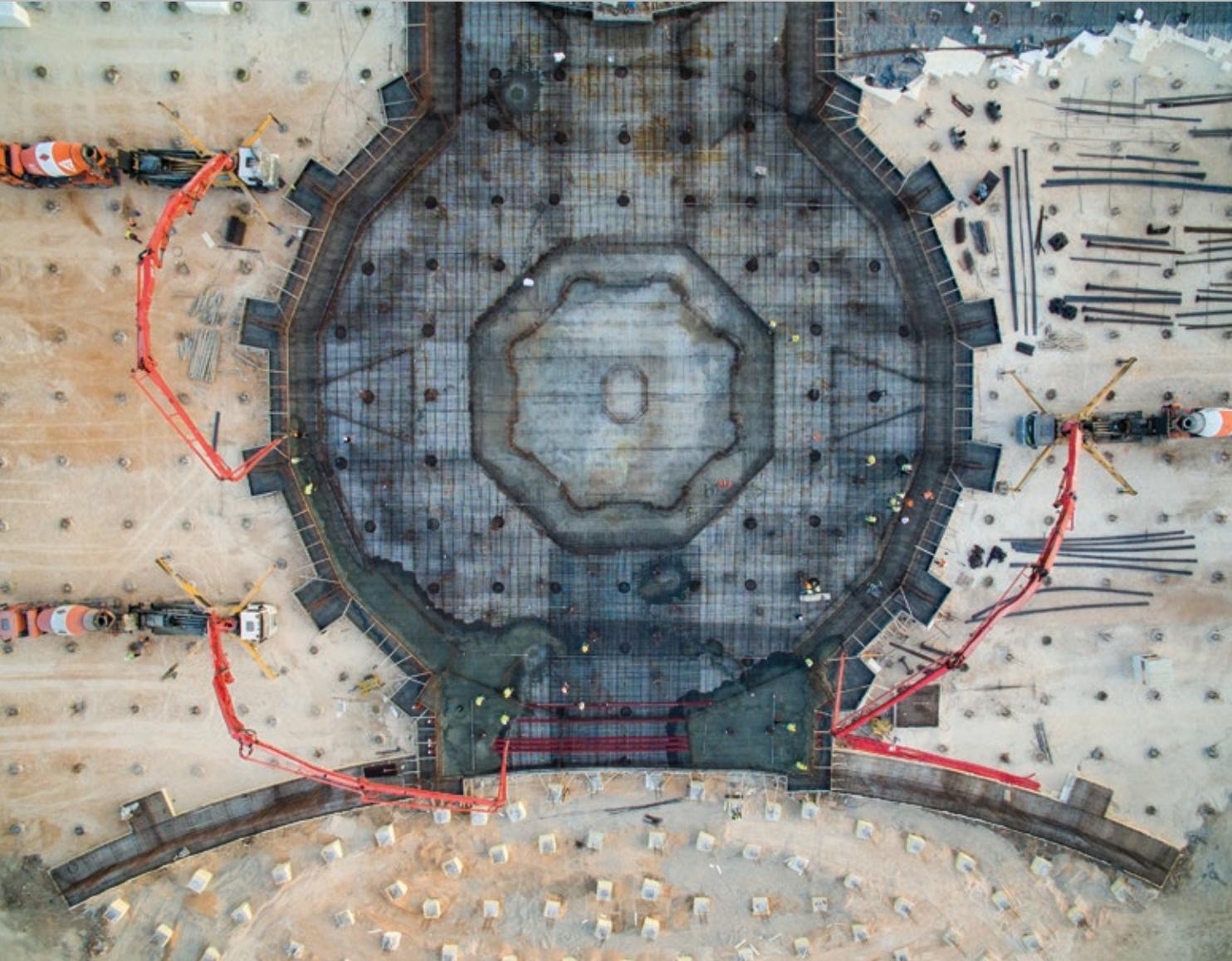


BAHÁ'Í CANADA

FALL/WINTER 2020 | HONOUR 177 B.E.

VOL. 33 NO. 4



Seeing the journey
through

From the Writings

Promote ye the development of the cities of God and His countries, and glorify Him therein in the joyous accents of His well-favored ones. In truth, the hearts of men are edified through the power of the tongue, even as houses and cities are built up by the hand and other means. We have assigned to every end a means for its accomplishment; avail yourselves thereof, and place your trust and confidence in God, the Omniscient, the All-Wise. – Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, par. 160.

This is the day to make mention of God, to celebrate His praise, and to serve Him; deprive not yourselves thereof. Ye are the letters of the words, and the words of the Book. Ye are the saplings which the hand of Loving-kindness hath planted in the soil of mercy, and which the showers of bounty have made to flourish. He hath protected you from the mighty winds of misbelief, and the tempestuous gales of impiety, and nurtured you with the hands of His loving providence. Now is the time for you to put forth your leaves, and yield your fruit. The fruits of the tree of man have ever been and are goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character. Withhold not these fruits from the heedless. If they be accepted, your end is attained, and the purpose of life achieved. If not, leave them in their pastime of vain disputes. Strive, O people of God, that haply the hearts of the divers kindreds of the earth may, through the waters of your forbearance and loving-kindness, be cleansed and sanctified from animosity and hatred, and be made worthy and befitting recipients of the splendors of the Sun of Truth.

– Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 25–26.

Regard ye the world as a man's body, which is afflicted with divers ailments, and the recovery of which dependeth upon the harmonizing of all of its component elements. Gather ye around that which We have prescribed unto you, and walk not in the ways of such as create dissension. Meditate on the world and the state of its people. He, for Whose sake the world was called into being, hath been imprisoned in the most desolate of cities ('Akká), by reason of that which the hands of the wayward have wrought. From the horizon of His prison-city He summoneth mankind unto the Dayspring of God, the Exalted, the Great. Exultest thou

over the treasures thou dost possess, knowing they shall perish? Rejoicest thou in that thou rulest a span of earth, when the whole world, in the estimation of the people of Bahá, is worth as much as the black in the eye of a dead ant? Abandon it unto such as have set their affections upon it, and turn thou unto Him Who is the Desire of the world. – Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p.55–56.

Iadjure Thee by Thy might, O my God! Let no harm beset me in times of tests, and in moments of heedlessness guide my steps aright through Thine inspiration. Thou art God, potent art Thou to do what Thou desirest. No one can withstand Thy Will or thwart Thy Purpose. – The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p.210.

The teachers of the Cause must be heavenly, lordly and radiant. They must be embodied spirit, personified intellect, and arise in service with the utmost firmness, steadfastness and self-sacrifice. In their journeys they must not be attached to food and clothing. They must concentrate their thoughts on the outpourings of the Kingdom of God and beg for the confirmations of the Holy Spirit. With a divine power, with an attraction of consciousness, with heavenly glad tidings and celestial holiness they must perfume the nostrils with the fragrances of the Paradise of Abhá.

– 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 88.

The divine friends must be attracted to and enamored of each other and ever be ready and willing to sacrifice their own lives for each other. Should one soul from amongst the believers meet another, it must be as though a thirsty one with parched lips has reached to the fountain of the water of life, or a lover has met his true beloved. For one of the greatest divine wisdoms regarding the appearance of the holy Manifestations is this: The souls may come to know each other and become intimate with each other; the power of the love of God may make all of them the waves of one sea, the flowers of one rose garden, and the stars of one heaven. This is the wisdom for the appearance of the holy Manifestations!

– 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p.52.

Fall/Winter 2020

December | 177 B.E.

Vol. 33, No. 4

Published for the Bahá'ís of Canada



ON THE COVER With an overnight concrete pour, a platform across an area of 2,900 square meters was recently cast at the center of the site of the Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, bringing the central foundation work to completion. Photo: Bahá'í World News Service

Bahá'í Canada (ISSN 1199-1682) is published by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada three to four times per year. 7200 Leslie Street, Thornhill ON L3T 6L8 phone: (905) 889-8168 fax: (905) 889-8184 email: secretariat@bahai.ca

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Publications Mail Agreement 40050758

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The passing of Violette Haake

From the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 24 September 2020.

Dear Friends,

Our hearts sorrow at the passing of dearly loved Violette Haake. Reared in a distinguished family tracing its roots to the early history of the Faith, she served the Cause of God with utter dedication over many decades, first in her native Iran, and later in the United States and Australia. Whether when pioneering, or during her time as an Auxiliary Board member, or as a Continental Counsellor in Australasia, and most especially in the ten years she served as a member of the



Violette Haake
Photo: Bahá'í World News Service

International Teaching Centre, her intrepid spirit and radiant enthusiasm for teaching were ever in evidence as she rallied the friends, particularly the youth; poured out encouragement; and fanned the flame of love for Bahá'u'lláh in the hearts. Violette possessed a character that blended extraordinary resilience, steadfastness, and inner strength with unfailing kindness, a nurturing instinct, and true joy. To the last, hers was a life devoted to the service of the Lord.

To her husband, Roderic, and her daughter, Susanne, we extend our heartfelt condolences, with an assurance of our supplications at the Sacred Threshold for the progress of Violette's luminous soul as it plunges into the sea of light in the world of mysteries. The believers in every land are asked to arrange memorials in her honour, including in all Houses of Worship, as circumstances permit.

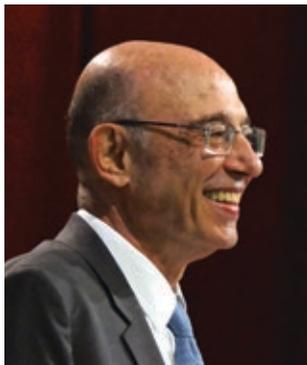
– The Universal House of Justice

The passing of Farzam Arbab

From the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 26 September 2020.

Dear Friends,

With grief-stricken hearts we mourn the sudden passing of our former colleague, our dearly loved brother Farzam Arbab, news of which has brought us fresh sorrow. His brilliant mind, loving heart, and vibrant spirit were ever turned towards the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, seeking to draw from it insights that, through the process of education, could build spiritual and intellectual capacity within entire populations. Born in Iran, he studied in the United States before settling in Colombia as a pioneer. His outstanding gifts fitted him, it seemed, for a distinguished career in the physical sciences—but Providence had determined



Farzam Arbab
Photo: Bahá'í World News Service

otherwise. His rigorous scientific training was instead applied to the work of the Faith. He recognized that the verities contained in the Bahá'í writings concerning spiritual and social transformation and the entry into the Faith of the masses of humanity demanded persistent effort to learn how to bring them about; the investment

of his whole being in this great enterprise was complete and constant. Throughout his time as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Colombia, as a Continental Counsellor, as a member of the International Teaching Centre, and finally as a member of the Universal House of Justice for two decades, his unshakeable belief in the capacity of all of God's children, especially of young people, was the hallmark of his service to the Cause. Always insightful, always discerning, always attuned to spiritual reality, this man of exceptional vision lived a life shaped by the harmony

between scientific truth and true religion.

To Sona, his beloved wife, and to Paul, his cherished son, as well as to other family members, we extend

our heartfelt condolences at this unexpected loss. We supplicate in the Sacred Shrines for the progress of his illumined soul as it commences its journey into the eternal realms of God. May it be lovingly welcomed to its heavenly home. All Bahá'í communities are urged to

arrange memorials, as circumstances permit, including in all Houses of Worship, to mark the passing of much-loved, illustrious Farzam Arbab.

– The Universal House of Justice

The passing of Douglas Martin

From the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 29 September 2020.

Dear Friends,

With mournful hearts already brimming with sorrow, we announce the passing of our much-loved, much-admired former colleague, Douglas Martin. Having embraced the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh as a young man, he with all his heart dedicated his life to the Cause of God over successive decades of outstanding service. The special gifts he possessed for presenting the Faith with clarity and vision shone through as much in his scholarly writings as in his public presentations, including in vigorous defence of the Bahá'í community in Iran. Much of this work was undertaken while he simultaneously discharged weighty responsibilities in the administration of the Faith. This included a quarter century spent as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, most of that time as its Secretary. His scintillating intellect



Douglas Martin

Photo: Bahá'í World News Service

and uncommon grasp of the grand forces of history, combined with his formidable powers of expression, were much in evidence during the years he spent as director-general of the Bahá'í International Community's Office of Public Information, a prelude to the twelve years he served as a member of the Universal House of Justice.

Resolute, ingenious, and blessed with piercing insight, he will be immensely missed.

We pray ardently that dear Douglas, now reunited with his beloved wife, Elizabeth, may be received with joy in the Abhá Kingdom, and that his illumined soul may ever soar in the limitless realms above. The friends in every community are called upon to honour his memory by convening memorials, including through devotions at every House of Worship, as circumstances permit.

– The Universal House of Justice

Regarding pilgrimage

From the Secretariat of the Universal House of Justice to all Local Spiritual Assemblies, Regional Bahá'í Councils, and Registered Groups, 14 October 2020.

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Further to the letter dated 12 March 2020 written to you on behalf of the Universal House of Justice regarding the suspension of pilgrimage and brief visits, the House of Justice has asked us to convey to you the following information.

In the intervening months since this decision was communicated to you, little has changed to make it possible for friends to visit the Holy Land. The coronavirus pandemic continues to grow worldwide; government restrictions on movement and travel change constantly; flights are rescheduled or cancelled at short notice; in many countries, including Israel, quarantine requirements are in place and can change from day to day; hotels decline bookings by people from countries they perceive to have high infection rates; and social distancing regulations make it difficult to organize group activities and gatherings.

Regrettably, as a consequence of the uncertainties outlined above, which render it very difficult for pilgrims to make plans without undue risk of disruption or financial loss, it has become necessary to extend the suspension of nine-day pilgrimage until the start of the 2021–2022 season in October 2021. Should circumstances make it possible at any point before that to allow brief visits to resume, you will be informed.

The House of Justice is aware that the believers will share its disappointment but fervently hopes that they can be welcomed to the Holy Land in the not too distant future.

Kindly assure the friends in your communities that the House of Justice will offer prayers in the Holy Shrines that they may be surrounded by the tender mercies of Bahá'u'lláh and protected under His sheltering wing.

Membership of the Continental Boards of Counsellors

From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, 29 October 2020.

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The Day of the Covenant, 25 November 2020, marks the commencement of a new five-year term of service for the members of the Continental Boards of Counsellors for the Protection and Propagation of the Faith. We have decided to increase the number of Counsellors from eighty-one to ninety, and it gives us great pleasure to announce the names of those now appointed.

AFRICA (20 Counsellors): Mélanie Bangala, Mariama Ousmane Djaouga, Alain Pierre Djoulde, Agatha Sarinoda Gaisie-Nketsiah, Augustino Ibrahim, Mati Issoufou, Hamed Javaheri, Jacques Tshibuabua Kabuya, Musonda Kapusa-Linsel (Trustee of the Continental Fund), Linnat Sifuna Kisaka, Townshend Lihanda, Izzat Abumba Mionda, Maina Mkandawire, Judicaël Mokolé, Amélia Mujinga Ngandu, Nsika Mutasa, Michael Okiria, Nancy Oloro Robarts, Djamilia Tchakréo, Jean- Pierre Tshibangu

THE AMERICAS (21 Counsellors): José Luis Almeida, Ayafor Temengye Ayafor, Louis Boddy, Natasha Bruss, Beatriz Carmona, Brígida Carrillo, Ingrid Umpierre Conter, Blas Cruz Martínez, Daniel Duhart, Farah Guchani-Rosenberg, Sonlla Heern, Badí Hernández, Irene Iturburo, Nwandi Ngozi Lawson, Ada Micheline Leonce Ferdinand, Borná Noureddin (Trustee of the Continental Fund), Arthur Powell, Pejman Samoori, Bernardino Sánchez, William Silva, Margarita Valdez Martínez

ASIA (27 Counsellors): Yam Prasad Acharya, Jamil Aliyev, Bhavna Anbarasan, Walid Ayyash, Marjini Deraoh, Gulnara Eyvazova, Shareen Farhad, Nadera Fikri, Kam Mui Fok Sayers, Rahul Kumar, Nicholas Loh, Parimal Mahato, Tarrant Matthew Mahony, Uttam Mitra, Myint Zaw Oo, Faris Naimi, Sokuntheary Reth, Foad Reyhani (Trustee of the Continental Fund), Artin Rezaie, Hesham Saad, Niroshani Saleh, Omid Seioshansian, Dregpal Singh, Zebinisso Soliyeva, Ircham Sujadmiko, Fang Jung Tseng Chung, Ozoda Zoidova

AUSTRALASIA (10 Counsellors): Bob Ale, Latai 'Atoa, Ritia Kamauti Bakineti, Kirk Johnson, Jalal Rodney Mills, Taraz Nadarajah, Daniel Pierce, Kessia Ruh, Vahid Saberi, Tessa Scrine (Trustee of the Continental Fund)

EUROPE (12 Counsellors): Raffaella Capozzi Gubinelli, Aisté Elijio, Orlando Ravelo Hernández, Varqá Khadem, Shirin Youssefian Maanian, Sabà Mazza, Veranika Medvedeva, Hedyeh Nadafi-Stoffel, Yevgeniya Poluektova, Mehdi Rezvan, Amir Saberini (Trustee of the Continental Fund), Paul Verheij

The following believers, who have earned our abiding gratitude for their self-sacrificing contributions to the progress of the Cause, are being relieved of the duties of membership on the Boards of Counsellors:

Vugar Alizadeh, Naisan Azimi, Ronny Brenes, Olga Daradur, Jabbar Eidelkhani, Clément Thyrrrell Feizouré, Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi, Zoraida García Garro, Bernard Lo Cascio, Lee Lee Loh Ludher, Sehla Masunda, Nibras Sarmad Moqbel, Aggrey Zeyazi Munubi, Delafruz Nassimova, Ahmad Parsa, U'ileiuluwehi Pimental, Iharinirina Rakotomavo, Carmen Elisa de Sadeghian, Rajan Sawant, Mark Sisson, Christopher Kiprotich Songok, Raúl Taboada, Henry Tamashiro, Shabnam Tashakour



Entrance of the International Teaching Centre Building. Photo: © Bahá'í International Community

We are confident that these dear friends will remain a source of inspiration and strength to the believers as they continue their dedicated efforts for the advancement of the Faith in the coming years. We shall offer supplications in the Holy Shrines on their behalf, that divine blessings may surround their every endeavour in the path of service to Bahá'u'lláh.

Only a few months separate us from the conclusion of the current Five Year Plan, indeed, of a series of Plans spanning twenty-five years, during which the Bahá'í world has remained focused on a single aim, namely, a significant advance in the process of entry by troops. As the friends continue their valiant exertions through these final months and prepare to enter a new stage in the development of the Cause with the launch of the One Year Plan, the leadership and inspiration that the Counsellors

bring to communities will remain vital to their efforts to respond to the exigencies of the hour. The Counsellors in all continents will be called to the Bahá'í World Centre in December 2021 to take part in deliberations on the general features of the Plan to be launched the following Ríḍván. At the conclusion of that gathering, they are to be joined by members of the Auxiliary Boards for Protection and Propagation to consult on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead and on the decisive role that the Counsellors and their auxiliaries are to play in meeting them.

We will offer fervent prayers at the Sacred Threshold for these ninety souls that their consecrated labours for the Cause may be guided and confirmed by the boundless grace and abundant favours of the Abhá Beauty.

– The Universal House of Justice

On the occasion of the Day of the Covenant

From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, 25 November 2020.

Dearly loved Friends,

We greet you with immense affection on this special day, an occasion for calling to mind the power of the Covenant, that power which “pulsateth in the body of the contingent world” and forges enduring bonds of love among the believers. In the months since Ríḍván, we have seen the evidences of this dynamic power in the unified activity of Bahá'u'lláh's followers, led so ably by the institutions of the Cause in each continent and country, as the friends everywhere have sought with characteristic creativity and determination to minister to the needs of an ailing world. Your resilience and your unwavering commitment to the well-being of those around you, persistent through all difficulties, have filled us with tremendous hope. But it is no wonder that, in some other quarters, hope has become a depleted resource. There is a mounting realization on the part of the world's people that the decades ahead are set to bring with them challenges among the most daunting that the human family has ever had to face. The current global health crisis is but one such challenge, the ultimate severity of whose cost, both to lives and livelihoods, is yet unknown; your efforts to succour and support one another as well as your sisters and brothers in society at large will certainly need to be sustained, and in places expanded.

It is against this background of furious storms lashing humanity that the ark of the Cause is about to embark upon a series of Plans that will carry it into the third century of the Bahá'í Era and significantly strengthen the Bahá'í community's capacity for realizing the society-building powers of the Faith. As you are aware, the first Plan to commence this new series will last but one year. In places where circumstances prevent national communities from establishing as many intensive programmes of growth before Ríḍván 2021 as they intended, these twelve months will extend the time available to them to do so. Meanwhile, wherever the process of growth has already been intensified, the year will be an opportunity to consolidate the achievements made during the current Plan, while cultivating the conditions necessary for welcoming larger and larger numbers of souls into the embrace of a community recognized for its fortitude and outward-looking orientation. At the national, regional, and cluster levels, we look to communities of proven strength to help those in which less experience

has accrued. In this year-long effort, every community must draw on whatever untapped potential it may possess and seek to overcome any obstacles that are impeding its growth, thereby preparing it for the demands to come. For it is within the context of a flourishing community, especially a centre of intense activity in a village or neighbourhood, and when each element of the Plan's framework is given the attention it requires, that those elements most visibly cohere and connect, multiplying the community's powers in the field of action.

Besides providing for advances within clusters everywhere, the coming Plan will be a year for profound reflection on the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the strength of the Covenant of which He was the Centre, as the community prepares to commemorate the centenary of His Ascension. The observance of this anniversary will undoubtedly prompt individuals and communities alike to contemplate the significance of that infinitely poignant moment when He Who was the Mystery of God departed from this world. His passing took from the Bahá'ís of that era a Figure Who was the object of their ardent love and loyalty; to the faithful of this age, He remains without parallel: a perfect embodiment in word and deed of all that His Father taught, the One through Whom the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh was “proclaimed, championed and vindicated”. We are conscious that the coming year will also mark a century since His Will and Testament—that “momentous”, “historic”, “immortal” Document—“called into being, outlined the features and set in motion the processes” of the Administrative Order, “the very pattern of that divine civilization which the almighty Law of Bahá'u'lláh is designed to establish upon earth”. This “unique” and “divinely-conceived” Order, this “mighty administrative structure”, had been fashioned by its Architect to perpetuate the Covenant and channel the spiritual powers of the Cause. It will be apparent, then, that the Day of the Covenant next year, exactly twelve months from now, will be especially meaningful. We ask National Spiritual Assemblies to determine how these two dates, occurring so close together, may each be observed, taking into account prevailing conditions in their countries.

All the while, earnest preparations continue to be made in the Holy Land for the commemoration of the centenary of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at a gathering at which, it is hoped, representatives of National Spiritual Assemblies and Regional Bahá'í Councils will be present. Similarly, plans are already being made for the conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members, which will coincide, in January 2022, with the lapse of one hundred years since the first public reading of the Will and Testament of the

Master. Conditions in the world may, of course, require the plans being made for these gatherings at the Bahá'í World Centre to change. But come what may, we have no doubt that the efforts made in local communities worldwide to befittingly commemorate the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and to honour the Day of the Covenant in this coming centennial year will provide the impetus needed to launch the succeeding stage in God's Minor Plan, even as Providence propels the unfoldment of His Major Plan in accordance with His incontestable decree.

