

Creating a spiritual conference

Communicating with our hearts

“The prime requisite for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attachment to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold. Should they be graciously aided to acquire these attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Baha shall be vouchsafed.” Abdu’l Baha

[Bahá'í Reference Library - Selections From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Page 87 \(bahai.org\)](#)

Prayer

O Thou compassionate Lord, Thou Who art generous and able! We are servants of Thine sheltered beneath Thy providence. Cast Thy glance of favor upon us. Give light to our eyes, hearing to our ears, and understanding and love to our hearts. Render our souls joyous and happy through Thy glad tidings. O Lord! Point out to us the pathway of Thy kingdom and resuscitate all of us through the breaths of the Holy Spirit. Bestow upon us life everlasting and confer upon us never-ending honor. Unify mankind and illumine the world of humanity. May we all follow Thy pathway, long for Thy good pleasure and seek the mysteries of Thy kingdom. O God! Unite us and connect our hearts with Thy indissoluble bond. Verily, Thou art the Giver, Thou art the Kind One and Thou art the Almighty.

Abdu'l-Bahá

Land Acknowledgement

Halton as we know it today, is rich in history and modern traditions of many First Nations and the Métis. From the Anishinabe to the Attawandaron, the Haudenosaunee, and the Métis - these lands surrounding the Great Lakes are steeped in Indigenous history.

As we gather today on these treaty lands we have the responsibility to honour and respect the four directions, land, waters, plants, animals, ancestors that walked before us, and all the wonderful elements of creation that exist.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation for sharing their traditional territory with us.

Guidelines for a focused Practice

- We want to acknowledge the sacrifice that all of us are making to spend our precious time in learning how to practice the ADJ Process.
- It is critical that during this time, we focus solely on the Practice of the ADJ Process, where we will work to free ourselves from racial prejudice. Please stay on topic. We will gently remind you of this.
- During the presentation, everybody should be on mute. We will go through the entire presentation first. Write down any thoughts or questions that come to you. Once the presentation is finished, unmute. We will then start the discussion based on each specific slide.
- We are aware that in learning and practicing this process, emotions will be stirred up and awakened that will surprise and confuse us.
- How do we move forward with this double-edged sword where our personal lived experience and tests and difficulties can obscure our path forward in our quest for freedom from racial prejudice?
- If an emotion becomes overwhelming in this process and in the meeting, write it down for yourself. Do not ignore, avoid or deny it. This is a gift.
- If you have any questions about the ADJ process, please reach out to info@adj-wtru.org.

What we're working on today

1. Sharing Feedback from Self Assessment and Reflection Practice.
2. Communication – Creating a Spiritual Conference

Why is interaction important to consider?

- “Within an interaction, neither person can stop behaving, and each adapts to the other’s behavior. Whether they are talking or remaining silent, being active or passive, they are behaving.
- Each person perceives the other’s behavior and attaches meaning to some of it. Those behaviors to which meaning is assigned become messages. Since any behavior can become a message, it is impossible to keep from generating meaning within an interaction. In this sense one cannot not communicate.” (Note 1)
- With every interaction there is the possibility of misunderstanding (fallout)
- How we resolve a fallout, by developing the capacity to use the tools that Baha’u’llah gave us to prevent and resolve fallout, whether at an individual, family, community or institutional level will determine our future as humanity. This tool is CONSULTATION.

Note 1 - [Interaction and Human Communication | Interpersonal Relations \(lumenlearning.com\)](https://lumenlearning.com)

When interaction and communication results in fallout

- If interaction and communication do not result in understanding and connection, then we call this misunderstanding, a fallout.
- A fallout is characterized by an emotional reaction.
- What do I do with this emotional reaction? If I ignore it, then I start a cycle of emotional spin and rumination. My denial and avoidance behaviours will close the path to spiritual growth within myself and my interactions with others.
- If I do not do the inner work, I will not develop my capacity or understanding to bring forward the betterment of the world.
- **“The betterment of the world can be accomplished through pure and goodly deeds, through commendable and seemly conduct.”** (Note 4)

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited in “The Advent of Divine Justice” (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984), pp. 24–25)

[Search – Authoritative Writings and Guidance | Bahá'í Reference Library \(bahai.org\)](#)

Reflection item: I will become increasingly aware that this work provides lessons, rather than punishment. Each fallout points out to me those areas where I need additional spiritual guidance. We have an ocean of spiritual guidance at our fingertips.

