

# BAHÁ'Í CANADA

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The spirit of the  
dawn-breakers

# From the Writings

*He is the Eternal, the One, the Single, the All-Possessing, the Most Exalted.*

ALL praise be to Thee, O my God, inasmuch as Thou hast adorned the world with the splendor of the dawn following the night wherein was born the One Who heralded the Manifestation of Thy transcendent sovereignty, the Dayspring of Thy divine Essence and the Revelation of Thy supreme Lordship. I beseech Thee, O Creator of the heavens and Fashioner of names, to graciously aid those who have sheltered beneath the shadow of Thine abounding mercy and have raised their voices amidst the peoples of the world for the glorification of Thy Name.

O my God! Thou beholdest the Lord of all mankind confined in His Most Great Prison, calling aloud Thy Name, gazing upon Thy face, proclaiming that which hath enraptured the denizens of Thy kingdoms of revelation and of creation. O my God! I behold Mine own Self captive in the hands of Thy servants, yet the light of Thy sovereignty and the revelations of Thine invincible power shine resplendent from His face, enabling all to know of a certainty that Thou art God, and that there is none other God but Thee. Neither can the power of the powerful frustrate Thee, nor the ascendancy of the rulers prevail against Thee. Thou doest whatsoever Thou wilt by virtue of Thy sovereignty which encompasseth all created things, and ordainest that which Thou pleasest through the potency of Thy behest which pervadeth the entire creation.

I implore Thee by the glory of Thy Manifestation and by the power of Thy might, Thy sovereignty and Thine exaltation to render victorious those who have arisen to serve Thee, who have aided Thy Cause and humbled themselves before the splendor of the light of Thy face. Make them then, O my God, triumphant over Thine enemies and cause them to be steadfast in Thy service, that through them the evidences of Thy dominion may be established throughout Thy realms and the tokens of Thine indomitable power be manifested in Thy lands. Verily Thou art potent to do what Thou wilt; no God is there but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

This glorious Tablet hath been revealed on the Anniversary of the Birth [of the Báb] that thou mayest recite it in a spirit of humility and supplication and give thanks unto thy Lord, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Make thou every effort to render service unto God, that from thee may appear that which will immortalize thy memory in His glorious and exalted heaven.

Say: Glorified art Thou, O my God! I implore Thee by the Dawning-Place of Thy signs and by the Revealer of Thy clear tokens to grant that I may, under all conditions,

hold fast the cord of Thy loving providence and cling tenaciously to the hem of Thy generosity. Reckon me then with those whom the changes and chances of the world have failed to deter from serving Thee and from bearing allegiance unto Thee, whom the onslaught of the people hath been powerless to hinder from magnifying Thy Name and celebrating Thy praise. Graciously assist me, O my Lord, to do whatever Thou lovest and desirest. Enable me then to fulfill that which will exalt Thy Name and will set ablaze the fire of Thy love.

Thou art, in truth, the Forgiving, the Bountiful.

– Bahá'u'lláh, *Days of Remembrance*, p. 202-4.

Issue forth from your cities, O peoples of the West and aid God ere the Day when the Lord of mercy shall come down unto you in the shadow of the clouds with the angels circling around Him, exalting His praise and seeking forgiveness for such as have truly believed in Our signs. Verily His decree hath been issued, and the command of God, as given in the Mother Book, hath indeed been revealed...

Become as true brethren in the one and indivisible religion of God, free from distinction, for verily God desireth that your hearts should become mirrors unto your brethren in the Faith, so that ye find yourselves reflected in them, and they in you. This is the true Path of God, the Almighty, and He is indeed watchful over your actions.

– The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 56.

Worship thou God in such wise that if thy worship lead thee to the fire, no alteration in thine adoration would be produced, and so likewise if thy recompense should be paradise. Thus and thus alone should be the worship which befitteth the one True God. Shouldst thou worship Him because of fear, this would be unseemly in the sanctified Court of His presence, and could not be regarded as an act by thee dedicated to the Oneness of His Being. Or if thy gaze should be on paradise, and thou shouldst worship Him while cherishing such a hope, thou wouldst make God's creation a partner with Him, notwithstanding the fact that paradise is desired by men.

Fire and paradise both bow down and prostrate themselves before God. That which is worthy of His Essence is to worship Him for His sake, without fear of fire, or hope of paradise.

– The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 77-8.

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**ON THE COVER** A shadow play depicting Mulla Husayn at the House of the Báb, performed at the Quebec Bahá'í summer school. Photo: Lorraine Goh

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# Marking the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb

To the Bahá'ís of the world from the Universal House of Justice, October 2019.

To all who have come to honour the Herald of a new Dawn

Dearly loved Friends,

Consider with us. Whenever a divine Educator appears in the world, a Figure Whose teachings will come to shape human thought and action for centuries thereafter—at such a dramatic, seismic moment, what would we expect?

The appearance of every such Educator, as recorded in the Sacred Texts of the world's great faiths, is a pivotal event that propels the advancement of civilization. The spiritual stimulus each has provided throughout history has enabled the radius of human cooperation to extend from the clan, to the tribe, to the city-state, and to the nation. And each of these great Teachers promised that, in time, another divine Figure would appear, Whose advent should be anticipated and Whose influence would reform the world. No wonder, then, that the coming of the Báb, Whose Birth two centuries ago we now honour, gave rise to unprecedented ferment in the country where He was born. The moment of His appearance, like the appearance of all such Figures, precipitated the release of powerful spiritual forces—but there was no accompanying spectacle. There was instead a late evening conversation, in a modest Persian dwelling, between a student of religion and his youthful Host, during which that Host revealed that He was the Promised One, the divine Educator His guest had been seeking. “Observe attentively,” He remarked, “Might not the Person intended ... be none other than I?” It is this Youth, the Báb, that we acclaim as the One Whose coming—after an interval of a thousand years—shed the light of divine guidance once again upon the human world.

From this first moment unfolded all that has since come to pass. The Báb's Writings flowed profusely from His pen, disclosing profound truths, dismissing superstitions that held sway in His day, urging the people to recognize the significance of the times, castigating the hypocrisy of their leaders, and summoning the world to an exalted standard of conduct. “O peoples of the earth!” He declares in one of His major works, “Verily the resplendent Light

of God hath appeared in your midst ... that ye may be guided aright to the ways of peace and, by the leave of God, step out of the darkness into the light and onto this far-extended Path of Truth.” His influence spread with extraordinary rapidity, reaching beyond the limits of Persia. Observers were astonished alike by the fast-swelling numbers of His followers and by their deeds of unsurpassed bravery and devotion. Accounts of the Báb's life—the swift arc it traced and the tragic drama that ended it—induced curious souls to travel to Persia and investigate further, and inspired a range of artistic tributes to His Person.

The brilliance of the light of the Báb seems the more dazzling when set against the darkness of the social milieu in which He appeared. Nineteenth-century Persia was far removed from its glory days when its civilization was the envy of the world. Ignorance now prevailed; senseless dogmas went unchallenged; inequality was fuelled by rampant corruption. Religion, the foundation of Persia's former prosperity, had become a body devoid of its animating spirit. Each succeeding year offered the subjugated masses only disillusionment and hopelessness. Oppression was complete. Then, like a spring storm, the Báb came to purge and purify, to uproot the withered and spent customs of a wayward age, and to wash away



Looking at the Shrine of the Báb and its surrounding gardens at sunrise from the west. Photo: Bahá'í International Community

the obscuring dust from the eyes of those blinded by illusion. But the Báb had a special object in view. He sought to prepare people for the imminent appearance of Bahá'u'lláh—the second of the Twin Luminaries destined to bring new light to humankind. This was His most insistent theme. “When the Daystar of Bahá will shine resplendent above the horizon of eternity”, He instructed His followers, “it is incumbent upon you to present yourselves before His Throne.”

Thus did the Báb and, with even greater splendour, Bahá'u'lláh illuminate a society and an age shrouded in darkness. They inaugurated a new stage in social evolution: the stage of the unification of the entire human family. The spiritual energies They released into the world infused a new life into every sphere of endeavour, the results of which are evident in the transformation that has occurred. Material civilization has advanced immeasurably; astounding breakthroughs in science and technology have been achieved; the gates to the accumulated knowledge of humanity have been flung open. And principles set out by Bahá'u'lláh for the upliftment and progress of society and for ending systems of domination and exclusion have come to be widely accepted. Consider His teaching that humanity is one people, or that women are equal with men, or that education must be universal, or that rational investigation of the truth must prevail over fanciful theories and prejudices. Across all nations, a large segment of the world's people now agrees with these fundamental values.

Nevertheless, arguments against these values, previously confined to the margins of serious thought, are also resurgent in society—a reminder that ideals require the force of spiritual commitment to cement them. For it is one thing to acknowledge something in principle; it is quite

another to embrace it with all of one's heart, and harder still to refashion society in ways that give collective expression to it. Yet this is the aim of communities emerging across the globe that are patterned on Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. These communities are striving to focus the light of those teachings on the chronic problems that afflict the societies around them; they are devising programmes of practical action centred on spiritual precepts. These are communities that champion the education of both girls and boys under all circumstances; that subscribe to an expanded conception of worship which includes work carried out in the spirit of service; that look to spiritual aspirations, rather than self-interest, as the ever-flowing springs of motivation; and that inculcate a resolve to advance individual and social transformation. They seek to bring about spiritual, social, and material progress simultaneously. Above all, these are communities that define themselves by their commitment to the oneness of humanity. They value the rich diversity represented by all the world's kindreds, while maintaining that one's identity as a member of the human race has precedence before other identities and associations. They affirm the need for a global consciousness, arising from a shared concern for the well-being of humankind, and they count all the peoples of the earth as spiritual brothers and sisters. Not content with simply belonging to such communities, Bahá'u'lláh's followers are making constant effort to invite like-minded souls to join them in learning how to put His teachings into effect.

This brings us to the crux of our case. The matter at hand is a challenging one, and requires candour. There are many noble and admirable causes in the world, and they arise from particular perspectives, each with its own merit. Is the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh merely one amongst them? Or is it universal, embodying the highest ideals of all humanity? After all, a Cause that is to be the wellspring of enduring justice and peace—not for one place or one people, but for all places and all peoples—must be inexhaustible, must possess a heavenly vitality that allows it to transcend all limitations and encompass every dimension of the life of humanity. Ultimately, it must have the power to transform the human heart. Then let us, like the Báb's guest, observe attentively. Does not the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh possess these very qualities?

