

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

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10 Sultán 172 B.E.

To all believers in the United Kingdom

Dearly loved Friends,

The National Spiritual Assembly sends you its warmest love and greetings.

By now it is hoped that most of you will have seen the letter of the Universal House of Justice, dated 29 December 2015, to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors. In this remarkable and far-sighted document, the Supreme Body maps out for us the steps to be taken in the next Five Year Plan, to be launched this Riḍván.

Throughout the world, Bahá'í institutions are gathering in the coming weeks to consult upon the message, review efforts to ensure that the current Plan comes to a successful conclusion, and prepare for the next global endeavour. We are delighted to inform you that the first of these national institutional meetings took place last weekend, and among them was the one for the United Kingdom.

In an environment that was joyous, eager and spiritually charged, a focused study of the message was profoundly guided and inspired by the presence of Counsellor Alison Milston, member of the International Teaching Centre, who shared a wealth of insight and experience, and touched the hearts of all present with the spirit of love and encouragement emanating from the Bahá'í World Centre. Also present at the meeting were four members of the Continental Board of Counsellors for Europe—Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi, Bernard Lo Cascio, Sabà Mazza and Paul Verheij; a representative from the Office of Social and Economic Development at the World Centre; the National Spiritual Assembly; the Bahá'í Councils and Training Institute Boards for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales; Auxiliary Board members; and institution members from Denmark, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Ireland, Norway and Sweden.

As you know, the aim by this Riḍván is for all clusters to establish a nascent programme of growth and thus reach the first 'milestone', the characteristics of which were explained to us by the House of Justice five years ago. The evolution and movement of clusters will continue throughout the next Plan. Those that have passed this milestone will naturally be aiming to pass the second by Riḍván 2021, and those that have already passed the second will aspire to reach the third milestone during the next Plan.

At the institutional meeting, those present endeavoured to gain an initial appreciation of the task ahead. As understanding grew, we began to realise the "truly formidable" nature of the objectives of the Plan and the "herculean labour" and "sacrifice" required to accomplish them.

The bulk of the work of the coming years will be in strengthening the pattern of action in those clusters which are on their journey to the second milestone. The elements of such a pattern are set out clearly in the 29 December letter and were explored in great detail. These include: the strengthening of the institute process through a marked increase in the quality and effectiveness of tutors and the raising up of groups of tutors in cluster after cluster; learning to work with sustained intensity in each cluster in small centres of population, such as in villages and neighbourhoods; bringing into being a basic junior youth spiritual empowerment programme in every cluster; engaging a growing contingent of youth, who are the “most responsive element of every receptive population” in the activities of the community; and the development of institutional capacity to support these advances.

In the coming weeks, Regional Councils will be arranging gatherings of members of Local Spiritual Assemblies, cluster agencies, assistants, core activity hosts—including teachers, animators and tutors—who are drawn from groups of adjoining clusters, with the aim of consulting on how to bring the study of the message to the entire community. Earnest consideration will surely be given at these gatherings and at subsequent meetings of friends, families and neighbours, as well as in consultations of local institutions as to how the conditions necessary for a cluster to advance can be further nurtured such that growth can quickly occur.

The foundation for the coming Plan will be greatly strengthened by what we achieve in the coming months. To this end, the National Assembly invites you to earnestly pray that the goal of establishing a programme of growth in every cluster will be achieved by Ríḍván. These clusters, where the work is well under way and supported by visiting travel teachers, are listed at the end of this letter. We can think of no better prayers to offer at this time than those given to us by the Master in the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, which were penned almost 100 years ago and are the Charter for the teaching work for this Dispensation. With these prayers, we can beseech Bahá’u’lláh to aid us in finding opportunities to reach out to friends, family and neighbours and to call upon His assistance to guide and support the endeavours of those working in these goal clusters.

If, as a result of prayer, you feel moved to materially support the efforts of teaching teams and pioneers, you may wish to contribute to the Training Institute Deputisation Fund or the General Deputisation Fund by earmarking your donation through the National Assembly.

We have arrived at a moment when the Bahá’í world community is ready to harvest victories from the arduous labour and learning of the past 20 years. To bring home this harvest, we need but to use the methods, approaches, tools and instruments that have been so keenly crafted in the field of experience during these decades. The “plight of a world that suffers more each day bereft of Bahá’u’lláh’s elixir” is unprecedented, and hence the demands upon us will be unparalleled—a pattern explained so clearly by the beloved Guardian:

The champion builders of Bahá’u’lláh’s rising World Order must scale nobler heights of heroism as humanity plunges into greater depths of despair, degradation, dissension and distress. Let them forge ahead into the future serenely confident that the hour of their mightiest exertions and the supreme opportunity for their greatest exploits must coincide with the apocalyptic upheaval marking the lowest ebb in mankind’s fast-declining fortunes.

Be assured of the ardent prayers of the National Assembly for all your endeavours.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

National Spiritual Assembly

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

cc. Counsellor Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi
Auxiliary Board members
Regional Bahá'í Councils
Local Spiritual Assemblies and Groups

Clusters striving to establish a programme of growth by Ridván 2016

England (7)

Channel Islands
Cumbria
Devon
Dorset
Isle of Man
Lincolnshire
Solent

Northern Ireland (2)

Hainsworth (North-West of Northern Ireland)
Stars of the West (South-West of Northern Ireland)

Scotland (4)

Borders
North Highlands
Orkney Islands
West Highlands

Wales (2)

Mid-Wales
West-Wales