

BAHÁ'Í CANADA

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Responding to the call

From the Writings

Many a chilled heart, O my God, hath been set ablaze with the fire of Thy Cause, and many a slumberer hath been awakened by the sweetness of Thy voice. How many are the strangers who have sought shelter beneath the shadow of the tree of Thy oneness, and how numerous the thirsty ones who have panted after the fountain of Thy living waters in Thy days!

Blessed is he that hath set himself towards Thee, and hastened to attain the Dayspring of the lights of Thy face. Blessed is he who with all his affections hath turned to the Dawning-Place of Thy Revelation and the Fountainhead of Thine inspiration. Blessed is he that hath expended in Thy path what Thou didst bestow upon him through Thy bounty and favor. Blessed is he who, in his sore longing after Thee, hath cast away all else except Thyself. Blessed is he who hath enjoyed intimate communion with Thee, and rid himself of all attachment to anyone save Thee.

I beseech Thee, O my Lord, by Him Who is Thy Name, Who, through the power of Thy sovereignty and might, hath risen above the horizon of His prison, to ordain for everyone what becometh Thee and besemeth Thine exaltation.

Thy might, in truth, is equal to all things.

– Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, no. 29

The Pen of the Ancient King hath never ceased to remember the loved ones of God. At one time, rivers of mercy have streamed from His Pen, at another, through its movement, God's perspicuous Book hath been revealed. He is the One to Whom none can compare, Whose utterance mortal man can never rival. He it is Who from everlasting hath been established upon the seat of ascendancy and might, He from Whose lips have gone out counsels that can satisfy the needs of the whole of mankind, and admonitions that can profit them.

The One true God beareth Me witness, and His creatures will testify, that not for a moment did I allow Myself to be hidden from the eyes of men, nor did I consent to shield My person from their injury. Before the face of all men I have arisen, and bidden them fulfil My pleasure. My object is none other than the betterment of the world and the tranquillity of its peoples. The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. This unity can never be achieved so long as the counsels which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed are suffered to pass unheeded.

Through the power of the words He hath uttered the whole of the human race can be illumined with the light of unity, and the remembrance of His Name is able to set on fire the hearts of all men, and burn away the veils that intervene between them and His glory. One righteous act is endowed with a potency that can so elevate the dust as to cause it to pass beyond the heaven of heavens. It can tear every bond asunder, and hath the power to restore the force that hath spent itself and vanished....

Be pure, O people of God, be pure; be righteous, be righteous.... Say: O people of God! That which can ensure the victory of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, His hosts and helpers on earth, have been set down in the sacred Books and Scriptures, and are as

clear and manifest as the sun. These hosts are such righteous deeds, such conduct and character, as are acceptable in His sight. Whoso ariseth, in this Day, to aid Our Cause, and summoneth to his assistance the hosts of a praiseworthy character and upright conduct, the influence flowing from such an action will, most certainly, be diffused throughout the whole world.

– Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 286–287

O ye loved ones of the Lord! This is the hour when ye must associate with all the earth's peoples in extreme kindness and love, and be to them the signs and tokens of God's great mercy. Ye must become the very soul of the world, the living spirit in the body of the children of men. In this wondrous Age, at this time when the Ancient Beauty, the Most Great Name, bearing unnumbered gifts, hath risen above the horizon of the world, the Word of God hath infused such awesome power into the inmost essence of humankind that He hath stripped men's human qualities of all effect, and hath, with His all-conquering might, unified the peoples in a vast sea of oneness.

Now is the time for the lovers of God to raise high the banners of unity, to intone, in the assemblages of the world, the verses of friendship and love and to demonstrate to all that the grace of God is one. Thus will the tabernacles of holiness be upraised on the summits of the earth, gathering all peoples into the protective shadow of the Word of Oneness. This great bounty will dawn over the world at the time when the lovers of God shall arise to carry out His Teachings, and to scatter far and wide the fresh, sweet scents of universal love.

– 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 20

Glory be to Thee, O King of eternity, and the Maker of nations, and the Fashioner of every moldering bone! I pray Thee, by Thy Name through which Thou didst call all mankind unto the horizon of Thy majesty and glory, and didst guide Thy servants to the court of Thy grace and favors, to number me with such as have rid themselves from everything except Thyself, and have set themselves towards Thee, and have not been kept back by such misfortunes as were decreed by Thee, from turning in the direction of Thy gifts.

I have laid hold, O my Lord, on the handle of Thy bounty, and clung steadfastly to the hem of the robe of Thy favor. Send down, then, upon me, out of the clouds of Thy generosity, what will purge out from me the remembrance of any one except Thee, and make me able to turn unto Him Who is the Object of the adoration of all mankind, against Whom have been arrayed the stirrers of sedition, who have broken Thy covenant, and disbelieved in Thee and in Thy signs.

Deny me not, O my Lord, the fragrances of Thy raiment in Thy days, and deprive me not of the breathings of Thy Revelation at the appearance of the splendors of the light of Thy face. Powerful art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Naught can resist Thy will, nor frustrate what Thou hast purposed by Thy power.

No God is there but Thee, the Almighty, the All-Wise.

– Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, no. 37.

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ON THE COVER "Walking through"
Painting by Jane Macmillan

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Regarding the Bahá'í International Development Organization

From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, 9 November 2018.

Dearly loved Friends,

As the process of the disintegration of a lamentably defective world order gathers momentum in all parts of the planet, engendering hopelessness, confusion, hostility, and insecurity, the hearts of the friends everywhere must be assured, their eyes clear-sighted, their feet firm, as they work patiently and sacrificially to raise a new order in its stead. The guidance of Bahá'u'lláh is the foundation upon which you build. His instruction is clear: “This servant appealeth to every diligent and enterprising soul to exert his utmost endeavor and arise to rehabilitate the conditions in all regions and to quicken the dead with the living waters of wisdom and utterance, by virtue of the love he cherisheth for God, the One, the Peerless, the Almighty, the Beneficent.” His divine remedy has been prescribed: “God, the True One, beareth Me witness, and every atom in existence is moved to testify that such means as lead to the elevation, the advancement, the education, the protection and the regeneration of the peoples of the earth have been clearly set forth by Us and are revealed in the Holy Books and Tablets by the Pen of Glory.” And His assurance is engraved on every faithful heart: “The betterment of the world can be accomplished through pure and goodly deeds, through commendable and seemly conduct.”

During the ministries of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, the first community of sufficient size that could begin to systematically apply Bahá'u'lláh's teachings to unite material and spiritual progress was that of the believers in the Cradle of the Faith. The steady flow of guidance from the Holy Land enabled the Bahá'ís of Iran to make tremendous strides in but one or two generations and to contribute a distinctive share to the progress of their nation. A network of schools that provided moral and academic education, including for girls, flourished. Illiteracy was virtually eliminated in the Bahá'í community. Philanthropic enterprises were created. Prejudices among ethnic and religious groups, aflame in the wider society, were extinguished within the community's loving embrace. Villages became distinguished for their cleanliness, order, and progress. And believers from that land were instrumental in raising in another land the first *Mashriqu'l-Adhkar* with its dependencies designed to “afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant.” Over time, such efforts were augmented by scattered initiatives of other Bahá'í communities in various parts of the world. However, as Shoghi Effendi remarked to one community, the number of believers was as yet too small to effect a notable change in the wider society, and for more than the first half century of the Formative Age the believers were encouraged to concentrate their energies on the propagation of the Faith, since this was work that only Bahá'ís could do—indeed their primary spiritual obligation—and it would prepare them for the time when they could address the problems of humanity more directly.

Thirty-five years ago, circumstances within and outside the community combined to create new possibilities for greater involvement in the life of society. The Faith had developed to the stage at which the processes of social and economic development needed to be incorporated into its regular pursuits, and in October 1983 we called upon the Bahá'ís of the world to enter this new field of endeavor. The Office of Social and Economic Development was established at the Bahá'í World Centre to assist us in promoting and coordinating the activities of the friends worldwide. Bahá'í activities for social and economic development, at whatever level of complexity, were at that time counted in the hundreds. Today they number in the tens of thousands, including hundreds of sustained projects such as schools

and scores of development organizations. The broad range of current activities spans efforts from villages and neighborhoods to regions and nations, addressing an array of challenges, including education from preschool to university, literacy, health, the environment, support for refugees, advancement of women, empowerment of junior youth, elimination of racial prejudice, agriculture, local economies, and village development. The society-building power of Bahá'u'lláh's Cause has begun to be more systematically expressed in the collective life of the friends as a result of the acceleration of the process of expansion and consolidation, especially in advanced clusters. Beyond this, of course, countless believers, through their professional and voluntary efforts, contribute their energies and insights to projects and organizations established for the common good.

Once again, then, we find that forces inside and outside the Faith have made possible a new stage in the work of social and economic development in the Bahá'í world. Therefore, on this sacred occasion of the Festivals of the Twin Birthdays, we are pleased to announce that the Office of Social and Economic Development now effloresces into a new world-embracing institution established at the World Centre, the Bahá'í International Development Organization. In addition, a Bahá'í Development Fund will be inaugurated, from which the new organization will draw to assist both long-standing and emerging development efforts worldwide; it will be supported by the House of Justice, and individuals and institutions may contribute to it.

A five-member board of directors will be appointed which will function as a consultative body to promote and coordinate the efforts of the worldwide community in social and economic development. The directors will serve for a term of five years beginning on the Day of the Covenant. Operating at the spiritual and administrative centre of the Faith, the board will consult with the Universal House of Justice and the International Teaching Centre to ensure that the development work is coherent with the many endeavors of the Bahá'í world. The new institution will begin by assuming the functions and mandate previously carried out by the Office of Social and Economic Development and then gradually grow in capacity to discharge them on an expanding scale and at higher levels of complexity. It will reinforce the efforts of Bahá'í individuals, communities, and institutions worldwide to extend and consolidate the range of their activities. It will help to strengthen institutional capacity

for social and economic development in national communities, including through the creation of new agencies and the emergence of advanced development organizations. It will promote, on an international scale, approaches to development and methodologies that have proven effective. It will keep abreast of findings in the development field and explore their application in consonance with spiritual principles with assistance from Bahá'ís with relevant training. It will form networks of resource persons and such institutional arrangements across continents as are necessary for carrying out its various lines of action. Above all, like the Office of Social and Economic Development before it, its primary purpose will be to facilitate learning about development by fostering and supporting action, reflection on action, study, consultation, the gathering and systematization of experience, conceptualization, and training—all carried out in the light of the Teachings of the Faith.

Upon the Arc on Mount Carmel that surrounds the resting places of members of the Holy Family, Shoghi Effendi anticipated both the raising of edifices and the establishment of international institutions—administrative, scientific, and social—that would flourish under the auspices of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. This new institution for social and economic development will grow and evolve over the decades and centuries ahead according to the needs of humanity and under the direction of the House of Justice until the material and spiritual civilization anticipated by Bahá'u'lláh is realized in this contingent world.

Ultimately, of course, the work of Bahá'í social and economic development rests in the hands of the friends everywhere. To take full advantage of the opportunities emerging, one need look no further for encouragement and insight than to the perfect Exemplar of the Bahá'í teachings. Consider His words: “We should continually be establishing new bases for human happiness and creating and promoting new instrumentalities toward this end. How excellent, how honorable is man if he arises to fulfill his responsibilities; how wretched and contemptible, if he shuts his eyes to the welfare of society and wastes his precious life in pursuing his own selfish interests and personal advantages. Supreme happiness is man's, and he beholds the signs of God in the world and in the human soul, if he urges on the steed of high endeavor in the arena of civilization and justice.”