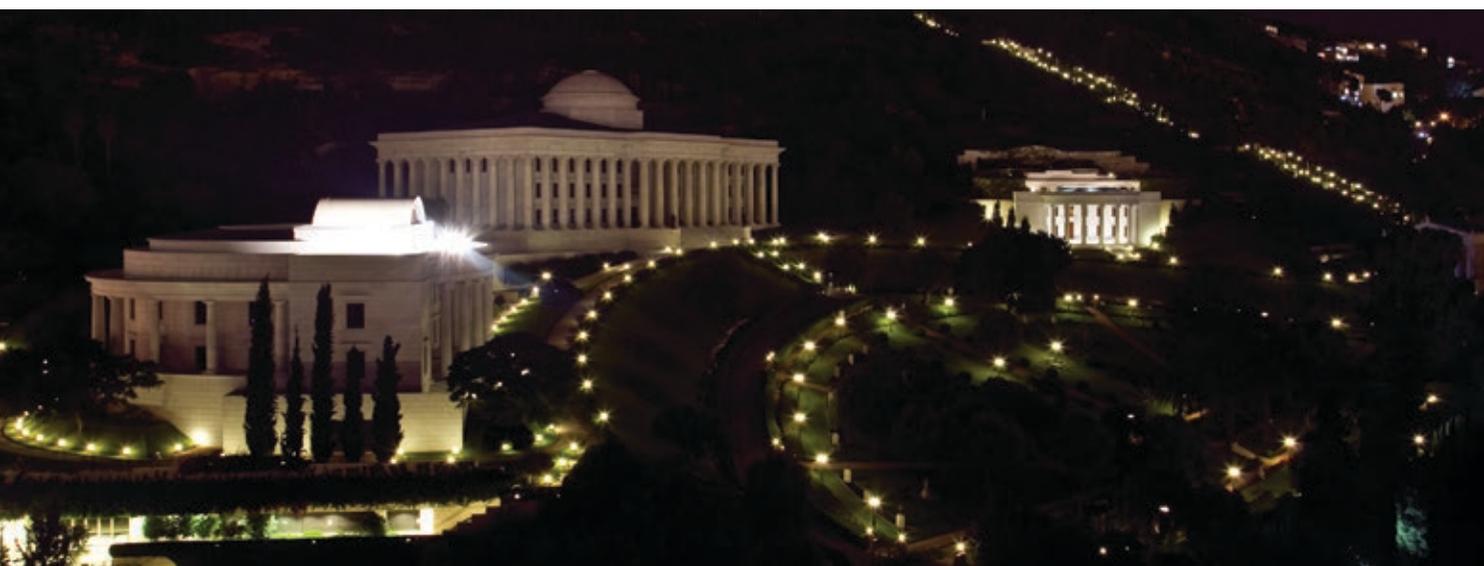
The momentum that is sure to build with each successive cycle of the One Year Plan will be further augmented by the release of two films. The first of these, which will become available in time for the centennial commemoration, will be a portrait of the Person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Besides being a tribute to His life and work, it will explore how, by championing the oneness of humanity through His words and deeds, He offered a challenge to the stale assumptions and prejudices of the age, and gave stimulus to a process of unification which continues to this day. A second film, following soon after the first, will reflect on the expiration of the first hundred years of the Formative Age from the vantage point of the heights to which the Bahá'í community has climbed, and from where it can now gaze upon new horizons.

The significance of the occasions being marked during the One Year Plan will lend it a unique character, enhancing the work being undertaken in clusters and making this single year the ideal preparation for the global endeavour that is to follow. With a sense of joyful anticipation, we announce that the Bahá'í world will, at Ridván 2022, begin a Nine Year Plan. Its requirements and provisions will be set out at a later date, but its duration already gives an unmistakable indication of the expansive prospect it will present. God willing, it will be heralded by the convocation of a series of conferences held over a span of months across the globe.

This, so far as it can be foreseen, is the course the Bahá'í community will seek to tread. For the present hour, we urge you to recommit your energies, keeping your focus on the mission immediately before you. We are immensely gratified to see the assured composure with which the community of the Greatest Name has sought to offer the divine remedy under all conditions, especially during this period when society's established patterns of life have been disrupted and risks of different kinds are being faced by so many. Withal, the friends must guard against being drawn into the ultimately futile conflict and strife that characterizes so much of the discussion of the affairs of society, or—heaven forbid—allowing interaction of this type to permeate, even fleetingly, the conversations of the community. Yet such vigilance on your part in avoiding discord and in not becoming entangled in society's controversies should under no circumstances be construed as aloofness from the many pressing concerns of this time. Far from it. You are among the most active and earnest of humanity's well-wishers. But, whether through deeds or words, the merit of your every contribution to social well-being lies, first, in your resolute commitment to discover that precious point of unity where contrasting perspectives overlap and around which contending peoples can coalesce.

Less than two full cycles remain of the present Five Year Plan—indeed, of the current series of Plans inaugurated in 1996. In these closing months, we will be sure to offer ardent prayers on your behalf in our supplications at the Sacred Threshold. May you succeed in giving hope to those who know not where to find it in a world disoriented and adrift, sorely lacking the unity which you, through your heart-pledged devotion to the Covenant, so conspicuously manifest.

– The Universal House of Justice



Buildings on the Arc. Photo: © Bahá'í International Community

Membership of the Board of Trustees

From the National Spiritual Assembly to all Local Spiritual Assemblies, all Regional Bahá'í Councils, and all Registered Groups, 8 December 2020.

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

We are pleased to share with you news of the appointment of the Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh for Canada and Saint Pierre and Miquelon. Following are the five members appointed by the International Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh to serve for the five-year term that commenced on 1 December 2020.

Mr. Bahram Gustaspi
 Mr. John MacLeod
 Mrs. Charlotte Mosleh
 Dr. Afsaneh Oliver
 Dr. Faran Vafaie

The Board also expressed their heartfelt appreciation to Mr. Bruce Moore and Mrs. Donna Seyed Mahmoud whose term of service as Deputy Trustees has concluded.

In its letter to the National Spiritual Assembly announcing these appointments, the International Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh shared the following regarding the functions of the Board of Trustees:

The primary function of a Board of Trustees is to educate the friends on the spiritual significance of the mighty law of Ḥuqúqu'lláh, enabling them to better appreciate that obedience to this law is “bound to attract divine confirmations, heavenly blessings and incalculable favours, and to promote the manifold interests of the International Bahá'í Community”. Appointing suitable Representatives and nurturing them to assist the Board in undertaking this task will be a vital element of this effort.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Board of Trustees directly (bot.huquq.canada@gmail.com) or the Representative serving your community, with any questions. We know that you will join the National Assembly in remembering these distinguished servants in your prayers.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
 Karen McKye, Secretary



Windows on the Western Pilgrim House. Photo: © Bahá'í International Community

About this issue

The title of this issue draws inspiration from this year's Riḍván message from the Universal House of Justice, in which that beloved institution wrote to the Bahá'ís of the world, "However long and arduous the road that must be travelled, we are supremely confident in your fortitude and determination to see the journey through."

As Canadians have, by and large, adjusted to the rhythm of life necessitated by the current global health crisis, there is a growing awareness that a return to the normalcy of yesteryear may be longer delayed than once imagined. Indeed, in another message from the House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world on the occasion of the Day of the Covenant, we read that "the decades ahead are set to bring with them challenges among the most daunting that the human family has ever had to face."

With this in mind, it is inspiring to witness how the Canadian Bahá'í community has carried on with the work of the Plan — of which less than two full cycles remain — seemingly undeterred, demonstrating a great willingness to be flexible in its efforts to "examine, promote, and cultivate those spiritual qualities which are most needed at this time." We have sought in this issue to share stories that demonstrate not only the resilience of the community, but also the spirit of hopefulness and undiminished vitality that remains ever present in the face of ongoing challenges.

In this light, the feature article "Carrying out activities in the pandemic" explores how those involved in the activities of the Plan across the country have adapted their efforts in the new reality. It is hoped that these examples serve as inspiration to those still contemplating how to continue with their own endeavours. While, of course, safety guidelines differ from time to time and region to region, these stories demonstrate how guidelines can be adhered to without diminishing the momentum generated prior to the pandemic.

Likewise, the article "University students engage in conversations on social change" explores how the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity seminars, which were adapted to an online setting, play a vital role in accompanying youth throughout their university studies, providing an invaluable space to connect with one another and examine their circumstances through discussions about the processes of integration and disintegration visible in society.

Additionally, two of the articles in this issue focus on recent exciting developments in the Ruhi institute courses, an updated issue of Book 1, and the introduction of two units of Book 11, all of which have contributed to revitalizing the intensity with which friends across the country are engaging in the main sequence of courses.

The article "Fulfilling a long-pursued goal: the Bethany Bahá'í Centre of Learning" describes the efforts of friends to make ready a large, multi-purpose facility for the learning site in Toronto. While this facility's use may be limited in the coming months, it has tremendous potential to support the activities of growth in Toronto and surrounding clusters.

In December, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau held a virtual meeting with representatives of several religious groups to discuss the role of faith in the context of a pandemic. In this issue, we share a report of this meeting, including the contributions made by the representatives of the Bahá'í community who were present.

Finally, it is hoped that the cover of this this magazine, a recent photograph of the progress being made in the construction of the Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, will fill your hearts with joy and appreciation for the bounty of this historic moment in time.

Submitting stories to *Bahá'í Canada*

The *Bahá'í Canada* magazine and website are spaces where we can continue to gain insight into the profound communication taking place between diverse individuals, communities and institutions. We invite people from across the country – from large cities to small towns – to submit stories and reflections about the efforts being made to translate the Writings of the Faith into action, the insights these actions are generating and the myriad questions that are arising. Send news, photos, insights, reflections and more to bahaicanada@bahai.ca.



Elizabeth Martin at work in the Bahá'í National Centre of Canada.

Her name was Elizabeth

In a short memoir entitled *Her Name Was Elizabeth*, published and distributed as a gift to delegates at the 2019 National Convention, Mr. Douglas Martin recounts the numerous contributions made by his late wife, Elizabeth Martin, to the progress of the Bahá'í Faith both in Canada and abroad. The following excerpt from that book offers a glimpse into the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Martin in the early 1970s, as they settled in Toronto following residences in Western Canada and Iceland. In this chapter, the author lovingly describes the ways in which his wife developed, at a critically formative moment in the history of the Faith in Canada, administrative capacity at the local and national level.

Her experience in Saskatoon and Iceland prepared Elizabeth for what I feel was the most vital contribution she made to the advancement of the Cause in Canada. As early as 1960, she had accepted to prepare and publish, virtually without a budget, the first compilation of the Master's addresses in Canada and His Tablets to the Canadian believers (*Abdu'l-Bahá in Canada, 1962*). In 1963,

again with an inadequate budget, she had accepted the principal editing responsibility in the work of a task force assigned to prepare for publication the Guardian's letters to the community (*Messages to Canada, 1965*). Throughout the 1960s, she had also served as a member of the National Pioneer Committee, performing much of the executive work of the committee, including acting as counsellor, travel agent and

banker for several friends serving in overseas posts. This experience had encouraged her to undertake a series of teaching trips throughout Canada, as mentioned in the statement of the House of Justice. In these travels she had concentrated on remote home front goal areas: the Yukon, the Queen Charlotte Islands, northern British Columbia, Labrador, Newfoundland, St. Pierre and Miquelon, Magdalen Islands,

Grand Manan, the Gaspé, Cape Breton and countless small towns across the country.

In the early 1970s, these varied activities gave way to full-time service as an administrative assistant at the National Centre, responsible for analyzing and drafting responses to correspondence from Local Spiritual Assemblies regarding problems of individual and group behaviour. As the greater part of this work was done on a purely voluntary basis, and as Bahá'í funds were painfully inadequate to providing the support needed by the National Assembly, I was most grateful for the kind of practical help she was prepared to contribute. Prior to her arrival, at least one out of the three days of each monthly meeting of the National Assembly – often much more – would be devoted to coping with the rising demands of this aspect of the life of an expanding national community. Within a few months of Elizabeth's assumption of her responsibilities, the National Assembly found itself spending less than half of the time formerly devoted to such matters, and this sharp reduction continued until the work was requiring little more than an hour or two of the National Assembly's attention, at least during the six or seven years of her service at the National Centre.

Elizabeth accomplished this impressive result by drafting letters for National Assembly consideration that required each Local Spiritual Assembly writing on such a subject to submit an analysis of the problem as it related to the relevant Bahá'í principles, and to suggest the course of action that seemed to it most wise. The letters from the National Assembly included thoroughly researched excerpts from the relevant Writings and the guidance given by Shoghi Effendi. Local Spiritual Assemblies were literally "compelled" to think through such issues and, once finding that they could do so, tended increasingly to feel empowered in handling their own challenges. The effect was to concentrate the attention of the



Elizabeth Martin traveling throughout Canada speaking about the Faith.

