



# Bahá'í Faith

## Disclaimer

This resource has been prepared to help staff and students in raising awareness, increasing knowledge and to assist their work at MMU.

The resource has been prepared according to the Faith Communities Navigator' published in 2007 by the Faith Regen Foundation and guidance from

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## Key beliefs

There are approximately 6,000 Bahá'ís in the UK today with 6.5 million members worldwide. Central to the Bahá'í Faith is the conviction that all people are equal and share a common destiny. It is a monotheistic faith that recognises the validity of all the world's great religions. The religion was founded approximately 160 years ago, making it the world's youngest monotheistic faith. Its founder, Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892), is regarded by Bahá'ís as the most recent in the line of Messengers of God that stretches back beyond recorded time and that includes Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, Muhammad and the Báb.

The three core principles of the Bahá'í Faith are the oneness of God, the oneness of humanity and the oneness of religion, and the relationship amongst these is the concept of progressive revelation, ie, at different stages of the spiritual and social development of humanity, the teachings of the same God have been and will be progressively revealed through different Manifestations of God, namely the prophet founders of various religious paths throughout the world, to teach and guide the same humanity according to the everlasting Covenant of God, and the Bahá'í revelation is the most recent one from God for humanity. Throughout the Bahá'í teachings, there is a predominant emphasis on the coexistence and synergy of the spiritual and the physical. Based on these premises, there are several important spiritual and social teachings:

- independent investigation of truth by every individual;
- emphasis on consultation, cooperation and collaboration;
- equality between women and men;
- elimination of all forms of prejudice;
- harmony of religion and science;
- implementation of universal compulsory education;
- adoption of a universal auxiliary language;

- obedience to government and non-involvement in partisan politics unless submission to law;
- establishment of world peace and global commonwealth for collective security, and prohibition of religious wars;
- elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty;
- regarding the spiritual and moral development during this physical existence as the preparation for the spiritual journey after physical death.

## Worship elements

The oneness of spirituality and physicality is the main focus; there is a deliberate avoidance of ritual and communal worship. The faith has a few specific worshipping practices:

- The recital of a daily prayer chosen by the individual from three options of different lengths;
- Marriage ceremony consisting of a specific short single sentence spoken by both the bride and the groom;
- The only congregational prayer is the funeral prayer;
- In each of the nineteen Bahá'í months of nineteen days each in a Bahá'í year based on the solar cycle, the believers of a locality gather in a nineteen-day feast for spiritual and physical fellowship as well as consultation on community affairs.

## Places of worship

Though worship can be performed anywhere, seven temples have been built to date (six standing today, one on each continental region, with the eighth under construction) with their commonality being nine entrances (usually on nine sides) and a central dome; one of the significance of the number nine being the highest digit, symbolising completeness and unity in diversity, the coming together of people of different religious and cultural backgrounds. These temples are open to all.

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## Food and drink

The non-medical use of alcohol and narcotics is forbidden. There are no other dietary restrictions. Spiritual discipline is outwardly displayed in the annual fasting during the nineteen days before the vernal equinox (ie, between 2nd and 20th March). The period between 25th February and 1st March is the Intercalary Days (Ayyám-i-Há) that does not belong to any Bahá'í month and is a time set aside for festivity, hospitality and charity.

## Festivals and days of worship

There are 11 holy days. Nine of these are anniversaries related to the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, the twin founders of the faith, and on which work should be suspended. The other two are related to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the eldest son of Bahá'u'lláh and the Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh.

Name	Gregorian date	Work suspended
Naw-Rúz (Bahá'í New Year)	21 March	Yes
First Day of Ridván (Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh)	21 April	Yes
Ninth Day of Rdván	29 April	Yes
Twelfth Day of Ridván	2 May	Yes
Declaration of the Báb	23 May	Yes
Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh	29 May	Yes
Martyrdom of the Báb	9 July	Yes
Birth of the Báb	20 Oct	Yes
Birth of Bahá'u'lláh	12 Nov	Yes
Day of the Covenant (Appointment of 'Abdu'l-Bahá)	26 Nov	No
Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá	28 Nov	No

Like Judaism and Islam, each day begins at sunset on the previous solar day and end at sunset of the present solar day. For instance, Naw-Rúz begins at sunset on 20th March and ends at sunset on 21st March.

## Texts

The huge volume of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh is regarded as divine revelation. The most important of these is the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (the Most Holy Book). The Bahá'í scripture also include the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, regarded as authorised interpretations of the Bahá'í teachings. The writings of the Báb are regarded as divine revelation, but some of the laws given by him were specifically changed or abrogated by Bahá'u'lláh. Though not included as Bahá'í scripture, the scriptures of preceding world religions are also regarded as sacred writings.

The diversity calendar can be found at [www.mmu.ac.uk/humanresources/equalities](http://www.mmu.ac.uk/humanresources/equalities)

This fact sheet has been produced using information found in the 'Faith Communities Navigator' published in 2007 by the Faith Regen Foundation and [www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/zoroastrian](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/zoroastrian) with guidance from MMU Chaplains.