

Soul Food

Tree of Divine Guidance



# April 2020

## The Tree of Divine Guidance

This month's program is about the continuous guidance in the Book of God's Revelation. Through this guidance we see the progressive development of human society working towards a better world.

### Program:



- 01. Prayer
- 02. Bahá'í Writings
- 03. Hindu Writings
- 04. Buddhist Writings
- 05. Muslim Writings,
- 06. Jewish Writings



- 07. Christian Writings
- 08. Bahá'í Writings
- 09. Guru Nanak
- 10. Zoroastrian Writings
- 11. Bahá'í Writings
- 12. Black Elk



- 13. Paramahansa Yogananda
- 14. Bahá'í Writings
- 15. The Revelation of Saint John
- 16. Jewish Writings
- 17. Michael Leunig
- 18. Ralph Waldo Emerson
- 19. Dalai Lama
- 20. Bahá'í Writings



***Religions are many, but the reality of religion is one.  
The branches are many, but the tree is one.  
'Abdu'l-Baha'***



1. O Thou Lord of wondrous grace! Bestow upon us new blessings. Give to us the freshness of the spring. We are saplings which have been planted by the fingers of Thy bounty and have been formed out of the water and clay of Thy tender affection. We thirst for the living waters of Thy favours and are dependent upon the outpourings of the clouds of Thy generosity. Abandon not to itself this grove wherein our hopes aspire, nor withhold therefrom the showers of Thy loving-kindness. Grant that from the clouds of Thy mercy may fall copious rain so that the trees of our lives may bring forth fruit and we may attain the most cherished desire of our hearts.  
~'Abd'u'l-Bahá
  
2. From the seed of reality religion has grown into a tree which has put forth leaves and branches, blossoms and fruit. After a time this tree has fallen into a condition of decay. The leaves and blossoms have withered and perished; the tree has become stricken and fruitless. It is not reasonable that man should hold to the old tree, claiming that its life forces are undiminished, its fruit unequalled, its existence eternal. The seed of reality must be sown again in human hearts in order that a new tree may grow therefrom and new divine fruits refresh the world. By this means the nations and peoples now divergent in religion will be brought into unity, imitations will be forsaken, and a universal brotherhood in reality itself will be established...

As the beginning was a seed and the end is a seed, we say that the seed has returned. When we look at the substance of the tree, it is another substance, but when we look at the blossoms, leaves and fruits, the same fragrance, delicacy and taste are produced. Therefore, the perfection of the tree has returned a second time. The branches are many, but the tree is one.

~Bahá'í Writings

***God leaves not His children comfortless, but, when the darkness of winter overshadows them, then again he sends his Messengers, the Prophets, with a renewal of the blessed spring.***

***'Abdu'l-Bahá***

3. I have been born again and again, from time to time, Thou too,

O Arjuna! My births are known to Me, but Thou knowest not thine.

I have no beginning. Though I am Imperishable, as well as Lord of all that exists, Yet by My own will and power do I manifest Myself.

Whenever spirituality decays and materialism is rampant, then, O Arjuna, I reincarnate myself! To protect the righteous, to destroy the wicked and to establish the kingdom of God, I am reborn from age to age.

~Hindu Writings

4. And the Blessed One replied: 'I am not the first Buddha who came upon earth, nor shall I be the last. In due time another Buddha will arise in the world, a Holy One, a supremely enlightened One, endowed with wisdom in conduct, auspicious, knowing the universe, an incomparable leader of men, a master of angels and mortals. He will reveal to you the same eternal truths which I have taught you. He will preach his religion, glorious in its origin, glorious at the climax and glorious at the goal, in the spirit and in the letter. He will proclaim a religious life, wholly perfect and pure; such as I now proclaim.'  
~ Buddhist Writings

***The Buddhas who have been and who shall be;  
Of these am I and what they did I do.  
(Cited in The God of Buddha, p15)***

5. And for every nation there is a messenger.  
And when their messenger cometh (on the Day of Judgment)  
it will be judged between them fairly, and they will not be wronged.