If the teachings brought by Bahá'u'lláh are what will enable humanity to advance to the highest levels of unity, then one must search the soul for the right response. The multitudes who recognized the Báb were summoned to heroism, and their magnificent response is recorded by history. Let every one who is awake to the condition of the world, and to the persistent evils that warp the lives of its inhabitants, heed Bahá'u'lláh's call to selfless and steadfast service—heroism for the present age. What else will rescue the world but the efforts of countless souls who each make the welfare of humanity their principal, their dominating concern?

– The Universal House of Justice



# New pilgrimage online portal

Message from the Secretariat of the Universal House of Justice to select National Spiritual Assemblies, 26 July 2019.

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

A new online portal is now active and accessible through the website [pilgrimage.bahai.org](http://pilgrimage.bahai.org). This portal will allow Bahá'ís to submit, track, and update pilgrimage and visit requests directly. Upon submitting the request, the requestor will receive an automated email containing his or her request number and a link to set up a password. After logging into the website, individuals will be able to view relevant guidelines for completing and submitting the requested information. Once the request has been processed, the Department of Pilgrimage will contact the requestor via email, providing him or her with instructions on how to view available pilgrimage

dates and make a selection. Any changes to a pilgrimage or visit request can be made through the website at any time. Individuals needing assistance with submitting a request may contact their National Spiritual Assembly, which is able to submit a request on their behalf. Believers are also welcome to make their request for pilgrimage or a visit by email or post.

The Department of Pilgrimage will contact by 14 August 2019 all individuals who have an existing pilgrimage request, including those who have already received an invitation, to supply them with a new username and password that will allow them to access and update their request through the site. Anyone who has applied to come on pilgrimage and has not been contacted by this date may write to the Department at [pilgrimage@bwc.org](mailto:pilgrimage@bwc.org). Those who have requested a brief visit will also be contacted by the Department of Pilgrimage in due course.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,  
Department of the Secretariat



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



# Contribution goals

From the National Spiritual Assembly to all Local Spiritual Assemblies and Regional Bahá'í Councils,  
5 July 2019.

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

In early June, with the joyful experience of National Convention still fresh in our minds and hearts, the National Spiritual Assembly and Counsellors assembled with a group of friends representing all Regional Bahá'í Councils, all Regional Institute Boards and five Local Assemblies from across the country. In a discussion that built on the consultation of the delegates – one that inspired the National Assembly to increase the contribution goals for the coming year – we explored how to strengthen the flow of material resources to support the thrilling prospects for growth before us.

As we mentioned in our recent letter to the friends in Canada, the account of a team of friends from the Vancouver and Toronto clusters who visited the Sydney, Australia cluster as part of a global process of learning galvanized the friends present at the Convention. In its response to the Convention's message, the Universal House of Justice referred to "the sense of eagerness and strong resolve communicated in the message sent to us by the delegates to your National Convention" and called for "a spirited and courageous effort to respond to the burgeoning receptivity amongst their compatriots through sustained and dynamic participation in the process of community building", particularly in this special period leading up to the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb. The material dimensions of this spiritual challenge are clearer than ever before: the need for youth to give time; for pioneers to settle in neighbourhoods and learn to release the powers of entire populations; for the acquisition of properties that serve the needs of these populations, among others.

The delegates directly linked this potential in Canada's diverse communities, north and south, east and west, to the Ríḍván message's momentous announcement that the

time has come to build the Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The call to erect an edifice to embosom His sacred remains, they observed, coincides with a marked increase in receptivity in the towns and cities, the neighbourhoods and villages He longed to visit. The work to which He bent his energies is now before us, an hour of fruition assisted by the mysterious forces released in this period of special potency. While we build His Shrine in the holiest place on earth, we grow the community whose seeds He planted in this country.

This vision compelled the National Assembly and the Counsellors to quickly consult at the Convention to review what we knew were the material needs of the next year in Canada as well as the projected contribution goals for other funds of the Faith. With the wholehearted encouragement of the delegates, \$2 million was added to the 2019-2020 budget, bringing it to a total of \$10.2 million.

Of this, an initial contribution goal of \$500,000 for the Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá had been established. It brings us great joy to announce that in only two months, this initial goal has not only been surpassed, more than double that amount has been received. We now call the friends across the country, while continuing to support the unique and historic project placed before us, to arise with equal love, determination and sacrifice to meet the remainder of the contribution goals that will accomplish the mission He conferred upon us in the Tablets of the Divine Plan, unfolding under the guidance of the Universal House of Justice. We are attaching a summary of Canada's contribution goals and look forward with confidence and joy to the friends' participation, material and spiritual, in this worldwide enterprise.

The National Assembly has been delighted to see the steps taken by various Local Assemblies and Councils to raise awareness of the need for a flow of resources, setting their own contribution goals towards the national total and sharing information with the friends about the pioneer requirements and the deputization fund. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of any assistance to your efforts.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,  
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada

## Bahá'í Community of Canada National Contribution Goals

FUND	Goal 2019/20 (\$CDN)
National Fund	6,000,000
Deputization Fund	1,500,000
Continental Fund	250,000
International Fund	600,000
International Collaboration Goals	400,000
Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá	500,000
World Centre Endowment	350,000
Wilmette House of Worship Fund	100,000
Community Properties Fund	500,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,200,000</b>

# Message to the Feast of Perfection

To the Bahá'ís of Canada on the occasion of the Feast of Perfection, 1 August 2019.

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Since the first days of summer, in a surge of activity over 450 youth and junior youth of diverse ages and backgrounds have gathered around the Word of God in institute campaigns, junior youth camps and teaching projects across the country. The younger generations are immersing themselves in joyful, purposeful service, supported by a community committed to nurturing their capacities. With the summer only half over, more than 215 youth have already begun the study of Book 1 of the institute courses. A vision of embracing large numbers is becoming more concrete day by day, through the friends' "spirited and courageous effort to respond to the burgeoning receptivity of their compatriots"<sup>1</sup>. With

gratitude and wonder, the National Spiritual Assembly sees a community in motion, one that is looking towards the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb conscious of the precious moments in which we live and the privilege that is ours.

This is an enterprise born aloft by love. "And to a heart consumed with love for Bahá'u'lláh, what more fitting occupation can be imagined than to seek out kindred spirits, to encourage them as they enter the path of service, to accompany them as they gain experience and—perhaps the greatest joy of all—to see souls become confirmed in their faith, arise independently, and assist others on the same journey. These are among the most cherished of all the moments that this transitory life affords."<sup>2</sup> This love is burning away veils, allowing the friends to perceive and respond to receptivity, to see no strangers, to loose their tongues and open their hearts.

The requisites of this spiritual enterprise, the interplay between worship, service and transformation, are well

<sup>1</sup> 14 May 2019, Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Riqvân 2019, Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world.



known. On the Day of the Covenant, 26 November 2018, the Universal House of Justice wrote, having spoken of the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “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.” One of the ways that increasing numbers of believers are pursuing this path of daily spiritual effort, is through the study of Book 8 of the sequence of institute courses, finding in it a clear path between the history of the Cause, the gift of the Covenant and the work of the current Plan to meet the pressing needs of humanity.

Among the stories of thoughtful and more systematic teaching efforts have been many accounts of receptivity found in unsuspected corners, of profound friendships born in unusual circumstances, of surprising conversations that have deepened and strengthened the relationship of souls to their Creator. It is a particular source of joy to the National Assembly to see how this relationship is being strengthened in increasing numbers of devotional gatherings across the country, where in simple settings an awareness of the power of a God-centred life is growing.

In closing, we are delighted to share more information about the approximately 45-minute film titled “Dawn of the Light”, being produced at the Bahá’í World Centre in honour of the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb. “It portrays several friends from different continents as they relate their own personal search after truth and meaning. These individuals share their discovery that God has sent two Divine Manifestations—the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh—Whose Teachings are revolutionizing human thought and behaviour. It is a discovery that is inspiring the efforts of many across the globe to serve humanity and to contribute to the movement of populations towards a new pattern of life... The completed film, including the subtitled and voice-over versions prepared at the Bahá’í World Centre in Arabic, English, French, Persian, Russian, Spanish and Swahili, will be made available to view or download on the Bahai.org website before the end of September 2019.”<sup>3</sup> The National Assembly will also be producing a DVD version.

Dear friends, during the thirteen weeks that remain until the celebration of the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb, we pray that each one who is gathered around this mighty fire—whether a veteran believer, a child of generations of steadfast lovers of Bahá’u’lláh, or one who is newly introduced to the Cause—will find joy in advancing along this “road that is drawn straight”, and delight in inviting others.

With loving Bahá’í greetings,  
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Canada

3 21 June 2019, on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies.

## Message to the Feast of Might

To the Bahá’ís of Canada on the occasion of the Feast of Might, 7 September 2019.

Dear Bahá’í Friends,

**I**n the eight weeks that led up to the commemoration of the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá’u’lláh two years ago, a gradually-accelerating pace of activity suddenly shifted into high gear. As a result of these intensifying efforts, wrote the Universal House of Justice at Ridván 2018, the global Bahá’í community in view was not the same as it was at the beginning of the Plan.

This new community now stands at the threshold of the second bicentenary, having extended the circle of those participating in the life of the community still wider through every possible means: camps, institute campaigns, study circles, children’s classes, junior youth groups, devotional gatherings, firesides. More and more, the believers are describing how the sweetness of teaching is becoming a way of life. More and more, they are finding in their receptive friends, families and new acquaintances the kindred spirits with whom they will walk a path of service.

On this path, the remarkable narratives of the youthful Báb and His intrepid followers are inspiring the acts

of young and old alike. Possessing a merit “far beyond an exploration of history”, these stories have drawn the friends closer to their spiritual forebears as they make the changes to daily patterns of life that in turn give life to the teaching work: rethinking what they do when they wake up in the morning, how they engage with others in a line at a grocery store, how they spend their time in the evenings after a day at work or school, how they look towards the weekend or vacation, how they think about and draw on prayer, how they view their homes. These adjustments are part of a daily heroism that takes us in spirit to the Bábíyyih, the home that Mulla Husayn prepared for Quddús and opened to the thirsty throngs, to the countless roads those God-intoxicated heroes and heroines travelled, to the dust in the square of Tabríz.

