



The Lamp

A NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY THE WILMETTE INSTITUTE

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Summer Session Inspiring, Insightful

The 2002 summer session of the Spiritual Foundations for a Global Civilization program was characterized by excellent faculty, devoted students, and an intimate learning environment. The students attended about seventy hours of



The students and staff of the 2002 Spiritual Foundations Summer Session.

classes over fourteen days—an average of about five hours

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2002 Student Survey Continues to Show Value of Wilmette Institute Courses

The students of the Wilmette Institute continue to report that the Institute's courses have had a significant impact on their efforts to serve the Cause and teach it to others.

The 2002 survey was sent electronically to about eight hundred people on the WINews listserver during the Ridván period. Only twenty-seven surveys were returned, fewer than one would like but comparable to the number returned last year (electronic surveys often have a low response rate). Students were asked how often they had used "Wilmette Institute materials and ideas" in firesides, deepenings, institute classes, and children's classes; totaled up, Wilmette Institute materials and ideas contributed to 83 firesides, 126 deepenings, 1 Institute class, and 11 children's or youth classes. Of particular interest and importance was the question, "About how many people have entered the Faith at least partially because of what you gained from the Wilmette Institute?"; in response to this question the students reported twelve declarations. Notably, three of the twelve declarants were reported by students of the Spiritual Foundations for a Global Civilization program, who constitute a small fraction of the Institute's students, thereby demonstrating once again the importance of the

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two weeks of summer classes in transforming lives.

If a larger number of students had responded, the numbers might well have been higher. As it is, the Wilmette Institute was at least partially responsible for one percent of all the declarations in the United States last year (some 1,162).

Among the comments by students completing the survey were these:

There is no doubt in my mind that my time with the Wilmette Institute has really paid off in the past twelve months. . . . Having so much information from the Institute has made a tremendous impact in the quality of our study. When someone asks a question sometimes I simply say that while I'm not sure of the answer I know I can research it in my materials. These new Bahá'ís are people of amazing capacity, very well read in the Faith and ask questions that I would never have been prepared to address. I am certain that because we can provide them with answers that are satisfactory it has been a critical factor in how quickly they have been assimilated into community life. . . . At their request we are now studying the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Thank goodness for everything the Wilmette Institute has provided over the years! Without doubt this has been the most exciting year of my life as a Bahá'í, and Wilmette Institute has been a major influence not just for myself but for the newest members of the community!

Bottom line: ten months of weekly study with the community using Wilmette Institute materials; three new declarants directly influenced by Wilmette Institute materials; two new Bahá'ís deepened significantly; many older believers (some of many years) who are reaching new levels of understanding thanks to the materials being shared with them. (Patricia Haynie)

These classes have been extremely important to my own spiritual development, to the spiritual development of my family members, and members of the community whom I have shared information with. I also hope many other people realize the potential there is to earn college credits by taking Wilmette courses, especially elective credits or religion credits. I have gotten approval from my college to take three Wilmette courses, have earned a total of 6 college credits, and am in the process of earning 3 more. I cannot image a better way to complete my education than to expand my knowledge of God's holy writings, benefit from the tremendous wisdom of Institute mentors and staff and

be able to share the entire experience over the internet with many other Bahá'ís and friends from all over the country and the world. To me, it is a gift from heaven. (Nancy Meyer)

I have a much better understanding of the essential oneness of Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Bahá'í Faith. I'm also far more comfortable discussing religion concepts with individuals of other faiths. (Sally Loble)

The Wilmette Institute experience has given me much greater understanding of the Íqán, the Qur'án and the Bible. This, in turn, has helped me have greater confidence in discussing the Bahá'í Faith, Islam and Muhammad's role, and the Bible—with a spiritual understanding of the Bible's messages—it is wonderful how all three aspects of 'Sacred Scripture' are interrelated. Though I'm an isolated believer—with a Bahá'í group 30 miles away—the Institute has also helped me be aware of the many Bahá'ís just a "click" away. Thanks. (Virginia Harden)