— 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, 26 November 2018.

Dearly loved Friends,

In this season, from the Day of the Covenant to the commemoration of the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, every Bahá’í heart is stirred by remembrance of Him Who is the Mystery of God, the Centre of Bahá’u’lláh’s impregnable Covenant, the Mainspring of the Oneness of Humanity, the embodiment of every Bahá’í ideal, the Most Mighty Branch of God where under all can find shelter. May His boundless love and tender solicitude give you reassurance and sustenance as you strive to fulfill the trust He bestowed upon you in His Testament and His Divine Plan. At night in that hallowed room in His home where He departed this life for reunion with His beloved Lord, we will testify to your fidelity to His call, evident in your tireless labors to create a refuge for humanity at this moment of increasing injustice and affliction.

Three brief years remain until the centenary of the Master’s passing, when Bahá’ís the world over will gather and take account of the distance traversed over the first century of

the Formative Age. May His loved ones, individually and collectively, little by little and day by day, increasingly embody His counsels: to be united in the Cause and firm in the Covenant; to avoid calumny and never speak ill of others; to see no strangers but regard all as members of one family; to set aside divergent theories and conflicting views and pursue a single purpose and common goal; to ensure that the love of Bahá’u’lláh has so mastered every organ, part, and limb as to leave no effect from the promptings of the human world; to arise with heart and soul and in one accord to teach the Cause; to march in serried lines, pressed together, each supporting the others; to cultivate good character, perseverance, strength, and determination; to know the value of this precious Faith, obey its teachings, walk in this road that is drawn straight, and show this way to the people.

That you may fulfill His highest expectations, we pray for each of you.

– The Universal House of Justice

A message on World Peace

From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, 8 January 2019.

Dearly loved Friends,

Half a century after Bahá’u’lláh summoned the kings and rulers to be reconciled among themselves and enjoined on them the establishment of peace on earth, the great powers of that era were plunged into war. It was the first conflict to be regarded as a “World War”, and it is remembered as a conflagration of horrific severity; the unprecedented scale and ferocity of the bloodshed has seared it on to the consciousness of every succeeding generation. And yet, from out the ruin and suffering, possibilities blossomed for a new order to bring stability to the world—notably at the Paris Peace Conference, which opened a hundred years ago on this day. In the years that followed, despite the repeated crises into which international affairs were thrown, Shoghi Effendi could discern “the progress, however fitful, of the forces working in harmony with the

spirit of the age”. These forces have continued to move humanity towards an age of peace—not merely a peace which rules out armed conflict, but a collective state of being, manifesting unity. Notwithstanding, it remains a long journey, and it proceeds in fits and starts. We find it propitious, at this moment, to reflect on the progress made on that journey, the contemporary challenges to peace, and the contribution to its attainment that Bahá’ís are called to make.

There have been at least three historical moments in the last one hundred years when it seemed as if the human race was reaching for real, lasting peace, albeit always falling short because of weaknesses it could not overcome. The first moment, as a result of the Paris Conference, was the establishment of the League of Nations, an organization intended by its founders to secure peace at the international level. It was the means by which, for the first time in history, the system of collective

security enjoined on the world's rulers by Bahá'u'lláh was "seriously envisaged, discussed and tested". But ultimately the peace agreement that concluded the war was fatally flawed, and the League was not able to prevent a second World War, judged by historians to be the deadliest conflict in human history. Just as the first significant step towards world peace followed a period of appalling conflict, so did the second, when not only was the United Nations Organization formed from the ashes of the League, but a system of international economic institutions came into being, and historic advances were made relating to human rights and international law. In rapid succession, many territories under colonial rule became independent nations, and arrangements for regional cooperation grew markedly in depth and range. The post-war decades, however, were also characterized by an atmosphere of brooding and often open hostility between the world's two major power blocs. Known familiarly as the Cold War, it spilled over into actual wars in various regions of the world, and brought humanity perilously close to a conflict involving nuclear weapons. Its peaceful termination, towards the end of the twentieth century, was an occasion for relief, giving rise to explicit calls for the establishment of a new global order. This was the third moment when universal peace seemed to be within grasp. Efforts to put in place new systems for international cooperation and to strengthen existing ones received great impetus, as a series of world conferences on themes of importance to humanity's future were convened by the United Nations. New opportunities for consensus emerged, and the spirit of collaboration propelling progress also found expression in the mandates given to certain international institutions charged with administering justice. This purposeful, deliberative process culminated at the turn of the century in the Millennium Forum, a meeting of representatives of over a thousand civil society organizations from more than a hundred countries, followed by the Millennium Summit, an unparalleled gathering of world leaders which led to agreement on a set of objectives representing a shared ambition of humanity. Styled the Millennium Development Goals, they became rallying points for collective action in the ensuing years. These various advances—despite their many limitations and imperfections and the horrifying conflicts that continued to unfold during this time—stand nonetheless as signs of a widespread, gradual but inexorable rise in global consciousness on the part of the earth's peoples and their attraction to universal justice, to solidarity, to collaboration, to compassion, and to equality.

As the present century opened, new challenges began to loom. With time, these intensified, leading to a retreat from the promising steps forward with which the previous century had closed. Today, many of the dominant currents in societies everywhere are pushing people apart, not drawing them together. Even as global poverty of the most extreme form has decreased, political and economic

systems have enabled the enrichment of small coteries with grossly exorbitant wealth—a condition that fuels fundamental instability in world affairs. The interactions of the individual citizen, governing institutions, and society as a whole are often fraught, as those arguing for the primacy of one or the other show more and more intransigence in their thinking. Religious fundamentalism is warping the character of communities, even nations. The failings of so many organizations and institutions of society have understandably led to a decline in public trust, but this has been systematically exploited by vested interests seeking to undermine the credibility of all sources of knowledge. Certain shared ethical principles, which seemed to be in the ascendant at the start of this century, are eroded, threatening the prevailing consensus about right and wrong that, in various arenas, had succeeded in holding humanity's basest tendencies in check. And the will to engage in international collective action, which twenty years ago represented a powerful strain of thinking among world leaders, has been cowed, assailed by resurgent forces of racism, nationalism, and factionalism.

Thus do the forces of disintegration regroup and gain ground. So be it. The unification of humanity is unstoppable by any human force; the promises made by the prophets of old and by the Author of the Cause of God Himself testify to this truth. Yet the course humanity takes to achieve its destiny may very well be tortuous. The tumult raised by the contending peoples of the earth threatens to drown out the voices of those noble-minded souls in every society who call for an end to conflict and struggle. As long as that call goes unheeded, there is no reason to doubt that the world's current state of disorder and confusion will worsen—possibly with catastrophic consequences—until a chastened humanity sees fit to take another significant step, perhaps this time decisive, towards enduring peace.

Universal peace is the destination towards which humanity has been moving throughout the ages under the influence of the Word of God that has been progressively imparted by the Creator to His creation. Shoghi Effendi described humanity's advance towards a new, global stage in its collective life in terms of social evolution, "an evolution that has had its earliest beginnings in the birth of family life, its subsequent development in the achievement of tribal solidarity, leading in turn to the constitution of the city-state, and expanding later into the institution of independent and sovereign nations." Now, with the coming of Bahá'u'lláh, the human race stands on the threshold of its maturity. World unity is finally possible. A global order that unifies the nations with the assent of humanity is the only adequate answer to the destabilizing forces that threaten the world.

However, though world unity is possible—nay, inevitable—it ultimately cannot be achieved without unreserved acceptance of the oneness of humankind, described by

the Guardian as “the pivot round which all the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh revolve”. With what insight and eloquence did he expound upon the far-reaching implications of this cardinal principle! Plainly he saw, amidst the turbulence of world affairs, how the reality that humanity is one people must be the starting point for a new order. The vast array of relations among nations— and within them—all need to be re-envisioned in this light.

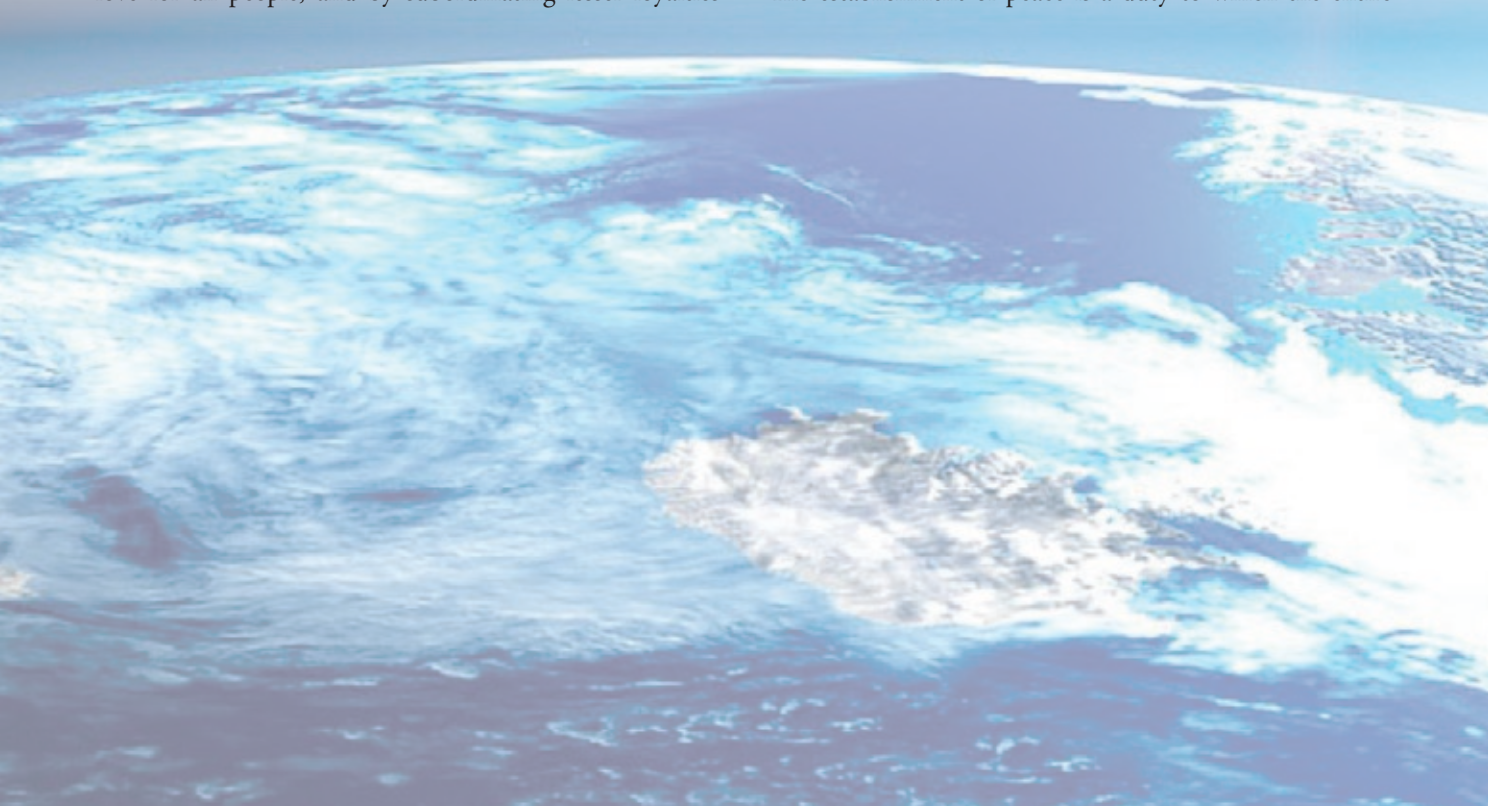
The realization of such a vision will require, sooner or later, an historic feat of statesmanship from the leaders of the world. Alas, the will to attempt this feat is still wanting. Humanity is gripped by a crisis of identity, as various peoples and groups struggle to define themselves, their place in the world, and how they should act. Without a vision of shared identity and common purpose, they fall into competing ideologies and power struggles. Seemingly countless permutations of “us” and “them” define group identities ever more narrowly and in contrast to one another. Over time, this splintering into divergent interest groups has weakened the cohesion of society itself. Rival conceptions about the primacy of a particular people are peddled to the exclusion of the truth that humanity is on a common journey in which all are protagonists. Consider how radically different such a fragmented conception of human identity is from the one that follows from a recognition of the oneness of humanity. In this perspective, the diversity that characterizes the human family, far from contradicting its oneness, endows it with richness. Unity, in its Bahá’í expression, contains the essential concept of diversity, distinguishing it from uniformity. It is through love for all people, and by subordinating lesser loyalties

to the best interests of humankind, that the unity of the world can be realized and the infinite expressions of human diversity find their highest fulfilment.