We share one example among the many wonderful stories of a heroic summer. In a small northern Ontario city, two sisters in their mid-teens have just settled as homefront pioneers to assist the cluster in its movement towards the second milestone as part of the 5000 intensive programmes of growth to be established worldwide. Inspired by their summer-long study of “The Dawn-

Breakers” and with the full support of their parents, they have just moved in with a Bahá’í family three and a half hours away. They thus begin a new school year in the company of new friends, having given up their home, their familiar school corridors, their participation in a well-loved track team. In the ink of such deeds is the story of Canada, in these powerful days, being written.

In the weeks that remain until the celebration of the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb, each one of His loved ones will have the possibility of a deed or deeds, acts of courage and steadfastness, of sacrifice. It may be a track team offered up for His love, or overcoming shyness to approach a new friend, or turning from solitary service to beginning to work with a group of friends, or opening up our home for prayers, or waking up earlier to read, to study, to pray a little more. Whatever the offering you bring to the Beloved in these fleeting days, you are in our prayers.

With loving Bahá’í greetings,  
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Canada

## Design for the Shrine of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

To all Local Spiritual Assemblies, all Regional Bahá’í Councils, and all Registered Groups,  
20 September 2019.

Dear Bahá’í Friends,

**T**he National Spiritual Assembly is delighted to share the following information from a letter of today’s date, written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, about the design that has been approved for the Shrine of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

“The structure that is envisaged in the design seeks to honour ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s unique position as the Centre of the Covenant, and to reflect at once His lofty station and His humility. It creates a space of immense sacredness, to which pilgrims and visitors will be drawn for the purpose of prayer and meditation.

“A brief video showing the design concept is being made available for viewing in connection with a news story on the website of the Bahá’í World News Service at [www.bwns.org](http://www.bwns.org).

“Preparations to commence the construction work for this historic undertaking are already well advanced. The House of Justice has every expectation that the unveiling of this design, which has been so eagerly anticipated since Riḍván, will bring tremendous joy to the friends and inspire them in all the efforts they are making for the progress of the Cause of God.”

Please ensure that the friends in your communities are advised of this joyous news.

With loving Bahá’í greetings,  
Karen McKye, Secretary



Design concept of the garden and plaza approaching the Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Photo: Bahá'í World News Service

# Message to Canada's Bahá'ís and those at their sides in the field of service

To Canada's Bahá'ís and those at their sides in the field of service, 23 September 2019.

Dear Friends,

With joy, we received news this morning of the public release of the film *Dawn of the Light* at <https://bicentenary.bahai.org/the-bab/>, a work commemorating the moment two hundred years ago when one of two Luminous Beings came into the world to bring a new message from God to humanity. The film “follows the personal search for truth and meaning undertaken by eight people from different parts of the world. Each one describes the journey to discovering that God has sent two Divine Manifestations for today, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, Who are revolutionizing human thought and behaviour.”<sup>1</sup>

Five weeks remain until the two hundredth anniversary of the Birth of the Báb and the celebration of the Twin Holy Days on 29 and 30 October. Between now and then, how might each group of friends — those involved in study circles, children's classes, junior youth groups, devotional gatherings, firesides, regular deepenings — gather with others and celebrate this unique, powerful and swiftly-passing period in human history? How

might the newly released film be used to introduce to others the conversations you have been having about your communities, and extend to your families, friends and acquaintances the bonds of common purpose you are forging? How might each team, each family, each community celebrate the Holy Days themselves in settings small and large, as part of the worldwide wave that will encircle the planet? How then might the numbers of those working with you increase tenfold, indeed a hundredfold, accelerating the spiritual revolution that is building communities who are combatting the ills afflicting the planet? In the period following the celebration of the Holy Days, how will you ensure that each new and precious bond of friendship, each desire to serve, is nurtured, for the betterment of the world?

To inspire your conversations about what you will do, we have compiled some excerpts from messages of the Universal House of Justice that speak to the significance of this time.<sup>2</sup> As you reflect on the Lights that have illumined the world in this day and think of ways to embrace others in the warmth and meaning They have brought, you are in our prayers.

With our most loving greetings,  
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada

<sup>1</sup> <https://news.bahai.org/story/1354/>

<sup>2</sup> Excerpts can be found at [bahaicanada.bahai.ca](http://bahaicanada.bahai.ca)



# About this issue

**N**abíl-i-A'zam, author of *The Dawn-Breakers*, made a pilgrimage to both the House of the Báb in Shíráz and the House of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdad.<sup>1</sup> In a Tablet addressed to him, Bahá'u'lláh revealed, “His glory be with thee, inasmuch as thou hast journeyed from God unto God, and entered within the borders of the Court of unfading splendor—the Spot which mortal man can never describe.”<sup>2</sup>

With the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb following only two years after the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, it feels as if our community has also journeyed from God to God. The eight cycles between the two bicentenaries “during which the greatest share of the effort needed to fulfill the objectives of the Five Year Plan” are drawing to a close.<sup>3</sup>

In its 7 September 2019 message, the National Spiritual Assembly wrote, “[T]he remarkable narratives of the youthful Báb and His intrepid followers are inspiring the acts of young and old alike. Possessing a merit ‘far beyond an exploration of history,’ these stories have drawn the friends closer to their spiritual forebears as they make the changes to daily patterns of life that in turn give life to the teaching work...”<sup>4</sup>

Bahá'í Canada has also taken inspiration from *The Dawn-Breakers*. Over the past several months, we published a series of excerpts from this narrative on the Bahá'í Canada website, [bahaicanada.bahai.ca](http://bahaicanada.bahai.ca), and in this issue include the story of Zaynab, a woman who demonstrated extraordinary heroism during the Zanján upheaval.

More recently, there have also been those called to lay down their lives. Zarrin Moqimi Abyányeh was one of 10 women martyrs in Shíráz, Iran, in 1983. In this issue, we have republished excerpts from a tribute written by her sister, Simin Khavari. During her life, Zarrin felt as if she had returned to the time of the dawn-breakers.

The year 2021 will mark the end of the first century of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Faith. The article “Marking

measures of time” looks back at this period and invites the reader to deepen further on the guidance received during this time – history that is still being made.

Like the dawn-breakers, the youth of today “are once more summoned to the vanguard of a movement aimed at nothing less than the transformation of the world.”<sup>5</sup> In this issue’s feature article, we revisit the clusters of Vancouver and Toronto, two examples of places where the friends responded wholeheartedly to the vision shared by a group of representatives who visited Sydney, Australia.<sup>6</sup> Over the summer months, many youth entered the institute process.

Summer schools across the country also focused on the Ministry of the Báb. Justine Rastello-Gralepois, who attended the Quebec Bahá'í summer school, contributed the article “The meaning of sacrifice” in which she reflects on what it means to sacrifice in the present day as her family continues to serve as homefront pioneers.

Many new souls are also being reached through devotional gatherings. In Nunavut, in the article “Beacons of light in Pond Inlet,” Patricia Parks describes how a relatively small community looks outward and welcomes others. There, devotional gatherings are proving to be an effective means of growth.

And as the community grows, our material needs also increase. In the article “Deepening on the Law of Huqúqu'lláh” Lynn Smith explains how a better understanding of this law unlocked a feeling of utmost joy and gratitude.

The stories of the dawn-breakers “assist the company of believers to realize that, by consecrating themselves to the acts of service required in this age, they are emulating the noble qualities of their spiritual forebears.”<sup>7</sup> We look forward to reporting on the bicentenary celebrations taking place across Canada, as these qualities are sure to come to light.

1 H.M. Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís in the time of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 224.

2 Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 302–3.

3 Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 1 June 2018.

4 From the National Spiritual Assembly to the Bahá'ís of Canada, 7 September 2019.

5 From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, Ridván 2018.

6 See the article “Stories from Sydney” in the Summer 2019 issue of Bahá'í Canada for more information.

7 From a letter written from the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 1 June 2018.

## Submitting stories to *Bahá'í Canada*

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



Ten thousand mourners from numerous religious backgrounds attend the funeral of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Haifa, on 29 November 1921. Photo: Bahá'í International Community

## Marking measures of time

A look back at the first century of the Formative Age.

On 28 November 2021, the Bahá'í community will commemorate the centenary of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. His passing marked the end of the 77 years of the Heroic Age of our Faith, the opening of the Formative Age and the birth of the Administrative Order. This approaching centenary is an occasion for us as a community to reflect on who we are, where we have come from, and to offer insights into the multiple processes of learning initiated by the Master that we are currently engaged in.

This article offers an overview and a list of resources the reader can consult to explore these early stages of a “vast evolutionary process of development that will, in time, lead to a transformation in all aspects of the life of the Bahá'í community and the functioning of its institutions.”<sup>1</sup>

When the Formative Age commenced, an increasingly globalized world was still recovering from a devastating world war, greater than any waged before: over 65

million troops were mobilised, over 21 million were wounded<sup>2</sup> and over 15 million died<sup>3</sup> in a struggle which sharply altered the political, economic, social and cultural nature of Europe. At that time, the National Fascist Party was taking root in Italy; Albert Einstein was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for his work with the photoelectric effect; researchers at the University of Toronto had just discovered

<sup>1</sup> Written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual, 30 September 2008.

<sup>2</sup> From Encyclopedia Britannica Online, “World War I: 1914–1918”.

<sup>3</sup> International Encyclopedia of the First World War, 1914–1918 online.

the hormone insulin; and Agnes Macphail became the first woman to be elected to the Canadian Parliament.

*The transition from one epoch to another may not be abrupt, nor is it strictly associated with a single event. It seems, rather, to represent stages in an organic process, in which the identity of our world community may not look much different from the end of one epoch to the start of another.*

Against that backdrop, Shoghi Effendi had inherited a community of a few hundred centres in 35 countries. Some events of interest within the small Bahá'í world community in 1921 included: the birth in Portuguese Guinea of Eduardo Duarte Vieira, who was to become the first African Bahá'í martyr; the beginning of construction on the House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois; Agnes Alexander's trip to Korea to share the Bahá'í teachings; and the enrolment into the Faith of Canadian Siegfried Schopflocher, who would be appointed a Hand of the Cause of God.

## Epochs of the Formative Age during Shoghi Effendi's Ministry

Among the many things the Guardian did to strengthen the identity and vision of the community was to mark measures of time. One of the ways he did this was by designating epochs to the Formative Age, the time in which we currently live. Shoghi Effendi's ministry saw the first two epochs of the Formative Age, while the Universal House of Justice has so far designated three epochs, the fifth of which we are currently in. An epoch has so far lasted for about 18 years, somewhat akin to the period that separates generations.