I personally gained more knowledge and confidence from these courses, plus some good reference materials when questions came up. I find that the intensive study, which the Wilmette Institute provides, helps to increase my excitement and interest on the subject or book being studied which makes me want to share what I'm learning. Every time I take a course from the Wilmette Institute, I offer one or more deepenings on the subject or book I have just studied or am presently studying. I particularly like to offer these deepening classes while I am still taking the course myself, so that I have an opportunity to pose any questions which my deepening class may have to the course's list server. My only "complaint" is the lack of response, in the form of attendance, that I get from my community. However, the few who do come are usually prepared and participate in the discussion. (Dianne O. Bradford)

My first Wilmette Institute course (*The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*) was wonderful and my study partner and I became very close friends. Numbering the paragraphs and writing notes on each is one of the best study habits that I learned. I have used that method for a few books since then in my independent study. I just finished *The Promised Day Has Come* and without that comprehensive method of study and drawing maps so I could sense the geography, I would not have been as ready for Dr. Nosratollah Rassekh's history lectures at Green Acre this month on *The Promised Day Has Come*. (Martha Webb)

The Wilmette Institute gives me the depth and breadth of knowledge needed to answer the multitude of questions I get as House of Worship guide every weekend. I could not get this information any other place, although I also am taking Ruhi courses to improve my teaching skills and to become a facilitator. Without the Wilmette Institute course, I do not think I would have the confidence to want to do this.

The Theology course has been the most helpful over all, even though it was the hardest. The study of the soul is something I use almost weekly. I can highly recommend the Wilmette courses, especially if there is a large class of correspondents signed up. (Mary Hansen)

Before taking the course on the Bible, I was very intimidated by Christians who would refer to specific Bible references. I was ignorant of what was in the Bible and had only a limited knowledge of it. This, despite growing up a Catholic. My attitude has changed greatly towards the Bible and toward engaging in conversations about the Bible with Christians. Although still very much a novice, I feel that the Wilmette course on the Bible has given me the courage to explore the Bible further and to share what I have learned with Christians.

Beyond the knowledge I have gained, I now feel this great connection to my religious roots that has only served to strengthen my Faith in Bahá'u'lláh.

I thoroughly loved the course. I recommend it to everyone who wishes to engage in Christian/Bahá'í dialogue.

Thanks very much to the entire Wilmette staff for their dedication to this spiritual institute. (Richard Yamartino) ▲

Summer Session . . . Continued from page 1

of class per day—on five major topics. Classes, as well as lodging and meals, were located at National-Louis University, about ten minutes' walk from the Wilmette House of Worship.

Every day began with dawn prayers at the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, followed by breakfast and classes at 9 a.m. The principal theme of the summer session was "Bahá'í Community and Administration," encompassing practical information about the functioning of administrative bodies and communities, a perspective of Bahá'í community life worldwide, theoretical understanding of the principles by

which Bahá'í institutions function, and some context about human social and political institutions. Martha Schweitz spoke about the nature and purpose of Bahá'í institutions and provided an outline of the field of political theory. Firuz Kazemzadeh described the divine nature of Bahá'í institutions and illustrated his points with numerous examples from his many years of experience serving the Faith. Gayle Morrison and Iraj Ayman—both former members of Continental Boards of Counselors—described specific Bahá'í institutions, their relationships to one another, and their functioning. Charles Nolley talked about the principles of Bahá'í community life that he has discerned as a result of his pioneering and documentary film work on the Faith



Dr. Firuz Kazemzadeh delivers a class on the nature of the Bahá'í administrative order to the 2002 Spiritual Foundations Students

worldwide. Supplemental night classes were provided by Rebecca Ellison, who described the statistical and demographic study of the American Bahá'í community currently underway, and David Rouleau, who spoke about the work of the Office of Community Administration and Development.

History, the second theme of the session, was divided into two topics. Jena Khodadad spoke about the life, ministry, and example of the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi. Robert Stockman presented Bahá'í history from 1921 through 1957, tracing the phases of consolidation and expansion of the Faith, especially the succession of international plans.

In addition, several Bahá'ís gave presentations on various Bahá'í texts that relate to administration and community, in particular the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Tablet of Carmel, the Kitáb-i-Ahd, the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-

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Two-Week Summer Session Planned for August 2003

The eighth year of the Spiritual Foundations for a Global Civilization program will be organized much like the previous three: it will include home study starting on May 1, 2003; a two-week summer session in Wilmette from 4 p.m., Saturday, August 2, through noon, Saturday, August 16; and a concluding period of home study through April 2004.

The question of shortening the summer session was raised earlier this year when it became clear that the number of students attending this summer's session would be noticeably fewer than last year. But the Wilmette Institute Board decided that a shorter session would seriously diminish the quality of the program; that face-to-face classrooms and an intensive learning experience are far more effective and transformative as learning experiences than distance-learning courses can hope to be; that the decline in students can be reversed through more effective publicity; and that new cost-saving techniques can be employed to lower costs.

The 2003 Spiritual Foundations program focuses on "Carrying Forward an Ever-Advancing Civilization," the Bahá'í teachings that relate to social change and transformation. Topics will include the oneness of humanity; equality of men and women; race unity; establishment of world peace; eliminating the extremes of wealth and poverty, and related Bahá'í economic principles; creating a new global political order; Bahá'í teachings about education and literacy; and Bahá'í principles about science and religion, the environment, and agriculture. The topics will be covered in about forty-five hours of intensive classes and seminars. The comprehensive treatment of these subjects will be of the sort unavailable

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New Courses on Bahá'u'lláh's Life, Summons of the Lord of Hosts Added to Fall Schedule

In the past few months, the Wilmette Institute has added two courses to its autumn schedule. In response to the National Spiritual Assembly's request to the Bahá'ís of the United States to study Bahá'u'lláh's life and sufferings (particularly His incarceration in the *Síyáh-Chál*, which occurred exactly 150 years ago) the Institute has scheduled a course called **Call to Remembrance: The Life of Bahá'u'lláh in His Own Words**. The course will focus on two works the National Spiritual Assembly has asked American Bahá'ís to study: part two of *God Passes By* (the section on the ministry of Bahá'u'lláh) and *Call to Remembrance*, a compilation of statements by Bahá'u'lláh about His own life, supplemented by passages from Shoghi Effendi and skillfully written transitional material by Dr. Geoff Marks, an Auxiliary Board member based in Cape Town, South Africa. The course will run from November 1, 2002, through January 31,

2002, and will cost \$150.

The second course will study the new volume of writings of Bahá'u'lláh translated under the supervision of the Universal House of Justice. Titled **The Summons of the Lord of Hosts**, it includes the full text of the Tablets to the Kings and the *Súriy-i-Haykal*, a lengthy and weighty tablet from the Adrianople period. The work is the first new translation of a large quantity of Bahá'u'lláh's revealed writings since the appearance of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* a decade ago. The Institute has already planned a course to study this new treasure-trove of guidance; the course is scheduled for December 15, 2002, to March 15, 2003.

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Dr. Kazemdazeh delivered the keynote address at the 2002 Graduation Dinner, on the new book *Century of Light*.

Changes to *The Lamp*

The advances of technology and the needs for cost savings have brought about a new approach to the Wilmette Institute's quarterly newsletter.

Henceforth, the principal form of distribution of *The Lamp* will be electronic. A copy in plain text ("vanilla") form will be sent to everyone on the Institute's WINews listserver, with links on top to web pages containing the PDF and HTML versions of the text. Anyone with access to either program will be able to open and print *The Lamp* in a few swift clicks. Those unable to read either of those versions of *The Lamp* will find the plain text version to be sufficient. Paper copies will be distributed to individuals and Bahá'í institutions requesting them.

It is our hope that the vast majority of our readers will experience quality equal to or better than the print version, while allowing the Institute to save about two thousand dollars per year. ▲

No July 2002 Issue

This issue succeeds the April 2002 issue. Lack of staff precluded production of a summer issue. ▲

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Bahá, the Tablets of the Divine Plan, *The World Order of Baha'u'lláh*, and the Constitution of the Universal House of Justice. Two skills workshops were provided: Ramsey Zeine offered a fifteen-hour course on consultation, and Peter Oldziej coordinated a seminar on teaching the Faith.

The graduation dinner on August 16 was attended by some forty Wilmette Institute students, faculty, staff, and friends. All of this year's students received certificates of attendance for the summer session. In addition, three received certificates of completion for finishing the written work for last year, and one—Shelley Rastall—received a certificate of completion for the entire four year program. Firuz Kazemzadeh provided the keynote address on "Century of Light," and several students offered moving words about the impact of the Spiritual Foundations program on their lives and service to the Faith.

Student reaction to the 2002 summer session was uniformly enthusiastic. As one put it on the student evaluation form, "There is not one instructor I would not want to listen to again. Some manners of presentation did not capture my attention as much as others, but all of the material was fascinating and some will keep me meditating for some time. I think another strength, and all of these people [the faculty] had it, was experience in the field they were asked to teach, much of it outside the United States, so we got a glimpse of the worldwide development of the Faith and could compare it to what is happening in our own community or region." The student added in conclusion that the summer session "exceeded my expectations. The quality of the instructors was excellent. In all cases there were things, ideas brought to my attention that I had not considered before." ▲

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anywhere else in the Bahá'í world.

The summer session will also explore Bahá'í history since the passing of the Guardian (1957–present), including study of the Interregnum when the Hands of the Cause of God were at the helm of the Faith. A ten-hour unit will examine Bahá'í writings that relate to the theme of social transformation, such as *The Secret of Divine Civilization* and *The Promise of World Peace*. A workshop on curriculum development will be offered to help students take their learning to their home communities. Finally, a workshop on teaching the Faith will help students apply their learning to promoting the growth of the Faith.

The prospect is for one of the most exciting, useful, thought-provoking sessions on the Faith yet offered by the Wilmette Institute. It shouldn't be missed. ▲

New Courses . . . Continued from page 4

Like all Wilmette Institute courses, the two will each have a Web page, listserver, a schedule of readings, conference calls, and mentors to help students apply their learning in the form of firesides and deepenings in their local communities. ▲

Wilmette Institute Distance-Learning Course Schedule

- **Century of Light**
(September 1–November 30, 2002)
- **The Mission and Destiny of America**
(October 1 – December 31, 2002)
- **Call to Remembrance: The Life of Bahá'u'lláh in His Own Words**
(November 1, 2002 – January 31, 2003)
- **The Summons of the Lord of Hosts**
(December 15, 2002 – March 15, 2003)
- **Living the Spiritual Life**
(January 15 – April 15, 2003)
- **Bahá'í Community and Administration**
(March 1 – May 31, 2003)

All distance-learning courses include e-mail listservers for students and faculty, regular conference calls, systematic lesson plans, and a wide variety of learning projects to help students apply their learning in their local communities. All courses are available at the “introductory” level for those unsure they can commit to taking a university-level course, the “intermediate” level for those wishing to go into more depth, and the “advanced” (graduate) level for those wishing to do extensive research or writing.

More information on all of them can be found on the Web at <http://www.wilmetteinstitute.org>. ▲

The Lamp



THE LAMP is the newsletter of the Wilmette Institute, established in January 1995 by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States to offer academic, professional, and service-oriented courses related to the Bahá'í Faith. In addition to offering university-level courses on Bahá'í topics, the Wilmette Institute fosters Bahá'í scholarship; develops new, innovative curricular materials; creates high-quality courses on teaching the Faith; and refines Bahá'í concepts of pedagogy.

It aims to produce teachers and administrators of the Bahá'í Faith of great capacity, capable of sharing and demonstrating Bahá'í truths in their lives and speech.

For more information about the Bahá'í Faith, the Wilmette Institute, or its courses, contact:

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