Fostering unity, by harmonizing disparate elements and nurturing in every heart a selfless love for humankind, is the task of religion. Great possibilities to cultivate fellowship and concord are open to religious leaders, but these same leaders can also incite violence by using their influence to stoke the fires of fanaticism and prejudice. Writing of religion, Bahá’u’lláh’s words are emphatic: “... make it not”, He warns, “the cause of dissension and strife.” Peace, for “all who dwell on earth”, is one of “the principles and ordinances of God”.

A heart that has embraced love for the whole of humanity will certainly be pained when confronted by the suffering that so many endure because of disunity. But the friends of God cannot shut themselves off from the increasing turmoil of the society that surrounds them; they must guard themselves, too, from becoming enmeshed in its conflicts or falling into its adversarial methods. No matter how bleak conditions may appear at any given time, no matter how dismal the immediate prospects for bringing about unity, there is no cause for despair. The distressing state of the world can only spur us to redouble our commitment to constructive action. “These are not days of prosperity and triumph” cautions Bahá’u’lláh. “The whole of mankind is in the grip of manifold ills. Strive, therefore, to save its life through the wholesome medicine which the almighty hand of the unerring Physician hath prepared.”

The establishment of peace is a duty to which the entire



human race is called. The responsibility that Bahá'ís bear to aid that process will evolve over time, but they have never been mere spectators—they lend their share of assistance to the operation of those forces leading humanity towards unity. They are summoned to be as leaven to the world. Consider Bahá'u'lláh's words:

Address yourselves to the promotion of the well-being and tranquillity of the children of men. Bend your minds and wills to the education of the peoples and kindreds of the earth, that haply the dissensions that divide it may, through the power of the Most Great Name, be blotted out from its face, and all mankind become the upholders of one Order, and the inhabitants of one City.

'Abdu'l-Bahá also emphasized the importance of the contribution that Bahá'ís are called on to make to the establishment of world peace:

... peace must first be established among individuals, until it leadeth in the end to peace among nations. Wherefore, O ye Bahá'ís, strive ye with all your might to create, through the power of the Word of God, genuine love, spiritual communion and durable bonds among individuals. This is your task.

“The Promise of World Peace”, the message we addressed to the peoples of the world in 1985, set out the Bahá'í perspective on the condition of the world and the prerequisites of universal peace. It also offered the global Bahá'í community as a model for study that could reinforce hope in the possibility of uniting the human race. In the years since, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh have been patiently refining that model and working with

others around them to build up and broaden a system of social organization based on His teachings. They are learning how to nurture communities that embody those prerequisites of peace we identified in 1985. They cultivate environments in which children can be raised untainted by any form of racial, national, or religious prejudice. They champion the full equality of women with men in the affairs of the community. Their programmes of education, transformative in their effects and encompassing both the material and spiritual aspects of life, welcome everyone who wishes to contribute to the community's prosperity. In the stirrings of social action can be seen their desire to remedy the numerous ills afflicting humanity and to empower each person to become a protagonist in the building of a new world. Taking inspiration from the concept of the *Mashriq'u'l-Adhkar*, they invite to their devotional meetings followers of all faiths and none. Youth, distinguished for their commitment to a society founded on peace and justice, are engaging their like-minded peers in the work of building communities on this foundation. In the institution of the Local Spiritual Assembly exists the spiritual authority and the administrative capacity to govern in servitude, to resolve conflicts, and to build unity; the electoral process through which Assemblies are formed is itself an expression of peace, in contrast to the vitriol and even violence that often accompanies elections in the wider society. Implicit in all these dimensions of an open, expanding community is the foundational recognition that all of humanity are the children of one Creator.

The friends are also developing their capacity for engaging those around them, regardless of creed, culture, class,



or ethnicity, in conversations about how to bring about spiritual and material well-being through systematic application of the divine teachings. One gratifying result of this growing capacity is the community's increased ability to make meaningful contributions to various important discourses prevalent in society; in certain countries, leaders and thinkers striving to address the challenges confronting their societies increasingly show appreciation for the perspectives offered by Bahá'ís. These contributions articulate insights derived from Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, draw on the experience being generated by the believers around the world, and aim to elevate the discussion above the acrimony and contention that so often prevent discourses of society from progressing. Further, the ideas and lines of reasoning advanced by Bahá'ís are reinforced by their practice of consultation. Sensitized as they are to the importance of harmony and the fruitlessness of conflict, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh seek to cultivate those conditions that are most conducive to the emergence of unity in any setting. We are heartened to see the believers expanding their efforts to participate in the discourses of society—especially those friends who, in their professional capacity, are able to contribute to discourses directly related to peace.

For Bahá'ís, the attainment of peace is not simply an aspiration to which they are sympathetic or a goal complementary to their other aims—it has always been a central concern. In a second Tablet 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to the Central Organization for a Durable Peace in the

Hague, He asserted that “our desire for peace is not derived merely from the intellect: It is a matter of religious belief and one of the eternal foundations of the Faith of God.” He observed that for peace to be realized in the world, it was not adequate that people should be informed about the horrors of war:

Today the benefits of universal peace are recognized amongst the people, and likewise the harmful effects of war are clear and manifest to all. But in this matter, knowledge alone is far from sufficient: A power of implementation is needed to establish it throughout the world.

“It is our firm belief”, He continued, “that the power of implementation in this great endeavour is the penetrating influence of the Word of God and the confirmations of the Holy Spirit.”

Certainly, then, none who are conscious of the condition of the world can refrain from giving their utmost to this endeavour and seeking those confirmations—confirmations for which we too earnestly supplicate at the Sacred Threshold on your behalf. Beloved friends: The devoted efforts that you and your like-minded collaborators are making to build communities founded on spiritual principles, to apply those principles for the betterment of your societies, and to offer the insights arising—these are the surest ways you can hasten the fulfilment of the promise of world peace.

– The Universal House of Justice

The passing of Shapoor Monadjem

From the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 16 November 2018.

The passing of Shapoor Monadjem, distinguished and greatly loved servant of the Blessed Beauty, has brought much sadness to our hearts. We call to mind, at this moment, his immense dedication to the teaching work, knowledge of the Faith, and insight into the application of its principles. These qualities were much in evidence when he was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil and during the decade he served as a Continental Counsellor in the Americas. As a member of the International Teaching Centre, his talents and energies were determinedly focused upon the worldwide propagation and protection of the Faith. The wide-ranging services he undertook in his lifetime also included the promotion of the Right of God



Mr. Shapoor Monadjem
Photo: Bahá'í International Community

as a Deputy Trustee of Ḥuqúqu'lláh. A kindly and gentle soul, good-humoured and brimming with creative inspiration, he was also blessed with considerable administrative abilities, honed in many different settings, which he deployed with great effect in service to the Cause of God.

To his dear wife, Bahareh, and to his children and grand-children we extend our condolences and an assurance of our supplications in the Holy Shrines for his soul's blissful passage into the realms of the eternal. We also ask that memorial gatherings be convened in his honour in all Houses of Worship and in Bahá'í

communities across the world.

– The Universal House of Justice

Message to Canada's unit conventions

From the National Spiritual Assembly to the friends gathered at Canada's unit conventions,

8 February 2019.

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

It is with joy that the National Spiritual Assembly greets you, participants in a unique electoral process described in the powerful 18 January 2019 message of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world as itself an expression of peace. Indeed, as you gather to elect your delegates to the National Convention and consult about the progress of the Cause this year, your deliberations will be lifted by the House of Justice's stirring, sobering description of the forces propelling the peoples of the world towards peace and the role that Bahá'ís and their collaborators play in hastening the fulfilment of that promise.

At Riḍván 2018, the Universal House of Justice greeted the Bahá'ís of the world “in the enduring afterglow of those memorable events that marked the bicentenary of the Birth of the Blessed Beauty” and noted the capacities that had developed in a community that was not the same as it had been at the beginning of the Plan. It was more conscious of its mission, and had surged in its capacity to “bring friends and acquaintances into contact with its community life; to inspire neighbourhoods and villages into unified endeavour; to articulate how spiritual truths can be translated into sustained practical action; and, above all, to converse not only about the teachings that will build the world anew, but about the One Who taught them: Bahá'u'lláh.” In this afterglow, warmed by the remarkable receptivity of friend and stranger alike, the community was summoned to the next great work in the period leading up to the second bicentenary celebration: to nurture patiently towards fruition every seed so lovingly sown during the first.

It is to this work that the National Assembly turns in this message. Thrilling news has reached us of the seeds that have been lovingly planted by enkindled gardeners across the country. Among the creative and earnest responses to the two calls in the National Assembly's 6 April 2018 letter — the first to all the friends to intensify

their teaching efforts until the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb, and the second to the youth, to devote time to service and to arise as pioneers — are the following.

- A flow of encouragement, experience and resources has increased between adjoining clusters across the country, with examples as geographically varied as Ottawa, Cornwall and Lanark in the Ontario region, and Prince Edward Island and South East New Brunswick in the Atlantic Provinces.
- Summer and winter institute campaigns involved over 600 friends of every age. In more than 30 clusters, youth devoted time during their summer vacations to strengthening the junior youth programme, learning to connect with entire families. In a Calgary neighbourhood, for example, 50 junior youth, their siblings and parents are engaged and they aim to increase that number to 80 families by the bicentenary. Junior youth camps in the city of Québec and in Montréal last summer channelled the service of youth and attracted 45 of their younger peers.
- Sustained devotional gatherings across the nation are now kindling and connecting hearts in over 1,400 homes, attracting a regular participation of at least 8,000 souls.
- In British Columbia, half a dozen neighbourhoods have each grown from a small core of individuals to at least 100 regular participants in core activities. In Toronto, one neighbourhood grew from 8 core activities to 23 in 8 months, and social action has begun to emerge in the form of regular homework help for youth and English conversation circles for parents and their friends. A strong movement of youth pioneers has supported this growth and in turn been generously supported by Local Spiritual Assemblies, families and communities.
- Outside of larger urban centres, the signs of growth are equally promising. In a small town in Saskatchewan, the children's class taught by the grandparents of a few school-age children grew into a summer children's festival that attracted over a dozen of their friends. In Muscowpetung First Nation, the junior youth group has grown beyond 15 junior youth, an extension that has happened naturally as the junior youth themselves have taken ownership of the programme. In the Arctic communities of Inuvik, Pond Inlet and Iqaluit, children's classes and junior youth groups have been established to join those already existing in other far northern settlements, beacons of light in the darkness of a long winter.