The prerequisites for true communication and interaction in groups and institutions

- “When we look around us and see how people come together to reach agreement on a course of action, we often detect characteristics that are not in keeping with Abdu’l Baha’s depiction of true consultation.” (Note 1)
- “For a consultative process to take on the characteristics of a **“spiritual conference”** (Note 2) its participants must strive to reflect certain spiritual qualities.”
- The tools Shoghi Effendi has given me to resolve fallouts are the Caveats and God’s Assurances.(Note 3)

Note 5: Ruhi Book 10, Unit 2, Section 3, page 6

Note 6: Ruhi Book 10, Unit 2, Section 4, page 7

Note 7: Caveats and God’s Assurances can be found on the website, www.adj-wtru.org under Resources then Tools.

Reflection item: How is this guiding us to a path where we can speak from our hearts and listen with our hearts?

Interaction Responsibility Addressed to Whites (self identify)

**Let the
white make
a supreme
effort**

in their resolve to contribute their share to the solution of this problem,

to abandon once for all their usually inherent and at times subconscious sense of superiority,

to correct their tendency towards revealing a patronizing attitude towards the members of the other race,

to persuade them through their intimate, spontaneous and informal association with them of the genuineness of their friendship and the sincerity of their intentions,

and to master their impatience of any lack of responsiveness on the part of a people who have received, for so long a period, such grievous and slow-healing wounds.

Interaction Responsibility Addressed to African Americans (self identify)

**Let the
Negroes,
through a
corresponding
effort on their
part,**

**show by every means in their power the
warmth of their response,**

their readiness to forget the past,

**and their ability to wipe out every trace of
suspicion that may still linger in their hearts
and minds.**

Mutual Responsibilities Addressed to both whites and African Americans (Range)

Mutual Standards of Communication

Let neither think that the solution of so vast a problem is a matter that exclusively concerns the other.

Let neither think that such a problem can either easily or immediately be resolved.

Let neither think that they can wait confidently for the solution of this problem until the initiative has been taken, and the favorable circumstances created, by agencies that stand outside the orbit of their Faith.

Let neither think that anything short of genuine love, extreme patience, true humility, consummate tact, sound initiative, mature wisdom, and deliberate, persistent, and prayerful effort, can succeed in blotting out the stain which this patent evil has left on the fair name of their common country.

Let them rather believe, and be firmly convinced, that on their mutual understanding, their amity, and sustained cooperation, must depend, more than on any other force or organization operating outside the circle of their Faith, the deflection of that dangerous course so greatly feared by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the materialization of the hopes He cherished for their joint contribution to the fulfillment of that country's glorious destiny.

Using the caveats and God's assurances to transform emotional and mental suffering to spiritual opportunity

How to Kill Prejudice (The Sheltering Branch, Marzieh Gail)

In spite of His own immaculate perfection, the Master never turned away from the despised and the rejected, but rather transformed them with His regal touch. Florence Khánum tells in her book of her reaction to some of the people she saw in her travels. (It must be remembered that she was Boston-educated, which means that she took a rather conservative view of the rest of mankind). She writes of a little servant:

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“I ... discovered to my amazement and shock, that the expression of her eyes was more wild and uncivilized than the eyes of our domestic animals in America! Such as the eyes of our horses, our dogs, our cats, which usually give back a reflection of our love and affection, while this young girl's eyes did not!”

She grew somewhat afraid of the local people, and then one day she saw a native woman coming along the roofed-over stone corridor, and she wanted to run away. Just then 'Abdu'l-Bahá approached with one of His daughters:

“I saw the woman pause, bow, and greet the Master. He replied graciously, and spoke sweetly, and as He passed, pressed a coin into her hand. She burst forth into phrases of evident joy and gratitude, and went away.

