

# CYCLE 35: MAIN SEQUENCE

Insights, Data, and Reflections from Study Circles Across the Triangle

## Pg. 2 New Study Circles and Data!

A list of study circles that started this cycle. An overview of what growth and loss occurred from cycle 34-cycle 35 across the cluster.

## Pgs.3 Reflections on Cycle 35 Goals

Sharing reflections on why the goal was not met and what will change next cycle to help meet our goal!

## Pg.4-6 Stories from Tutors and Participants

Stories written by tutors and participants sharing about their study circles experiences over the past 3 months!

## Pg. 7 Dates and Contact Info

Dates for the summer months and contact information for the main sequence coordinator.



Youth from across the cluster celebrating and planning for summer at the Youth Summer Kick-Off Party!

## Note from the Coordinator

Dear friends,

What an exciting cycle it has been! These past three months have been filled with the start of 14 new study circles, the completion of 11 ongoing study circles, a spring break Book 4&5 intensive with 13 youth from across the cluster, and an intensive from May 16-18 offering Books 1,4,7, 8.1 and 8.2 to almost 40 youth and adults around the cluster. Thus, we have lots of learning and beautiful stories to share with you all in this newsletter. I am hoping to start capturing stories and pictures from tutors across the cluster to share at the end of each cycle. So if anyone has anything to add to next cycles newsletter, please send it to me at [aneesaglines@gmail.com](mailto:aneesaglines@gmail.com). THANK YOU!



## Current Statistics

Here is a snapshot of the main sequence in **Cycle 35**:

- **32 Study Circles**

- 6 in Durham
- 12 in Chapel Hill/ Carrboro
- 5 in Wake
- 2 in Orange Co
- 7 Cluster- Wide Intensives

- **165 Participants**

- 119 Baha'is
- 46 Friends of the Faith
- 64 Youth

Here is a snapshot of the main sequence in **Cycle 34**:

- **38 Study Circles**

- 10 in Durham
- 16 in Chapel Hill/ Carrboro
- 1 in Orange Co
- 7 in Wake
- 4 Cluster-Wide Intensives

- **173 Participants**

- 94 Baha'is
- 79 Friends of the Faith
- 105 youth

Book	Locality	Participants	Tutors
Book 5	Carrboro	11	Nathan Shepherd
Book 3	Charrboro	5	Naomi Sadighi and Amelia Joneydi
Book 1	Charrboro	4	Jacob Hill and Juan Collazo
Book 5	Wake	5	Gayle Gonzalez-Johnson
Book 8	Durham/ Wake Forrest	7	Susie Simerly and Amanda Hartley
Book 8	Hillsborough	6	Amanda Hartley
Book 4	Hillsborough	4	Aviram Marshall
Book 4	Cluster-Wide	9	Maye Lopez, Jerry and Janet Schoendorf
Book 5	Cluster-Wide	4	Mike Mastry, Adalia Ellis, Lee Moavenzadeh
Book 1	Cluster-Wide	1	Vahid Nourani
Book 4	Cluster-Wide	3	Luis Dechtiar and Vahid Nourani
Book 7	Cluster-Wide	8	Becky Louis and Shawheen James
Book 8.1	Cluster-Wide	9	Endrin Tushe
Book 8.2	Cluster-Wide	8	Amanda Hartley and Yovania Veeren

## Cycle 34-Cycle 35

- 11 Study circles completed their course
- 8 Study circles dis-continued
- 14 Study circles started

The fact that 11 study circles completed their course this cycle is something to celebrate! We are so happy to have friends progressing through the sequence at a sprightly pace! There were various reasons why 8 study circles discontinued including:

- Participants or tutor no longer able to make the time commitment (or moved away/traveling for extended period of time)
- Motivation from the participants for taking the course was transient not permanent. This could in part be due to the way the tutor described what the study circle would be. We are learning be more clear in our descriptions so the participants really know what to expect.
- One study circle was comprised of participants who went to college in different localities. So once winter break was over, the study circle did not

### Why the Cycle Goal Was Not Met

The goal of 22 new study circles with 113 participants was based on the number of potentially available tutors and groups of participants ready to start study circles. We did have 14 new study circles start with 84 new participants which is progress from last cycle when 10 study circles started with 58 new participants.

Some of the reasons projected study circles were not able to start were:

- Lack of accompaniment from the coordinator (the coordinator chose to focus more on the organization of cluster wide intensives this cycle which led to less accompaniment to initiate weekly study circles).
- Time of the school year was not ideal for starting new study circles. It was the end of the year so college students started leaving and all students were focused on finals.
- Some tutors were not able to commit yet, many of them plan to start tutoring this cycle.
- Participants no longer interested in taking the course
- The participants were already completing a different Ruhi book and wanted to finish that one first
- Tutors were waiting until they completed Book 7
- The memorial day weekend intensive that was originally planned did not happen because of other conflicts (expansion phase, junior youth coordinators seminar, youth beach trip, etc.)

