



Project CIDI Bridges



Omnipotent Lord of Power - prayer by a Baha'i member

The first misconception I held about the Baha'i community here in Rochester was that it is relatively new. Considering several Christian congregations have been thriving in our city for over 150 years, our local Baha'is may still be considered newcomers. For me in fact, Baha'is have been meeting in Rochester since the 1950s.

I entered into the United Way of Olmsted County building near downtown Rochester and was immediately welcomed with warm smiles and invitations to join the members at their table. For some reason I was surprised to see families with young children come into the service. I did not realize that I held this misconception. I picture local Baha'is as mainly being adults and not including children being raised in this tradition. It is always humbling to discover the misperceptions we never realized we possessed.

Each member shared a piece of good news from the past week. They then volunteered to offer a prayer, allowing a brief pause for reflection or comment afterwards. A family of five decided to use their prayer opportunity to sing a song encouraging children to grow into righteousness.

Other prayers invoked God as the "King of Kings" and the "Omnipotent Lord of Power". Through these prayers one can discover the similarities within the perception of God among the Baha'i and the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The children moved into a different room to begin their children's studies as the adults continued their readings and reflections. Within minutes the children were singing and engaging in acceptance-building activities.

Members read from the teachings of Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i tradition and considered a prophet among his followers. It became evident that the Baha'i tradition places a strong emphasis on the unity of all people and traditions. Instead of religions dividing humanity, the Baha'i faith sees its role as a unifying factor since all major faiths and religions hold the same core universal values of justice and peace.

Unity is the presence of the loving Power of God.

The presence of love in the heart is necessary for the Divinity of God to enter.

Reflecting on these sayings of Baha'u'llah, the members reflected on the difficulties of showing love towards someone who thinks differently from you and how achieving that goal is much easier than loving those who hold the same mindsets.

I am certainly looking forward to continuing to work with the Rochester Baha'i community as we demonstrate how religions, being both an Islamic and Baha'i tradition, are sources of good for society, including non-practitioners.