~Qur'an Sura X, Jonah, verse 47

Say: We believe in God, and in what hath been sent down to us, and what hath been sent down to Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and what was given to Moses, and Jesus, and the Prophets, from their Lord. We make no difference between them.

~Qur'an Sura III, the Family of Imran, verse 78.

6. For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
~ Isaiah 9:6

***The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet  
like me from among you,  
from your brethren – him shall you heed...  
Deuteronomy 18-15***



7. In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The

voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins... I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

~Christian Writings

8. The fundamental principle enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh, the followers of His Faith firmly believe, is that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is a continuous and progressive process, that all the great religions of the world are divine in origin, that their basic principles are in complete harmony, that their aims and purposes are one and the same, that their teachings are but facets of one truth, that their functions are complementary, that they differ only in the non-essential aspects of their doctrines, and that their missions represent successive stages in the spiritual evolution of human society.

~Bahá'í Writings

***Every true Prophet has regarded His Message  
as fundamentally the same as the Revelation***

***of every other Prophet gone before Him.  
Baha'u'lláh***

9. There is One God,  
He is the Supreme Truth,  
He, the Creator, is without fear  
And without hate.  
He, the Omnipresent, pervades the Universe,  
He is not born, nor does He die to be born again.  
True in the beginning, true throughout the ages,  
True even now and forever shall be true.  
-Guru Nanak, Japji morning hymn
10. I worship you in every religion that teaches your laws and praises your  
glory.  
I worship you in every plant whose beauty reflects your beauty.  
I worship you in every event which is caused by your goodness and  
kindness.  
I worship you in every place where you dwell.  
And I worship you in every man and woman who seeks to follow your  
way of righteousness.  
~Zoroaster

***O Gods! All your names and forms are to be revered,  
saluted and adored.***

***Rig Veda***

**11. The Garden of Ridvan**

The Festival of Ridvan (April 21-May 2) termed by Bahá'u'lláh the "Most Great Festival" and the "King of Festivals" provides the occasion for the holiest days of the Baha'i year. In 1863 Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed His mission – in a garden of Baghdad, called by Baha'is the garden of Ridvan (Paradise). This period signals the commencement of what has come to be recognised as the holiest and most significant of all Baha'i festivals. During the twelve days that Bahá'u'lláh remained in the



Garden of Ridvan, great numbers came from all over Baghdad to pay their respects and to say goodbye to Him – for He was about to be exiled again. Nabil has left to posterity the following vivid description of the joyous atmosphere of that historic time: 'Every day ere the hour of dawn, the gardeners would pick the roses which lined the four avenues of the garden, and would pile them in the centre of the floor of His blessed tent. So great would be the heap that when His companions gathered to drink their morning tea in His presence, they would be unable to see each other across it. All these roses Bahá'u'lláh would, with His own hands, entrust to those whom he dismissed from his presence every morning to be delivered, on His behalf, to His Arab and Persian friends in the city... One night, the ninth night of the waxing moon, I happened to be one of those who watched beside His blessed tent. As the hour of midnight approached, I saw Him issue from his tent, pass by the places where some of His companions were sleeping, and begin to pace up and down the moonlit flower-bordered avenues of the garden. So loud was the singing of the nightingales on every side that only those who were near Him could distinctly hear His voice. He continued to walk until, pausing in the midst of one of these avenues, He observed: "Consider these nightingales. So great is their love for these roses, that sleepless from dusk till dawn, they warble their melodies and commune with burning passion with the object of their adoration. How then can those who claim to be afire with the rose; like beauty of the Beloved choose to sleep?"