One of the most striking capacities that was developed and refined in celebrating the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh is that of working in groups. In a society which suffers increasingly from social isolation, there is a critical need to strengthen this treasured capacity and apply it in new ways in the community-building work: "Participation in these foundational activities is becoming so embedded in the culture of the population that it is viewed as an indispensable aspect of the life of a community. A new vitality emerges within a people taking charge of their own development, and they build immunity to those societal forces that breed passivity. Possibilities for material and spiritual progress take shape. Social reality begins to transform... There must emerge in many hundreds of clusters a growing band of believers who can maintain, with those around them, a sustained focus on nurturing growth and building capacity, and who are distinguished by their ability and their discipline to reflect on action and learn from experience. Raising up and accompanying an expanding nucleus of individuals in each place—not just at the level of the cluster but within neighbourhoods and villages—is at once a formidable challenge and a critical need. But where this is occurring, the results speak for themselves."¹

Among the questions we ask you to consider and share insights about at this unit convention are the following:

- What have you discovered in your attempts to nurture the seeds planted during the first bicentenary, and what support did you need? How have you intensified your efforts? If the spirit of intensity has waned, what

is needed to rekindle it between now and the next bicentenary?

- What experience can you share of working as part of a group of friends that seeks to itself grow, to nurture growth and build capacity?
- How might the capacity to work in groups be applied to devotional gatherings, which are often considered an individual or family activity? The International Teaching Centre describes groups who study guidance together, expand their reach to include not only family and friends, but also neighbours, and then regularly reflect and learn together. What experience has there been in this regard?

Dear friends, in the fleeting months that remain until the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb, precious and irretrievable opportunities await. The intensity of focus to which the National Assembly summoned the friends during this period of special potency holds the potential of a leap forward, a further transformation in our community life. Through your efforts, tens of thousands of Canadians — original to this land, settled for generations or newly arrived — are finding a home in a community that is drawing "nearer and nearer unto the threshold of oneness"², filled with confidence in the future and determined to act. Our ardent, grateful prayers are with you.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

– National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada

¹ Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world, Ridván 2018.

² 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 95.



About this issue

When the National Spiritual Assembly, in its 6 April 2018 message to the Bahá'ís of Canada, asked, “what time can you consecrate — daily, weekly, monthly — to the teaching work?” the friends took stock. Since the release of that encouraging letter, there has been a surge of growth across the country as people have taken up the call to press onward and to find whatever ways they can to contribute to the advancement of the Cause.

This issue of *Bahá'í Canada* focuses on how we have arisen to meet the needs of the Plan. Our feature article, *Responding to the call*, shares the stories of a number of individuals who each responded in creative ways, often having to overcome tests in order to meet the needs of their community.

We can also see this in the story of a family choosing to pioneer to a milestone one cluster after reading the 29 December 2015 message from the Universal House of Justice. And in the reflections of a “granimator” who believed so strongly in the power of the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme that she allowed nothing to stop her from starting a group in her home.

The need to respond to the longing in one's heart to serve the Cause has existed since the most embryonic days of

the Faith. In the *From the History* section of this magazine, we follow the footsteps of Mullá Husayn, Quddús and Ṭáhirih in their search for the Beloved of their hearts: the Báb. As we move ever-closer to the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb, their compelling journeys remind us of what it means to dedicate all that we can to the Faith we hold so dear.

We can also see how to bring the love of the first believers into the modern day by giving that same devotion to the Universal House of Justice. During his talks in Western Canada, former member of the Universal House of Justice Dr. Javaheri explained how that love will spur us to greater heights as we strive ever-onward toward the New World Order promised by Bahá'u'lláh.

We hope this issue of *Bahá'í Canada* helps to share some of the ways we are all striving to meet the needs of today

as well as about the strength that comes when we gather together in unity under the guidance of our beloved institutions. We look forward to continuing to hear – and share – your encouraging stories as we move into the coming year.

– Bahá'í Canada Committee

*“... love will spur us
to greater heights
as we strive
ever-onward toward
the New World
Order promised by
Bahá'u'lláh.”*

Submitting stories to *Bahá'í Canada*

The *Bahá'í Canada* magazine and its 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 bcanada@bahai.ca.



The upper portion of the House of the Báb in Shiráz, Iran, before its destruction in 1979.

Photo: Bahá'í International Community

From the history of the Faith

The Letters of the Living arise to find the Báb

From the moment that Mullá Ḥusayn attained the presence of the Báb and witnessed His declaration to be the Promised Qa'im, a beacon was lit in the city of Shiráz, calling those seeking Him to the city. The following is a short excerpt from H.M. Balyuzi's book "The Báb" describing their search and unending love for the Báb.

On that early morning of May 23rd 1844 when Mullá Ḥusayn stepped out into the streets of Shiráz, his heart brimming with joy, he abandoned a priestly career which would have brought him high honours. He abandoned it willingly and knowingly for a task which, though great and noble, would bring him jeers and humiliation. He was well-known amongst the circle of divines who exercised authority. He had the capacity, the intelligence and the learning which would have placed him in years to come in the forefront of the spiritual guidance of the nation. Power and riches would have been his. But by giving his allegiance to the young Siyyid of Shiráz whom he met under such

strange circumstances, Mullá Ḥusayn renounced all this, and chose a path in the opposite direction.

Mullá Ḥusayn was not alone in his high resolve. Others with similar prospects of a clerical vocation journeyed to Shíráz in search of light and truth. They too had set out at the bidding of Siyyid Kázim. As if by a magnet, they were drawn to Shíráz. How can one explain it otherwise? They had no intimation that in this city lived the One whom they sought. A force far greater than themselves led their steps to Shíráz, to their journey's end. As ordained by the Báb, they found Him, each one, independently. They were true, sincere and eager and they had their reward.

The last to arrive was a youth of twenty-two, whose home was in Bárfurúsh¹ in the province of Mázindarán which borders the Caspian Sea. When he was a boy in his early teens, his father, Áqá Muḥammad-Šálih, had died. Devoting himself to the pursuit of learning he had joined the circle of Siyyid Kázim's followers in Karbilá. Eventually, he became an outstanding disciple of that remarkable teacher. It is recorded that the night before this youth, whose name was Mullá Muḥammad-'Alí, reached Shíráz, the Báb told Mullá Ḥusayn that on the following day one would arrive whose acceptance of the new theophany would 'complete the number of My chosen disciples.' Next evening as the Báb, accompanied by Mullá Ḥusayn, was going towards His house, they encountered a young man whose dress and appearance showed the effects of a long journey. The newcomer went to Mullá Ḥusayn whom he knew well as a follow-disciple of Siyyid Kázim, greeted him and immediately asked whether he had found the object of his quest. Mullá Ḥusayn was not at liberty to divulge the fact that he had, and he tried to pacify his friend and avoid the subject. It was useless, for that youth had seen the Báb. His retort to Mullá Ḥusayn was astounding: 'Why seek you to hide Him from me? I can recognize Him by His gait. I confidently testify that none besides Him, whether in the East or in the West, can claim to be the Truth. None other can manifest the power and majesty that radiate from His holy person.' Mullá Ḥusayn was amazed, and leaving the newcomer he walked on and told the Báb what had transpired. Having already anticipated the arrival of that youth, the Báb observed: 'Marvel not at his strange behaviour. We have in the world of the spirit been communing with that youth. We know him already... Go to him and summon him forthwith to Our presence.' Thus did Mullá Muḥammad-'Alí-i-Bárfurúshí, whom the Báb honoured with the title Quddús (the Most Holy), attain his heart's desire.

1 Now called Bábul.

These disciples of the Báb were called the Letters of the Living.² All but one met the Báb face to face, and recognized in Him the Lord of the Age whom they sought. That single exception was a gifted woman, an accomplished writer of verse, courageous, a total stranger to fear, of whom Lord Curzon says:

Beauty and the female sex also lent their consecration to the new creed, and the heroism of the lovely but ill-fated poetess of Kazvin, Zerin Taj³ (Crown of Gold), or Kurrat-el-Ain (Solace of the Eyes), who, throwing off the veil, carried the missionary torch far and wide, is one of the most affecting episodes in modern history.

And here is the tribute of another eminent Englishman, Edward Granville Browne, to this unique woman:

The appearance of such a woman as Qurratu'l-'Ayn is in any country and any age a rare phenomenon, but in such a country as Persia it is a prodigy — nay, almost a miracle. Alike in virtue of her marvelous beauty, her rare intellectual gifts, her fervid excellence, her fearless devotion and her glorious martyrdom, she stands forth incomparable and immortal amidst her countrywomen. Had the Bábí religion no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient — that it produced a heroine like Qurratu'l-'Ayn.

Qurratu'l-'Ayn belonged to a family famed for its learning. Her father, Ḥájí Mullá Šálih, and her uncle, Ḥájí Mullá Muḥammad-Taquí, were both leading figures among the clergy. But they were far too orthodox for this great woman's susceptibilities, although a younger uncle, Ḥájí Mullá 'Alí, had become a supporter of the Shayski school⁴. Qurratu'l-'Ayn was married to the son of Ḥájí Mullá Muḥammad-Taquí — her cousin, Mullá Muḥammad. They had children, but their marriage was disastrous. Mullá Muḥammad was even more fanatical and narrow-minded than his father and a wide gulf yawned between husband and wife.

Qurratu'l-'Ayn had another cousin, Mullá Javád, who had accepted the rational views of Shaykh Aḥmad and Siyyid Kázim, Having learned in this cousin's library of the teachings of the illustrious sage of Karbilá who had gone far beyond the limits of orthodoxy, Qurratu'l-'Ayn corresponded with Siyyid Kázim and gave him her allegiance. From him she received the name Qurratu'l-'Ayn. In vain did her elders attempt to dampen her enthusiasm. No persuasion or threat could stop the tide

2 Ḥurúf-i-Ḥayy. Ḥayy (the Living) is an Arabic word, numerically equivalent to eighteen.

3 Zarrín-Táj.

4 The school of Shaykh Aḥmad.

of her newly-found devotion. And when she decided to leave her home and her family and join the circle of Siyyid Kázim, nothing could thwart her purpose. To appreciate the boldness and gravity of her action, one must realize how sheltered were the Eastern women of those days; her behaviour could only be seen as scandalous and most unprecedented. However, she reached Karbilá too late. Ten days prior to her arrival Siyyid Kázim had passed away. Qurratu'l-Ayn remained in Karbilá. She was convinced that before long the One promised to them would appear. Now, many of the disciples of Siyyid Kázim were setting out on their search. One of them was Qurratu'l-Ayn's brother-in-law, the husband of her younger sister Marđíyyih. She gave this relative, Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí, a sealed letter and told him to deliver it to the One whom they expected and sought. A verbal

message in verse was added to the letter: 'Say to Him, from me,' she said,

'The effulgence of thy face flashed forth and
the rays of thy visage arose on high;
Then speak the word, "Am I not your Lord?" and
"Thou art, Thou art!"
we will all reply.'

When Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí reached the presence of the Báb, he gave Him the letter and the message; and the Báb numbered her among the Letters of the Living. Thus it was that this fearless, eloquent pioneer of woman's emancipation joined the rank of the first disciples of the Báb. Qurratu'l-Ayn is better known as Ṭahirih — the Pure One — a designation by which she will ever be remembered.

Tablet to the First Letter of the Living

This is that which We have revealed for the First Believer in Him Whom God shall make manifest, that it may serve as an admonition from Our presence unto all mankind.

In the name of the Almighty, the Best-Beloved.

LAUDED and glorified is He Who is the sovereign Lord of the kingdoms of heaven and earth and whatever is between them. Say, verily unto Him shall all return, and He is the One Who guideth at His Own behest whomsoever He pleaseth. Say, all men beseech His blessings and He is supreme over all created things. He is indeed the All-Glorious, the Mighty, the Well-Beloved.

This is an epistle from the letter Thá unto him who is the First Believer. Bear thou witness that verily He is I, Myself, the Sovereign, the Omnipotent. He is the One Who ordaineth life and death and unto Him shall all return. Indeed there is none other God but Him and all men bow down in adoration before Him. Verily Thy Lord, God, shall presently recompense every one as He ordaineth, even swifter than uttering the words "Be thou, and it is."

God hath in truth testified in His Book and so also have testified the company of His angels, His Messengers and those endued with divine knowledge, that thou hast believed in God and in His signs and that everyone is guided aright by virtue of thy guidance. This is indeed a boundless grace which God, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting, hath graciously conferred upon thee aforetime and will confer hereafter. And since thou didst believe in God before

the creation, He hath in truth, at His own behest, raised thee up in every Revelation. There is no God but Him, the Sovereign Protector, the All-Glorious.

It behooveth you to proclaim the Cause of God unto all created things as a token of grace from His presence; no God is there but Him, the Most Generous, the All-Compelling.

Say: All matters must be referred to the Book of God; I am indeed the First to believe in God and in His signs; I am the One Who divulgeth and proclaimeth the Truth and I have been invested with every excellent title of God, the Mighty, the Incomparable. Verily I have attained the Day of the First Manifestation and by the bidding of the Lord and as a token of His grace, I shall attain the Day of the Latter Manifestation. There is no God but Him and at the appointed hour everyone shall bow down unto Him in adoration.

I render thanks and yield praise unto God for having been chosen by Him as the Exponent of His Cause in bygone days and in the days to come; there is none other God save Him, the Glorified, the All-Praised, the Ever-Abiding. Whatever is in the heavens and on the earth is His and through Him are we guided aright.

O people of the Bayán! Those who embrace the Truth must turn unto Me, as ordained in the Book and divine guidance will be vouchsafed to whosoever attaineth My presence. – The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 9-10.

A light from the world beyond

The following poem was written by 12-year-old Manar Ali Vink when she completed a study of the Dawnbreakers with some adults and youth in her Vancouver community.

The one who ariseth hast heralded the Dawn
Of the glorious Sun of Bahá
Shining forth, a light from the world beyond

A single spark ignited a roaring inferno
That swept over a land enveloped in the dark
Shining forth, a light from the world beyond

A call arose, a call from the world on high
And souls asleep on the couch of heedlessness stirred
Shining forth, a light from the world beyond

Casting away the fetters of worldly desire
And hastening to quaff from the cup of martyrdom
Shining forth, a light from the world beyond

And in each heart there was kindled
The burning fire of love
Shining forth, a light from the world beyond

Though imprisoned, tortured, chained
The flame remained unquenched
Shining forth, a light from the world beyond

Not dying, not failing, not obliterated to dust
The darkness began to lift
Shining forth, a light from the world beyond



The friends who took part in the winter youth and junior youth camp in Quebec. Photo contributed by the Bahá'í Council of Quebec

Responding to the Call

"Time, that most precious gift - will be needed even when the hope of rest beckons. In these sacrifices lies the heroism of the day." The following is a glimpse into how the friends across the country are meeting the calls of the National Spiritual Assembly.

From the National Spiritual Assembly to the Bahá'ís of Canada, 6 April 2018.

In April 2018, the National Spiritual Assembly addressed a letter to the Bahá'ís of Canada that called us to action – to greater heights of sacrifice – in this “defining moment”: the contracting time from now until the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb. They summoned believers “to a new intensity, focus and consecration in the work of teaching...whatever your circumstances and whatever the opportunities before you.”

There were two direct calls of action: one to every believer and one specifically to young people. The efforts of souls across the country demonstrate that the framework for action is increasingly clear, but it's up to us to take the first steps, and perseverance is required when encountering obstacles. Here are a few examples of how individuals, families and neighbourhood teams responded to these calls.

Committing to the work ahead

In clusters that have yet to launch a program of growth, attending a teaching campaign in a nearby cluster can help provide the experience and inspiration necessary to lend momentum at home. Husband-and-wife team David and Patricia Daley of Moncton, N.B., now in their 60s, re-committed themselves to the empowerment of youth in their community in response to the National Spiritual Assembly's message, recognizing that one of the calls was meant for them.

“We were invited to be part of a team to develop the junior youth program,” Mrs. Daley said. “It was about the time when the letter from the National Spiritual

Assembly came out and we took a deep breath and said, 'okay, let's commit to this.'"

But first, they needed to move beyond certain setbacks they had faced in the past.

"We have had junior youth groups here and we had done outreach in several communities," Mr. Daley explained. "But a lot of our efforts seemed to be dissipated when a number of the junior youth [moved away]."

Focusing on learning goals helped them move forward with determination. They decided they wanted to learn how to converse with youth about the possibility of serving as animators, as there were few Bahá'í youth in their community.

Convinced that confirmations would be forthcoming if they entered the field of action, they approached their local community centre and presented the junior youth program, which led to a space being offered free of charge. But they did not yet have any participants. So, they made contacts with a local high school and gained permission to talk with youth during their lunch break. This led to a few interested individuals. They wondered what else they could do.

"It was about the time when the letter from the National Spiritual Assembly came out and we took a deep breath and said, 'okay, let's commit to this.'"

"We felt a lot of hesitancy," Mrs. Daley said. "We were looking for confirmations. We decided we would take a step and then look for confirmations and then we would take another step."

Soon after, they were invited to take part in an intensive campaign in Charlottetown, P.E.I., focused on developing the junior youth program. Mrs. Daley said she had to overcome some feelings of reluctance in order to attend.

"Two weeks in the summer? Twelve-hour days? I thought: 'I was too old for this!' But it worked well

with family visit schedules, and there was no reason to say no, so off we went."

With the rest of the participants in the campaign, they learned more about conversing with youth and community members. This involved a change in their approach to the conversation. Mr. Daley explained that their previous outreach centered around "giving invitations to something that we had planned" rather than engaging others in a conversation about how to develop the community spiritually and materially. The Daleys felt that, through these deeper conversations, "there was a sense of oneness between those of us who were



Joyful activities abound during a spring intensive campaign in Vancouver, B.C.

Photo: Galen Humber

visiting and those who were living in the community.” This naturally led to more commitment from the wider community – something that had been a struggle in the past.

“It was a very helpful experience,” said Mr. Daley. “The intensity really taught us a lot of what it means to be an army of God. It seemed to help the whole group be disciplined. We struggled with some of our own tests and difficulties, but it was good, and it meant that we were working and making an effort.”

The Daleys took this learning back to Moncton and organized an outreach campaign in their cluster to meet junior youth with the help of travelling teachers from Fredericton, N.B.

As a result of this campaign, eight junior youth attended a one-day camp, along with a youth from the neighbourhood who said she was interested in becoming an animator. Now, most of them have said they want to attend a group on a regular basis.

Mrs. Daley said that it’s been an amazing journey so far. “I think, for myself, we’re still a bit scared. Scared of the process and the commitment, but we decided that we would do our part and look for the confirmations.”

Mr. Daley agreed: “I think I’ve been in awe of the confirmations. They really turn a gnat into an eagle. And it’s wonderful to feel those confirmations and to feel that we are not alone.”

Embedding ourselves in the process

Carmen Ighani said that she, too, has been learning to align her efforts with the needs of the Plan. When she moved to Toronto, Ont., with her husband, they began looking for a way to serve in a neighbourhood as a young couple. “I wanted to know more about the reality of the cluster and how I can apply the teachings to start and advance some activities,” she said.

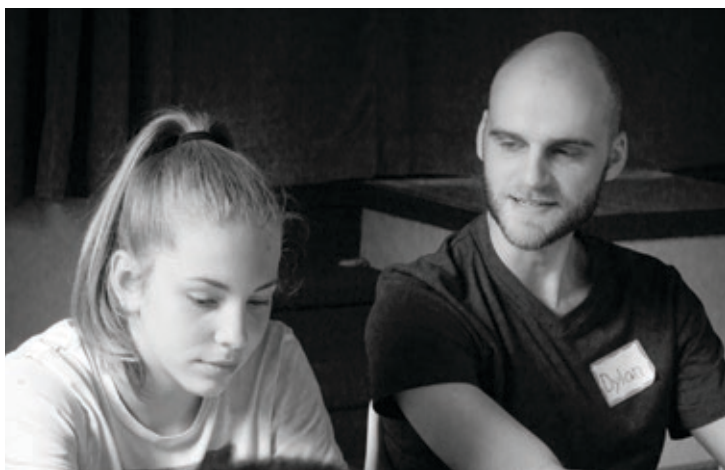
When she found out that there was going to be a series of intensive campaigns in her area over the summer, she consulted with her husband and decided to take a few weeks off work in order to participate in not one, but several of the campaigns. Financially, they determined, it was possible if they saved money before and after her period of service.

The team of friends she served with worked to re-establish several junior youth groups that had fallen the previous year. They felt greater confirmations when they also formed multiple study circles, along with a devotional. Though the campaigns are now complete, Ms. Ighani continues to serve in the neighbourhood, along with her husband. Serving this way means that they are able to spend meaningful time together, she said, removing the false dichotomy between service and family.

Serving alongside her husband has also influenced her spiritual connection to the community and has created a sense of family that she hasn’t experienced before.



Following an assistants meeting in Edmonton, Alta., Bud Zeitz, Riel and Elizabeth Aubichon, Renie Zeitz, David and Caroline Mockon and their child Leo Mockon had a devotional filled with music. Photo contributed by the Alberta Bahá’í Council.



Pioneer Dylan Crone with junior youth Bella Quinn at a junior youth camp. Photo: Paul Vreeland



Tahireh Mohebati and Chayan Dehghan talk with two youth about the role they play in the spiritual and material progress of their Toronto community. Photo: Liza Lotfali

“Meeting families as a family provides for so much more warmth than meeting as an individual,” she explained. This feeling has flowed into her relationships with her two 15-year-old study circle participants, and she refers to them as her sisters. Together they play music, celebrate birthdays and serve in the neighbourhood. The youth teach a children’s class and Ms. Ighani consults with them about its progress when they’re spending time together. She and her husband even brought them on their visit to the Montreal Shrine.

