

the point of view of a particular time and historical situation, it is believed that all religious truth is relative. Revelation, however, progresses with the appearance of each new messenger, and supposedly the truth that God wants humankind to know thereby increases.

According to the faith, one's purpose in life is to worship God and to advance civilization. The final goal is the unification of all people in one religion that will promote harmony, knowledge, justice, progress, and peace. The practice of religion is intended to promote family unity, equal rights and opportunities for all persons, compulsory education, and the elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty.

Services and Administration

The Bahá'í religion has no clergy, sacraments, or excessive ritual. There are obligations concerning prayer, fasting, and monogamy, and encouragement to abstain from alcohol and tobacco. Members are also expected to attend the Nineteen Day Feast on the first day of each month of the Bahá'í calendar. In the Bahá'í calendar the year is divided into 19 months of 19 days, with four extra days. In leap years there are five extra days. The year begins on March 21, the first day of spring, which is considered a holy day.

In the temples of Bahá'í the services are extremely simple. There is no preaching. Services consist of readings from the scriptures of all religions. The sacred literature of Bahá'í consists of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and succeeding interpretations of them.

On the local level, the Bahá'í religion is governed by an elected spiritual assembly, which has jurisdiction over all affairs within the church community. Each year, delegates from the local communities attend a national convention.

The supreme governing body is the international Universal House of Justice. It functions as the administrative, legislative, and judicial body for the Bahá'í commonwealth around the world. The headquarters of the Universal House of Justice is in Haifa, Israel, near the shrine of Bahá'u'lláh.

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