National Spiritual Assembly on those matters that could be handled only at that level, the agenda items themselves being accompanied by summaries of each case and excerpts from what appeared to be the relevant guidance. Two of the assistants trained by Elizabeth during this period subsequently put their experience to use as members and officers of the National Assembly, one of them later serving in a senior capacity in the Secretariat of the Universal House of Justice.

The key to the program's success lay, I believe, in the fact that Elizabeth had early fallen in love with the Guardian's writings: their sanity, their balance, their intellectual clarity, and the larger perspective in which they place the minutiae of day-to-day living. With the National Assembly's agenda liberated from its monthly burden, she went on to propose that teams of qualified believers be appointed in each region of the country, supplied with compilations of guidance on commonly encountered administrative questions, and systematically trained to provide help to needy Local Assemblies.

The idea was adopted by the National Assembly and a system of "assembly resource teams" was developed. As with the form which the National

Assembly's related correspondence was taking, the strength of this system was the guiding principle that placed emphasis on assisting Local Spiritual Assemblies to analyze, research, consult, and arrive at their own decisions. Elizabeth participated eagerly in the work of helping to prepare the teams, her travels taking her to many of the areas of the country she had visited on teaching trips. It came as a source of great encouragement when, shortly thereafter, the Universal House of Justice established the position of Assistants to Auxiliary Board members, and those Board members serving in Canada found themselves with a ready pool of qualified believers from among whom to choose their new helpers.

For Elizabeth, who viewed them through the eyes of faith and in the perspective of humanity's future, these struggling, often fragile, sometimes quarrelsome Local Assemblies that the Bahá'í community was painstakingly planting throughout the planet were, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá said of them:

...shining lamps and heavenly gardens, from which the fragrances of holiness are diffused over all regions, and the lights of knowledge are shed abroad over all created things. From them the spirit of life streameth in every direction. They, indeed, are the potent sources of the progress of man, at all times, and under all conditions. (*God Passes By*, p.325)

In pursuing the demanding work that she had taken on, no amount of toil, frustration, nor sometimes painful disappointment seemed to weaken the profound conviction that such words of the Master had awakened in Elizabeth.

This commitment to cultivating the possibilities inherent in the Administrative Institutions created by Bahá'u'lláh illustrated more forcefully than anything else she did in life – apart from the manner in which she took leave of life – the depths of Elizabeth's faith in the transforming power of His Covenant. She was not



A gathering on the eve of Elizabeth and Douglas Martin's departure for the Bahá'í World Centre, hosted by Pouran Baghai, who wanted Elizabeth to 'look around and see nothing but loving friends!'

only a highly intelligent woman, but an intellectually sophisticated one. A degree in English literature, coupled with reading that ranged across many fields of interest, endowed her with an unsentimental understanding of human nature and human society. The net effect of this intellectual discipline was to provide her with the skills and mental acuity that the pursuit of the spiritual objectives to which she had given her allegiance demanded.

Throughout her life, a major cause of disquiet was her concern that she had slipped into the role of a kind of "jack-of-all-trades." She wondered constantly whether she might not have been far more useful, and far more fulfilled, had she pursued an academic career, equipping herself with the doctoral degree that would have been within her reach and establishing herself in some field of scholarship relevant to Bahá'í studies. There was a good deal of truth in this cold-eyed assessment of what she was doing with her life, yet that was precisely what the Cause needed of her and what her capacities, her preparation, and her opportunities combined to dictate. No modern scholar who reviews objectively the administrative dev-

“The powers of unity, wisdom and fair-mindedness that are inherent in Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation shape the collective life of His followers only as Bahá'í institutions come gradually to embody the administrative principles He taught.”

elopment of the Canadian Bahá'í community will fail to discern in it the enduring effects of what she achieved.

The powers of unity, wisdom and fair-mindedness that are inherent in Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation shape the collective life of His followers only as Bahá'í institutions come gradually to embody the administrative principles He taught. To experience firsthand the extent to which this is occurring in the Canadian Bahá'í community must be a source of particular happiness to its members. To me, Elizabeth's contribution to the process remains the most deeply satisfying of the many services she rendered to the Cause she loved.

Whatever advantages an academic career might have offered, the course she actually chose meant that the administrative development of the Faith in Canada, at a critically formative moment in its history, enjoyed the wholehearted services of an individual with the combination of intellectual, artistic, and organizational resources it required.

– Douglas Martin



Youth offering a summer of service in the Rundle, Alta., neighbourhood gather in Nose Hill Park for prayers.

Photo: Amanda Ong

Carrying out activities in the pandemic

Three neighbourhoods navigate challenges to sustaining and growing their core activities in the spring and summer months.

As social distancing guidelines have continued to evolve throughout the summer and fall, friends across the country have earnestly striven to carry on with the work of the Plan while remaining vigilant to protect the health of everyone involved. This has required a great deal of determination and flexibility as plans, sometimes weeks in the making, can require adjustment

on short notice. The following stories from three localities in Canada show some examples of this determination to overcome obstacles.

In the Atlantic region, teams of youth giving a period of full-time service in the summer travelled to **Charlottetown, P.E.I.** to participate in a series of in-person institute campaigns. P.E.I. had closed its borders when the pandemic began,

but it soon formed a bubble with other Atlantic provinces and travel was permitted between them without self-isolating.

Lomeharshan Lall, who serves as the Charlottetown cluster junior youth program coordinator as well as an animator in the **Summerside neighbourhood**, described the excellent timing of the new border regulations for the province's summer



Animator and junior youth in Rundle, Alta., making reusable face masks as part of a service project.

Photo: Drew Erickson

plans, saying, “that coincided with when we had planned activities and we went ahead with plans as usual. People came all summer, and we held the activities we had hoped for.”

The purpose of the campaigns, where the youth studied Ruhi books 1 to 5 and 7, was two-fold. Mr. Lall explains, “we wanted to help these communities advance in the institute and also for participants to go back to their communities to help start or strengthen core activities to help win the goals of the Plan.”

The campaigns also served to strengthen the activities of the three neighbourhoods — Summerside, Dresden Ct. and Hillsborough — in which the teams carried out the practices of the books. By the third campaign, teams felt confident enough in their approach to social distancing to begin outreaching to new people, but during the first two campaigns, visits were made only to

neighbours already known to the neighbourhood team.

The Summerside team visited these neighbourhood friends to carry out the practice of Book 1: *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit*. They stood at a distance from the front door and shared some prayers and quotations they had learned from the book. Most of these neighbours were elderly and were happy to be visited by youth because they had not had contact with many people since the beginning of the pandemic. They were also happy to see young people serving the community in times of difficulty. The neighbours agreed to continue receiving regular visits from the team for the sharing of prayers and quotations, and these each became a separate devotional gathering in the neighbourhood.

A strategy emerged out of this experience for the Summerside team to overcome challenges to growth

presented by P.E.I.’s safety guidelines. The team decided it would visit and engage in conversations with neighbours already known to them until a depth of understanding had been developed around the community building process. From there, they would ask neighbours to



A junior youth in Rundle, Alta., getting a visit on his porch by animators on his birthday.

Photo: Drew Erickson

reach out to other people from their own networks and help introduce them to the process.

Reflecting on this experience, Mr. Lall shared, “One thing that became clear to us in the pandemic is the importance of building strong relationships, because we couldn’t just reach out to new people, we had to work with people we knew already and go from there.”

Similarly, the **Rundle neighbourhood** in **Calgary, Alta.**, realized the importance of strengthening relationships with those to whom they already had a connection.

The Rundle youth that were giving a period of full-time service for the summer experienced a change in the rhythm of activity in the neighbourhood when the pandemic began. The first few weeks of summer would usually be a time for these youth to have an institute campaign and to have new conversations with people in the neighbourhood, but the pandemic guidelines made this usual pattern for the neighbourhood unfeasible.

Desiring to reinvigorate the activities which were being adversely affected by the pandemic, the youth decided to make efforts to have meaningful conversations with people with whom they already had a connection. Each youth made a list of school friends, whom they had not seen for a few months, and began to text and call the people on their lists. “We were on our phones a lot,” reflected Deeba Behrouzi, a youth serving full-time in the summer. “From that point on,” she continued, “we started a new study of Ruhi Book 1 with some friends from school, which was a big success.”

Likewise, with the junior youth groups in the neighbourhood, it became clear to animators that hosting activities on online platforms lessened the frequency of participation for the junior youth; therefore, a few steps were taken to safely host activities in-person in the neighbourhood.

One thing the animators decided to do was to carry out what they call



Junior youth practicing social distancing while attending a neighbourhood camp in Rundle, Alta. Photo: Drew Erickson

“doorstep devotionals.” Yassamin Erickson, an animator, explained, “With our junior youth group, what we really wanted was to bring back the devotional character because our group had weekly devotionals and it stopped.” She explained further that the junior youth group had initially tried to hold the devotionals online, but it was not successful. “So,” Ms. Erickson shared, “we went out and brought our guitars and ukuleles and we just sang at the door.” The animators also took the opportunity to engage with parents during their devotional visits to doorsteps.

In July, the neighbourhood hosted a five-day in-person junior youth camp in the local community centre. Prior to the camp, the animators consulted doctors, other health care workers, and local Bahá’í institutions about their plans for the safety of the camp space. The animators also consulted within their own team about the content of study and activities of the camp. Collectively, they put together study materials for the camp that explicitly addressed the pandemic, as well as ways the junior youth could contribute to the feelings of hope and safety in their neighbourhood. During the camp itself, they designated a safety coordinator who reflected daily with the junior youth about the health and safety of the camp space. The animators also regularly reviewed the health and safety guidelines together in their own reflection space.

At times, there have been challenges for the team in adequately following the safety guidelines, but the members are mindful to lovingly encourage each other to do so. “We think about the families of the junior youth that we meet every day and the safety of the children at the park. The consequences of animators not following the guidelines affect the rest of the neighbourhood. I believe this way of thinking tied into the sense of ownership we felt over the activities and strengthened our love for our community,” shared Ms. Behrouzi.

In the **Overbrook neighbourhood** in **Ottawa, Ont.**, it became challenging for a group of youth to carry on with their study of Ruhi Book 1 online. “I was discouraged,” shared their tutor, Melody Rowhani, “Book 1 over Zoom wasn’t working, and all the youth were ‘zoomed out.’” To overcome her feelings of hopelessness, Ms. Rowhani decided to accompany two of the youth in the study circle to start a children’s class.

The excitement of these two youth, Jason, and Megan, 16 and 15 years of age respectively, grew as they began to plan with Ms. Rowhani for their children’s class. Planning helped them to reflect on the current conditions of the world. After reading about the purpose of children’s classes in several sections from Ruhi Book 3: *Teaching Children’s Classes*, Grade 1, Jason shared his

feelings that if every child were to be raised with these materials, then perhaps racism and other forms of prejudice would cease to exist in the world. Jason also shared with Ms. Rowhani a song he liked that talked about education giving people the tools to combat prejudice, and that his interest in teaching children's classes arose out of the desire to help young people have access to spiritual education.

Jason and Megan extended an invitation to children from families they knew in their neighbourhood. They explained to each family how they planned to help the children keep a safe distance from each other. They wanted the class to meet in

the park, and they would place hula hoops on the ground as visual markers for distancing, and each child would stay in their own hoop for the duration of the class. They would also provide hand sanitizers and ask the children to wear masks when they were meeting.

As the three friends became focused on their goal of conducting an excellent children's class, more children began to express an interest in joining; however, because of local health restrictions, the class was kept to 10 participants.

Moving forward, the team is consulting about how to meet with the children safely indoors during the

winter months. They have taken steps to measure the space inside the home of a pioneer in the neighbourhood to see how many participants can fit safely indoors. They have decided that since only five participants can fit safely distanced in the home, they will split the class in half with one teacher conducting each, at different times of the week.

These examples demonstrate the resolve of many communities, which in the current conditions of the pandemic, are finding that "while certain possibilities have been temporarily closed, others have opened up, and new means have emerged for strengthening existing patterns of activity."



