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WORLD RELIGION DAY

World Religion Day is an observance that was initiated in 1950 by the [National Spiritual Assembly](#) of the [Bahá'ís of the United States](#), which is celebrated worldwide on the third Sunday in January each year. Though initiated in the United States, World Religion Day has come to be celebrated internationally by followers of the [Bahá'í Faith](#).^[1]

Described as a "Bahá'í-inspired idea that has taken on a life of its own",^[2] the origins of World Religion Day lie in the Bahá'í principles of the [oneness of religion](#) and of [progressive revelation](#), which describe religion as evolving continuously throughout the history of humanity.^{[3][4]} The purpose of World Religion Day is to highlight the ideas that the spiritual principles underlying the world's religions are harmonious, and that religions play a significant role in unifying humanity.

PURPOSE OF WORLD RELIGION DAY

Story Subtitle or summary

Initially a Bahá'í observance, World Religion Day was inspired by the Bahá'í principles of the [oneness of religion](#) and of [progressive revelation](#), which describe religion as evolving continuously throughout the history of humanity.^{[3][4]} It promotes these principles by highlighting the ideas that the spiritual principles underlying the world's religions are harmonious, and that religions play a

significant role in unifying humanity.^{[1][2]}

As a means of clarifying the nature and purpose of World Religion Day, the [Universal House of Justice](#), the elected council that serves as the head of the Bahá'í Faith noted in a 1968 message that, rather than providing a "platform for all religions and their emergent [ecumenical](#) ideas," the observance serves as "a celebration of the need for and the coming of a world religion for mankind, the [Bahá'í Faith](#) itself."^[5]

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In April 2002, the Universal House of Justice published a letter, "To the World's Religious Leaders", in which it stated:

...interfaith discourse, if it is to contribute meaningfully to healing the ills that afflict a desperate humanity, must now address honestly ... the implications of the over-arching truth ... that God is one and that, beyond all diversity of cultural

expression and human interpretation, religion is likewise one.^[6]

World Religion Day has been described as a "Bahá'í-inspired idea that has taken on a life of its own",^[2] because its observance is no longer confined to the Bahá'í community, where it originally took shape. Although observances of World Religion Day are still sponsored and

supported by Bahá'í communities worldwide, Baha'i institutions such as the Universal House of Justice or the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States no longer play active roles in the promotion of events, apart from reporting on them. Instead, an increasing number of observances are independently organized by interfaith or multi-faith coalitions.

HISTORY OF WORLD RELIGION DAY

The earliest observation entitled "World Peace Through World Religion" was in [Portland, Maine](#) at the [Eastland Park Hotel](#) in October 1947 with a talk by [Firuz Kazemzadeh](#).^[7] In 1949 observances in various communities in the United States made the local newspapers in December called "World Religion Day".^[8] It was standardized across the United States by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States in December 1949 to be held January 15, 1950.^{[6][9]} It also began to be observed internationally starting as early as in [Australia](#) in 1950 in two cities^[10] and [Bolivia](#) in 1951.^[11] By 1958 Bahá'ís had gathered notices of events in a number of countries—sometimes attracting hundreds of people and sometimes overlapping with race amity priorities.^[12] In [Laos](#), for example, meetings were noted in 1958,^[13] 1959,^[14] and 1960, among many countries activities.^{[15][16]} In [the Netherlands](#) in 1962 it was noted in several cities.