not enough firesides in most communities to find a place for seekers to bring their many questions.

Home visits should also be a place for answering questions and not just deepening themes.

New believer confirmation firesides

- Our new believers have a myriad of questions that are not covered in the Ruhi Study Books.
- Gather them into on-going confirmation sessions, so that they all may empty their cups. They have to know there is a safe place to ask their questions. These answers should be given directly from the Writings.
- Some of these sessions can be given by a Book2 graduate doing the deepening themes. See also “Becoming a member of the Baha’i Community” in Heart to Heart.
- Important to introduce here the “personal teaching” concept. See list in “Reflections”. Will learn further skills in future Study Circles.

Organize quarterly socials for our new believers so that they can bond and can freely talk about their needs and transformation experiences.

Just as exciting is the news that the majority of the new believers are benefiting from immediate follow-up visits, leading many to participate in institute courses and other core activities.



Issues...

First

Year

Retention

I heard at Feast about
the need of the fund
and more teaching...



It takes 7 cycles (21 months) to get through all the
Ruhi Books. ITC Counselor Stephen Hall
recommends one book per cycle at Portland
conference.
Book 2 alone takes 88 man hours to complete
with all the services and exercises.

- Only a few new believers
complete Book 1 (20%)
- Most new believers
might make it to
devotionals.

"I keep hearing all the
time that I need to teach
but I don't understand
any of it... I was not told
about that when I
enrolled."

"Reflection
Gatherings
are scary. I
feel I was one
of their
numerical
goals."

Accompaniment
is up to each teacher.



Solutions for some of our new believers needs

Accompany them for the first year to most events and activities. Ask for help from the many tutors.

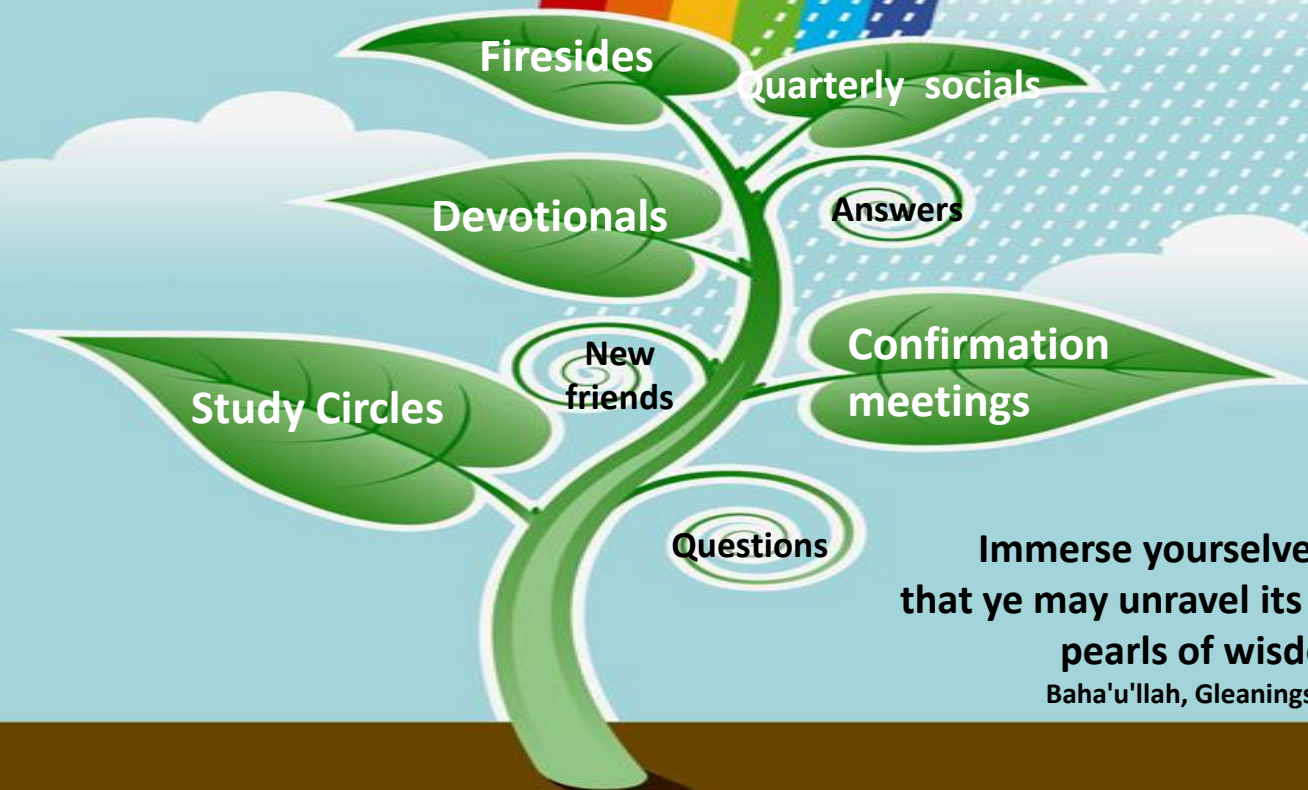
Help them to deepen their relationship with Bahauallah. Network them into the 4 core activities, especially the Study Circles