The transition from one epoch to another may not be abrupt, nor is it strictly associated with a single event. It seems, rather, to represent stages in an organic process, in which the identity of our world community may not look much different from the end of one epoch to the start of another. Instead, taking a longer view, there are clear signs of collective maturation from one point in time to another. Even in the case of the inception of the Formative Age itself, the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was indeed the transitional event marking the close of the Heroic Age, but the Guardian also noted that it concluded "more particularly with the passing [in 1932] of His well-beloved and illustrious sister, the Most Exalted Leaf—the last survivor of a glorious and heroic age."<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the first epoch of the Formative Age did not terminate on a single year, but rather during the period of 1944 to 1946 – two years that separated the first two Seven Year Plans initiated by the Guardian for the American Bahá'í community, which, until the establishment of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada in 1948, also included the Canadian Bahá'í community. This epoch was the period in which the framework of the Administrative Order of the

<sup>4</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 98.

Faith was laid out, with the building of local and national institutions in all the five continents of the world.

For students of Shoghi Effendi's writings, it may be of interest that his major writings were released during the first epoch: the "World Order" letters,<sup>5</sup> *The Advent of Divine Justice*, *The Promised Day is Come*, as well as his seminal book, *God Passes By*. To chronologically follow the guidance given by the Guardian to the American community as they were building their institutions during the first epoch, two books contain a compilation of his letters to the North American Bahá'í community during this period: *Bahá'í Administration* and *This Decisive Hour*.

The second epoch lasted until the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963. This epoch saw the further consolidation of the Administrative Order, with national plans being prosecuted by different national communities to propagate and consolidate the Cause throughout the world. It culminated in the Ten Year World Crusade with 12 national plans that took their direction from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan, with the goals assigned by Shoghi Effendi from the World Centre of the Faith.

This epoch also saw the rise and consolidation of the World Centre of the Faith. During this time, the Guardian appointed Hands of the Cause, introduced the institution of the Auxiliary Board, and established the International Bahá'í Council. At the close of the epoch, the Universal House of Justice was elected. The book *Citadel of Faith* contains a collection of messages from Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'ís of the United States, written between 1947 and 1957, to give insight into how the Faith was evolving during this period. The *Ministry of the Custodians* is another valuable resource that helps us understand how the Hands of the Cause of God

<sup>5</sup> Seven letters written by Shoghi Effendi and addressed to the Bahá'ís of the United States and the West, first collected in 1938, and compiled in the book entitled *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*.



guided the Bahá'í world community between the passing of Shoghi Effendi in 1957 and the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963.

## Epochs of the Formative Age under the Universal House of Justice

The Guardian foresaw that, in succeeding epochs of the Formative Age, the Universal House of Justice would launch a series of worldwide enterprises which would “symbolize the unity and coordinate and unify the activities” of National Spiritual Assemblies.<sup>6</sup>

The third epoch – and the first one under the House of Justice – lasted from 1963 until 1986 and contained three world plans derived largely from the World Centre: the Nine Year Plan (1964–1973), the Five Year Plan (1974–1979) and the Seven Year Plan (1979–1986). It was a period that saw the emergence of the Faith from obscurity, not least due to the persecutions of the community in Iran following the revolution in that country. It was also a time in which initial steps were taken to foster the social and economic development of communities, the institution of the Continental Boards of Counsellors was created and the International Teaching Centre was established. The book *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986* compiles all the major messages released during this period.

The fourth epoch concluded in 2001 and introduced a change in the way national plans were formulated. Specific goals for each national community were now to be devised within the framework of the overall objectives of the Plan, by means of consultation between the particular National Spiritual Assembly and the Continental Board of Counsellors. The advancement of the institution of the Counsellors was indeed a hallmark of this period, and the Universal House of Justice noted



Bahá'ís stream up the central staircase of the terraces of the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel during an inaugural ceremony on 23 May 2001.

Photo: Bahá'í International Community

that it had “reached a new stage in its maturation.”<sup>7</sup> Other signal developments included a change in the very “culture of the Bahá'í community as training institutes emerged, as the construction projects on Mount Carmel approached their completion, and as the internal processes of institutional consolidation and the external processes towards world unity became more fully synchronized.”<sup>8</sup> The book *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1986-2001* contains all the major messages released during this period.

The commentary *Century of Light* is another source to consult to understand the reality of the Bahá'í world community at the end of the fourth epoch. In encouraging its study, the House of Justice stated

that it would “prove both spiritually enriching and of practical help in sharing with others the challenging implications of the Revelation brought by Bahá'u'lláh.”<sup>9</sup> In particular, it is instructive to observe the ways in which the launch of the Four Year Plan in 1996 set in motion the series of global plans in which our community is currently operating, with the centrality of the training institute in raising the capacity of individuals, communities and institutions to advance the process of entry by troops.

## The Fifth Epoch: The time in which we live

At the beginning of the fifth epoch, the Universal House of Justice stated that the Bahá'í world community had reached “a new state of mind” and “a moment of consciousness,” followed by the remarkable statement that it was “deeply grateful to the Blessed Beauty to be able to recognize and acclaim” this level of consciousness. The elements defining this new stage were “a heightened awareness of the value of process, the necessity of planning and the virtue of systematic action in fostering growth and in developing the human resources.”<sup>10</sup> The worldwide community, had, in a sense, collectively become more insightful, methodical and wise.

Building on this strength, a life of worship and service has increasingly come to embody what Bahá'ís “do” and seek to initiate in the communities in which they live. The House of Justice accordingly noted in 2001 that “a feature of the Fifth Epoch will be the enrichment of the devotional life of the community through the raising up of national Houses of Worship.”<sup>11</sup> In 2012 it announced that national *Mashriqu'l-Adhikár*s were to be raised up in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Papua New Guinea, and added the first local Houses of Worship in each of the following clusters: Battambang, Cambodia;

6 From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World acting under the Mandate of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 26 March 2016.

7 From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, 16 January 2001.

8 *Ibid.*

9 From the *Foreword of Century of Light*.

10 From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, Ridván 2001.

11 *Ibid.*



Aerial view of the local Bahá'í House of Worship in Battambang, Cambodia. Photo: Bahá'í International Community

Bihar Sharif, India; Matunda Soy, Kenya; Norte del Cauca, Colombia; and Tanna, Vanuatu. These were places “where the process of entry by troops was sufficiently well advanced,” and “the response of their peoples to the possibilities created by the current series of Plans has been nothing short of remarkable,” and where “the correlation of worship and service is especially pronounced.”<sup>12</sup>

Associated with the collective raising of consciousness is what the House of Justice marked as a change in the culture of the community. It is perhaps by reflecting on this aspect of culture that we can best understand who we are as a community and the processes of learning we are engaged in. Below is a brief compilation of some references that speak to some of the elements of culture to which the House of Justice has spoken to in its messages during the current epoch:

- “It is heartening, indeed, to see the culture of learning that is

<sup>12</sup> From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, Ridván 2012.

taking root everywhere, as the Bahá'í world community focuses on advancing the process of entry by troops.”<sup>13</sup>

- “Let them not fail to appreciate the value of the culture now taken root in the community that promotes the systematic study of the Creative Word in small groups in order to build capacity for service.”<sup>14</sup>
- “We feel moved, as we take pause on this festive occasion, to make clear that what evokes such a deep sense of pride and gratitude in our hearts is not so much the numerical feat you have achieved, remarkable as it is, but a combination of developments at the more profound level of culture, to which this accomplishment attests.”<sup>15</sup>
- “To meet this challenge, the believers and the institutions that

<sup>13</sup> From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, 17 January 2003.

<sup>14</sup> From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, 20 October 2008.

<sup>15</sup> From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, Ridván 2010.

serve them will have to strengthen the institute process in the cluster, increasing significantly within its borders the number of those capable of acting as tutors of study circles; for it should be recognized that the opportunity now open to the friends to foster a vibrant community life in neighbourhoods and villages, characterized by such a keen sense of purpose, was only made possible by crucial developments that occurred over the past decade in that aspect of Bahá'í culture which pertains to deepening.”<sup>16</sup>

- “That the Bahá'í world has succeeded in developing a culture which promotes a way of thinking, studying, and acting, in which all consider themselves as treading a common path of service—supporting one another and advancing together, respectful of the knowledge that each one possesses at any given moment and avoiding the tendency to divide the believers into categories such as

<sup>16</sup>–20 *Ibid.*



deepened and uninformed—is an accomplishment of enormous proportions.”<sup>17</sup>

- “It signals the significant strengthening of a culture in which learning is the mode of operation, a mode that fosters the informed participation of more and more people in a united effort to apply Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings to the construction of a divine civilization, which the Guardian states is the primary mission of the Faith.”<sup>18</sup>
- “In relationships among the friends, then, this development in culture finds expression in the quality of their interactions.”<sup>19</sup>
- “Not only does this advance in culture influence relations among individuals, but its effects can also be felt in the conduct of the administrative affairs of the Faith.”<sup>20</sup>
- “Finally, a significant advance in culture, one which we have followed with particular interest, is marked by the rise in capacity to think in terms of process.”<sup>21</sup>
- “In short, the community-building work in which the friends are engaged influences aspects of culture.”<sup>22</sup>
- “As a prime example, the advances at the level of culture being witnessed in some villages and neighbourhoods are due in no small part to what is being learned from Bahá’í involvement in social action.”<sup>23</sup>
- “We are gratified to see how a culture of mutual support, founded on fellowship and humble service, has quite naturally established itself

in such quarters, enabling more and more souls to be systematically brought within the pale of the community’s activities.”<sup>24</sup>

- “Qualities of mutual support, reciprocity, and service to one another begin to stand out as features of an emerging, vibrant culture among those involved in activities.”<sup>25</sup>

*“In relationships  
among the  
friends, then, this  
development  
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- “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.”<sup>26</sup>

Key resources to read more about developments during this epoch are: *Turning Point – Selected Messages of the Universal House of Justice and Supplementary Material 1996–2006* and *Framework for Action – Selected Messages of the Universal House of Justice and Supplementary Material 2006–2016*.