~Baha'í Writings

12. The Sacred Hoop

Then I was standing on the highest mountain of them all,  
And round about beneath me  
was the whole hoop of the world.  
And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell  
And I understood more than I saw;  
For I was seeing in a sacred manner  
the shapes of all things in the spirit,  
and the shape of all shapes as they must live

together like one being.  
And I saw the sacred hoop of my people  
was one of many hoops that made one circle,  
wide as daylight and as starlight,  
and in the centre grew one mighty flowering tree  
to shelter all the children of  
one mother and one father  
And I saw that it was holy.  
-Black Elk, Oglala Sioux

***Religions are different roads converging upon the same point.  
What does it matter that we take different roads  
so long as we reach the same goal.  
Mahatma Gandhi***



13. The diverse religions are branches of Thy one immeasurable tree of truth.  
May we enjoy the luscious fruits of soul realisation that hang from the boughs of scriptures of every clime and time.  
Teach us to chant in harmony the countless expressions of our Supreme devotion, in Thy temple of earth, in a chorus of many-accented voices, we are singing only to Thee.  
O Divine Mother, lift us on Thy lap of universal love. Break Thy vow of silence and sing us the heart-melting melody of human brotherhood.  
~Paramahansa Yogananda
  
14. This is the food that conferreth everlasting life upon the pure in heart and the illumined in spirit. This is the bread of which it is said: "Lord, send down upon us Thy bread from heaven." This bread shall never be

withheld from them that deserve it, nor can it ever be exhausted. It groweth everlastingly from the tree of grace; it descendeth at all seasons from the heavens of justice and mercy. Even as He saith: "Seest thou not to what God likeneth a good word? To a good tree; its root firmly fixed, and its branches reaching unto heaven: yielding its fruit in all seasons.

~Bahá'í Writings

***The paths to God are more in number than  
the breathings of created beings.***

***Zoroastrian Writings***

15. And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.  
~The Revelation of Saint John, 22:1-2

16. At the point of rest at the centre of our being, we encounter a world where all things are at rest in the same way. Then a tree becomes a mystery, a cloud a revelation, each man a cosmos of whose riches we can only catch glimpses. The life of simplicity is simple, but it opens to us a book in which we never get beyond the first syllable.  
-Dag Hammarskjöld

***By routes diverse men may the mountain climb  
each path presenting different views sublime  
but when to the proud summit they do rise  
the self-same smiling Moon doth greet all eyes.  
A Shinto prayer***

17. **The Prayer Tree**

Might not prayer be our most accessible means to inner reconciliation; a natural healing function in response to the pain of divided self and the divided world? Might not prayerfulness be part of our survival instinct belonging more to the wilderness than to the church?

And just as we have become somewhat alienated from nature and its cycles, could it be that we are also estranged from our instinctive capacity for prayer and need to understand it afresh from the example of the natural world?

\* \* \*

The person contemplates the tree.

\* \* \*

The tree sends its roots beneath the surface, seeking nourishment in the dark soil: the rich "broken down" matter of life.

As they reach down and search, the roots hold the tree firmly to the earth.

Thus held and nourished, the tree grows upward into the light, drinking the sun and air and expressing its truth; its branches and foliage, its flowers and fruit. Life swarms around and into it. Birds and insects teem within its embrace, carrying pollen and seed. They nest and breed and sing and buzz. They glorify the creation.

The tree changes as it grows. It is torn by wind and lightning, scarred by frost and fire. Branches die and new ones emerge. The drama of

existence has its way with the tree but still it grows; still its roots reach down into the darkness; still its branches flow with sap and reach upward and outward into the world.

A person kneels to contemplate a tree and reflect upon the troubles and joys of life. The person imagines mornings and evenings in a great forest of prayers, swarming and teeming with life.

The person is learning how to pray.

~Leunig

18. Write it on your heart  
that every day is the best day in the year.  
He is rich who owns the day, and no one owns the day  
allows it to be invaded with fret and anxiety.

Finish every day and be done with it.  
You have done what you could.  
Some blunders and absurdities, no doubt crept in.  
Forget them as soon as you can, tomorrow is a new day;  
begin it well and serenely, with too high a spirit  
to be cumbered with your old nonsense.