Introduce them to the many ways to meditate and read the Writings everyday.

Invite them to come with you when you teach. Let them support you and make them feel engaged.

Solutions....
New believer "One Year Retention"

**Prayer, studying the Word of God,
bonding, support, transformation.**



**Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words,
that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the
pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths.**

Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 136

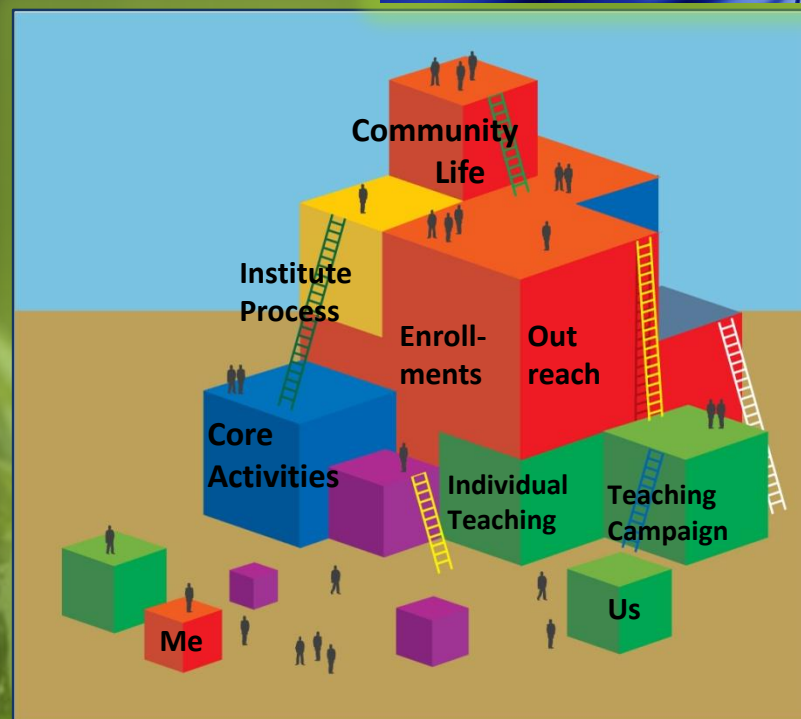
We need to take charge of our own learning...



“Let us begin our discussion on this subject by saying that the Ruhi Institute’s fundamental concern with participation is not at a level of method and technique. What we seek is for the student to take charge of his or her own learning. This can occur even when the teaching method is not participatory.... We expect that, in the study circles for which you serve as a tutor, the students will be the active agents of learning. You are to ensure that they assume ownership of their education.”

Ruhi Book 7 “Walking together on a Path of Service” pg 52

Sustainable Growth...How do we know we are ready for an Intensive Program of Growth?