Significant messages to highlight since the publication of the latter volume above include:

- 1 March 2007 – Regarding economic life
- Riḍván Message 2017
- 27 April 2017 – Regarding engaging in social action and public discourse, and non-involvement in political affairs
- October 2017 – Marking the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá’u’lláh
- 31 October 2017 – Following the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá’u’lláh
- 29 November 2017 – Regarding climate change
- 27 December 2017 – Regarding religious prejudice
- Riḍván Message 2018
- 9 November 2018 – Regarding the establishment of the Bahá’í International Development Organization
- 26 November 2018 – On the occasion of the Day of the Covenant and the commemoration of the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
- 18 January 2019 – Message on world peace
- Riḍván Message 2019<sup>27</sup>
- October 2019 – Marking the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb

In addition to these messages, it might be helpful to refer to the second and third unit of Ruhi Book 8: *The Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh*, as well as the second unit of Book 9: *Gaining an Historical Perspective*.

– Vahid Spencer

<sup>27</sup> All messages are available online at the Bahá’í Reference Library.

<sup>21</sup> From the Universal House of Justice to the Conferences of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, 28 December 2010.

<sup>22</sup> From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá’ís of the World, Riḍván 2013.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá’ís of the World, Riḍván 2015.

<sup>25</sup> From the Universal House of Justice to the Conference of the Continental Board of Counsellors, 29 December 2015.

<sup>26</sup> From the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá’ís of the World, Riḍván 2018.





A drawing entitled "Walled Enclosure Zanján," by Eugène Flandin, who travelled through several cities in Persia from 1839–41.

## Heroine of Zanján

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Zaynab's fearlessness during the Zanján upheaval demonstrates the power of the Báb's Revelation to tear away the veils of past traditions.

**F**urther evidence of the spirit of sublime renunciation animating those valiant companions was afforded by the behaviour of a village maiden, who, of her own accord, threw in her lot with the band of women and children who had joined the defenders of the fort. Her name was Zaynab, her home a tiny hamlet in the near neighbourhood of Zanján. She was comely and fair of face, was fired with a lofty faith, and endowed with intrepid courage. The sight of the trials and hardships which her men companions were made to endure stirred in her an irrepressible yearning to disguise herself in male attire and share in repulsing the repeated attacks of the enemy. Donning a tunic and

wearing a head-dress like those of her men companions, she cut off her locks, girt on a sword, and, seizing a musket and a shield, introduced herself into their ranks. No one suspected her of being a maid when she leaped forward to take her place behind the barricade. As soon as the enemy charged, she bared her sword and, raising the cry of "Yá Sáhibu'z-Zamán!" flung herself with incredible audacity upon the forces arrayed against her. Friend and foe marvelled that day at a courage and resourcefulness the equal of which their eyes had scarcely ever beheld. Her enemies pronounced her the curse which an angry Providence had hurled upon them. Overwhelmed with despair and abandoning their

barricades, they fled in disgraceful rout before her.

Hujjat, who was watching the movements of the enemy from one of the turrets, recognised her and marvelled at the prowess which that maiden was displaying. She had set out in pursuit of her assailants, when he ordered his men to bid her return to the fort and give up the attempt. "No man," he was heard to say, as he saw her plunge into the fire directed upon her by the enemy, "has shown himself capable of such vitality and courage." When questioned by him as to the motive of her behaviour, she burst into tears and said: "My heart ached with pity and sorrow when I beheld the toil and sufferings of my fellow-disciples. I advanced

by an inner urge I could not resist. I was afraid lest you would deny me the privilege of throwing in my lot with my men companions.” “You are surely the same Zaynab,” Hujjat asked her, “who volunteered to join the occupants of the fort?” “I am,” she replied. “I can confidently assure you that no one has hitherto discovered my sex. You alone have recognised me. I adjure you by the Báb not to withhold from me that inestimable privilege, the crown of martyrdom, the one desire of my life.”

Hujjat was profoundly impressed by the tone and manner of her appeal. He sought to calm the tumult of her soul, assured her of his prayers in her behalf, and gave her the name Rustam-‘Alí as a mark of her noble courage. “This is the Day of Resurrection,” he told her, “the day when ‘all secrets shall be searched out.’<sup>1</sup> Not by their outward appearance, but by the character of their beliefs and the manner of their lives, does God judge His creatures, be they men or women. Though a maiden of tender age and immature experience, you have displayed such vitality and resource as few men could hope to surpass.” He granted her request, and warned her not to exceed the bounds their Faith had imposed upon them. “We are called upon to defend our lives,” he reminded her, “against a treacherous assailant, and not to wage holy war against him.”

For a period of no less than five months, that maiden continued to withstand with unrivalled heroism the forces of the enemy. Disdainful of food and sleep, she toiled with fevered earnestness for the Cause she most loved. She quickened, by the example of her splendid daring, the courage of the few who wavered, and reminded them of the duty each was expected to fulfil. The sword

*In the brief intervals of sleep she was able to obtain, she was seen with her head resting upon her sword and her shield serving as a covering for her body.*

she wielded remained, throughout that period, by her side. In the brief intervals of sleep she was able to obtain, she was seen with her head resting upon her sword and her shield serving as a covering for her body. Every one of her companions was assigned to a particular post which he was expected to guard and defend, while that fearless maid alone was free to move in whatever direction she pleased. Always in the thick and forefront of the turmoil that raged round her, Zaynab was ever ready to rush to the rescue of whatever post the assailant was threatening, and to lend her assistance to any one of those who needed either her encouragement or support. As the end of her life approached, her enemies discovered her secret, and continued, despite their knowledge that she was a maid, to dread her influence and to tremble at her approach. The shrill sound of her voice was sufficient to strike consternation into their hearts and to fill them with despair.

One day, seeing that her companions were being suddenly enveloped by the forces of the enemy, Zaynab ran in distress to Hujjat and, flinging herself at his feet, implored him, with tearful eyes, to allow her to rush forth to their aid. “My life, I feel, is nearing its end,” she added. “I may myself fall beneath the sword of the assailant. Forgive, I entreat you, my trespasses, and intercede for me with my Master, for whose sake I yearn to lay down my life.”

Hujjat was too much overcome with emotion to reply. Encouraged by his silence, which she interpreted to mean that he consented to grant her appeal, she leaped out of the gate and, raising seven times the cry “Yá Sáhibu’z-Zamán!” rushed to stay the hand that had already slain a number of her companions. “Why befoul by your deeds the fair name of Islám?” she shouted, as she flung herself upon them. “Why flee abjectly from before our face, if you be speakers of truth?” She ran to the barricades which the enemy had erected, routed those who guarded the first three of the defences, and was engaging in overcoming the fourth, when, beneath a shower of bullets, she dropped dead upon the ground. Not a single voice among her opponents dared question her chastity or ignore the sublimity of her faith and the enduring traits of her character. Such was her devotion that after her death no less than twenty women of her acquaintance embraced the Cause of the Báb. To them she had ceased to be the peasant girl they had known; she was the very incarnation of the noblest principles of human conduct, a living embodiment of the spirit which only a Faith such as hers could manifest.

– Nabil-i-A’zam, *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil’s Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá’í Revelation*, pp. 549-552

1 Qur’án, 86: 9.

# Zarrin Moqimi Abyáneh

Zarrin Moqimi Abyáneh was one of 10 Bahá'í women martyred in Shíráz, Iran, in 1983. She was 28 years old. The adversity the Bahá'ís of Iran faced at that time –including the destruction of the House of the Báb –made Zarrin feel that they had “returned to the beginning history of our Faith.” The following excerpts from an article written by her sister, Simin Khavari, provide insight into her character and dedication to the Faith.

From the age of five, Zarrin would stand on a chair at Bahá'í meetings and recite in a clear, expressive voice portions of the Bahá'í Writings and poems about the Bahá'í Faith. In her youth she showed her love for the Faith in many ways. One Friday, when Zarrin was about 12 years old, her parents suggested that an exception be made to her attending Bahá'í school, for there had been a heavy snowfall, the roads were closed, no public transportation was available, and the location for the class was far distant.

Zarrin began to cry, saying, “If because of snow I fail to attend Bahá'í school, then how could I be able in the future to serve the Faith? Compelled by this reasoning, her mother relented and walked with Zarrin to the Bahá'í class. Another time, when Zarrin refused to attend a dance a group, so her friends labeled her “fanatic” and called her “mulla.” When her sister became upset by this, Zarrin said to her, “Do you know that, according to Ruhíyyih Khanum, living the commandments of Bahá'u'lláh in this time is exactly like swimming against the current of a river, because the standard of life has changed and human beings have become confused about what is good and what is bad. Thus we must fortify and prepare ourselves.”

When she was 15, she became a Bahá'í school teacher and expressed boundless interest in the stories of those who had been killed for their belief in the Bahá'í Faith. She



Zarrin Moqimi Abyáneh.

*Photo: Bahá'í Chronicles*

always taught her students about the lives of such victims. After the executions of Mr. Mehdi Anvari and Mr. Hidayatullah Dehqani in Shíráz in March 1981, Zarrin wrote: “O My God! How can I believe? I only heard of sacrifice from Nabil’s Narrative. I imagined I must go through the history of 137 years until I could realize the full meaning of self-sacrifice. Unexpectedly it was willed for me: the mystery of absolute consecration was revealed to my heart.”

As soon as she finished her academic degree, she wanted to go pioneering. Her all-consuming wish was to be able to return to her own birthplace, Abyáneh, and teach in the elementary and high schools. Although most of the villagers favored her plan, the government under the Sháh’s reign rejected her application because she

was a Bahá'í. She could have found work in Tíhrán; but, compelled by her desire to pioneer, she went to Shíráz, where her father worked and where she found work as a translator, bookkeeper, and secretary in the Marvdasht Petrochemical Plant. Yet she still desired to pioneer.

For two years Zarrin was troubled by her failure to serve the Cause by the standards she had set for herself. Night after night she would pray and weep until finally she had a vision, which she described in this way:

I dreamed that Bahá'u'lláh came to the blessed house of the Báb, and all the friends in the lane were coming to visit. I also went, but I had not the courage to enter. I stood at the door of the house of the Báb. I saw Bahá'u'lláh and the friends approaching Him one by one and then leaving. Then there was no one else, and I was still standing at the door. I saw that Bahá'u'lláh stood up and began to mount the stairs to the room of the Báb. In my heart I said, “O my God! Woe is me! Even now there was an opportunity to meet Him, but I was unworthy.” Suddenly Bahá'u'lláh turned His beautiful face and said, “Come in.” I entered and attained His Presence. He embraced me; He laid my head on His blessed chest; then He held my head and asked, “Why are you so upset? You will finally achieve that which you desire.”

