

Weaving the strands of love

"...a new kind of collective life is taking shape which gives practical expression to all that is heavenly in human beings."

**THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, RIDVAN 2015*



'Over and over again individual friends are discovering the power of divine assistance that floods to our aid.'

...page 2

'The main aspect which would make me want to return next year is – the Welsh Baha'is and the fantastic atmosphere.'

...page 3

'Those visitors... acknowledged the claim of the Cause and willingly enlisted under its banners.'

...page 6

'Despite the intensity of the studies, the school had an ambience of love and, most important, humour.'

...page 9

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Message from the Bahá'í Council for Wales

Dearly loved Friends,

The months since the last issue of Undod have seen some marked developments in Wales. These included wonderful cluster reflection meetings in North and South Wales, declarations, a weekend school, the amazing Summer School, junior youth camps, and, most notably, an increase in core activities in South Wales, almost doubling from 17 to 30 in the 5 months from May to October.

Since then, further core activities have been initiated in other clusters as well, and Wales looks set to meet the National Spiritual Assembly's goal of doubling the number of core activities in the final year of the Plan.

However, we must not become complacent – the challenge of sustaining a new activity is very often greater than that of initiating it in the first place. But over and over again individual friends are discovering the power of divine assistance that floods to our aid when we arise to take seemingly small steps in response to the plans of the institutions.

Another momentous development also needs special note. In March this year, the National Spiritual Assembly made the decision to decentralise the UK Training Institute Board, and in May this year the Training Institute Board for Wales was appointed by the Baha'i Council for Wales. We were doubly blessed, as this coincided with agreement by Amy Behi to devote herself full-time to the task of being Training Institute Coordinator for Wales.

This Undod includes an introduction to the work the Training Institute Board for Wales. As the recent increase in core activities demonstrates, we are continually learning about how to use this tool to support people to arise in service to their communities. In particular, the Training Institute has initiated work to learn how we can attract young people and support them to arise in the field of service, an area of potential highlighted by the Universal House of Justice.

As regular projects are carried out, each building on lessons from the one before, we will gradually learn how to attract others with a vision of the material and spiritual progress of the community, sustain their interest through the training process, and then accompany them into the field of service.

With Loving greetings,

The Bahá'í Council for Wales

Welsh Summer School 2015 in Llangrannog

"... The institution of the Summer School ... should be organized in such a way as to attract the attention of the non-believers to the Cause and thus become an effective medium for teaching. Also it should afford the believers themselves an opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the Teachings, through lectures and discussions and by means of close and intense community life."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, October 17, 1936)



The plenary sessions were enjoyed by the participants at the school; many commented that they appreciated the programme having space for plenaries and workshops – that the balance this year was just right. This year the speakers were Wendi Momen (who was also the representative of the National Spiritual Assembly for the Baha'is of the UK), Bill Jenkins and Leila Jenkins.

'The school was so fabulous, with a range of courses to choose from for study in the morning, then beautiful walks along the cliffs and to the sea, tobogganing, skiing, swimming, horse riding, quad biking, trampolining... Missing it all so much!'

Leila gave the third plenary session, a perceptive, practical and humorous presentation. She shared examples of how it is possible for each one of us to grow from a feeling of powerlessness to a feeling of confirmation from Bahá'u'lláh in our efforts to bring about spiritual transformation in our own selves and in the community where we live.

The workshops were very well attended and the organising team received much positive feedback about the courses. The course facilitators were also, in general, very happy with their participants and the courses.

From the 21 to 25 August a total of 172 participants, including adults, junior youth and children, attended the Welsh Summer School this year, which was held for the second time in the Welsh National Language Urdd Education Centre, situated near the small coastal village of Llangrannog, above Cardigan Bay, West Wales.

The theme of the school, 'Making Sense of the World's Crisis' was explored in each plenary session, touched on in the devotionals with the chosen texts and AV presentations, and explored throughout the workshop courses. The final sharing session was focused on how each participant would share their experience of their workshop course with a neighbour or a friend – how we are learning how to make sense of the world's crisis from a spiritual perspective.

In this week we focused on devotion, deep study of various texts and subjects (including Islam for the first time – a subject Shoghi Effendhi particularly wanted the Bahá'í community to study in Summer Schools) and recreation in the form of deepening bonds of friendship, of engagement in sports and arts activities and interactive evening programmes.