“A question often asked by the friends is how they will know when their cluster is ready for an intensive program of growth. One indicator that cannot be overlooked is growth itself—an increase in the number of Baha’is in the cluster. A vigorous institute process, the multiplication of core activities and their integration, a successful outreach to local inhabitants, an ever-growing number of individual and collective teaching initiatives, a vibrant community life, and a commitment to an ongoing learning process will result in growth. This includes new enrollments as well as reactivated Baha’is who have been roused by the newfound spirit and activity in their area.”

Impact of the Process of Growth on Community Life



“...the positive effect on the quality of Baha’i community life...
is reflected in the enhanced quality of its internal processes:”

- ❑ **Improvements in the Nineteen Day Feast**
- ❑ **A rise in participation levels**
- ❑ **The consultative processes at all levels...have improved in efficacy, becoming more purposeful, united, and focused**
- ❑ **Contributions to the Bahá’í Fund have been positively impacted**

These successes are owed to the effect of the institute process...”

- July 2005 International Teaching Center, “Impact of Growth on Administration Processes”, para 14-15

Congregational activity versus community and spiritual vitality.



To mistakenly identify Bahá'í community life with the mode of religious activity that characterizes the general society -- in which the **believer is a member of a congregation, leadership comes from an individual or individuals presumed to be qualified for the purpose, and personal participation is fitted into a schedule** dominated by concerns of a very different nature -- **can only have the effect of marginalizing the Faith and robbing the community of the spiritual vitality available to it.**

Universal House of Justice to an individual, Aug 22, 2002

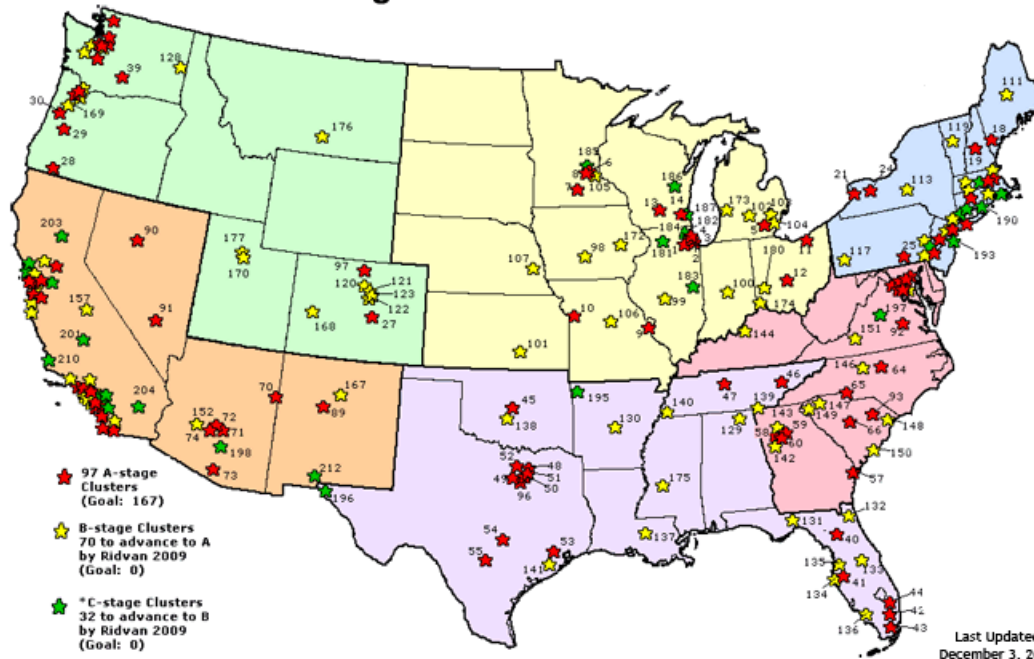
Progress of the Five Year Plan: 2007-2008

From 97 to 121 clusters scheduled to advance by Ridvan 2009:

76 from B-stage to A-stage

45 from *C-stage to B-stage

Cluster Progress Towards Ridvan 2009 Goals



Last Updated
December 3, 2008