Fountain at the Riqvân Garden. Photo: © Bahá'í International Community

Reflections on the new Book 1

SECTION 12

Bahá'u'lláh declares:

“Ye are even as the bird which soareth, with the full force of its mighty wings and with complete and joyous confidence, through the immensity of the heavens, until, impelled to satisfy its hunger, it turneth longingly to the water and clay of the earth below it, and, having been entrapped in the mesh of its desire, findeth itself impotent to resume its flight to the realms whence it came. Powerless to shake off the burden weighing on its sullied wings, that bird, hitherto an inmate of the heavens, is now forced to seek a dwelling-place upon the dust. Wherefore, O My servants, defile not your wings with the clay of waywardness and vain desires, and suffer them not to be stained with the dust of envy and hate, that ye may not be hindered from soaring in the heavens of My divine knowledge.”¹⁷

1. Complete the sentences below.

a. The bird to which Bahá'u'lláh refers in this quotation is the _____.

40 – Reflections on the Life of the Spirit



An online Book 1 study circle.

Tutors explore some notable changes to the first book in the training institute's main sequence of courses.

In May 2020, the Ruhi Institute released a new edition of Book 1: *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit*. “This new edition,” the Institute stated, “draws on comments we have received in recent years from other institutes and friends in the field, as well as from growing experience in its use.”

The publication has reinvigorated the study of this foundational course across the country as friends endeavour to familiarize themselves with its contents and study it in groups, keeping in mind that “the courses of the Ruhi Institute trace a path of service to humanity.”

Among other initiatives, a series of tutor seminars organized by institute boards have been taking place over the last few months, providing

a space for in-depth study and examination of the content of the book, in a way that shapes tutors’ thinking, speaking, and state of being so as to attract more souls to walk the path of service.

Those who have participated in these studies note a renewed appreciation and enthusiasm for the institute courses, particularly the first book, which for many is an introduction to engaging with the Word of God in a formal setting. Many have also noted that they now feel they can introduce the book to friends with more confidence.

“Everyone is very excited because the material feels so open,” shared Helen Mirkovich-Kohm who took part in one of the seminars in Alberta. “Some of the portions that may have

been hard if you weren’t a Bahá’í have been modified throughout; people are much more comfortable doing the book with their friends who are not Bahá’í.”

The opening section, “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor,” describes various paths that lead participants to the first institute course — believers looking to enhance their capacity to serve; seekers beginning their investigation of the Faith; those familiar with the Bahá’í community but wishing to better understand its aims and endeavours; and friends wanting to develop their capacity to participate in programs of service promoted by the Bahá’í community. This new introduction provides a context in which participants can find themselves in order to begin

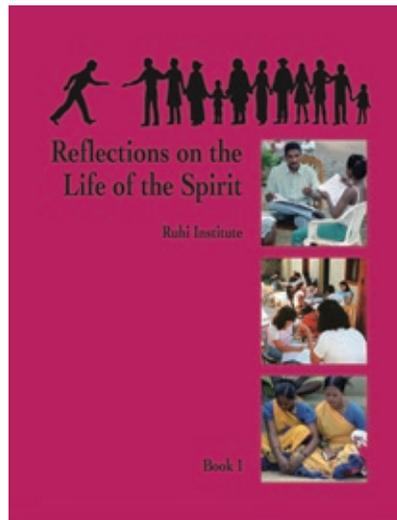
their study of the Teachings with greater focus and purpose.

Also addressed at the outset of the material is a question many unfamiliar with the Institute may have regarding its aims, namely, “Are participants being asked to join a religion?” The new introduction explains that while an ever-deepening understanding of Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings will naturally be cultivated during one’s studies, “acceptance and faith are matters to be contemplated by each individual freely and without pressure.”¹ Those who have studied the book are finding this new language particularly helpful when speaking to friends about the institute process for the first time.

Steve Poitras, who is participating in a study seminar as well as tutoring a Book 1 study circle in **Sainte-Béatrix, Que.**, noted the new material acknowledges how people could question the intentions of those inviting them to study, opening up a conversation about why the course has been created. Said Mr. Poitras, “We can tell them, ‘This book is studied internationally by Bahá’ís and people who want to better understand the ideas of the Faith, as well as youth who want to develop the capacities to serve society.’ This removes the stigma that this is religious content designed to convert people, when, in its true form, it is an effort on behalf of a growing international community to apply Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings both to individual life and society-building efforts.”

Another change is the way in which the second unit of the book, titled “Prayer”, frames the practice of prayer, especially as it relates to those who are not religious. By first introducing the concept that those walking a path of service have a twofold purpose—to grow spiritually and intellectually and to contribute to the transformation of society—the material explains how prayer best provides the spiritual nourishment necessary to advance this purpose.

¹ Ruhi Book 1: *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit*, “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor”



New edition of Book 1: *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit*

Tutors who have recently begun Book 1 study circles note how the concept that the primary purpose of prayer is to ensure the development of society through the acquisition of divine qualities struck a chord with participants and allowed for a deeper understanding around the concept of prayer.

From there, the material naturally advances and explores the concepts of obligatory prayer, prayer as a state of being, and the importance of collective prayer. Finally, a newly added section 11 in Unit 2 then summarizes the concepts to that point and states, “All that you have studied so far has prepared you to undertake, if you wish, a first act on the path of service: hosting a devotional gathering.”

Maëlle Turbide of **Longueuil, Que.**, started an online study circle with friends shortly after the French version of the material was made available and found the second unit particularly effective at relating the content to practical action. “Before,” she explained, “there was sometimes a gap to cross between the study of the material and the starting of a devotional gathering that could be difficult to bridge. The new book is written very directly and clearly states that participants should think about being a host of a prayer meeting.”

While Ms Turbide feels this material has rejuvenated how friends engage with the Creative Word and invite others to the path of service, she has also observed that the unique circumstances presented by the coronavirus pandemic have led to increased curiosity about spiritual reality from the wider community, coupled with a growing desire to remain connected. She recounts how a study group developed out of these circumstances.

During the initial quarantine in March, she received the Naw-Rúz letter from the Universal House of Justice speaking about the conditions of the world and offering hope to humanity. The letter acknowledged the suffering people are experiencing, but also was a source of great comfort to her.

Wanting to reach out to friends and share this message, she organized a series of meetings on Zoom to discuss the letter and evolving social conditions. Conversations about integrative and disintegrative forces in society allowed participants to realize that they could align themselves with positive forces if they chose to do so. As some participants showed a desire to learn more about how the current state of humanity relates to Bahá’u’lláh’s vision for the world, it was proposed to continue meeting and to begin studying Book 1.

This group of five participants who, given their geographical separation, would likely never all meet in person, has been brought together and uplifted through their online study of Book 1. “One of my friends went from a state of despair to being very hopeful,” said Ms Turbide. “It’s amazing to see how being in contact with the material is giving her a sense of purpose and a feeling that she can engage in a process that is important.”

In light of global circumstances, the new edition of Book 1 has been made available on the Ruhi Institute’s website for download at: www.ruhi.org



A volunteer helping to prepare the Bethany Bahá'í Centre of Learning, in Kawartha Lakes, Ont.

Fulfilling a long-pursued goal: The Bethany Bahá'í Centre of Learning

Canada has achieved a goal to acquire a new property for Toronto and surrounding clusters.

On April 1st, 2016, a letter on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada presented a vision of establishing educational facilities to serve the pressing needs of growth. In its letter, the House of Justice said:

In Toronto and Vancouver, where institute activities have increased significantly and which are also serving as sites for the dissemination of learning about the junior youth spiritual empowerment program, it might be helpful for you to think in terms of a facility with dormitories dedicated to all forms of educational activity.

In response to this letter, an educational facility was first acquired for the Vancouver cluster in 2018, and, more recently, the National Assembly announced news of the acquisition of a 12-acre property in Bethany Hills, located in the Kawartha Lakes cluster. The property is ap-

proximately 115 km northeast of Toronto and although its primary use will be as a centre of learning for the Toronto cluster, it is also a valuable resource for the entire region. This step fulfilled a long-pursued goal that the House of Justice encouraged the National Assembly to meet to serve the growth of youth activities in Toronto. In a letter to the Spiritual Assembly of Toronto, the National Assembly wrote:

Having acquired a facility in Vancouver over two years ago and been in constant search for a suitable facility to serve the Toronto cluster, what joy it brings us to now assume possession of a 12-acre property, with 120-person dormitory capacity and buildings designed for educational activity, so close to the city!

The Bethany Bahá'í Centre of Learning is located in a protected ecosystem, which is part of a larger conservation area. The expanse

of rolling hills and rich agriculture surrounding it will provide a peaceful setting for studying, enjoying recreational activities, and building bonds of friendships during camps and campaigns to be hosted there in the future.

As a learning site for the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme, Toronto has reached a point of requiring spaces where youth can accelerate in their study of the institute courses in a transformative environment. When restrictions ease, the space may also be used for Toronto learning site overnight learning and training seminars for young people in other clusters.

The Bethany property includes a main educational building with classrooms, art rooms, offices, a commercial grade kitchen and a dining hall. There are also two dormitory buildings that can host up to 120 people and outdoor spaces for sports and recreation.



Volunteers at the Bethany Bahá'í Centre of Learning taking a break to enjoy each other's company.

To prepare the site to serve the needs of the Cause, the National Assembly appointed a task force to begin coordinating the immediate maintenance work needed to bring it into operation. The task force called upon the friends in Toronto and its neighbouring clusters to undertake various tasks such as cleaning, gardening, and repairs. An immediate challenge to the volunteer work has been the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and great care was taken both by the task force

and volunteers to ensure daily health screening of all visitors, sanitization and mask requirements, and physical distancing measures.

Despite these challenges, tremendous progress has been made in the past several months. The task force reports that over the summer, a total of approximately 180 volunteers came from 15 different clusters contributing some 2,160 hours on-site. Community members donated water and snacks for volunteers, much needed funds for present and

future maintenance of the property, heavy equipment and machinery, and cleaning equipment. Volunteers also offered their professional skills and experience as engineers, heavy equipment operators, landscapers, gardeners, and administrators. There is no doubt that the dedication, love, and generosity of the friends will continue as the facility becomes open to activities that will accelerate the community building process in the years to come.

Exploring concepts from Ruhi Book 11: *Material Means*

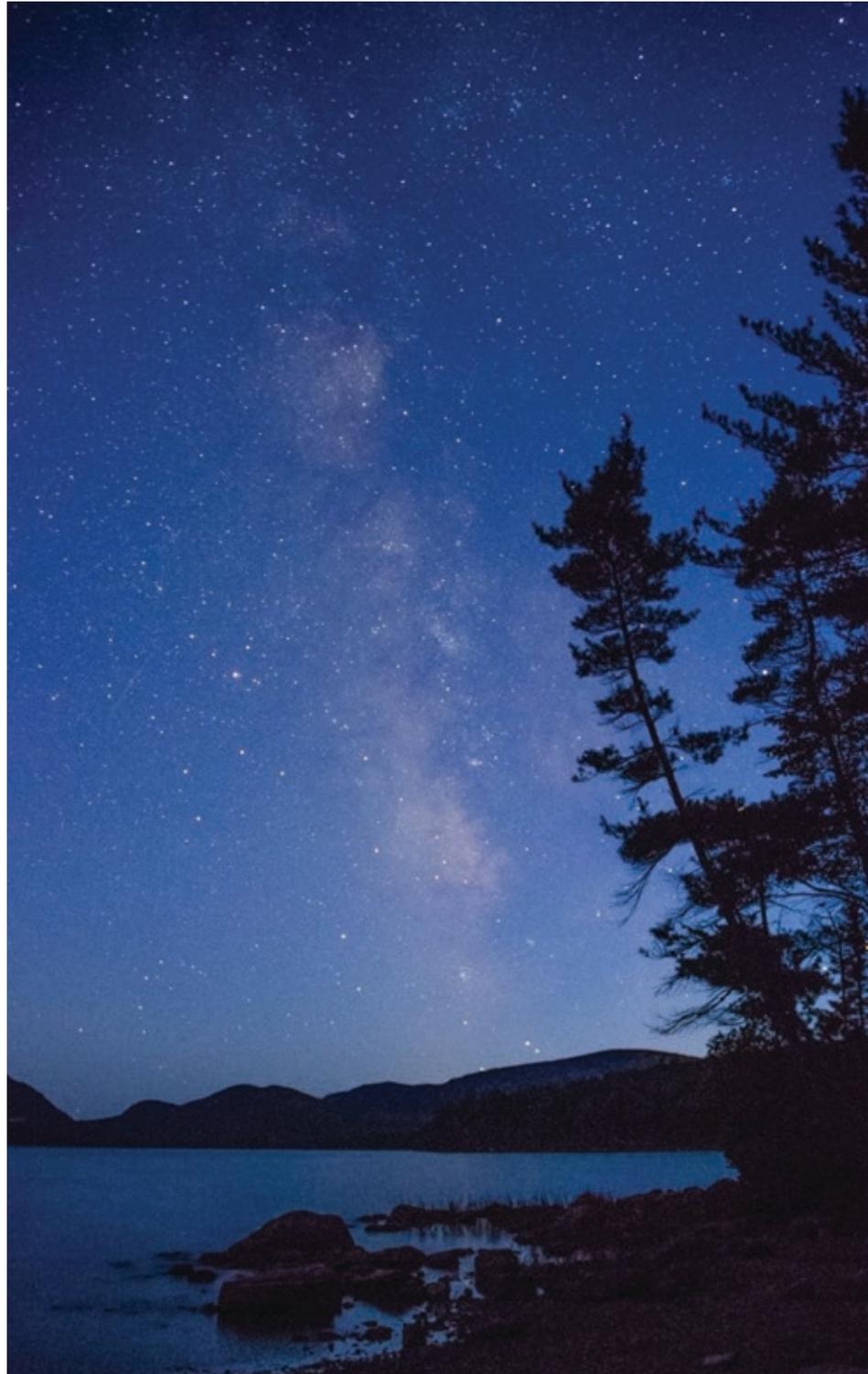
Two participants reflect on themes from the first units of the eleventh book in the institute process.