This new day is too dear,  
with its hopes and invitations,  
to waste a moment on the yesterdays.  
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, Collected Poems and Translations

***The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be  
our doubts of today.***

***Let us move forward with strong and active faith.***

***Franklin D Roosevelt***

19. **The Commonality of all Religions**

Every religion of the world has similar ideals of love, the same goal of benefiting humanity through spiritual practice, and the same effect of making its followers into better human beings...Each, in its own way, teaches a path leading to a spiritual state that is peaceful, disciplined, ethical and wise.

-Dalai Lama, the Little book of Wisdom, p139

20. The divine religions are like the progression of the seasons of the year. When the earth becomes dead and desolate and because of frost and cold no trace of vanished spring remains, the springtime dawns again and clothes everything with a new garment of life. The meadows become fresh and green, the trees are adorned with verdure and fruits appear upon them. Then the winter comes again, and all the traces of spring disappear. This is the continuous cycle of the seasons—spring, winter, then the return of spring. But though the calendar changes and the years move forward, each springtime that comes is the return of the springtime that has gone; this spring is the renewal of the former spring. Springtime is springtime, no matter when or how often it comes. The divine Prophets are as the coming of spring, each renewing and quickening the teachings of the Prophet Who came before Him. Just as all seasons of spring are essentially one as to newness of life, vernal showers and beauty, so the essence of the mission and accomplishment of all the Prophets is one and the same. Now the people of religion have lost sight of the essential reality of the spiritual springtime. They have held tenaciously to ancestral forms and imitations, and because of this there is variance, strife and altercation among them. Therefore, we must now abandon these imitations and seek the foundation of the divine teachings; and inasmuch as the foundation is one reality, the divergent religionists must agree in it so that love and unity will be established among all people and denominations.

~Bahá'í Writings

***Then again will the tree of humanity blossom and bring forth  
the fruit of righteousness for the healing of nations.***

***'Abdu'l-Bahá***



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Please join us for refreshments

**We extend our warmest appreciation to the performers who have so  
generously contributed to our program.**

**Our Musicians this month:**

## **Soul Food**

*Soul Food* is an open community event hosted on the first Sunday of each month and whose purpose is to inspire us to transform our lives, our neighbourhoods and our communities with actions that promote the unity and betterment of society. Set in the tranquil setting of the Baha'i Centre of Learning, it provides an occasion to be inspired and reflect on uplifting themes with our neighbours. Our programs feature live music, audio-visual pieces and readings from various authors, sources and Faiths - indigenous, ancient and modern- from all over the world.

*Soul Food* was initiated by the Bahá'í community in Adelaide and now occurs in places around Australia and as far afield as Botswana, Africa. It is also proudly supported by the Victorian Multicultural Commission. Original programs are available for free download from [www.soulfood.com.au/tas/](http://www.soulfood.com.au/tas/)

***Soul Food - First Sunday of each month.  
Venue: Bahá'í Centre of Learning, Hobart  
Time: 3.00pm – 4pm***



## Study Circles

The Bahá'í Community is offering a series of life-changing circles of study. The purpose of Bahá'í study circles is to provide participants with the knowledge, spiritual insights and skills to enable them to contribute to the betterment of society, starting with their own neighbourhood. This is done through systematic study of a sequence of courses based on the Bahá'í Writings using the courses of the Ruhi Institute. The first in the sequence of books is called Reflections on the Life of the Spirit. It examines spiritual matters such as prayer, meditation, life and death and the development of the soul. Study circles are held all around Australia and are open to all. You are invited to take inspiration from the Bahá'í teachings, benefitting from whatever gems of wisdom and knowledge will help you to address the challenges you face. Study circles are held in an uplifting environment conducive to spiritual empowerment of individuals, who come to see themselves as active agents of their own learning. The role of the study circle facilitator is not to impart knowledge, but to assist discussion. Study Circles feature participatory learning, involving discussions with others and the use of the arts. For inquiries or more information please email: Sandhya Keenoo [sandhya.keenoo@gmail.com](mailto:sandhya.keenoo@gmail.com) ☎ 044850728