The spirit of love and fellowship was so attractive and all pervading that two souls declared their faith in Bahá'u'lláh. Added to this the Coordinating team had such feedback as, 'A good school - one of the best that I have ever been to' from two participants and 'The main aspect which would make me want to return next year is – the Welsh Baha'is and the fantastic atmosphere'.

The Council look forward to welcoming even more Bahá'is and their family and friends to the Summer School next year, details of which will be in the next issue of Undod/Unity.

For some personal responses from the participants, please go to page 9.

Junior-Youth Camps

A junior youth camp was held in Chepstow from 25 to 27 August, with 6 girls aged between 12 and 15. The group doesn't regularly meet but got together for a one-off camp to lend some impetus to their existing groups and to study one text intensively. The group started and completed a study of 'Glimmerings of Hope' and carried out a service project in the town for local residents (based on their own idea – they had many!). After the camp the junior youth were eager to carry on their study of the whole sequence of junior youth texts and plan to get together again and grow the local group in Chepstow. The description of the camp on the right hand side is from local junior youth, Martha:



Another junior youth camp was held at Cranmore from 10 to 12 August with 6 boys who have been part of a regular junior youth group for the last two years in Swansea. The group has already completed study of 'Breezes of Confirmation' and 'Glimmerings of Hope', so came away for 3 days to complete a study of 'Spirit of Faith', which they started and completed in the 3 days. They also undertook activities involving observation and orienteering, and enjoyed the beautiful environment of the woods and nature around, having a bonfire one night.



We had a junior youth camp at my house; it was really fun and interesting. We did the exercises in the book and then did an activity such as drama and dancing. Before the end we split into two groups – one decorated paper cards and one made cupcakes. Then we went to houses around Chepstow offering cupcakes and prayer cards. People were really surprised that they were free, and one man said, 'You've made my day!'

I really enjoyed giving out the cupcakes and making people happy

Some people would start to turn us down because they thought you had to pay, but were really surprised and happy when we said they were free.

I really enjoyed giving out the cupcakes and making people happy. The weekend was really fun and enjoyable, and we all had a really great time. By reading the book we all learnt about how peaceful-ness is important and that if you work hard towards something you want, you can get it.

Martha Melville



Developing the Meditative Faculty in Builth Wells

by Anne Maund



“The core of religious faith is that mystic feeling which unites man with God. This state of spiritual communion can be brought about and maintained by means of meditation and prayer”.

On a sunny Autumn weekend in October friends gathered together in Builth Wells in excited anticipation of a long awaited event – “Developing the Meditative Faculty”. The Llanelwedd Jubilee Hall was an ideal venue with plenty of space for three courses to be run alongside each other, facilitated by Jo Harding, Peter Hulme and Paul Profaska. Around 40 people attended. Some had not meditated before; others had tried different methods with varying degrees of satisfaction and regularity. Most wished to find a deeper understanding of the significance of meditation and to explore how it can be a part of our spiritual journey, bring us peace and have a profound effect on the world around us. As there is no prescribed way to meditate according to the Baha’i teachings, friends were keen to discover methods and tools to access the hidden depths. We weren’t disappointed!

The attendees were split up into three groups. Each group spent equal time with each facilitator. This way all were able to glean knowledge presented by Jo, Peter and Paul and experience practical meditation methods whilst drawing closer with the silent, though tangible, heart-felt connection with others in our groups.

The atmosphere was quiet and purposeful outside of the sessions where we enjoyed eating together, socialising, browsing the bookshop and enjoying the Saturday evening entertainment. This was a valuable weekend course, and many would benefit from its being run on other occasions, such as summer schools.

The closing devotional was extremely profound as a spontaneous meditation after the final prayer brought a long-lasting peaceful silence. Hearts were expanded and love was tangible during this weekend. So, thank you many times over, on behalf of everyone, to Jo, Peter and Paul, for all they shared with us, and especially to the audacious Mehran who pulled the event together with his forward planning, thoughtfulness and humility. And well done Stephen for keeping us to time and ensuring we had our phones switched off!