The campfire crackled as we huddled around to finish the closing sections of the first unit of Ruhi Book 11: *Material Means*, “Giving: The Spiritual Basis of Prosperity,” in Algonquin Park, Ont. Our study circle, the members of which belonged to the same social bubble in Ottawa since the beginning of the pandemic, had driven out of the city for the weekend determined to complete our study of the unit. As we enjoyed each other’s company and the outdoors, we reflected on the lofty themes of the material.

The first section of the unit reminded us that the global civilization envisioned by Bahá’u’lláh is prosperous both spiritually and materially, a vision that beckons the re-evaluation of the concept of wealth. We read the Master’s statement that “Wealth is praiseworthy” when it is generated through “an individual’s own efforts and the grace of God, in commerce, agriculture, art and industry, and if it be expended for philanthropic purposes.”¹ In every session of the study circle that followed, achieving coherence between the material and spiritual dimensions of life was a theme woven throughout our discussions.

Unit 1 also explores the connection between the generation and expenditure of wealth by examining the attributes of a generous heart. A few of these attributes - purity, love, and detachment – appear throughout the sections. We also learn that a generous heart is free from “greed or envy and finds delight in the progress of others;”² it is forgiving and forbearing;³ it gives continuously

¹ Abdul-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*; Ruhi Book 11: *Material Means*, Unit 1, Section 2.
² Ruhi Book 11: *Material Means*, Unit 1, Section 7.
³ *Ibid*, Section 8



The Milky Way seen from the edge of Eagle Lake on Mount Desert Island, Me. Photo: Louis Brunet

of its time and substance;⁴ it “clings to justice;”⁵ it is willing “to enter the field of sacrifice;”⁶ and it does not give “from a position of superiority,” rather, a generous heart is ready to offer and learn at the same time.⁷

... sacrifice draws one closer to the Creator.

Section 11 draws on some other texts of the Ruhi institute to explore the mysterious nature of sacrifice. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says, “Until a being setteth his foot in the plane of sacrifice, he is bereft of every favour and grace.”⁸ This connection between sacrifice and love of God, and the relationship between sacrifice and realization of one’s potentials are examined subsequently. The section tells us that sacrifice draws one closer to the Creator. The Master says, “nearness to God necessitates sacrifice of self, severance and the giving up of all to Him. Nearness is likeness.”⁹ So, although sacrifice is difficult, it brings about true joy. The Master further counsels us, “Let us put aside all thoughts of self; let us close our eyes to all on earth, let us neither make known our sufferings nor complain of our wrongs. Rather let us become oblivious of our own selves, and drinking down the wine of heavenly grace, let us cry out our joy, and lose ourselves in the beauty of the All-Glorious.”¹⁰

Towards the end, Unit 1 turns to the topic of the community, the place where the attributes of a generous heart can bear fruit. We read that a generous community has a unique

culture that strives to reflect the Will of God. Such a community draws upon the spiritual forces that come from sacrificial acts. The Guardian writes, “The greater the effort and self-sacrifice, the richer the benefits that will accrue, and the more potent the blessings that will be vouchsafed from on high.”¹¹

In our study circle, the tutor shared how she always thought of her culture as something that she already had with her. She said that studying Book 11 had helped her to begin to think of creating a community culture that is yet to come, a characteristic of which is giving.

Concepts of Book 11 have also permeated the language we use to talk about generosity in the context of the current global pandemic. At a recent online citywide Feast in Ottawa, facilitators of the consultation portion used excerpts from the unit to explore the relationship between the attributes of a generous heart and the community in the pandemic.

Reflecting on these passages helped us gain a new understanding of the connection between the individual and community in the Plan. Several friends shared their own experiences and insights. A young pioneer to a neighbourhood in Ottawa described that when she and her sister moved to the cluster with no furniture in the midst of the pandemic, they were helped by the community to set up their new apartment. An animator of an online junior youth group shared that she was able to meet the members of her group for the first time in-person because a community member gave her a ride to the neighbouring cluster where they lived. Another community member told the story of several young animators who showed a spirit of generosity by staying committed to their group despite difficulties they faced during the lockdown. That group was able to complete a full junior youth program text over Zoom, and later they regathered in-

person in the summer months and held camps in the park. In order to continue serving their junior youth group, the animators, whose families lived in other provinces, decided to stay in Ottawa despite the fact that their university studies had moved online and it would have been less expensive for them to move back to their parents’ homes.

In our open-air study of the book in Algonquin park, we recalled similar examples of generous acts from our own experiences. We finished the unit just as we reached the end of the evening, and the campfire had now become our circle’s primary source of light and heat. With thoughts of a generous community still fresh in our minds and hearts, one participant got up to stoke the fire for the rest.

Reflections on study of Book 11, Unit 2

How exciting it was to explore the topic of material means in the second unit of Book 11, “The Institution of the Fund,” with a group of friends in Toronto, especially at a time when our systems of society, our use of material resources and our relationships with one another are relevant topics of discussion around the world.

Before beginning the unit, our study circle decided to review the 1 March 2017 letter from the Universal House of Justice. This letter explores the moral aspects of economics as well as the coherence between spiritual and material life. It also helps us reflect on our collective responsibility with regards to material means, stating, “As the Bahá’í community strives to contribute at the level of thought and action to the betterment of the world, the adverse conditions experienced by many populations will more and more demand its attention.”¹²

This letter further reminds us that “the enervating influence of materialism seeps into every culture,” and that unless all Bahá’ís

4 Ibid, Section 9

5 Ibid, Section 10

6 Ibid, Section 11

7 Ibid, Section 9

8 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*; Ruhi Book 11: *Material Means*, Unit 1, Section 11.

9 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*; Ruhi Book 11: *Material Means*, Unit 1, Section 11.

10 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*; Ruhi Book 11: *Material Means*, Unit 1, Section 11.

11 Shoghi Effendi, *Dawn of a New Day*; Ruhi Book 11: *Material Means*, Unit 1, Section 12.

12 From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá’ís of the World, 1 March 2017.

“strive to remain conscious of its effects, they may to one degree or another unwittingly adopt its ways of seeing the world.” Following this reminder, we were thankful for the opportunity to continue our study of material means in Unit 2 of Book 11.

At the outset, Unit 2 helped us begin to see our relationship to the funds of the Faith as putting into practice the qualities of a generous heart. We also gained insight into the concept of wealth used for universal well-being, as well as how to apply this concept through creating new patterns of action in our community-building efforts. As one member of our study circle wrote:

Unit 1 invited us to envision a prosperity that will embrace humankind in its entirety. Unit 2 takes us deeper into the civilization building process related to the prosperity of humankind; it explores the relationship of the three protagonists: the individual, the community and the institutions to the Institution of the Fund. It is a wonderful detailed study of this essential and exciting topic. I look forward to Unit 3, which will explore the mighty Law of Huqúqu'lláh.

Throughout the unit, we are helped to refine our understanding of ‘means’ and ‘ends,’ and we are lifted out of a mechanical perspective of participating in the Fund because we are reminded that our ‘doing’ and ‘being’ are inseparable. We are also made to see that participating in the Fund has implications beyond the simple, and often seemingly mechanical, act of individuals making a regular monetary contribution. Rather, we are encouraged to imagine what our communities will look like as they increasingly act with generosity, humility and faithfulness. This gives us a long telescopic view into the future – a just and prosperous civilization for the entire human race. “The act of contributing to the Fund,” states the House of Justice, “is imbued with profound meaning: it is a practical

... we are encouraged to imagine what our communities will look like as they increasingly act with generosity, humility and faithfulness.

way of hastening the advent of that civilization.”¹³

Sacrificial individual contributions, the community consciousness and institutional stewardship of the funds “can be regarded as expressions of the love that binds the three actors together.”¹⁴ This new relationship among the three protagonists constitutes a “matrix within which the spiritual civilization, bearing the imprint of divine inspiration, gradually emerges.”¹⁵

In terms of contributing to the Fund at the individual level, the House of Justice says that giving “is both a responsibility and a source of bounty.” With regards to this, the Master tells us:

If a man would seek distinction, he should suffice himself with a frugal provision, seek to better the lot of the poor of the realm, choose the way of justice and fairmindedness, and tread the path of high-spirited service. Such a one, needy though he be, shall win imperishable riches and attain unto everlasting honour.¹⁶

This passage made clear how different our attitudes and standards

13 From the Universal House of Justice to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, 29 December 2015; Ruhi Book 11: *Material Means*, Unit 2, Section 6.

14 Ibid.

15 From the Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 2012; Ruhi Book 11: *Material Means*, Unit 2, Section 7.

16 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, From a Tablet, compiled in “Trustworthiness: A Cardinal Bahá’í Virtue;” Ruhi Book 11: *Material Means*, Unit 2, Section 8.

must be from those of our society concerning wealth and distinction.

The book also allowed us to reflect on the circumstances of our own lives by following the story of a young man whose frequency of contributions decreases after his expenses rise. Eventually, as he and his wife achieve more stability, they begin to contribute more systematically. After carefully budgeting for day-to-day expenses, as well as the future education of their children, they allot a portion of their income to the Fund.

The institutional requisites for administering the funds also stands out in clear contrast to society’s norms. Individual giving is a sacred obligation, and the institutions are cautioned to avoid the pressures and manipulations common in society concerning donations. They are advised by the Universal House of Justice to “observe strict confidentiality”¹⁷ and to administer the funds with wisdom, handling them as a sacred trust, in a trustworthy, judicious and effective manner.¹⁸

Now that the participants of our study circle have finished the study of this unit, we have become more reflective about our relationship to the Fund. We pay closer attention to the Fund reports from the Local Spiritual Assembly during Feast, which include the evolving needs of the community and the institutions in these months that are left of this Five Year Plan. We feel a renewed desire to re-assess our individual needs and wants, so as to increase our own level of sacrifice and the regularity of our giving. Now, we realize that by giving to the Fund, we are contributing not only to the immediate needs of the Bahá’í community but to the eventual establishment of a just and equitable society for all.

17 From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 18 July 2000; Ruhi Book 11: *Material Means*, Unit 2, Section 10.

18 From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 19 December 1929; Ruhi Book 11: *Material Means*, Unit 2, Section 11.



Ongoing gatherings have been held in Canada, and across the globe, for youth to continue to study ISGP seminar materials. Photo: Bahá'í World News Service

University students engage in conversations on social change

A series of online gatherings provided an uplifting environment for students to come together and reflect on their present reality.

In Canada, The Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity held four online gatherings for participants in the summer months. More online gatherings are planned for December 2020 and January 2021 as part of ongoing efforts to support university students studying in English and French.