Using the caveats and God's assurances to transform emotional and mental suffering to spiritual opportunity Cont'd

I lingered, to ask the Master's daughter: 'What did she say? Who is she?'

"She is the daughter of a desert chief, and she has suffered very much.'

"Is she a Bahá'í?'

"No; but she loves the Master very much. He has been kind to her.'

"What did she say to Him?'

"She said she would pray for Him.'

"And what did the Master say?'

"He thanked her.'

"In my American-trained mind, at first I thought: 'How presumptuous for that dirty- looking, half-savage-looking woman to tell the Master she would pray for Him!' And then, as the sweetness and humility of His reply astonished me, another experience of His spiritual grandeur overwhelmed my soul."

Abdu'l-Bahá was to say:

"... there is need of a superior power to overcome human prejudices; a power which nothing in the world of mankind can withstand and which will overshadow the effect of all other forces at work in human conditions. That irresistible power is the love of God."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 68.

DOUBLE CRUSADE PROCESS - TRANSITION FROM FALLOUT TO REFLECTION PROCESS

Interaction between individuals, groups and/or institutions may result in fallout. Fallout creates suffering which can be mental and/or physical stress.

CAVEATS

• Shoghi Effendi has identified and listed all possible outcomes of fallout. We call them Caveats (warnings). This is a blessing because it allows me to be able to identify the nature of the fallout, and to confirm that the fallout is a necessary part of the process in the total cycle. I must link the specific fallout to a caveat. This results in the acknowledgement and understanding of the issue.

SUFFERING takes two forms:

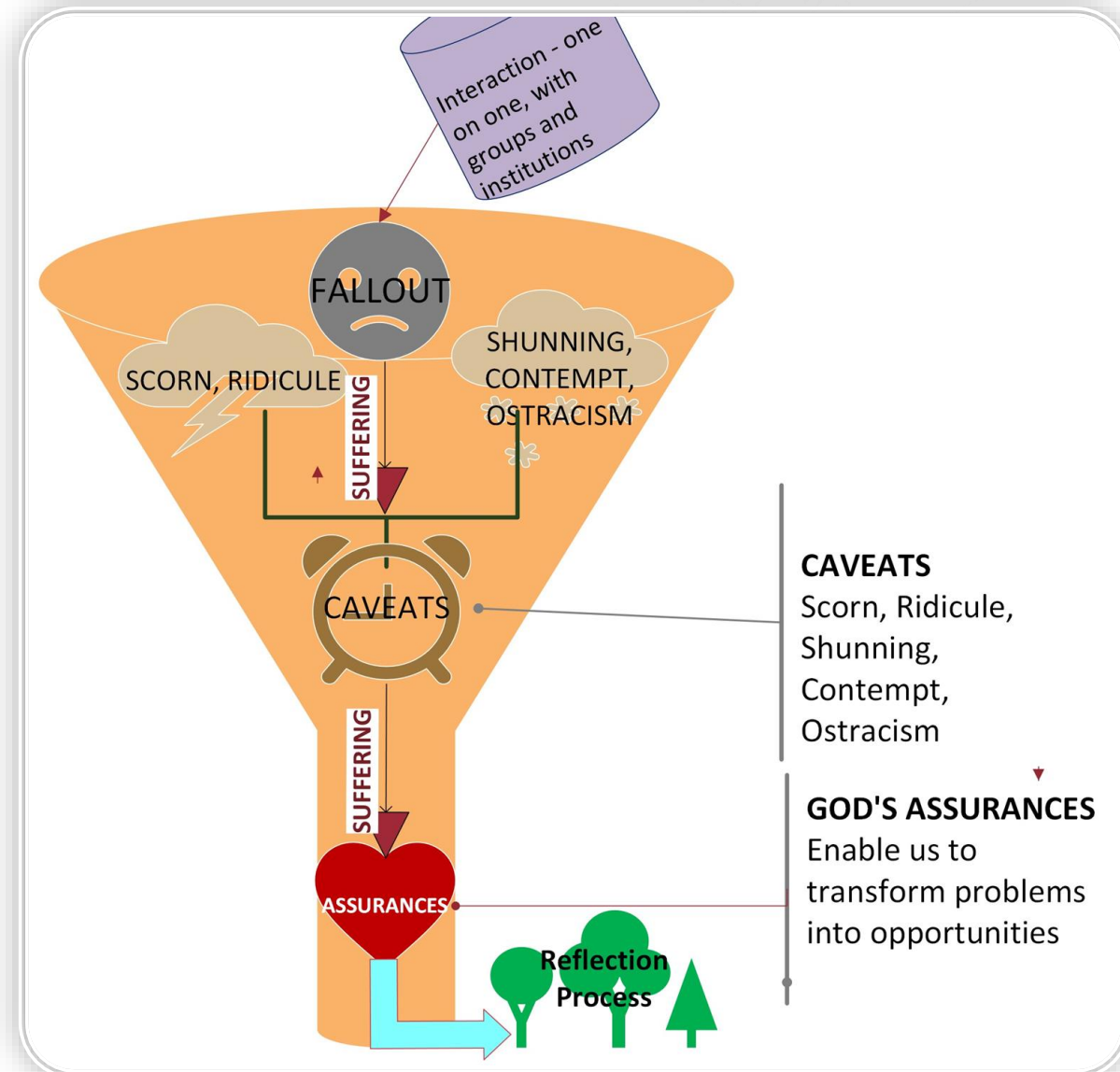
- Physical or emotional pain. This is when I get stuck in the suffering state, which is called the fallout. It is a result of a human interaction.
- In spiritual suffering I have found the path to move forward from emotional turmoil by linking the caveats to the issue. The result is an understanding that this is a spiritual opportunity not a problem.