Next Weekend School in Builth Wells

Dates: Saturday & Sunday 2nd & 3rd April 2016
 Subject: Virtues & Spiritual Education of Young People
 Speakers: Viv Bartlett & Geoff Smith
 Children & Youth: Welcomed & Catered For

Get together dinner on Friday 1st April 2016

The event will be advertised on the FB page, search for & join group **“Builth Wells Bahá’i Weekend Schools”**

As the Headteacher of a school that has implemented the “Virtues Project”, Geoff will speak about the project, its benefits and other related issues (although it will not be a training weekend on delivering the project). This will be of great interest to Bahá’is, friends and people in education.

Closely tied with it, and at Geoff’s request, Viv will be presenting the “Spiritual Education of Young People”, partly based on his book “Nurturing A Healthy Human Spirit In The Young” based on the Swindon experience.

ARE THEY OLD OR NEW CONCEPTS?

I love attending the Cluster Reflection meetings where I meet with many friends, listen to inspiring stories, and, I get motivated to carry on with the plan.

At these gatherings we are reminded by the Cluster Agencies about the importance of; **Sharing personal teaching experiences**. Is this an old concept or a new one?

...the names of new believers...will be mentioned in the 'Tablet of God'

From the recorded history of our faith in the Dawn Breakers, we read that The Báb; **Assigned** to each of the Letters of the Living their own native provinces as their fields of service; **Instructed** them to record separately the names of every believers and; **Bade** them to enclose the names in sealed letters to be forwarded to Him by His uncle.

The Báb informed the letters of the Living that these names (of new believers and the names of the Letters of Living) will be mentioned in the **'Tablet of God'**, 'so that upon each one of them the Beloved of our hearts may, in the Day when He shall have ascended the throne of glory, confer His inestimable blessings, and declare them the dwellers of His Paradise'. {1}

Another concept mentioned at the Cluster Reflection meeting is that of **working in Teams**. Is this an old or new concept?

'Working in Teams' Is this an old or a new concept?

Once again from the book of Dawn Breakers, we read that when Mullá Husayn discovered the 'Hidden Treasure' in the person of Quddus, he immediately followed Quddus's instructions by going to Mashhad to 'build a house so designed as both to serve for our private residence and at the same time afford adequate facilities for the reception of our guests.'{2}

We know that house became known as 'Bábiyyih' and it welcomed the steady stream of visitors; those visitors were prepared and invited to the Bábiyyih house by Mullá Husayn and, in the presence Quddus, acknowledged the claim of the Cause, and willingly enlisted under its banner. What a beautiful illustration and example of working as a Team.

The Letters of the Living followed the command of the Báb when He told them, **Raise the cry: 'Awake, awake, for, lo! the Gate of God is open, and the morning Light is shedding its radiance upon all mankind! The promised One is made manifest; prepare the way for Him, O people of the earth! Deprive not yourselves of its redeeming grace, nor close your eyes to its effulgent glory.'** {3}

Now I am willing to always feedback my challenges and stories to the members of the Cluster Agencies in the hope that the names of the people I have a spiritual conversations with may be listed in the **Tablet of God**.

Rafi Abbas

References:

{1} The Dawn-Breakers, p 86 (Baha'i Publishing Trust, reprint 1975)

{2} As above, p 186

{3} <http://fairoaksorangevale.org/lopch9h.php>

**South Wales Cluster Reflection Meeting
September 2015**



Interfaith Meeting in West Wales

Six Bahá'ís attended the first Interfaith meeting held in Llwynrhydowen, West Wales on 15th November, organised by the Unitarians. We had been invited to tell them about the Bahá'í Faith, and members of the Dar Ul-Isra mosque gave an introduction to Islam.

We shared Writings concerned with spiritual aspects of prayer and worship as we felt this would attract the hearts.

Ten minutes had been allocated for each group and originally the brief was to see what was different about each Faith. However, the terrible massacre in Paris seemed to focus us on what we shared in common. We shared Writings concerned with spiritual aspects of prayer and worship as we felt this is what would attract the hearts. The organiser read 'Blessed is the Spot' in Welsh for us.

The talk by the Muslim speaker, who had arrived after our part, was similar in style, giving no background into Islam but sharing from the Koran, hadiths and poetry.

Afterwards we were invited to share Cawl (soup) with everyone. Melda Grantham, secretary of the Unitarians in Wales, said that people had been very positive about the event and she has handed out some of the Welsh Hidden Words to those who asked.

Assembly member Elin Jones attended and a link was also made with a reverend from Haverfordwest who wants to start Interfaith activities there.