This article originally appeared on the Bahá'í World News Service website: <https://news.bahai.org>

In this period of heightened uncertainty, youth have especially been confronted with many questions about the direction in which the world is headed and their place in it. To assist university students in navigating these questions, the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity

(ISGP) has been creating spaces for young people to come together in focused discussions.

A participant from Canada says: “By identifying relevant spiritual concepts—such as unity and justice—our discussions are helping us to re-

flect on the current situation and to gain new perspectives.”

These gatherings, largely held online, complement a four-year seminar program offered by ISGP to university students, who are taking the opportunity to reexamine many

Participants of the gatherings have been emphasizing the caution and wisdom needed when using social media to discuss the current health crisis.

of the concepts and ideas studied in the seminars in light of the pandemic and their efforts to serve society at this time.

“One of the concepts that has brought clarity to our analysis of present conditions is from the Bahá’í teachings, which state that humanity is reaching its collective maturity, when its essential oneness will be recognized and will give shape to new social structures. This movement toward maturity involves both processes of disintegration and integration. But if all we see is disintegration, then we do not get an accurate picture and are left with hopelessness. Through these discussions we are learning to detect progress, no matter how subtle it may be, and to think about the ways we can contribute to our society,” says a participant from France.

In whatever country they reside, the health crisis is making more apparent to participants and their peers the need to reconsider the relationship between the individual and society.

One participant from France says: “Many people are revisiting prevalent notions of what it means to be a good citizen and ideas about the ‘social contract’. Not harming others is simply not enough. Recognizing our essential oneness and making this a reality implies something far greater.”

“The health crisis has further exposed the inequalities that exist in our society and has made more evident the responsibility that we all have to those around us,” says a fellow participant.

A student from Russia states: “New conceptions are needed based on the organic unity of mankind, the nobility of the human soul, and the twofold moral purpose of the individual to develop their own inherent potentialities and contribute to the transformation of society.”

Such discussions are leading participants to examine further the relationship between science and religion, particularly how both science and religion—as evolving systems of knowledge and practice—can work together to eradicate prejudices and superstitions and to propel human progress.

A participant from Brazil states: “A great deal of information is being propagated on social media about the virus that is confusing. If we use science as a means for investigating the world, we will understand the methods and tools through which conclusions about reality can be reached. Religion helps us to consider how spiritual principles, like justice and the interconnectedness of humanity, can be applied to issues such as economic inequality that have become even more exacerbated during the pandemic.”

A facilitator from the Central African Republic (CAR) describes efforts by participants to provide reliable information about the health crisis to their communities.

“United action guided by both science and religion is required in finding solutions to the pandemic. We are learning how to draw on science—staying informed of what scientists across the world are saying about the pandemic, consulting with each other to weigh new information—to assist our families and neighbours by dispelling the misinformation that clouds people’s thinking and spreads confusion, fear, hopelessness and prejudice. At

the same time, we are guided by the spiritual concepts explored in the Bahá’í teachings, particularly the understanding that all humanity is as one body and whatever affects one nation can affect any other.”

Participants of the gatherings have been emphasizing the caution and wisdom needed when using social media to discuss the current health crisis. “There are online conversations about the pandemic that appear to be progressive in nature and attractive to young people concerned with the transformation of society,” says a participant from India. “But some have deep partisan political undercurrents, which can quickly unravel into highly charged debates that lead to discord.”

Another participant from India says, “The way we show forth our thoughts and ideas, combining a language that critically analyzes our social reality, with that of hope and possibilities, has become even more important during the pandemic.”

As university students reflect on the concepts and ideas discussed during these gatherings, they are identifying constructive conversations around them in which they can take part with fellow students and others, such as the role of religion in society, the intellectual and moral education of children and youth, and the material and spiritual dimensions of true prosperity.

While recognizing the value of contributing to public discourse in diverse social spaces, participants are also seeing how it is possible for them to effect social change at the level of community.

“Thinking about how any one of us can change society is very complex,” says a participant from Russia. “We can, however, see change through the efforts of people acting together at a neighborhood or village level and within their professions. We can learn about service and cooperation at these levels.”

“A challenge still is that many urban neighborhoods are large, similar to the size of a small town. But the

pandemic has shrunk our space and made us see our neighbors in a different light. People living in high-rises helping each other has given us a glimpse of what community life on a small scale can look like and how unity can be built in different settings.”

These discussions are providing participants with hope, helping them to resist the disheartening effects of

the forces of disintegration of society and to see how they can align their efforts with the forces of integration that are propelling humanity towards a bright future.

“This is not a moment to let time slip away, waiting for a return to a so-called ‘normalcy,’” says a participant from India, echoing the sentiments of many others engaged in these conversations. “There is so

much to do if we want to contribute constructively during this period.”

Prospective or current participants seeking more information about these gatherings are encouraged to write to the coordinators responsible for their region: Western Canada bc@isgp.ca, Eastern Canada on@isgp.ca, and for the French-language studies qc@isgp.ca.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau holds virtual meeting with religious representatives

Nearly 20 Bahá’ís participated in an interfaith discussion on the importance of faith in the present reality.

On December 3rd, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau joined a dialogue with a diverse group of religious representatives from across Canada to talk about the contribution of faith communities in the context of the pandemic.

“I have been proud of our fellow Canadians to make it through this pandemic, but we have seen countless examples of stepping up, helping out, and contributing to their communities,” said the Prime Minister.

He continued: “The measures each of you have put in place to keep your communities safe have been very important. You have also been very strong in continuing a message that is not unfamiliar to you – the encouraging of people who are tired and frustrated by what life is throwing at them to stay the course, think of the long term, and doing good towards others. To make sacrifices



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks with leaders and representatives from religious groups. Photo : Adam Scotti

and hang in there and keep doing the right thing.”

The meeting was hosted by the Canadian Council of Churches, the Canadian Interfaith Conversation, and the Canadian Multifaith Fed-

eration. Over 400 people joined the conversation on a virtual meeting platform, including about 20 local and national Bahá’í representatives. The participants were addressed by Minister of Labour, Filomena Tassi,

and Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Bardish Chagger. The speakers included representatives from a range of religious communities, including: the Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, and Bahá'í communities.

“COVID has taught us how to set our priorities and values,” reflected Imam Hamed Slimi. “It has humbled us and turned us to faith for consolation and support. This is the essential nature of religious service.”

Cardinal Gérald Lacroix added, “Faith allows us to live daily in love and service. Love sustains us and allows us to go through the storm filled with hope, and this allows us to be believers and citizens.”

Other speakers emphasized the ways in which religious communities are undertaking practical acts of service to care for those around them – es-

pecially the elderly and the vulnerable.

The “closing blessing” for the event was given by Deloria Bighorn, Chairperson of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada.

“Beyond all our vast diversity, the human family is one, and that understanding must be at the heart of all our discourse and all our actions,” she said. “Religion calls us to come together as a united human family in the face of an unprecedented, dire crisis. It is precisely in the face of such great challenges as we have with the pandemic that the power of faith shines. It is a force capable of healing, of generating self-discipline and restoring commitment to noble behaviour.”

Ms Bighorn reflected that “our ability to move as one” is “our best response to this pandemic”. In this

connection, she shared the following passage from the Bahá'í scriptures: “Do not be satisfied until each one with whom you are concerned is to you as a member of your family. Regard each one either as a father, or as a brother, or as a sister or as a mother or as a child. If you can attain to this your difficulties will vanish, you will know what to do.”

In his final comments, the Prime Minister reflected on the value of diversity in Canadian life and underscored the importance of common values that “inform how we support the most vulnerable to deliver a better present and future for everyone we share this earth with.”

This article originally appeared on the Canadian Bahá'í News Service Website: news.bahai.ca.

Service de distribution bahá'í - Canada
Un organe de l'Assemblée spirituelle nationale des bahá'ís du Canada

Messages au Canada

Shoghi Effendi



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Messages to Canada is the first French-language edition of a collection of 278 letters and cables that Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957), the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, sent to Canada during his mandate that lasted from 1923 until his death in 1957. These messages were addressed to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada as well as to local spiritual assemblies, groups, committees, and individual believers.

The contents of this volume also belong to the Bahá'í world community, as it provides authoritative guidance on matters that often have not been dealt with elsewhere. In addition, **Messages to Canada** offers a moving encounter with some of the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh, through whom the Faith grew tremendously during the Ten Year Crusade.

Anyone who reads these messages will see that they are a unique resource in themselves; they are part of the enduring legacy that the Guardian of the Cause has left to the world, a legacy that will continue to enrich future generations.

Publications Bahá'í Canada

2020

380 pages (including 32 pages of photographs)

23 cm X 15 cm

Paperback

\$23.50

Taxes, shipping and handling not included



librairie.bahai.ca

Provision in a will for the payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh

Dear Friends,

First published in the July/August 2011 edition of *Bahá'í Canada*, this document, prepared and approved by the Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in Canada, offers information on making provisions in a will for the payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh.

“A person hath full jurisdiction over his property. If he is able to discharge the Ḥuqúqu'lláh, and is free of debt, then all that is recorded in his will, and any declaration or avowal it containeth, shall be acceptable. God, verily, hath permitted him to deal with that which He hath bestowed upon him in whatever manner he may desire.”

– Bahá'u'lláh, *Questions and Answers, Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, no. 69, p.127.

“The execution of the provisions of the will causes the spirit of the deceased to rejoice in the Abhá Kingdom.”

– Writing on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, quoted in a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, August 24, 1982 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States.

Question :

How should one make provision in one's will for the payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh?

Answer: The question of a legal wording to include provision in a will for the payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh after a believer is deceased is dependent upon so many factors that it would be preferable for the answer to be sought in each case from a lawyer in the country concerned.

The advice needs to be local because legal wording and the laws governing inheritance vary from country to country. It also needs to be specific to each case because believers

may follow somewhat different methods in computing their liability to Ḥuqúqu'lláh and in recording those items of their property on which Ḥuqúqu'lláh has already been paid. Moreover, unless the believer concerned leaves a clear accounting of his property and his payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh to date, if any, it will not be possible for anyone to calculate what remains to be paid at the time of his death.

The payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh is an individual responsibility. If a believer turns to you with a question on this matter, you could refer him to the nearest Representative of the Trustee of Ḥuqúqu'lláh, who could advise him in the light of his specific circumstances.

– Letter to a National Spiritual Assembly, 17 July 1989.

Essentially, the Ḥuqúqu'lláh should be paid by a believer during the course of his life whenever his surplus property reaches the assessable level. A certain leeway is provided in the law, inasmuch as reference is made to the annual expenses which should be deducted before the liability to Ḥuqúqu'lláh is calculated. Ideally, when a Bahá'í dies, the only payment to Ḥuqúqu'lláh which should need to be provided for in his will is such additional liability as may be found to exist when his affairs are reckoned up as at the date of his death.

The House of Justice hopes that as the believers acquaint themselves with the law of Ḥuqúqu'lláh and start to pay it, they will also learn not only how to calculate it during the course of their lives but will thereby be enabled to understand how to provide for the payment of the balance remaining at their deaths.

– Letter from the Universal House of Justice, to an individual, 1 October 1989.

The Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in Canada has sought legal advice and at the present time the following wording has been determined to best meet the requirements for providing a provision for payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in your will.

“Given the spiritual significance for me to ensure that Ḥuqúqu'lláh (“the Right of God”) has been paid in accordance with Bahá'í law, I direct my Estate Trustees to refer to my personal records to ascertain those of my assets on which I calculated and paid the Right of God during my lifetime and to determine what amount, if any, is due from my estate in accordance with Bahá'í law, and to pay such amount forthwith to ‘National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada’ earmarked ‘Right of God’. In the event of

uncertainty as to the calculation of same, advice shall be taken from the Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in Canada. In the event that my personal records cannot be located or it is found that they are incomplete or not current, I expressly grant herein power and authority to my Estate Trustees, in an exercise of their absolute discretion, to make the final decision as to what amount shall be paid, if any, from my estate for the Right of God.

My Estate Trustees shall be fully protected in exercising the discretion granted to them hereunder and shall not be liable to the beneficiaries or their heirs or personal representatives by reason of the exercise of such discretion.”