“When we first went to the Shrine, we were able to be there just the four of us for a while. We all had about an hour to say our prayers and afterwards they said they felt like ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was in the room with them, which is something I have felt in my own prayers in the past. I think our friendship grew so much stronger because we were able to share such a profound moment together.”

“I’ve learned that just trying to make an effort is the most important thing.”

She added that serving with youth from the neighbourhood has changed her understanding of teaching. “These are 15-year-olds who are so dedicated,” she said. “They are such an inspiration for me. They keep pushing me and showing me how we need to be so creative and open to sharing and teaching the Faith to everyone.”

The group is now studying Ruhi Institute Book 2: *Arising to Serve*. Ms. Ighani said studying this book and serving with her two young friends has deeply affected her.

“I’ve learned that just trying to make an effort is the most important thing. Book 2 says that the act of teaching is the most joyful thing, not the result. I would be fearful to do certain things, not sure of the result, but now I just do it. This has translated to all areas of my life: to act and see what happens and see what doors open.”

The movement of a neighbourhood

The neighbourhood of Blue Quill, found in south west Edmonton, Alta., has been serving as a focus neighbourhood in the city. It is relatively small, made up of about 5,000 residents, 300 of whom are junior youth. There, a team is learning about how a steady flow of youth can move through the sequence of Ruhi courses and arise to serve.

Blue Quill was first opened in 2013 when four youth moved there and established several core activities. After six months, however, these stalled as life circumstances caused them to move out of the neighbourhood.



The junior youth take part in a planting activity at a local farm during their November, 2018 junior youth camp in Outaouais, Que.

Photo contributed by the Bahá’í Council of Québec

But, in 2015, it was reopened and a junior youth group formed. This group was sustained for several years, producing graduates of the program. Building on the achievement of having a strong junior youth group, and with the encouragement and support of the institutions, six youth moved into the neighbourhood in the spring of 2017.

“The institute board held a gathering with youth and we talked about this movement of moving into a neighbourhood that was happening across the country,” said Nadim Parsa, one of the youth who pioneered to Blue Quill. “That’s when the youth started talking about moving there. Blue Quill went from having just one couple to suddenly having eight people.”

Four of the youth were then able to travel to Vancouver – a learning site for the junior youth program – to participate in an intensive campaign. They brought this experience back to Blue Quill, where the team agreed to start holding intensive campaigns within the neighbourhood.

Soon, another junior youth group was established, as well as three children’s classes. Young people indigenous to the neighbourhood were among those teaching the classes and they were invited to study the Ruhi Institute courses in the context of intensive campaigns.

Mr. Parsa said that from the first campaign they tried to establish an atmosphere that was both joyful and focused. “We talked about excellence in the context of a campaign and how we hoped to have a joyful but intensely-focused environment. That seemed to really move the youth to be able to focus and study the Writings wholeheartedly.”

Those serving in Blue Quill then began to think about how others in the region might learn from their experience. Around this time, the 6 April 2018 letter from the National Spiritual Assembly was released. A gathering was planned for all of the youth in Northern Alberta,



The friends in the Blue Quill neighbourhood of Edmonton, Alta., during their spring campaign to establish junior youth groups. Left to right (top row): Wyatt Top, Dorna Sadeghi, Arshawn Naderi, Taher Joshani, Taraneh Parsa, Rhiyon Naderi and Yashar Roohijahromi. Bottom row: Jamshid Roohijahromi, Negar Parsa, Shireen Rashidi, Anisa Aidun, Naseem Naderi, Shamim Mehrabkhani and Afsoon Yaldaei. Photo: Stacey-Michelle Teyke

where they studied the message and considered what period of time they could dedicate to serving the Cause full-time.

“We dove deep into that message and what it was asking us to do,” Mr. Parsa recalled. “Those youth were then each individually met with, along with their parents, to see if there were any concerns or challenges to committing to a period of service. It was a mighty effort.”

And the confirmations were clear: around 15 youth started to attend the institute campaigns in Blue Quill and eight youth moved into the neighbourhood to contribute to its progress.

This past summer, two new junior youth groups were formed, and more youth from the neighbourhood were brought into an ongoing conversation regarding the spiritual and material health of their community. They are now learning about what it means to extend this conversation to entire families, involving all members in the educational process.

“The main goal now is to expand the number of junior youth groups in the neighbourhood,” Mr. Parsa said. “Right now we are maintaining the groups that are already happening and trying to build on their quality. Come the summer we are looking at how we can expand the number of junior youth participants to 100 in the neighbourhood. We can do it.”



The youth in the Blue Quill neighbourhood of Edmonton express their creativity through art activities during their study of Ruhi Book 5: *Releasing the Powers of Junior Youth*. Photo: Stacey-Michelle Teyke



Tricia Johnson-Drapeau, Charlotte Hadden, Dr. Javaheri, Folkie Johnson, Sandra Johnson, Darla-Jean Lindstrom, Vida Javaheri, Francis Neumann, and Charlene Bake hold up the blanket given to the Javaheris during their visit to Whitehorse in the Yukon as a symbol of the "high regard" the First Nations friends hold for them. The blanket is called "Love Birds" and represents the Eagle and Crow clans. Photo contributed by Darla-Jean Lindstrom.

From Across Canada

Dr. Javaheri's talks evoke love for the Universal House of Justice

During his visits to the friends in British Columbia and the Yukon, Dr. Firaydoun Javaheri spoke of the importance of deepening our love for the Universal House of Justice. The following shares an individual's recollections from his talks.

Dr. Firaydoun Javaheri's love for the Universal House of Justice was spread throughout the Yukon and British Columbia this past Fall when he and his wife travelled through the West-Coast to meet with the Bahá'ís.

In B.C., they met with several different groups of friends across the lower mainland. They gathered with youth, young adults, Persian-speaking friends, and numerous meetings with smaller groups of friends in more intimate settings. In total, over a thousand people came together to hear Dr. Javaheri speak.



Dr. Javaheri talks to the friends in British Columbia about the importance of love for the Universal House of Justice.

One of the common themes in his conversations was the importance of strengthening our love for the Universal House of Justice. He spoke about how this love is manifested through our obedience to the guidance and our continued efforts to study and understand what it is

“Empowerment, he said, is the awakening of the desire to act on the Word of God, and to draw upon its power.”

asking us to do. He said that each and every one of us has a role to play in this series of unfolding Plans at every stage of our lives.

In exploring the focus of the current series of Plans, he called to mind the potency of the institute process for exposing hearts to the Word of God and the power that it unleashes as it transforms souls and engages them in action. Empowerment, he said, is the awakening of the desire to act on the Word of God, and to draw upon its power. He explained that while

we have many ways of teaching the Faith and of deepening that have evolved over time, the institute process and its core activities are the instruments that the Universal House of Justice has provided us with to be able to work with large numbers systematically, opening the way for entry by troops. Everyone has the obligation to understand it, support it and participate in it in any way feasible. This does not mean that individual teaching efforts, using other approaches of teaching, are not important, as long as they are associated with capacity building and human resource development. It is critical that a spirit of inclusivity is spread in the community as every lover of the Blessed Beauty has a part to play in the implementation of the Divine Plan.

One of the other themes that he spoke about was constructive resilience and what we can learn from the Bahá'ís in Iran. Through their example, he explained, we can learn about certitude in the Manifestation of God, sacrifice for the Manifestation, obedience to the laws of the nation without compromising principles and patiently championing justice. He spoke about the ways in which

they have been able to avoid being drawn into the cycle of oppression through patient resilience as they continue to serve their fellow countrymen with love and humility without becoming angry or violent in the face of continued injustice and attacks on the community.

In the West, however, we are faced with a different kind of oppression: the forces of irreligion and gross materialism. We need to ensure that these forces do not cloud our purity of heart or motive, while also

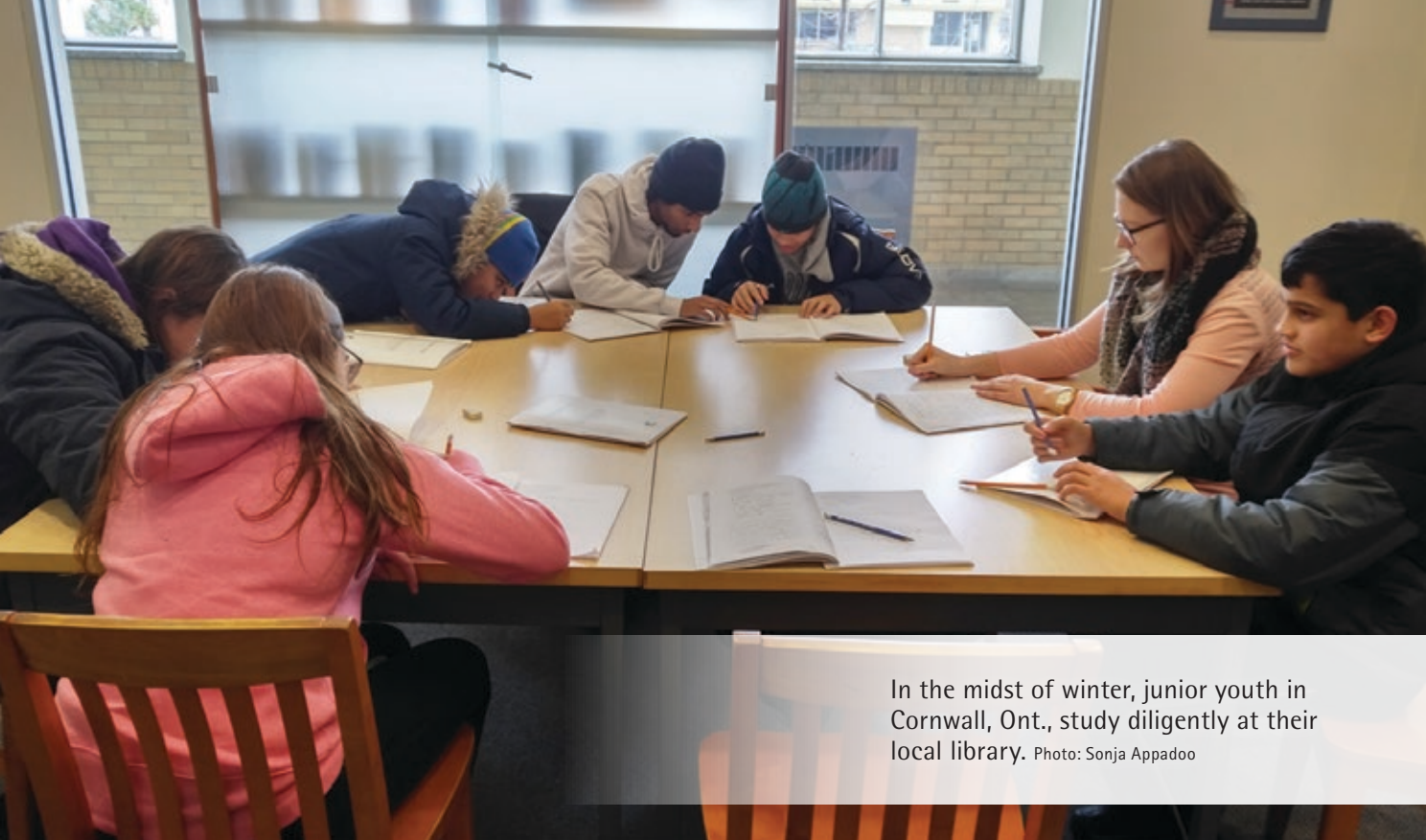
avoiding becoming caught up in excessive criticism or protests on this or that issue. Similar to the friends in Iran, a patient resilience is needed as we share the Word of God in neighbourhood after neighbourhood and, gradually, we build a new order that at the foundation is a harmony between faith and reason, science and religion, spiritual and material. This must replace the old order that is governed by forces of materialism.