### What Will Change to Help Meet Our Goal Next Cycle?

The main sequence coordinator will now be working with some (informal) assistants to accomplish multiple lines of action each cycle! These assistants will help with accompanying tutors to start study circles, visiting existing study circles, and holding reflection spaces for tutors.

FOR ALL BAHAI'S: Three assistants have been helping the coordinator look at the data of all the Baha'is in the cluster and what Ruhi courses they need to complete the sequence. They then made lists of participants who are ready for each course and began contacting potential tutors. So be on the lookout for calls from Christine Krug and Suzan Kalantar (Chapel Hill/Carrboro) or Amanda Hartley (Orange County/Durham/Wake Forrest) inviting you to participant in a study circle with fellow community members! An additional assistant will soon be added to help do this in Wake County. As part of this same effort, Book 8 is being offered to anyone who has completed Books 1-7.

FOR YOUTH: We now have small group facilitators in place to assist the youth to move through the sequence! Each youth (ages 15-30) has been placed into a small group with 20-30 youth in their same locality. Each group has 1-3 "facilitators" whose role is to help them progress through the sequence, start activities, invite their friends, and support them in all aspects of life :)

*There are 5 small groups:*

**1 in Wake-** Sasha

**1 in Durham-** Kyle and Shawheen

**3 in Chapel Hill/Carrboro**

Group 1: Yovania, Jordan, Alberto

Group 2: Maia and Megan

Group 3: Jacob and Emily

# Stories from Tutors and Participants

## Adult Ruhi 3-Day Intensive Resounding Success

— report by Gayle Gonzalez-Johnson, Raleigh



Youth Ruhi intensive Jan, 2014

After several successful youth Ruhi Intensives took place over the last 18 months in the cluster, word spread about the intense learning which was advanced, the loving bonds of friendship which were nurtured, and the energy and joy which were generated, all within the span of a few days! Based on this proven success, the idea of doing the same, but with adults in the community, rather than just youth, took hold. Thus, the cluster main sequence coordinator got in motion and helped us organize it. The Triangle cluster-wide 3-day adult Ruhi intensive deeply impacted each attendee and beyond that diffused a new energy in the cluster.

It happened May 16-18, at 2 locations, in North Durham and also the Raleigh Center, so that all 40 participants could be accommodated. Five Ruhi Books were pored over - Books 1, 4, 7, 8/Unit 1, and 8/Unit 2, under the capable guidance of 8 tutors. For those of you who were unable to participate but wished to, contact Aneesa Glines at 919-219-1185 to let her know of your interest in future intensives. If the intense format of 2 or 3 full consecutive days is not your preference, you will be delighted to know that the momentum and enthusiasm generated by the weekend spurred on a few weekly Ruhi study circles! A Book 8 will be starting in Raleigh in July and a Book 5 will be meeting weekly on Saturday evenings in Cary which began June 21. Contact Aneesa to sign up for either or learn of others.



Friends studying Book 8 at the adult intensive

Next time you are in the Raleigh Bahá'í Center, pay close attention, and should you sense that the place has a different "feel" to you, it surely will not be surprising! After all, our Beloved House of Justice told us, that where the community building efforts have "advanced for some years in a neighborhood...and the friends have sustained their focus, remarkable results are becoming gradually but unmistakably evident", in fact, "The very spirit of the place is affected.!" What a blessing, that this is actually unfolding, right before our eyes, here in Raleigh.

## Confirmations in Carrboro!

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- reported by Luis Dechtiar, Carrboro

I've been co-tutoring a Ruhi Book 1 in Carrboro with about half a dozen participants, most of which are college students. One evening, when I was hosting the study circle at my house, only my co-tutor and I showed up. We figured since it was the end of the Spring semester, many students were busy with school work and exams, so we decided to wait half an hour in case anyone arrived late, then say a few prayers and call it a night. After my co-tutor left, I was feeling a bit discouraged, and wondered if it was worthwhile continuing to commit my Saturday evenings to tutoring this study circle.

About fifteen minutes later, I got a phone call from one of the participants - one of the only ones who wasn't a college student. He was a family man, and was not always able to take the time away from family obligations to come to the study circle. But that night, he was somewhere near my apartment and was trying to figure out how to get there! He finally arrived, and although I was the only one there, we agreed that we could go through a few sessions together. We ended up having a lovely time deepening in the Writings and discussing the themes of the book, and before leaving he said: "You know, even though we have very busy lives, it's very nice to be able to take the time once a week to think about these deep subjects. I can really feel the effects throughout the week."