GOD'S ASSURANCES

Shoghi Effendi lists God's Assurances to help us:

- Accept the struggle that we must go through to develop our spiritual qualities
- Transform our perception of the struggle from a problem to a spiritual opportunity.

Without God's Assurances we would stay in spiritual suffering mode and not move forward to do the hard work required to move the issue to the Reflection Process.



Identifying the Caveats to transform emotional and mental suffering to spiritual opportunity

- To understand the nature of the fallout, I must recognize that emotional turmoil is at the core of a fallout. In this story, where do you see the emotional suffering? (“In my American-trained mind, at first I thought: ‘How presumptuous for that dirty - looking, half-savage-looking woman to tell the Master she would pray for Him!’ And then, as the sweetness and humility of His reply astonished me, another experience of His spiritual grandeur overwhelmed my soul.”)
- Was one of the veils removed from her eyes through this experience?
- Next, using the list of caveats, I will identify the corresponding caveat to the fallout of the story. When I review the list and the fallout above, I see that in Paragraph 60, **Their own instincts** (2nd sentence) is the corresponding caveat.
- When I acknowledge and understand the caveat, I am moving from emotional and material suffering into the recognition that it is spiritual suffering.
- This acknowledgement that my emotional turmoil, when processed through my reflection of the caveats transforms my perception that the struggle is not purely emotional but also a spiritual suffering. Our guidance on this path is through the caveats

Caveats can be found here [99bcf3_d2a894de6b2c43528837914677d16b7e.pdf \(adj-wtru.org\)](https://www.adj-wtru.org/99bcf3_d2a894de6b2c43528837914677d16b7e.pdf) on paragraph 60.

Identifying God's Assurances to transform spiritual suffering to spiritual opportunity

- When we recognize that we are in spiritual suffering, we go to God's Assurances to gain the strength and grounding into His spiritual support. I accept that I must go through tests and difficulties to develop our spiritual qualities.
- What is the assurance in the story? "And then, as the sweetness and humility of His reply astonished me, another experience of His spiritual grandeur overwhelmed my soul."