He emphasized that we are not engaged in fixing the current world order, but rather in building a new one. This requires us to revisit our habits of thought and modes of expression. It requires us to see our work as building capacity in ways that avoid dependency and empowers communities to take charge of their own wellbeing. He also spoke of the importance of worship, and the seeds that are now being sown for further Houses of Worship. He encouraged everyone to be connected to spaces of prayer and to hold devotional gatherings. We need to learn to see the potential of these spaces, he told us, and be mindful of how to elevate the conversation in these gatherings.

Some of the friends who were able to attend one or more of the gatherings said that the talks helped them to think about how much they needed to go back and study the guidance of the Universal House of Justice. One person said that they have been reading the guidance, but now they need to learn how to plan and act on its inspiration and put it into practice. Several friends shared how it had helped them to see a bigger picture of the Plan and how the different pieces are in harmony with one another. This was helpful in removing a number of dichotomies between the different aspects of life and the work of the Plan.

We were all deeply encouraged through his visits. They helped us to understand the context of this present moment in history, and the importance of participating in the work leading up to 2021.

– Galen Humber



In the midst of winter, junior youth in Cornwall, Ont., study diligently at their local library. Photo: Sonja Appadoo

Homefront pioneering: "our next teaching act"

The call to raise the number of clusters with intensive programs of growth, first shared in 2015, continues to resonate throughout the world to this day. Here we follow one family that immediately responded to the goals set by the Universal House of Justice and decided to pioneer to a cluster looking to grow.

Our desire to homefront pioneer was first sparked when we studied the 29 Dec. 2015 message from the Universal House of Justice with a group of friends in London, Ont., soon after it was released.

Helping to raise "the number of clusters where a programme of growth has become intensive to 5,000 by Rīḍvān 2021" appealed to us as a "truly formidable"¹ objective and we knew wanted to contribute to it as a family. This Plan also presented a rather unique opportunity to serve from a historical perspective: it not only is the "last in a series of consecutive Five Year Plans," as the Universal House of Justice mentions in the Rīḍvān 2016 message, but its outcome "has the potential to be profoundly significant, even epoch making."

Through the guidance of the Universal House of Justice, we learned that "Efforts to stimulate activity in a cluster...are greatly enhanced if one or more individuals

settle there as homefront pioneers, concentrating their attention on part of a village or even a single street where there is heightened receptivity."² This settled it. Homefront pioneering would be our next teaching act. It became very clear from the outset that the "herculean labour"³ required of us, at least initially, was coming to understand all the implications of settling in a new town, relocating our business and finding a high school for our teenage son.

We knew our lives would be unsettled, and we had no illusions about the "concerted effort"⁴ that would be required in terms of helping to advance a cluster to the second milestone. We felt that – after residing in clusters which had attained and sustained an intensive programme of growth – our experience, the things we have learned and the capacities we developed could be useful in a cluster that had yet to reach the second milestone. But where would we go?

2 *Ibid.*
3 *Ibid.*
4 *Ibid.*

1 From the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Board of Counsellors, 29 Dec. 2015.

We received the Bahá'í Council of Ontario's call for homefront pioneers in the province a few months later and learned of a cluster near Ottawa called Cornwall. We knew nothing about this place except that it was a goal cluster, but found it confirming that moving there would also bring us closer to Montreal, where our older son and his family reside. We immediately contacted the Council's secretary and informed her of our intention to pioneer to Cornwall.

The encouraging response from the Council and their guidance to consult with the Auxiliary Board member set everything in motion. We were quickly engaged in a consultative process with the Auxiliary Board member, and we set out to meet him and a devoted Bahá'í couple in Cornwall – themselves pioneers in a previous Plan – for a consultation to initiate steps for our settlement as homefront pioneers.

With the institutions setting the direction, it was now a question of how quickly we could move to our pioneering post. Here again the guidance of the Universal House of Justice proved priceless: “By concentrating on the advance that must be made in a cluster in an initial period—for instance, in the six cycles occurring before the first of the bicentennial anniversaries—the friends will do much to bring their goal for the full five years within reach.”⁵

It became abundantly clear to us that the move should happen within the six cycles leading to the first bicentenary celebration, and the sooner the better. Our teenage son, who had been given the choice to continue his education in London or to come to Cornwall, pleasantly surprised us when he said he had decided to join us as a pioneer, leaving his many friends behind. This was welcome news and confirmation as the cluster needed youth of his age to animate a junior youth program. We decided he would complete Grade 11 in London and join us in June 2017.

With the help of a friend from Ottawa who offered to host us, we spent much of the summer of 2016 driving to Cornwall to visit one neighbourhood, scouting others and having conversations with parents and youth about starting a junior youth spiritual empowerment programme. Activities started in earnest when we settled in our new home in November of that year. We started hosting dawn prayers every Sunday, study circles and meetings to plan Bahá'í Holy days and other events. By this time a nucleus of friends studying, acting, reflecting and consulting together was already emerging in the cluster. Regular visits to friends in Russell, Ont., an hour's drive from Cornwall, to tutor Ruhi Book 10: *Building Vibrant Communities* and to attend devotional gatherings ensured that the teaching efforts involved the friends in the furthest parts of the cluster.

“Our teenage son... pleasantly surprised us when he said he had decided to join us as a pioneer.”

Efforts to reach out to families with children and junior youth multiplied. With the help of two young animators from Ottawa, the reservoir cluster, we organized a junior youth camp in the summer of 2017 at our home. Several families happily sent their junior youth, laying a strong foundation for starting a regular group. More confirmation was on the way when we received the go-ahead from the public library to use one of its rooms for the junior youth program every Saturday morning, free of charge. The first junior youth group started in August 2017, and the participants are, to this day, mostly those who attended that first junior youth camp.

The search for a junior youth animator was another goal that we set right from the beginning. A friendly conversation with a young man while shopping led to a strong friendship being developed with him and his girlfriend, herself a young teacher. She was interested in the program and, during a gathering at our home, she volunteered to animate the junior youth program at the library. She has since completed Ruhi Book 1: *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit* and is about to complete Ruhi Book 5: *Releasing the Powers of Junior Youth*. This new animator takes her role very seriously, shown through her careful preparation each week and her desire to always consult prior to and debrief after the sessions. She and her friend are both regular attendees at our monthly devotional gathering, and they actively participate in our Holy Day celebrations.

We're now past the halfway mark of this Plan, and since deciding to dedicate ourselves to its goals our nucleus of friends has expanded to 15 believers and friends of the Faith. We have a well-structured cycle of growth with reflection meetings and an expansion phase; the cluster has 17 core activities including three junior youth groups, one of which is held every Friday at our place and involves participants from our and neighbourhood, with a fourth on the way. As pioneers, we see our role as continuing to walk the path of service alongside these friends, identifying “the nascent capacity that must be nurtured... and initiators of a fledgling effort who must be accompanied...”⁶

– Sonja Appadoo

⁵ From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, Riqdán 2016

⁶ From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, Riqdán 2014

Reflections from a “Granimator”

Recognizing and responding to the needs of your community can take many forms. This grandmother in Calgary had to quickly learn to arise and take on any role that was being asked of her, including that of a junior youth animator.



Junior youth Skye Lupick contributes to her Calgary community's well-being through her participation in a local junior youth group. Photo: Maureen Flynn-Burhoe

My husband and I moved to Calgary, Alta., five years ago to provide some support to two of our sons' young families. We live in a condo complex in a nice neighbourhood, and although an opportunity arose very quickly to provide a children's class, my efforts to start a junior youth group didn't seem to get anywhere. I quickly realized that a major obstacle in a relatively affluent neighbourhood is that the kids have piano on Mondays, Scouts on Tuesdays, swimming on Wednesdays, chess club on Thursdays, and so on. So, I focused on my Saturday morning children's class, which was entirely comprised of Bahá'í kids, and I tried to be content. But the idea of starting a junior youth group never left me, especially as message after message reminded us of the promising nature of the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme.

And then, about a year ago, a family moved into the condo across the street. I had seen a need to do a little community building in our complex and have since become the welcoming committee for new residents. I trotted over with some cookies and a plant and introduced

“But the idea of starting a junior youth group never left me, especially as message after message reminded us of the promising nature of the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme.”

myself. It turned out that they were from Cali, Colombia, and they had three daughters – 13-year-old twins and a 9-year-old. Within five minutes the mother was talking about the need to provide children, especially girls, with a moral education. I took a deep breath and said that, when they returned from a trip home, I would talk to them about a couple of programs that might interest them.

After they returned, we started inviting each other over for supper and the girls would come over to bake cookies, pies and cakes with me. Their youngest started attending our children's class and her older sisters were anxious to enrol in a junior youth program. I took them to visit an existing one in our sector, but,

since all but one of the participants were boys, the girls weren't enthused. I decided I'd better try to find some other junior youth in our area.

I hadn't thought to approach one of our son's neighbours in my earlier attempts to attract interest in the program, but they also had twin girls the same age as our neighbour's daughters, so I decided I would talk to them. I rehearsed a presentation about the aims of and rationale for the junior youth program and went down the street to meet their school bus, where their mother was waiting for them to arrive. I started to share about the program and was just at the point of reassuring her that it isn't a program of religious indoctrination when she interrupted me and said,

“If it has anything to do with the Bahá’í Faith, count us in.” When she got home, she announced to her twins that she had enrolled them in a junior youth group.

One was willing, the other was not. The mother, a resourceful woman, phoned the mother of the girl’s best friend and, with the little knowledge she had of the program, managed to convince her to also enrol her daughter. That was enough to get the reluctant twin on board. Now we had five participants and I needed to find an animator *toute de suite!*

There was a Feast later that week and, while there, I was still preoccupied with finding an animator. Glancing up from my seat, there was a 15-year-old graduate of the junior youth program sitting across from me. I asked her if she had ever considered animating a junior youth group, and she said that she had been looking around for one, actually. Our group started the following week.

Everything went along swimmingly for a few months. My husband and I hosted the group in our home, I made snacks and listened admiringly from the next room while the young animator forged bonds of friendship with and among the junior youth. And then she got busy – very busy – with schoolwork, piano and the swim team, and her parents announced that she no longer had time to animate the group. After much consultation, they agreed that she could animate every second week.

This wasn’t going to be enough, of course. If I have learned anything, it is that core activities need, first and foremost, to be consistent. I suddenly realized I was about to embark on a new career as an elderly animator, every second week or more depending on my colleague’s homework and exam schedule.

I’m surprised to find that it’s going rather well. My young friend and I are a good blend of skills, experience and styles. I tend to be more directive than the ideal animator should be – I persuaded the girls to try working

in a community garden as a service project, which they ended up really enjoying, despite their initial reservations – and I plan every meeting of the group as carefully as I plan a children’s class. My colleague, on the other hand, is an expert at going with the flow and drawing the girls out and giving them the space and freedom to express their true feelings.