In addition, testators and their lawyers are advised to consider preparing a memo from the testator to the estate trustees with the specific records of assets and values on which the Right of God has been paid during the testator's lifetime or explicit directions to the estate trustees where to look for the testator's records regarding the Right of God. We further recommend that all testators review these provisions with their lawyers to ensure that they conform to the relevant legal requirements of their particular jurisdiction.

– Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in Canada, June 2011

Obligation to obey the law of Ḥuqúqu'lláh

The following excerpt from a letter from the Office of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in the Holy Land dated June 24, 2010 to the Boards of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh further clarifies the application of the law of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in the preparation of one's will:

“The obligation to faithfully obey the law of Ḥuqúqu'lláh is an individual responsibility, and it is one that is to be



Fountain at the Riqvân Garden.

Photo: © Bahá'í International Community

joyously undertaken during the lifetime of a believer. In most cases, provisions also need to be made in the will and testament of a believer, so that any remaining Ḥuqúqu'lláh liability is discharged at the time of death. The Universal House of Justice states that

[w]hile the application of the principles involved in payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh may well require subsidiary legislation by the House of Justice in the future, at the present time it falls to the executor or administrator of an estate to apply them to the extent possible, using his or her best judgment and taking into account the information available.

– From a letter dated 1 July 1996 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer.

The Universal House of Justice has recently clarified that the executor or administrator of an estate can access the payment records of a deceased believer in order to fulfil any Ḥuqúqu'lláh liability. The statement it issued to our Office is as follows:

We have decided that, if the executor or administrator requires access to such records in order to assist in calculating the amount that should be deducted from the estate as a payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh, then there is no objection to the payment records for the deceased believer being disclosed to the relevant person on a strictly confidential basis.

– From a memorandum dated 14 June 2010 written by the Universal House of Justice to the Office of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in the Holy Land.

However, the guidance below makes it clear that the family members of the deceased do not have the right to access this information:

As you are aware, information about a person's contributions to the Funds of the Faith and Ḥuqúqu'lláh payments are normally considered to be confidential, and would not be provided to family members.

– From a letter dated 8 February 1999 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly.

“There can be no doubt that whatsoever hath been revealed from the All-Glorious Pen, be it ordinances or prohibitions, conferreth benefits upon the believers themselves. For example, among the commandments is that of the Ḥuqúqu'lláh. If the people attain the privilege of paying the Ḥuqúq, the one true God - exalted be His glory - will of a certainty confer blessing upon them. Moreover, such payment will enable them and their offspring to benefit from their possessions. As thou dost observe, large portions of people's wealth are lost to them as God causeth strangers, or heirs in comparison with whom strangers would have been preferable, to lay hands on their possessions.”

– *Compilation of Compilations*, vol III.

The Right of God

Q: What should the heirs and/or executor of a will do if the will does not mention Ḥuqúqu'lláh and the deceased has already divided his/her belongings?

R: . . . the event of death does not remove from a believer his obligation to pay Ḥuqúqu'lláh. Whatever portion he is due to pay is therefore a debt due from his estate at the time of his death. The cost of the funeral and burial, the payment of the debts of the deceased, and the payment of whatever portion of Ḥuqúqu'lláh remains due from him are prior charges on the estate which must be met before arriving at the amount of the property which the deceased is free to dispose of as he wishes or which has to be divided in accordance with the provisions of the law of inheritance. Thus, whether or not a person makes a will or, having made a will, whether he makes provision in it for the payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh, the Ḥuqúqu'lláh should be paid, like his debts, before the rest of the estate is divided.

“The application of these principles may well require subsidiary legislation by the Universal House of Justice in future. In the meantime it falls to the executor or administrator of an estate to apply them to the extent possible, using his best judgement in the light of information available to him.”

- From a memorandum dated 5 August 1994 written by the Universal House of Justice to the Office of the Ḥuqúqu'lláh.

“As to the calculation of Ḥuqúqu'lláh on the estate of your father in the absence of his will, if it is ascertainable that no Ḥuqúqu'lláh has been paid on any part of the estate by your father during his lifetime, then 19% of his estate after the deduction of relevant expenses and his debts, if any, will be due as Ḥuqúqu'lláh.

“You and your family’s noble wish to discharge the Ḥuqúqu'lláh obligation of your late father is indeed meritorious and commendable. It will be the cause of the progress of your beloved father’s soul in the Abba Kingdom, and the source of Bahá'u'lláh’s confirmations and bounties descending upon the dear members of his family.”

- From a letter dated 23 December 1999 written by the Office of Ḥuqúqu'lláh to an individual believer

“. . . in the case of the estate of a deceased Bahá'í whose liability to Ḥuqúqu'lláh cannot be assessed, there is, as you know, no objection in principle to the heirs agreeing to a payment from the estate to Ḥuqúqu'lláh on behalf of the deceased if they so wish. But this is in no way their obligation, nor should such a payment be accepted from non-Bahá'í heirs. This is different from the case of an estate in respect of which the deceased has left records whereby his liability to Ḥuqúqu'lláh can be computed. In such a case, the executor or administrator should do his utmost to ensure that this Right of God is paid. The provisions of civil law may make it necessary for the executor or administrator to obtain the permission of the heirs to the making of the payment, and in this, the non-Bahá'í heirs should be included, because the payment would be the liquidation of a recognized and clearly computed debt of the deceased, and not a voluntary gift in respect of what is understood to be a spiritual duty.”

- Ḥuqúqu'lláh, *The Right of God*, Compilation, 2007, amended August 2009, #4.



Star design on the Terraces of the Shrine of the Báb. Photo : © Bahá'í International Community

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Contribute to the Funds of the Faith through the Treasurer of your Local Assembly, the Regional Bahá'í Council in your area, or online at www.bahaifunds.ca. You can also donate through the National Spiritual Assembly. In this case, kindly make your cheque payable to "Canadian Bahá'í Fund" and mail it to:

The Treasury Department, Bahá'í National Centre,
7200 Leslie Street Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8.

The major Funds of the Faith to which one can make contributions are:

The Local Fund (only through a Local Spiritual Assembly or online)

The National Fund

The Wilmette House of Worship Fund

The Deputization Fund

The Santiago House of Worship Fund

The Continental Fund

The International Fund

The Community Properties Fund The World Centre Endowment Fund

The Bahá'í Development Fund

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(250) 507-2765

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(403) 669-2670

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Winnipeg, MB, R3L 0N4
sk.mb.rbc@gmail.com

Ontario

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Toronto, ON, M2J 1T5
council@ontariobahai.org
(647) 479-8650

Quebec

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Chelsea, QC, J9B 1T3
secretariat@conseil.bahaiqc.org
(819) 743-7778

Atlantic Provinces

103 Harmony Road
South Tremont, NS, B0P 1R0
regional.council@atlantic.bahai.ca
(902) 844-2075

GENERAL INFORMATION

To purchase **Bahá'í books in English, Persian, Chinese or Spanish**, visit bookstore.bahai.ca

Or contact:

University of Toronto

Press Distribution

Phone: 1-800-565-9523 or 416-667-7791

In the event that the title you are looking for is not available, contact the Bahá'í Distribution Service

Email: bds@bahai.ca

Phone: 1-800-465-3287 or 905-889-8168

To purchase **Bahá'í books in French**, contact the Service de distribution bahá'í-Québec (SDB-Q)

75 d'auteuil Street, Québec, QC, G1R 4C3

Email: sdbc@bahai.ca

Phone: 418-692-2402

Website: bookstore.bahai.ca

To travel teach or pioneer within Canada or internationally, contact the Pioneer Desk at pioneer@bahai.ca or 905-889-8168.

To change your address, please notify your Local Spiritual Assembly, Regional Council or the Records Department of the National Spiritual Assembly, providing your name, old address, new address and your Bahá'í ID number to: Records Department, Bahá'í National Centre, 7200 Leslie Street, Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8; Phone: 905-889-8168; Fax: 905-889-8184; Email: records@bahai.ca.

To request international credentials from the Bahá'í National Centre when planning to visit countries other than the United States, contact the Records Department: 7200 Leslie Street, Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8; Phone 905-889-8168; Fax: 905-889-8184; Email: records@bahai.ca.

Pilgrimage requests (nine-day pilgrimage or three-day visit) are to be made directly to the Bahá'í World Centre through the Bahá'í Pilgrimage Website <http://pilgrimage.bahai.org> or by post or fax: Office of Pilgrimage, PO Box 155, 3100101, Haifa, Israel; Fax: 011-972-4-835-8507.

Getting married? A Bahá'í wedding cannot take place without the authorization of a Local Spiritual Assembly. Please contact, as early as possible, the Local Assembly in whose jurisdiction the wedding will take place. The Records Department at records@bahai.ca can provide you with the necessary contact details.

Submit news, photos, etc. to Bahá'í Canada through email bahaicanada@bahai.ca or mail to 7200 Leslie St., Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8. Items submitted to *Bahá'í Canada* are considered for publication online and in the magazine.

The Right of God ~ Ḥuqúqu'lláh

"Ḥuqúqu'lláh is indeed a great law. It is incumbent upon all to make this offering, because it is the source of grace, abundance, and of all good. It is a bounty which shall remain with every soul in every world of the worlds of God, the All-Possessing, the All-Bountiful." – Bahá'u'lláh, Ḥuqúqu'lláh – *The Right of God*, p.5.

ḤUQÚQU'LLÁH PAYMENT INFORMATION

In response to guidance from the International Board of Trustees, the Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in Canada has set up a centralized system of receipting and recording of payments at the Treasury Department of the Bahá'í National Centre. Payments of the Right of God (Ḥuqúqu'lláh) are not processed through individual Deputies or Representatives.

Payments should be sent directly to the Ḥuqúqu'lláh Treasury at the Bahá'í National Centre, 7200 Leslie Street, Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8. The Ḥuqúqu'lláh Treasury will issue one receipt, which will serve both as an acknowledgment receipt and as an official tax receipt. It is up to the individual to determine whether or not she/he wishes to use the receipt when filing her/his income tax return. Cheques, bank drafts, bank and/or postal money orders should be made payable to "Canadian Bahá'í Fund" earmarked "Ḥuqúqu'lláh" or "Right of God." Payments to the Right of God can also be made utilizing the <www.bahai-funds.ca> Online Contribution System. The individual's Bahá'í identification number must be provided on all payments.

Payments should not be made through a Local Spiritual Assembly.

Inquiries regarding the law of the Right of God (Ḥuqúqu'lláh) should be directed to your nearest Representative or Deputee Trustee.

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شارلوت مصلح

اطلاعیه مهم در خصوص نحوه پرداخت "حقوق الله"

با توجه به راهنمایی هیأت بین المللی امنای حقوق الله، هیأت امنای حقوق الله در کانادا برنامه مرکزی جدیدی را برای دریافت وجوه، صادر کردن رسید و نگهداری سوابق حقوق الله در اداره مالی دفتر محفل ملی کانادا برقرار کرده است. لذا امور مربوط به حقوق الله دیگر توسط افراد معاونین و یا نمایندگان امین حقوق الله اجرا نخواهد شد. وجوه مزبور مستقیماً باید به صندوق حقوق الله به آدرس زیر ارسال گردد:

Bahá'í National Centre Ḥuqúqu'lláh Treasury, 7200 Leslie Street Thornhill ON L3T 6L8

خزانه دار هیأت امنای حقوق الله رسید وجوه دریافت شده را که در عین حال رسید مالیاتی نیز محسوب میگردد برای فرستنده ارسال خواهند داشت. تقدیم کنندگان حقوق الله میتوانند از این رسید ها در زمان تهیه اوراق مالیاتی استفاده نمایند. در روی چک، حواله بانکی یا پستی باید عبارت Canadian Bahá'í Fund – Ḥuqúqu'lláh ذکر شود. شماره تسجیل بهائی نیز باید در هر پرداخت قید گردد. از چندی پیش امکان پرداخت حقوق الله از طریق سایت اینترنتی "www.bahai-funds.ca" و با استفاده از کارتهای اعتباری نیز میسر شده است. وجوه تقدیمی برای حقوق الله به هیچ وجه نباید توسط محافل روحانی محلی ارسال شود.

سوالات مربوط به حقوق الله را از معاونین و یا نمایندگان امین حقوق الله درخواست کنید