After this dream Zarrin found some peace in her heart.



In 1979, when workers from the government began to demolish the house of the Báb, Zarrin was an attentive observer of each brick and pane; she talked with the men destroying this spiritually and artistically significant edifice. In a letter she described the razing of the house of the Báb:

They have completed a great deal of destruction in this lane ... one cannot even imagine that previously there was a roof there or that this was a narrow lane ... While I am writing you this letter, the sound of the ravaging bulldozer assaults my ears and my soul ... of the familiar old lane nothing now remains – of the face of that house only a mound of dust, the opened space, and the half-wrecked walls. What unimaginable feeling overwhelms me. A few nights ago, as I was passing the rubble, it occurred to me that even in the rocks and dust here the fragrance of Love lingers. As I stand and look at the ruins, every view of the scene portrays the grandeur of the Báb. What did this Siyyid of Shíráz have that they are so terrorized by even the dust of His threshold, that they hasten to obliterate every trace of Him? Many have come to watch the destruction. Each of us feels that we have returned to the beginning history of our Faith...

When Zarrin's sister wrote that she had visited the resting place of Shoghi Effendi, great-grandson of Bahá'u'lláh and the Guardian of the Cause of God, and there prayed for the Bahá'í friends in Iran, Zarrin replied:

You had written that you had visited the grave of the Guardian... how fortunate you are... we here are the observers of the ruins of the lane of our Beloved. This morning when I went out with Father, we walked on a steep pathway, through the area where the house of the Báb had stood, to the dirt road. I stepped on a piece of rock to which some tile adhered. Suddenly Father said, "Do you

*"While I am writing you this letter, the sound of the ravaging bulldozer assaults my ears and my soul ... of the familiar old lane nothing now remains..."*

know that your foot has stepped on a part of the hallway of the house of the Báb? The place that pilgrims have washed with their tears now lies under our muddy boots. In this way we have learned the lessons of true generosity: They [the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh] have left their homes to their enemies so that we may not concentrate on our possessions and physical life; and the Báb subjected His chest to those moments of mortal peril that the martyrs might learn how to sacrifice their lives."

In December 1982, Zarrin, along with her parents and several other innocent Bahá'ís, was imprisoned for her beliefs.

One friend, after being freed, wrote the following description of one of Zarrin's trials:

Zarrin, throughout the series of interrogations and trials, testified with infinite strength and courage. She confessed her belief in the truth of the religions of the past as well as her belief in Bahá'u'lláh, the New Manifestation, and His Cause. During these trials, the knowledge and scholarliness she displayed were so comprehensive that the judges were intimidated because of their own inadequacies.

...[W]hen they tried to persuade her to recant, as is customary, the judge exclaimed, "Recant or execution!"

Zarrin answered, "I have found the way of Truth and God, and I am unwilling to betray it at any price. Therefore, I kiss the order of the judge."

In the same manner they had asked Zarrin during another session, "How far are you willing to stand by your belief—even to execution?"

Without hesitation Zarrin responded, "I hope that I shall endure in my belief until the last moment."

The judge then repeated the demand that she abandon her belief. Repetition of this question became exasperating for Zarrin, and she replied, "Your honor, thus far you have examined me for many days. I have given you decisive and sufficient answers. I think that to repeat that question further is not necessary."

But the judge importunately pressed her. Zarrin began to weep loudly, saying, "With what kind of language should I respond to you so that you will leave me be? My being is Bahá'u'lláh; my love is Bahá'u'lláh; my heart belongs to Bahá'u'lláh!"

The judge was angered and threatened, "I will wrench your heart from your chest!"

Zarrin replied, "Still that heart will chant, 'Bahá'u'lláh! Bahá'u'lláh!'"

Zarrin had said to her friend in prison, "Tell everyone that no one should wear black on my behalf, nor cry loudly. Only my mother, since I know she cannot forbear, may cry a little."

And indeed, there was no reason for sadness or tears, for as Bahá'u'lláh had told Zarrin in her dream, she had finally achieved that which she desired.

– Simin Khavari,  
published in *World Order*  
magazine, Volume 4, Issue 3, 1986.



Participants in an institute campaign in Vancouver create music together (left); An animator and junior youth in Toronto work in a community garden (right).

## Vancouver and Toronto apply Sydney learning

This summer, friends in large centres laboured energetically to engage youth in the institute process.

The learning from these clusters will no doubt propel the entire country forward.

### Vancouver

When the representatives from Vancouver returned from Sydney in April, they didn't waste a moment. A meeting with cluster agencies, Local Spiritual Assemblies and teaching teams was immediately called, and the exciting learning from Sydney was shared, enhancing the cluster's vision of what is possible.

The stories helped teaching teams envision reaching out to the entire

population of Vancouver. They also helped advance understanding around living a life of service. One of the representatives shared a conversation he had with a youth in Sydney who commented that he serves full-time. The team member asked: "So you don't have jobs or study?" The youth replied, "Oh, we all have jobs or study, and we serve full-time."

In Vancouver, the friends are striving to create a pattern of life that welcomes increasing numbers to the community building process. In the neighbourhood of Central

Richmond, about a dozen youth embarked on a three-week intensive teaching project to learn about engaging large numbers of their peers. They spent every day during those weeks having hundreds of conversations with those in the neighbourhood.

Through these efforts, 32 youth began to study Ruhi Book 1: *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit*. Shahrzad Badrnejad, a youth who pioneered to the neighbourhood in 2017, said, "But there's so many more who come and play soccer with us... have attended junior youth groups,



or just hang out with us...it isn't just about starting a Book 1 anymore. It's about building a community, which at its foundation is friendship."

When new youth enter Book 1, their tutor takes them to a junior youth group, "so they immediately can see how their study will be woven in with service," Ms. Badrnejad explained. They also study messages from the Universal House of Justice so that their hearts and minds are inspired by the guidance and this vision of embracing large numbers.

As in Sydney where school breaks are used to hold institute campaigns, two week-long camps were held this summer, one in Kelowna, B.C. and one in Squamish, B.C., which gave the youth an opportunity to study intensively. They built friendships, participated in collective prayer, played sports and enhanced their understanding of concepts through the arts.

At a weekly devotional gathering in Central Richmond, one of the friends of the Faith attending heard about the upcoming camp in Kelowna; in fact, the youth were leaving in three hours. She immediately called her daughter, who was eager to go, then left the devotional early in order to buy a sleeping bag and other supplies. Her daughter made wonderful new friends, completed Book 1 and is now studying Book 2. She began attending the weekly devotional and shared that she is so happy that she and her Mom learned about the Faith.

A rededication to strengthening the devotional character of the community was another response to the learning from Sydney. A teaching conference was held, during which pledges were made from all parts of the cluster, leading to a significant increase in the number of devotional gatherings. Bundles of 10 specially designed prayer books were given to each person to share with their friends.

One of these devotional gatherings takes place in the Commercial Drive neighborhood in northern



Participants in an institute campaign from the Commercial Drive neighbourhood, in Vancouver.

Vancouver. Jason Bienia shared, "When the friends came back from Sydney...a group of us got really excited about the idea of a vibrant space filled with songs, devotions and music."

The hosts created a songbook to increase participation. "It's been the best way to get new people to sing," Mr. Bienia explained, "It's so night and day in the participation of the youth." Those who attend were also encouraged to share what they were praying for, which is something that really resonated with them.

These new friends are now taking ownership of the activity. "We started by having the youth introduce the space...then they started to invite their siblings and cousins," Mr. Bienia explained. "As hosts," he continued, "we try to be detached from our view of the space... these youth decide what we do and how long we go for, and they take over the curation of the space."

At the time representatives from Canada visited Sydney, the cluster had been holding institute campaigns for 26 cycles in a row – a proven strategy even if the number of participants was few. The friends there, and now here, have committed to this work, cycle after cycle.

Over 20 friends from the Edmonds neighbourhood attended two week-long campaigns at the Vancouver



Bundles of 10 specially designed prayer books were given out at the teaching conference in Vancouver, to be shared with friends.

Centre for Learning, a new residential facility for the training institute. Participants completed Ruhi Books 1 and 3, as well as several junior youth texts. Shawyun Refahi, who lives and serves in Edmonds, commented, "The positive environment allows a vacation away from the negative forces affecting their daily lives."

The friends' pattern of action has also intensified. A key learning from Sydney that inspired those serving in Edmonds, Mr. Refahi explained, was "acting daily, instead of a few times a week." Meeting in the mornings as a team, and holding intensive institute campaigns, has freed up





A basketball tournament organized by junior youth in the Mornelle Ct. neighbourhood, in Toronto, brought together youth aged 12 to 18.

their evenings to accompany new friends as they start to walk a path of service.

Since their completion of Books 1 and 3, friends – old and new – in Edmonds gather together three evenings per week. On the first evening, they plan for the newly-formed devotional gathering and children’s class, and on the other two carry out these activities. This pattern of action has allowed their nucleus to expand, as more take ownership of the educational process.

Regarding the community’s support of the campaigns, Mr. Refahi added, “In the past, the largest obstacles were food and transportation.” Now, an individual has been serving at the Vancouver Centre for Learning, ensuring that these needs are provided for.

The three protagonists – the individual, the institutions and the community – work together toward the common goal of embracing large numbers. The youth arise to serve, the institutions keep abreast of emerging needs and the community rallies in support.

– Susan Mottahedeh

## Toronto

Experience from Sydney indicated that engaging large numbers of youth in the institute process would require a regular rhythm of campaigns at the grassroots. Institute campaigns have allowed young people to advance through courses from the Ruhi sequence relatively quickly. This intensity can be accomplished in diverse ways that take account of the needs of participants, as finding time to study often requires a creative approach.

A small cohort of youth in the neighbourhood of Mornelle Court., in the East end of Toronto, had been studying Book 1 intermittently for about a year. This summer, galvanized by the learning from Sydney, a team began to rally around this study circle, including a youth pioneer, who was able to dedicate a significant amount of time to home visits. Through a series of expansion phases during the summer, they increased the pool of youth they were in conversation with.

Seven youth are now in the institute, with 10 more in conversation. The larger number of youth has brought more dynamism to the process, and they began to meet every day to

study. They quickly completed Book 1 and have now moved on to Book 3 in the hopes of starting a children’s class in their neighbourhood.

