

## INTERFAITH INSIGHT

# A Baha'i perspective on service: Servants to humanity

*As a part of the Year of Interfaith Service, this is the sixth in a series of Insights on various religious perspectives on service.*

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The foremost example of how the members of the Baha'i Faith seek to serve and to guide humanity toward universal peace is seen in the life of the son of the prophet founder of the Baha'i Faith, 'Abdu'l-Baha. Through 40 years of persecution and imprisonment, 'Abdu'l-Baha exemplified the true meaning of service to humanity, and he

serves as the supreme example to all Baha'is of how to serve humanity through acts of kindness. His instructions to the Baha'is was to "Love ye all religions and all races with a love that is true and sincere and show that love through deeds."

'Abdu'l-Baha, through his writing and actions, established acts of kindness, service and charity as the motive force behind the individual life of a Baha'i.

He instructed the Baha'is, "It is your duty to be exceedingly kind to every human being ... until ye change the world of man into the world of God."

He further stated, "Love manifests its reality in deeds, not only in words — these alone are without effect."

Baha'is believe service to humanity is service to God.

On a local level, this principle of service crystalizes into numerous activities.

The Baha'is of the Greater Grand Rapids area and West Michigan engage in collective and individual projects. For example, one such effort involves providing support and assistance to immigrant families, often from parts of Africa.

These efforts include regular



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virtue and activity classes for youth, junior youth and children, social activities for refugee families and instruction in English as a second language. Individual Baha'is may provide jobs, education and training classes, and material assistance when needed.

The world Baha'i community has a long tradition of interfaith outreach and community service projects on both global and local

fronts.

Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith, said, "The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens," and enjoined upon the Baha'is to "consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship."

The Baha'i Faith was founded upon principles of the attainment of world peace and the Baha'is are individually and collectively dedicated with working with all religions on the fulfillment of the promise of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth.

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