Abdu'l-Bahá was to say:

"... there is need of a superior power to overcome human prejudices; a power which nothing in the world of mankind can withstand and which will overshadow the effect of all other forces at work in human conditions. That irresistible power is the love of God."

Next, using the list of caveats, I will identify the corresponding assurance to the fallout of the story. When I review the list and the assurance above, I see that Paragraph 62 is the corresponding assurance.

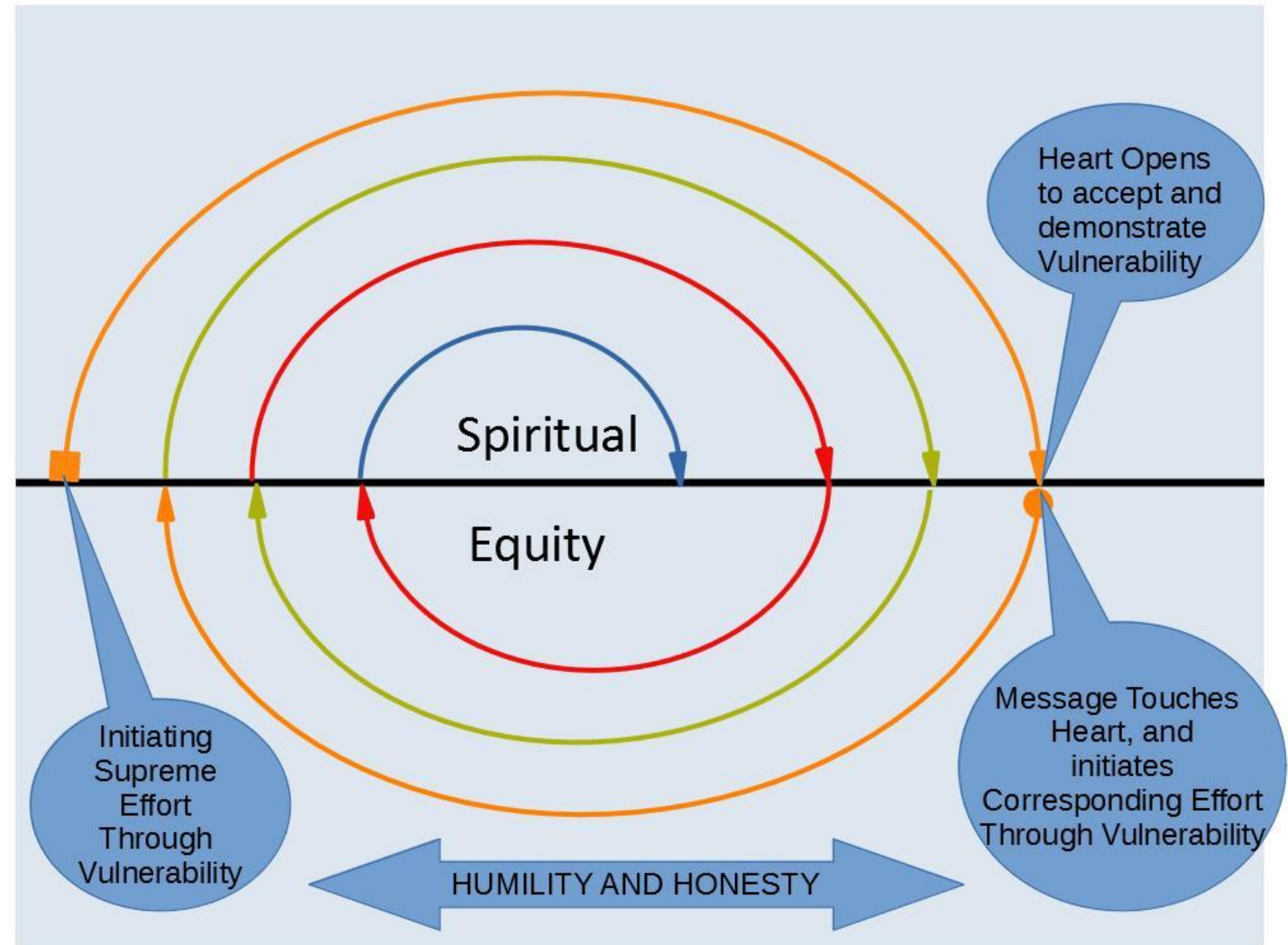
God's Assurances can be found here [99bcf3_d2a894de6b2c43528837914677d16b7e.pdf \(adj-wtru.org\)](https://www.adj-wtru.org/99bcf3_d2a894de6b2c43528837914677d16b7e.pdf) on paragraph 62.