The learning from Sydney strengthened their resolve to act. Crystal Eckstrand, who serves in the Mornelle Court neighbourhood, explained, “We never gave up on a youth and always went back to visit them. There is a new determination to keep them in conversation.”

Friends in St. James Town, a populous neighbourhood in downtown Toronto, participated in two campaigns held over the summer months. The first was an away camp in nearby Aurora, Ont. Kyle Schmalenberg, who served as a tutor during the campaign, said, “It helps them to see the coherence of it all. We are having fun and playing games but also saying prayers before we go to sleep. Then we go to the space in the morning and help set up. We are contributing to something instead of having it all done for you.”

The youth are thirsty for prayer. As a practice component of Book 1, they shared prayers with Bahá’ís in their neighbourhood and hosted a devotional gathering with over 20 attendees. They have now decided to make it a recurring gathering. Through studying Book 1, these youth have increased their

consciousness of spiritual reality. “They realize they have agency over the outcome of their souls,” Mr. Schmalenberg shared.

Regarding the influence of the Sydney learning on his own mindset, Mr. Schmalenberg commented, “Having an example of a community that pushed the level of activity to such a degree tells us that it’s possible...one day we will get there.”

Four youth in the Rowntree neighbourhood, on the Northwestern edge of Toronto, along with their tutor, Jayeeta Barua, were similarly inspired to intensify their pattern of action. These friends were among the first cohort of youth engaged in the institute process in their neighbourhood, entering as junior youth seven years ago. They decided to study Books 6 and 7 intensively and arise to serve as tutors. Their goal was to start a Book 1 study circle with new participants before the end of the summer.

Finding time to complete the books and carry out the practice components required creativity and focus. The participants studied for some full weekends, and then created weekly schedules that utilized their available time to continue their study, which often involved sleeping over at their tutor’s home. They regularly carried out home visits in the neighbourhood to share what they had learned.

During the second week of August, the team held an expansion phase and reached out to the older siblings of their junior youth. Eight of these youth entered the institute. This development provided opportunities to learn about building capacity in new tutors, which, Ms. Barua described, “Requires giving them space to learn how to do it... Everything is in Book 7 so we looked at the sections about preparing, identified questions and talked about them together.”

The community of Toronto has rallied in support of these institute campaigns and junior youth camps. Mozhdeh Fakhar has been learning about drawing on a growing number



Participants in an institute campaign from the St. James Town neighbourhood, in Toronto, present an art piece that highlights concepts from Book 1 about the nature of the soul. Photo: Liam Moore

of community members to undertake this service. “It’s a kind of deputization,” Ms. Fakhar explained, “These youth are teaching the Faith. We can contribute money, rides and food to support this endeavour.”

In one instance, the participants of a junior youth camp were scheduled to travel to a lake outside the city, and it was decided (the day before) that it would be a good idea to wear waterproof wristbands so that the large group would be identifiable while there. After they couldn’t be found in several local shops, a volunteer found them in Milton, Ont. – a town about an hour away – and with joy, drove out to get them.

“How can we get to unity of thought and unity of action unless we work together?” Ms. Fakhar asked, “We are like the cells of one body and every cell is important.”

A collective movement towards multiplying gatherings for prayer has emerged in a variety of contexts, including from junior youth groups and children’s classes. Through devotionals, junior youth participate in community life, and the program becomes much more than a weekly activity. The multiplication of devotional gatherings – embracing all ages – provides a glimpse of what it might look like to embrace

thousands more in the community-building process.

Tahireh Mohebaty, who serves as an animator, started a devotional about a year ago, but recently, the number of participants has increased. Neighbours now pray for their community together regardless of their religious backgrounds. “It builds a sense of unity and a sense of reliance on God,” Ms. Mohebaty said.

Devotionals also reinforce some of the fundamental concepts of the junior youth spiritual empowerment program. Sima Ghodrati, who hosts a devotional for junior youth and children in her home, explains, “Some of the conversations we’ve had with junior youth are about confirmation. When we pray, confirmations become more accessible to us and our insight is stronger.” One way that these concepts are being extended to families is through devotional gatherings.

The learning, insights and inspiration so lovingly shared by the representatives that travelled to Sydney is illuminating the path of the friends. By working “in serried lines” and drawing on the spirit of the dawn-breakers, the goal of large-scale growth is assured.



# The meaning of sacrifice

After attending the Quebec Bahá'í summer school, which focused on the life of the Báb, Justine Rastello-Gralepois reflects on what it means to sacrifice for the Faith in the present day.



Participants gather for a group photo at the Quebec Bahá'í summer school. Photo: Lorraine Goh

The first time our family attended a summer school was in 2017. The following year, my choice of dates for a trip to France caused us to miss the summer school. My children then made me promise never to do the same thing again. This is how our family made attending the summer school an

annual ritual. It is something that we look forward to and that contributes to our spiritual development and that of our community.

We are a young family with three children – soon to be four! My husband and I discovered the Faith as young adults and have no family model on

which to build the Bahá'í identity of our children. We lived in Montreal until about two years ago, when we decided to move to a village in the Laurentians located about an hour north of Quebec City where we are the only Bahá'í family. Our community reality has therefore changed significantly.

The opportunity to access intensive spaces like the summer school is a great support for us. Our children meet friends their own age from all over Quebec who speak French! They are also accompanied by people who share our beliefs and put them into practice. Our children have the opportunity to experience for a few days what it means to walk together on a path of service, to share our love for Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá and to find one's rightful place in the Divine Plan. What a privilege to be able to experience this, every year, before we establish new routines in September and decide how we will spend our evenings and weekends. Hockey? Theatre? Piano? Or to make even more room for service, prayer and community building?

This year, we were doubly blessed. Not only was the summer school held a few weeks before the celebration of the bicentenary of the birth of the Báb, with all the uniqueness of this period, but we also benefited from the presence of the Lincolns, a couple who exemplify through their life their devotion to the Cause.

I had the opportunity to work with Mrs. Lincoln while serving at the World Centre in 2006. I had just graduated from university and was considering marrying the man who is now my husband. The Lincolns were for me an example of a couple that I could aspire to emulate, a perfect blend of service and unity. The Lincolns played an important role in my life, and in the development of my faith. What a joy it was to be able to see them again in Quebec with my family.

The program focused on the Báb's ministry and on strengthening the devotional character of our



communities. Plenaries, group studies, arts and stories punctuated our days and those of our children. We were able to explore what it means to live a life infused with prayer at the individual and collective levels. The Lincolns shared their experiences pioneering in Africa that made me want to sell everything and relocate our family to the other side of the ocean, in areas that are a little bit warmer in the winter!

The atmosphere that prevailed throughout those few days could only make us want to give our life, our heart and our material goods to Bahá'u'lláh (as we sang several times during the summer school). It led me to reflect on the service that we are being called to today, during this special time. Did sacrifice mean leaving everything behind, all the material comforts we are accustomed to in Canada, and moving to another country?

During the summer school, we were invited to consider how to act on the enthusiasm that had been generated by revisiting guidance from our institutions. It seemed clear that although sacrifice is always required to advance the Faith, its form changes over time. The pioneering spirit to which we were urged was to be deployed today in our daily lives, where we live, on the homefront.



A new Bahá'í family put a quotation from Ruhi Book 1 to music and invited everyone in the audience to sing along. Photo: Lorraine Goh

No exotic adventures, no incredible external changes. On several occasions, the Lincolns reminded us of Canada's role, and more particularly Quebec's place, in the Master's Writings; of His decision to visit Montreal despite the reluctance of His entourage, and of His words about the receptivity of the people of our region. They called to mind the marriage of Ruhiyyih Khanum, who was from Quebec, with the Guardian of our Faith, as well as the blessing of

the Montreal Shrine, which 'Abdu'l-Bahá called His home.

All this allowed me to reconnect with the fact that my place was here, in the Laurentians, and to continue dedicating myself to working with our friends and neighbours. The sacrifice that was being asked of me was to strive to transcend the material world in which we are so strongly drowned daily and to persevere in living the spiritual life to which the Writings exhort us.

Consultations about the devotional character of communities, inspired by the lives of the dawn-breakers, were held at the summer school. Photo: Lorraine Goh







Children learn about insects at the Quebec Bahá'í summer school.  
Photo: Lorraine Goh

God's own Plan has been set in motion. It is gathering momentum with every passing day. The powers of heaven and earth mysteriously assist in its execution. Such an opportunity is irreplaceable. Let the doubter arise and himself verify the truth of such assertions. To try, to persevere, is to insure ultimate and complete victory."<sup>1</sup>

On our drive home, my eight-year-old son told me, whilst looking out the window at the landscape, "You know, Mom, I really like the Báb. I find Him brave and constant."

"I understand you, my love," I replied, with eyes full of emotion and a heart full of a motherly gratitude. I became aware that as a family we had passed a milestone in deepening our faith during the four days spent at the summer school.

– Justine Rastello-Gralepois

I've learned that this life is not measured by external movements, however incredible they may seem, but rather by the profound inner change that accompanies my service.

I am not saying that the momentum of my heart is not regularly undermined by the superficial reminders of the world in which we live. I must regularly pray and refocus

my thoughts, my actions, and my choices, but my time at the summer school has strongly influenced my soul. I left feeling determined and reminded of why I had moved:

"There is no time to lose. There is no room left for vacillation. Multitudes hunger for the Bread of Life. The stage is set. The firm and irrevocable Promise is given.

<sup>1</sup> Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, *Messages to America, 1932-1946*, p. 17.

Participants engaged in various outdoor activities at the summer school, including canoeing.

Photo: Lorraine Goh





# Beacons of light in Pond Inlet

A small, but growing group of friends in Pond Inlet, Nunavut, are extending the "spiritual energies of prayer" to their community.<sup>1</sup>



View from a home in Pond Inlet, Nunavut, where the friends gather to say prayers. Photo: Shirin Nuesslein.

Our land in the north is vast; the number of Bahá'ís are few. Although it is possible to feel discouraged by this, I am reminded of a quote from 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Tablets of the Divine Plan: "O ye believers of God! Be not concerned with the smallness of your numbers...One pearl is better

than a thousand wildernesses of sand, especially this pearl of great price, which is endowed with divine blessing. Erelong thousands of other pearls will be born from it."<sup>2</sup>

For over two decades, the Universal House of Justice has been guiding us to widen our embrace, primarily

through multiplying core activities and becoming involved in the life of society. We have learned of wonderful results from many centres across Canada and throughout the world.

