

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom

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30th Anniversary of the Passing of Knight of Bahá'u'lláh, Eskil Ljungberg

It was a great pleasure to appoint a member of the Bahá'í Council for Scotland as a representative of the National Spiritual Assembly to attend a commemoration, organised by the friends in the Faroe Islands, to mark the 30th anniversary of the passing of Knight of Bahá'u'lláh, Eskil Ljungberg. The gathering was a dignified and beautiful celebration of his life of service. Prayers were offered by the National Assembly at the time of the commemoration for the progress of Eskil's illumined soul, and for the devoted efforts of the dear friends in the Faroe Islands to attract confirmations from on high.

It was wonderful to note that the refurbishment of the grave of Eskil Ljungberg had been completed just prior to commemoration, which has added much grace and dignity to the site where his earthly remains are interred.

Institutional Meeting

As has already been reported to the community, the National Assembly recently hosted an Institutional meeting for the UK. It was a great bounty to have present with us Counsellor Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi and also two Counsellors from the International Teaching Centre, Mr. Andrej Donoval and Mrs. Alison Milston, and to benefit from their insights and the wonderful spirit they infused into the gathering. After writing to the Universal House of Justice about the meeting, we were delighted to receive a response from the Supreme Body that included the following passage:

... It was pleased to note the matters that were discussed and the steps that are being taken, in consultation with Counsellor Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi, to further advance the work of the Five Year Plan in your country.

Rest assured of the prayers of the House of Justice in the Holy Shrines that the efforts of the friends in the United Kingdom to serve the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh may be blessed with abundant confirmations.

Arts and the Institute Process

The National Spiritual Assembly is continuing to consult about the unique and special role that the arts have to play in enriching community life. We warmly encourage the friends to continue to experiment and learn about the use of the arts in the training institute process, and also to share stories and accounts of these efforts, as well as any creative endeavours in the celebration of Holy Days and in other activities, with the *UKBahá'í* magazine and the Regional Councils for inclusion in their newsletters.

Consultation

At the beginning of every one of its meetings, the National Assembly finds it extremely helpful to study the following quotation from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly. They must be wholly free from estrangement and must manifest in themselves the Unity of God, for they are the waves of one sea, the drops of one river, the stars of one heaven, the rays of one sun, the trees of one orchard, the flowers of one garden. Should harmony of thought and absolute unity be non-existent, that gathering shall be dispersed and that assembly be brought to naught. The second condition is that the members of the assembly should unitedly elect a chairman and lay down guide-lines and by-laws for their meetings and discussions. The chairman should have charge of such rules and regulations and protect and enforce them; the other members should be submissive, and refrain from conversing on superfluous and extraneous matters. They must, when coming together, turn their faces to the Kingdom on high and ask aid from the Realm of Glory. They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden. The honoured members must with all freedom express their own thoughts, and it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another, nay, he must with moderation set forth the truth, and should differences of opinion arise a majority of voices must prevail, and all must obey and submit to the majority. It is again not permitted that any one of the honoured members object to or censure, whether in or out of the meeting, any decision arrived at previously, though that decision be not right, for such criticism would prevent any decision from being enforced. In short, whatsoever thing is arranged in harmony and with love and purity of motive, its result is light, and should the least trace of estrangement prevail the result shall be darkness upon darkness.... If this be so regarded, that assembly shall be of God, but otherwise it shall lead to coolness and alienation that proceed from the Evil One.... Should they endeavour to fulfil these conditions the Grace of the Holy Spirit shall be vouchsafed unto them, and that assembly shall become the centre of the Divine blessings, the hosts of Divine confirmation shall come to their aid, and they shall day by day receive a new effusion of Spirit.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 87)

By studying and reflecting at every meeting on the principles outlined in this quotation, striving to apply them individually and collectively and, indeed, setting out clearly a set of “guide-lines and by-laws” for the conduct of its meeting and consultations, National Assembly meetings are joyful, loving, frank, focused, fruitful and, we pray, a cause of the attraction of the promised divine blessings and confirmations.

Upkeep of Graves

A number of grave plots across the country are owned by the Bahá'í Institutions, and the National Assembly has in place arrangements to ensure that the plots are suitably maintained. A team has thus been appointed for this specific task. In addition, efforts are being pursued to ensure that records are kept of the gravesites of Bahá'ís who pass away in the UK.

Regional Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh

The National Assembly welcomed the opportunity to consult with the Trustees of the Regional Board of Ḥuqúqu'lláh and to learn of the strategies that it is putting in place to help deepen the friends in this mighty law, including asking Local Spiritual Assemblies to arrange regular deepenings in their communities on Ḥuqúqu'lláh in collaboration with their Institution. Those attending the upcoming National Convention will have an opportunity to hear more about Ḥuqúqu'lláh from the Regional Board itself, and we are grateful to the Trustees for their efforts in this regard.

Staff appointments

With some long-standing staff retiring and others moving on into new work areas, the National Assembly has been consulting on the various appointments to be made at the National Bahá'í Centre. We are happy to say that most positions have now been filled, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude to those dear souls who are leaving and a warm welcome to those who are joining us at Rutland Gate! Indeed, the National Assembly feels compelled to offer a special thanks to one staff member, Hilary Freeman, who is leaving after no less than 34 years of dedicated service at the National Ḥazíratu'l-Quds. She will be sorely missed by the National Assembly and, we are sure, by the community that she has served with such outstanding diligence, care and love over these past decades.

You may have noticed from recent announcements on NEWS that one very important post remains unfilled within the Department of the Secretariat – that of Assistant Secretariat Aide – and the National Assembly is urgently seeking applicants for this position.

We wish all the friends a blessed few remaining days of the fasting period and a very happy Naw-Rúz!

With our warmest love,

National Spiritual Assembly

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM