

Local Baha'i delegate reflects on love, unity at convention

By Darren Hiebert

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I recently returned from the Baha'i National Convention, held April 29 through May 2 at the Baha'i House of Worship in Wilmette, Ill., near Chicago. Elected by Baha'is in North Alabama and parts of Tennessee and Georgia, I was one of 171 delegates assembled from around the country.

We assembled to elect the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, the nine-member administrative body that guides the affairs of the U.S. Baha'i community, and to offer constructive suggestions.

I was profoundly affected by the atmosphere of love and unity which pervaded the convention - like a very closely-knit family that recognizes the importance of nurturing each member.

Baha'i elections are unique among democratic systems. There are no nominations, no campaigning and no one seeks election. All delegates

vote privately, without discussion.

We create the institution out of love: We love those we ask to serve us, we know they love the community they serve, and we obey the decisions they make on our behalf.

Our consultation was guided by a profound letter from the Universal House of Justice, the international governing council of the Baha'i Faith, urging Baha'is to devote themselves to "community building." We are to seek out and identify neighborhoods of "men and women eager to improve material and spiritual conditions" and accompany them in developing "a process that seeks to raise capacity within a population to take charge of its own spiritual, social and intellectual development."

In short, Baha'is are being charged with the raising of a new civilization.

If you would like to participate in the building of your own community, you can call me at 256-542-1131.



Darren Hiebert, second from left, sits with other delegates to the recent National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States.

Eric van Zanten
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American Baha'i

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