To me this was a great confirmation that any efforts towards deepening our friends in Baha'u'llah's teachings are certainly worthwhile, even if it's sometimes difficult to see what effects they have on people.

## Study Circles as Regular Reflection Spaces

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- reported by Elham Zelickman, Fuqway Varina

Over the past several months I have had the opportunity to tutor two small groups studying Ruhi Book 3A, which is the material for the second grade of teaching children's classes. Each participant is an experienced children's class teacher, so they have been able to put the lessons into use with their classes while periodically getting together to study the sections provided for teacher preparation. Based on the experience of another group of teachers in the area who had studied the book previously, it was decided that each group would gather about once a month to study. In between each study session, teachers apply their learnings and insights through the practice of teaching the lessons. This format has been great for these two groups, because each study session is also an opportunity to reflect on the past month's experience. We have been able to go back to the Book 3A material to address concerns and questions that have come up about the lessons and reflect together about how best to apply our understanding of the text. Most of the teachers are actually ahead now in teaching the lessons of each unit, but this seems only to deepen our study when we go over the study sections of each unit, because understandings of concepts are based on experience. Members of the two groups have even been able to collaborate and share ideas to help each other in their practice of teaching the lessons. Being able to carry out these study circles over a longer period of time so that study and practice can happen hand in hand has added a lot to the experience.

## News from Up North!

- reported by Amanda Hartley, Durham

Carlene and I studied Ruhi Book 2, "Arising to Serve" together this past spring. We had a great time going through each section together, and enjoyed taking time to do the activities in each unit, including skits, memorizations, and presentations. We really learned a lot about teaching the Faith together! Since then, we have been able to put a lot of what we've learned from the third unit of that book, "Introducing Baha'i beliefs" into practice. We have both been able to use the skills of naturally introducing Baha'i spiritual ideas and concepts into conversations at work and with family and friends.



Before we had even finished the Book 2 together, we began putting the practice of home visits into action as a "visiting team" and "mobile resource" team in the Martinsville and Danville clusters just north of us. We began doing home visits and study circles with the isolated believers up there, where there are only a few Baha'is in the entire cluster. It's really fun and we've made a lot of new friends there. It has not felt like an arduous process, because it's all about making new friends and enjoying learning more and more about our Faith together. The reason that we are going there is to help fulfill the goals that the House of Justice gave us to finish up this Five Year Plan. They have called upon the friends to help implement programs of growth and sustained activities in areas where there are currently none or very few Baha'is.

Also since doing that Book 2 together, we were also inspired to start a women's devotional & art circle in our part of the cluster. It's been a relaxing and very spiritually enriching activity for all of us who attend. We hope that this event will expand more to our neighbors, family, and friends as it develops.

We have also recently been doing a lot of work in the "Willowdale Apartments" neighborhood here off Guess rd. It is a very receptive area, and currently with the helping hands of many other members of our cluster who live up here, there are consistent sustained neighborhood children's class, lots of residents who are seekers and open to home visits for the purpose of sharing and studying prayers together. There are lots of Willowdale residents who are very open to learning more about the Bahai ideas of community building and moral & spiritual education. We've all had a really fun time there!



Due to a collaboration of several friends in Orange County and Durham County, we are hosting a bi-monthly study of the recent guidance from the Universal House of Justice every other Thursday at 806 Prologue Rd, 27712. This event came naturally out of several friends wanting to get a more in-depth understanding of the guidance in the current 5-Year plan and other relevant messages to the work and service we are doing in the Faith these days. Friends from all corners of this cluster and neighboring clusters have joined us over the last few months. This is one of the events that we look most forward to, because its such a laid-back and welcoming atmosphere and there is always great food, fellowship, and fun! Please join us if you ever can - this and other northern Durham County events are always on the Triangle Cluster Calendar, found at the bottom of every Triangle Cluster email.

# DATES FOR SUMMER:

June 29-July 11: Planning Phase

July 11: Cluster Tutor Gathering, Durham Baha'i Center 7-9:30pm

July 12-July 27: Expansion Phase

July 28: Consolidation Phase Begins

Aug 15-17: North Carolina Youth Gathering

Sept 27-28 Weekend of Cluster Reflection Gathering

## Contact the Main Sequence Coordinator if...

- You are interested in taking a Ruhi course
- You are interested in tutoring a Ruhi course
- You are interested in supporting others to take Ruhi courses (hosting a study circle, providing transportation, providing meals for intensives, etc.)
- You have any other question regarding the main sequence!
- YOU HAVE A STORY FOR NEXT CYCLES NEWSLETTER!

*Aneesa Glines*

919-219-1185

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