The Colombian family suddenly withdrew their girls from both core activities (crisis and victory!) just around the time of the youngest’s First Communion. We have stayed

on friendly terms, and two other girls have recently joined the group so there are still six participants around our dining room table on Tuesday evenings.

What is remarkable is the rapid and deep bonds that have formed between the families of the girls. They get together nearly every weekend. And the younger sister of the remaining twins decided to join our children’s class. Truly, this is a program that builds community.

– Dolores Lindsay



Dolores Lindsay and her co-animator Faith Moghaddami busy themselves at the community garden.

Photo: Maureen Flynn-Burhoe

The development of community properties

In several clusters and neighbourhoods across the country, the need to rent or purchase physical spaces to facilitate working with large numbers has emerged. Two recent property acquisitions, guided by the National Spiritual Assembly, in Ottawa, Ont., and Vancouver, B.C., serve as such examples.

Activities within the community-building process take shape in a variety of settings: parks, homes, community centres, libraries, schools. But in some locales the receptivity, and capacity to respond to it, are such that the natural limitations of these physical spaces have become an obstacle, and more is needed for the development of the cluster or neighbourhood to proceed unabated.

In its letter to all Local Spiritual Assemblies dated 7 December 2017, the National Spiritual Assembly introduced the Community Properties Fund, “to be established to support the acquisition, maintenance and use of properties at all levels of the community,” including possibilities such as facilities with residential space “dedicated to all forms of educational activity, offices to serve the needs of regional agencies and neighbourhood space to support children’s classes, junior youth groups and study circles”.

The Community Properties Fund will provide the ongoing material resources necessary for this advancement. The National Spiritual Assembly has contributed an initial \$2.5 million to the Fund, and has called on the community to match this amount over the remainder of the current Five Year Plan. Returns from this sum will then generate funds allocated to community properties.

The examples of Greenboro, a locale in Ottawa, which recently acquired a neighbourhood centre, and Vancouver, where the National Spiritual Assembly purchased residential properties for training,



help to demonstrate some of the conditions that led to this significant development.

Ottawa

The neighbourhood of Greenboro has been a centre of intense activity since 2014, with high receptivity. With over 25 core activities currently established, trying to work around the schedules and restrictions of city-offered spaces became impractical and an obstacle to growth.

Anthea Nelson-James, who serves in the neighbourhood, explained: “We wanted to be able to have trainings with youth that would be able to run for 8 hours a day, or be able to fit the schedule needs of the families we were working with. This was impossible to do in a community centre or a school – they have their own activities to do as well. So, for us to be able to continue

“It seems like when people walk into the space, ...it really is a centre for the neighbourhood – it’s theirs”.

to meet the growing needs of our neighbourhood, we needed to find our own space.”

This was shared with the National Spiritual Assembly, who, in consultation with the Local Spiritual Assembly of Ottawa, encouraged the community to move forward in

its efforts to rent a building in the neighbourhood.

Finding a suitable property and making it fit for its purpose became an Ottawa-wide Bahá'í community effort. Some searched listings, and an appropriate option was found in a local strip mall. Volunteers worked tirelessly to renovate the property to suit the activities that would take place there. Meanwhile, the friends began outreaching near the space to start new junior youth groups and found their choice of location led to a number of confirmations.

“We were able to start about five junior youth groups in the span of about two-and-a-half weeks,” said Caitlin Moore, one of the pioneers to the neighbourhood. “It was a confirmation for our team... It showed us that there was such immense potential and a sincere longing for the junior youth and the families to be able to contribute to the well-being of their community in that way.”

In July 2018, it was opened as the Greenboro Neighbourhood Centre. To celebrate the occasion, the friends organized a neighbourhood barbeque that brought together a number of families and friends to

welcome the new centre into their community.

“It seems like when people walk into the space,” Ms. Moore remarked, “it really is a centre for the neighbourhood – it’s theirs”.

Vancouver

In Vancouver, which is a learning site for the junior youth spiritual empowerment program, there was a growing need for a training facility with residential capacity to help advance all forms of educational activities throughout the cluster. With the encouragement of the Universal House of Justice, the National Spiritual Assembly began looking for suitable properties.

Again, confirmations poured in. Two newly-constructed duplexes directly beside Vancouver’s local Bahá'í Centre went up for sale and the National Spiritual Assembly was able to immediately purchase them. At the same time, the Local Spiritual Assembly of Vancouver, seeing how its Bahá'í Centre could help serve in a new capacity, decided to donate it to the National Spiritual Assembly so that the properties could work in unison to address the advancing teaching work. Now, though Centre-

less, the Vancouver community has three buildings that serve as a training facility for the cluster.

The townhouses were quickly renovated into residential facilities suitable for accommodating large groups of people. Soon afterward, the new facility was put to use with trainings, meetings and gatherings to bolster the work of the cluster.

“There is a distinct spirit of joy and excitement at having such a facility to meet the training needs of the cluster and region.” The Institute Board of British Columbia and Yukon told the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada through email. “We are truly grateful for this precious space.”

“[U]nprecedented numbers are drawing closer to the Cause in Canada,” the National Assembly wrote in its 7 December 2017 letter, “each soul with a desire to serve their communities.” With the development of community properties, supported by the Community Properties Fund, some of the material requisites for nurturing this immense potential can be raised.



The new Vancouver training facility was immediately put to work once it opened. Photo: Galen Humber.

My growing love for ʘuqúqu'lláh

ʘuqúqu'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, *ʘuqúqu'lláh – the Right of God* compilation, passage no. 13

When I was appointed a Representative of the Right of God for Prince Edward Island, I thought I had a basic understanding of this Law. By serving in this capacity, however, I've realized how limitless this ocean of wisdom and understanding actually is.

My service thus far has been tentative, emboldened day by day as my love for ʘuqúqu'lláh has increased. I found new inspiration, however, while attending a two-day National ʘuqúqu'lláh Conference that took place in mid-January in Vancouver, B.C.

Twenty-eight representatives from coast to coast gathered to study guidance and to learn from one another. The conference was aptly titled “Creating a Culture of Learning” and I was eager to hear from my colleagues, to increase my knowledge of what it means to be a Representative and to meditate on how to translate that understanding into action. We studied and discussed the history of the Institution of ʘuqúqu'lláh, the

spiritual nature of this Mighty Law, how to educate the friends and have a nuanced approach, and ways in which to work alongside the other institutions.

The spirit of collaboration and friendship between those at the conference was bolstered by the presence of all five Deputy Trustees for Canada, member of the International Board of Trustees Mr. William Wietes, Continental Counsellor Dr. Borna Nouredin and National Spiritual Assembly member Mr. Ciprian Jauca. Although I have never felt alone in my service, which as been lovingly encouraged and guided by Bruce Moore, my supervising Deputy Trustee, participating in the conference created a sense of connection to a band of friends who are all striving with the same purpose – friends who are supported and encouraged by the loving collaborations that exists with other institutions of the Faith. The love between the institutions was keenly felt, particularly when the conference opened with a message from the



Group photo of the Representatives of the Right of God. Photo contributed by Donna Seyed Mahmood

National Spiritual Assembly saying:

“How grateful the Assembly is for your service and for the impact it has on the spiritual health of the community! Against the pull of the powerful forces of materialism that seek to draw in young and old alike, in your interactions with the friends you reinforce a perspective of the spiritual and material dimensions of a life lived in the light of the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, dedicated to the betterment of the world. We have heard stories of your inspiring visits to homes across the country to study the compilation on the Right of God with the believers, humbly and radiantly sharing your own love for this mighty Law as you explore guidance with them. You represent beacons of light on the darkening horizons

of these days, quickening the hearts, educating and edifying as you support the friends in their efforts to examine their lives ‘to determine what is a necessity’ and discharge with joy their obligation in relation to the Law. These daily decisions are described as an ‘indispensable discipline to bring one’s priorities into balance’ by the Universal House of Justice, a foundation of the new civilization rising before our eyes under the guidance of the Supreme Body.”

Perhaps what was most memorable was what occurred on Saturday evening: the Board of Trustees and the participants of the conference hosted a public event for the Bahá’ís in the Greater Vancouver area and their friends. The evening event was called “Exploring the Concept of Purification through Storytelling.”

It weaved together music, stories and experiences from the field and was a valuable opportunity for us to learn through action and to meet some of the friends in Vancouver.

Afterwards, the conference participants socialized and engaged in conversations with the friends present. It was a marvelous experience to learn through action and to be a part of an event that sought to educate the friends and kindle their love for Ғуқуқу’ллáh, right then and there.

I have carried this experience back home to P.E.I., along with newly-formed friendships, an increased understanding of Ғуқуқу’ллáh and a deepened desire to share my love for it with the Bahá’ís on the Island.

– Sonjel Vreeland Eiriksson

Association for Bahá’í Studies 43rd Annual Conference

BEYOND CRITIQUE:

Laying the Groundwork for Social Transformation

August 8–11, 2019 • Ottawa, Ontario

Theme Statement and Call for Proposals • Submission deadline: 24 March 2019

The theme for the 2019 Association for Bahá’í Studies (ABS) Conference – Beyond Critique: Laying the Groundwork for Social Transformation—builds on insights shared, and knowledge generated, at ABS gatherings over the past few years. Several presentations last year offered examples of the ways in which knowledge generated in active engagement with community (and, therefore, with social reality) can offer uniquely relevant and potentially transformative insights for a given context.

This year, ABS seeks to extend this line of thinking to reconcile two intentions in the process of generating, diffusing, and applying new knowledge: on the one hand, continuing to explore some of the deficiencies of the current order, while at the same time moving beyond critique alone, to introduce modes of thought and practice that align with Bahá’u’lláh’s vision for social transformation. Specifically, we welcome contributions that help us grapple with the following questions:

- How can we explore fundamental defects in present knowledge systems, while at the same time, advancing our understanding and generating spiritually grounded alternatives?
- How can we engage in a critique of the underlying ideologies of knowledge systems without being limited

by relativist, postmodern and materialistic modes of thinking?

- Through Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation, how can we ensure that our contribution to discourse includes both a deep understanding of what is, but also informed insights of what could be?
- How can Bahá’í scholarship contribute to knowledge that seeks to lay the groundwork for new social structures built on principles of justice and oneness?

The Association for Bahá’í Studies welcomes proposals for presentations in breakout sessions, which are participatory in nature, focusing on any subject of Bahá’í scholarship. Proposals from all disciplines and professions are welcome, including the sciences, humanities, and fine arts. The format for breakout sessions lends itself to sharing works-in-progress as well as formal research findings. Proposals may be submitted for a single paper (60-minute session), or for an entire panel of up to four people (120-minute session).

To read the complete theme statement, submit proposals, register, nominate award recipients, and find more details about the conference, please visit <https://bahai-studies.ca/upcoming-conference/>

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Office of Public Affairs: publicaffairs@bahai.ca

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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

REGIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

INSTITUTE BOARDS

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647-818-8576

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BAHÁ'Í COUNCILS

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514-237-0973

Atlantic Provinces

103 Harmony Road
South Tremont, NS, B0P 1R0
regional.council@atlantic.bahai.ca
902-894-5503

GENERAL INFORMATION

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

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

Online catalogue:

<http://librairie.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 bcanada@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 receiving 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.

Members of the Board of Trustees:

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جان مک لود

اطلاعیہء 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. **وجه 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