Spiral to Spiritual Unity

•Through humility and honesty, whites allow themselves to be vulnerable to initiate the Supreme Effort that is required of them. Whites demonstrate their vulnerability in abandoning their air of superiority through a continuous Supreme Effort, until it touches the hearts of Blacks. In turn, once touched, and through humility and honesty, Blacks allow themselves to be vulnerable to initiate the required Corresponding Effort to abandon their suspicions and begin to trust.

•At the level of interactions, both whites and Blacks make progress through iterations of this cycle over time. As a result, they build trust and confidence that forms the basis of relationships. On the spiritual level, the cycle tears down the sense of superiority for Whites and suspicion for Blacks and replaces these with an ability to see each other as spiritual human beings.

•Once they perceive themselves and each other as spiritual human beings, oneness can occur, and spiritual unity achieved.



Supplementary Reflections

Our potential

The utmost desire of the lordly ones is the union of the friends, the agreement of the believers and the spiritual communication of the hearts; in order that they may shine in this darkened world like unto bright stars; educate all the communities of the world like unto bright stars; educate all the communities of the world in the precepts of love; be kind and benevolent to every one, sympathetic and compassionate to all; to become the cool and pure water to every thirsty one, a heavenly table to every hungry one, a swift healing antidote to every sick one and the cause of the everlasting glory to every humiliated one. (Note 4)

Note 4:Ruhi Book 10,Unit 2, page 15

Reflection item: How does the guidance that Abdul Baha is giving me assist me in transforming myself by following the Binding Contract?

The struggle of the valiant warriors

In the conduct of this twofold crusade the valiant warriors struggling in the name and for the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh must, of necessity, encounter stiff resistance, and suffer many a setback.

Their own instincts, no less than the fury of conservative forces, the opposition of vested interests, and the objections of a corrupt and pleasure-seeking generation, must be reckoned with, resolutely resisted, and completely overcome.

As their defensive measures for the impending struggle are organized and extended, storms of abuse and ridicule, and campaigns of condemnation and misrepresentation, may be unloosed against them. Their Faith, they may soon find, has been assaulted, their motives misconstrued, their aims defamed, their aspirations derided, their institutions scorned, their influence belittled, their authority undermined, and their Cause, at times, deserted by a few who will either be incapable of appreciating the nature of their ideals, or unwilling to bear the brunt of the mounting criticisms which such a contest is sure to involve.

“Because of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” the beloved Master has prophesied, “many a test will be visited upon you. Troubles will befall you, and suffering afflict you.”

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*

Discussion: How can we overcome these forces, if not through the harmony of our hearts?

My Individual obligations on this path

- **As the friends work together to remove the blight of racism from society, challenges will no doubt arise; however, through patience as well as love for one another, it will be possible for them to encourage and support each other to reflect deeply on their own obligation to deal with the issue of racial prejudice.**
- **In such a culture, each individual can personally assess, in an atmosphere of uncensorious forbearance, his or her own condition and possibilities for improvement.**
- **In this way, all can grow together and develop their capacities in an environment characterized by tender affection, reciprocity, and cooperation, in which the friends do not sit in judgment of their fellow believers but, rather, urge each other to contribute their share to the establishment of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.**

Universal House of Justice, July 29, 2021 letter to an Individual believer.

Reflection Item: How do we see ourselves supporting each other in what the Universal House of Justice is asking us to do?