## **Children's classes in the Neighbourhood**

Regular children's classes are held in communities around Tasmania and provide moral, spiritual and virtues-based training essential in nurturing the inner capacities of children. The classes aim to build a strong moral framework which will assist children to achieve excellence in material, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of life. For inquiries or more information please call Jennifer's mobile 📞0404352042

*"Children are even as a branch that is fresh and green;  
they will grow up in whatever way you train them.  
Take the utmost care to give them high ideals and goals,*

*so that once they come of age,  
they will cast their beams like brilliant candles on the world..."*  
*from the Writings of the Bahá'í Faith*

## **Junior Youth Groups**

Developed for youth between the ages of 12 and 15, these programs are designed to empower and equip young people with the knowledge and concepts that will encourage the expression of their personal potential, and develop the skills and attitudes necessary to become agents of change - for themselves and their communities. Through engagement in service initiatives, artistic and extracurricular activities they foster a sense of world citizenship and a lifelong commitment to serve humanity. Those in their early adolescent years possess altruism, a sense of justice, eagerness to learn about the universe, and a desire to contribute to the construction of a better world. The program helps them form a strong moral identity and empowers them to contribute to the well-being of their communities and the world at large. By developing their spiritual qualities (virtues), their intellectual capabilities and their capacities for service to society, the participants come to see that they can become agents of positive change in the world. The program adopts a participatory mode of learning where the facilitator and participants learn from each other. Groups of participants engage in activities such as artistic expression, discussion, drama, cooperative games, study of literature, story telling and acts of community service. The junior youth program explores themes from a Baha'i perspective, but is not a formal religious education program. It is open to all, subject to parental approval. Junior youth groups meet on a regular basis and there is no written homework.

All program facilitators are certified under the Baha'i Child Protection Policy, which includes a mandatory police check. Parents are welcome to meet with the facilitators to learn about the program. For enquiries or more information please call Niloufar Pepperell 0412899498 or email [snshahzadi@gmail.com](mailto:snshahzadi@gmail.com)

# Join us

for the next Soul Food program –

## “Family - the Foundational Bond”

May 3<sup>rd</sup> 3pm

### Upcoming Dates and Titles for Soul Food 2020:

June 7 <sup>th</sup>	The Sacred Earth
July 5 <sup>th</sup>	A Kindly and Radiant Heart
August 2 <sup>nd</sup>	The Power of Words
September 6 <sup>th</sup>	Unfurling the Banners of Peace
October 4 <sup>th</sup>	The Ornament of Justice and Fairness

November 1<sup>st</sup> Polishing the Gems – the education of children  
December 6<sup>th</sup> The Joy of Giving

Another exciting program held every Tuesday afternoon  
12.30pm – 1.30pm in the  
Tranquility Room is a short Devotional designed to lift up  
our spirits and so is called:

***"Lunchtime Lift"***

We would love to share this with YOU.

All Soul Food programs are available for free download from  
[www.soulfood.com.au/tas](http://www.soulfood.com.au/tas)

The Baha'i Faith is an independent world religion, the main principles of which are:

- The Oneness of God
- The oneness of humankind
- The independent investigation of truth
- The essential harmony between science and religion
- Equality of men and women
- Elimination of prejudice of all kind
- Universal compulsory education
- Spiritual solution to economic problems
- A universal auxiliary language
- Universal peace upheld by a world federation

Baha'is strive to put into practice, in their own lives and to the betterment of others, the spiritual and practical teachings of their Faith.

In the Baha'i Faith belief must be expressed in deeds – service to others is service to God.

You can find out more about the Bahá'ís and their world embracing vision at [www.bahai.org.au](http://www.bahai.org.au) or feel free to call 03 6234 7654 for more information.



**PLEASE NOTE:** Due to Covid 19 Soul Food presentations are cancelled until further notice. Soul Food programs will still be compiled and available to be collected from the Baha'i Centre.