

# Bahá'í Elections

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On April 20, Los Altos and Mountain View Bahá'í communities will gather for the annual election of their respective nine-member governing bodies, as will thousands of other Bahá'í communities around the world.

The central theme of the Bahá'í Faith is the unity of humankind. This unity is of such paramount importance that well over a century ago the Faith's Founder emphatically wrote "The well-being of mankind, its peace and security are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established." To ensure this unity, Bahá'ís are enjoined not to participate in partisan politics. However, they are encouraged to be active in the civic life of their community, including voting in elections that do not require a party affiliation, and are instructed to "obey and be the well-wishers of the governments of the land" and to behave towards them with "loyalty, honesty and truthfulness."

Bahá'í elections are, therefore, nonpartisan. There is no nomination of candidates, campaigning or fund raising. Instead, prior to the elections Bahá'ís are asked to get thoroughly acquainted with one another and to discuss the requirements and qualifications for membership in the institution to be elected, without reference to particular individuals. The election takes place in a silent and prayerful atmosphere. The elector is called upon to vote, with secret ballot, and "without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespective of any material consideration," for "only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience".

Those elected are responsible to God rather than to those who elected them. Their purpose is to consult on the affairs of the community and to make decisions that are based on spiritual principles. If there is no unanimous agreement, the majority's decision prevails and the minority is asked to wholeheartedly support it, even if they believe the decision to be wrong. Unity always supersedes other considerations because in such an atmosphere the errors become eventually apparent and a corrective action can be taken; whereas in an environment full of criticism and discord no progress is made. The deliberations are always preceded by prayers, one of which follows.

"O Thou Lord of the Kingdom! Though our bodies be gathered here together, yet our spellbound hearts are carried away by Thy love, and yet are we transported by the rays of Thy resplendent face. Weak though we be, we await the revelations of Thy might and power. Poor though we be, with neither goods nor means, still take we riches from the treasures of Thy Kingdom. Drops though we be, still do we draw from out Thy ocean deeps. Motes though we be, still do we gleam in the glory of Thy splendid Sun.

"O Thou our Provider! Send down Thine aid, that each one gathered here may become a lighted candle, each one a center of attraction, each one a summoner to Thy heavenly realms, till at last we make this nether world the mirror image of Thy Paradise."

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