In Pond Inlet, we, too, are striving to achieve victories. We have decided not to compare ourselves to the larger centres. Instead, we are learning about what strengthening the institute process looks like in our own reality, which requires finding within ourselves the volition to act. It's okay to have a small, doable initial plan and trust that God will open doors that we never could have imagined. Our efforts to nurture a strong, loving and unified community will attract the bounties of God and seekers of spirituality.

There are five adult Bahá'ís and seven children in Pond Inlet. We have a small children's class, a junior youth group and two regular devotionals, all of which engage, to varying degrees, the Inuit community at large. We are finding that devotional gatherings are leading to growth, particularly the "Grandmothers/Mothers Devotional." It began several years ago with one of the Inuit grandmothers and a Bahá'í grandmother planning a gathering.

The devotional seems to have a life of its own and is growing organically. A small core of Inuit mothers and grandmothers attend regularly and sometimes invite others along. Everyone is free to express spirituality in their own way. Christian and Bahá'í prayers, writings and songs are shared together.

The form of each devotional is flexible and is decided on through consultation. This allows us to meet the needs of those present, whether it's for healing, easing the pain of crises or any other concern. Every devotional ends around the dining table with much joy, conversation and food. In Pond Inlet, at the present, devotionals are showing great promise in building a vibrant community.

– Patricia Parks

<sup>1</sup> The Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of Iran, 18 December 2014.

<sup>2</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, from "Tablet to the Bahá'ís of Canada and Greenland," pp. 86-87.



# Deepening on the law of Ḥuqúqu'lláh

Lynn Smith, a representative of the Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in Canada, reflects on the joy she derived from her efforts to deepen on Ḥuqúqu'lláh, and how she is now accompanying others to do the same.



Friends gather in Campbell River, B.C., to study a compilation on the Right of God.

In its introduction to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Universal House of Justice states, “Through His law, Bahá’u’lláh gradually unveils the significance of the new levels of knowledge and behaviour to which the peoples of the world are being called.” Being asked to serve as a Ḥuqúqu'lláh Representative on Vancouver Island made me think about how I could help groups of friends gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of this mighty law.

Let me start by sharing a little bit of my own initial approach to Ḥuqúqu'lláh, when the House of Justice first announced that the law “which enables each one to express his or her personal sense of devotion to God in a profoundly private act of conscience” would be universally applicable as of Riqván 1992. Perhaps some of you might relate.

I had received a substantial income tax rebate. “Wow!” I thought, “I can pay my car insurance in one fell swoop and still have money for the

items on my wish list.” Then several questions flashed through my mind. When we have excess, shouldn't we pay a certain percentage to the Right of God? How was I going to determine what was excess? Should I spend some of it and then figure out what I could offer as Ḥuqúq? Feeling a bit grumpy about it all, I finally decided to do some reading.

Gradually, I realized it wasn't about how I should calculate what I owed, but rather, that whatever amount I determined was due needed to be given in a spirit of joy and contentment. This was a challenge for me since my attitude had been one of obligation.

As I deepened on this law, I found myself falling in love with it. The obligatory part was slowly being balanced with thoughts about its positive influence on me as an individual and its potential to eliminate the extremes of wealth and poverty, an issue that is near to my heart. Having the opportunity to reflect on my needs and wants to determine what was excess began to feel like a bounty. The day soon came when I could make a payment with the utmost joy and gratitude.

This process never left me. When I was asked to serve as a Ḥuqúqu'lláh representative, I was humbled and excited, but also filled with trepidation because I soon discovered how vast the subject of Ḥuqúqu'lláh was. I accepted,

"In the midst of a civilization torn by strifes and enfeebled by materialism, the people of Bahá are building a new world. We face at this time opportunities and responsibilities of vast magnitude and great urgency. Let each believer in his inmost heart resolve not to be seduced by the ephemeral allurements of the society around him, nor to be drawn into its feuds and short-lived enthusiasms, but instead to transfer all he can from the old world to that new one which is the vision of his longing and will be the fruit of his labours."

– The Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'is of East and West, 18 December 1963.

knowing that prayers and support from the institutions will surround whoever arises in service to His Cause. And what a confirmation it has been.

My next challenge was where to start with all this incredible guidance at my fingertips. How could I assist others to experience the transformative effect of the Right of God? The experience of the training institute inspired me to put together a series of study sessions on the Right of God. Me and another representative with creative skills developed a workbook of nine lessons, each focusing on a different aspect of this mighty institution.

One evening, I invited three friends to study the first couple of sessions with me. As we finished that first evening, they said, "We can't stop now! When can we get together again?" And so, the process unfolded. Our study sessions are filled with music and stories. My learning continues to grow along with the other participants. I am not an expert imparting knowledge, but a facilitator of the study.

My heart has been touched as the participants work out their own relationship with the Right of God. One individual shared, "I have



A group of friends study the booklet of nine lessons on Ḥuqúqu'lláh at a local community centre in Campbell River, B.C.

been thinking about this all week and realize this is so much more than doing calculations." Another said, "I have become so much more conscious of what I spend money on."

Deepening on this law over a period of time allowed us to consider questions such as: What are the necessary attitudes towards Ḥuqúqu'lláh? and what is the "mere code of laws" that Bahá'u'lláh dissociates Himself from? This has helped us to analyze the ideas of wealth that permeate our culture.

Overall, experience with these study groups and others offered elsewhere has taught the representatives of Ḥuqúqu'lláh how effective focused study on the law can be. It has allowed for reflection on the application of Ḥuqúqu'lláh as well as on its implications for the growth of the Faith. I encourage all to study this law so that an understanding of Ḥuqúqu'lláh may grow in our hearts.

– Lynn Smith

# Reflections on growth

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The following excerpt is from *Reflections on Growth*, a periodic resource prepared by the International Teaching Centre. It tells the story of how a group of youth in Austria decided to homefront pioneer to a goal cluster on the other side of the country.

In the months of July and August 2018, a vibrant group of 20 youth came together in the small town of Jenbach in the Tyrol cluster for an intensive summer institute campaign. For three weeks, they combined intense study of the sequence of courses with efforts to advance the community-building activities in a nearby neighbourhood. Some then took part in a nine-day national family institute camp as animators and children's class teachers. The young people who participated returned home with experience and heightened enthusiasm. These experiences inspired a small group of youth to arise as homefront pioneers.

The programme of the summer institute campaign began with study of guidance from the Universal House of Justice and relevant materials about the institute process. In this way the youth gained a deeper understanding of the framework for action of the Five Year Plan and built a common vision for continuing to serve upon their return home. Each morning would start with a devotional gathering, followed by stories of heroes and heroines from the early history of the Faith, prepared by the participants.

The youth visited the nearby neighbourhood almost daily, assisting with children's classes and junior youth activities and participating in teaching campaigns. Here, they met new people with whom they had conversations about the community-building process and conducted home visits to deepen the under-

standing of recently met friends. This shaped their practical understanding of how to engage with others and invite them to join them in walking a path of service. One of the participants commented:

I was a bit frightened at first, but then you prepare in a group and you feel the unity. And then, once you go out, all the fear disappears. You simply feel these confirmations when you have absolute trust in God, and with this trust, you need not be frightened of reaching out to people.

The spirit that the youth felt during the days of learning and teaching in this summer campaign inspired a small group of them to offer a longer period of service as pioneers. A member of one of the institutions describes how this unfolded:

As the weeks went by, one of the young women participating in the summer campaign, inspired by the vision of Bahá'u'lláh, started to feel a desire to contribute to the advancement of a goal cluster. She consulted with the institutions and clearly conveyed that since groups of friends were already serving intensively in her hometown, her heart truly yearned to settle in a new place where she could help establish the junior youth programme and engage an expanding nucleus of people in learning together how to advance a process of community building. So she resigned from her job and asked to accompany us on our next trip to Graz, a city on the

other side of the country, where she hoped to serve as a pioneer.

This young woman shared her vision with two other youth in conversations about their personal plans. One of them had also started thinking about homefront pioneering and decided to join her as a pioneer in Graz. The other friend was from Graz herself and was eager to deepen her knowledge of the Faith; she became very enthusiastic about serving and learning alongside them upon her return home.

Immediately following the intensive summer activities, a few members of the institutions went with the youth to Graz in order to identify the neighbourhood where they would soon settle. Now, after six months, a group of five young people is studying, planning, acting, and reflecting together. They are joined and supported in their efforts by an increasing number of friends from the local community and are closely accompanied by the Auxiliary Board member. These youth have continued to intensively advance through the sequence of courses in order to build their capacity as animators and tutors. They have formed a junior youth group and a children's class, and they hold a regular devotional meeting and a fireside with a growing group of local youth, with whom they plan to begin studying the sequence of courses.



## NATIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

### National Spiritual Assembly

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**Office of Public Affairs:** [publicaffairs@bahai.ca](mailto:publicaffairs@bahai.ca)

**Records Department:** [records@bahai.ca](mailto:records@bahai.ca)

**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](http://www.bahaifunds.ca). You can also donate through the National Spiritual Assembly. In this case, kindly make your cheque payable to "Canadian Bahá'í Fund" and mail it to:

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

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

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

The National Fund

The Wilmette House of Worship Fund

The Deputization Fund

The Santiago House of Worship Fund

The Continental Fund

The International Fund

The Community Properties Fund

The World Centre Endowment Fund

The Bahá'í Development Fund

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

To purchase **Bahá'í books in English, Persian, Chinese or Spanish**, visit [bookstore.bahai.ca](http://bookstore.bahai.ca)

Or contact:

University of Toronto

Press Distribution

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

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

Email: [bds@bahai.ca](mailto: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](mailto:sdbc@bahai.ca)

Phone: 418-692-2402

Website: [bookstore.bahai.ca](http://bookstore.bahai.ca)

**To travel teach or pioneer within Canada or internationally**, contact the Pioneer Desk at [pioneer@bahai.ca](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:records@bahai.ca) can provide you with the necessary contact details.

**Submit news, photos, etc. to Bahá'í Canada** through email [bcanada@bahai.ca](mailto: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](http://www.bahai-funds.ca)> Online Contribution System. The individual's Bahá'í identification number must be provided on all payments.

Payments should not be made through a Local Spiritual Assembly.

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

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