Photo credits: Melda Grantham

Chris Abbas

Bahá'í Writings in Welsh

CYMRAEG

O FAB YR ENAID!

Crybwyll Fi ar Fy naear, fel y boed i Mi dy gofio yn Fy nefoedd, felly y bydd i'm llygaid i a'th lygaid di dderbyn cysur.

Y Geiriau Cudd Arabeg 43 – Bahá'u'lláh

English

O SON OF BEING!

Make mention of Me on My earth, that in My heaven I may remember thee, thus shall Mine eyes and thine ne solaced.

Arabic Hidden Words No 43 – Bahá'u'lláh

Training Institute Board

Since June there is a new Training Institute Board for Wales! (The UK Training Institute Board has been replaced by Boards for each of the four UK countries). The members are Rachel Murray, Amy Behi and Joe Pearce and we are responsible for helping develop training in Wales. It is exciting since Wales is such an intimate community and it puts us in touch with so many wonderful souls even whilst trying to develop strategies. It is also great to have a full-time, tireless, training coordinator in Amy. We have five strategies (which overlap a fair bit):

1. Individual reflection with tutors
2. Facilitating spaces for reflection such as tutor gatherings
3. Running Intensive Training in Wales
4. Focusing on a small number of centres of intensive activity
5. Finding creative ways to reach out and involve youth (in order to learn about intensity and youth in the Plan)

If you are a tutor who wants someone to talk to about your service and Amy is not in touch with you please contact us. The upcoming Tutors' gathering in North Wales is on the 17th of January and in South Wales on the 24th of January (venues to be confirmed).



The next Intensive Training is in Llandeilo 24th-28th February and we will be studying Ruhi book 8 (Units 1 and 2) alongside a youth programme focused on serving Junior Youth.

If you want more details or would like to study a different book intensively please email us. We aim to be flexible and hope to do more than one Intensive Training before the summer.

Please email us at tibwa@bahai.org.uk

Loving Regards, TIB Wales

Welcome to our Training Coordinator, AMY BEHI



I think the Training Institute exists to allow more and more people to get to know Baha'u'llah's teachings and apply them to improve their own life and for the benefit of their community – to make their own lives happy, their families lives happy and their community's lives happy.

The council for Wales has decided that to have someone fulltime will help strengthen the Training Institute in Wales. I was asked to do this job so I travel to all four clusters in Wales and visit people to help start and sustain their activities so we can contribute to the spiritual progress of communities in Wales.

In October eight of us went to a youth conference in Lichfield that was for Central England and Wales.

Whilst there we did some workshops about youth and community building and also heard stories from other youth groups around the region. Youth shared stories about how they have been running core activities and inviting their friends to train to help them run these core activities.

We looked at the question 'how would you go about fulfilling a vision of large numbers of youth who, as true friends, work together to transform their community?'. We then made plans about meeting youth that we are still following through.

If you do start an activity please let me know so we can know what is going on! Also please contact me with any questions about books, money, people, projects or starting activities!

amytidswell@hotmail.com
07511526897

Welsh Bahá'í Summer School – Participant Responses

'As grandparents we are enthusiastic for our grandchildren to attend summer school each year as it is an essential building block in their spiritual education and, hopefully, their eventually becoming Baha'is as adults. We were not going to attend the Welsh summer school this year because of the distance and taking Fiona and the children with us. As it turned out we had a family wedding in the summer and many visitors and the Welsh summer school was the only one we could get to.

However, Fiona's conclusion, despite the long journey, was that if it is held next year in the same venue she would definitely want to attend. Her overarching statement was that it reminded her so much of the schools she attended as a child which shaped her future and set friendships still held today.

'...it reminded (my daughter) so much of the schools she attended as a child which shaped her future and set friendships still held today.'

The children of those friends are now becoming firm friends from meeting at summer school. Our grandchildren's experience of the classes was excellent and they loved their classes. The teachers were excellent and dedicated. There was a large group of children who in my experience were very sweet natured and well behaved. The facilities and opportunities for children at this venue are second to none. The subjects of the studies were challenging but Mina and Fiona thoroughly enjoyed their groups and have taken a lot away with them. Importantly, despite the intensity of the studies, the school had an ambience of love and most importantly humour.

The organisers and all involved in running the school were exemplary in both their organisational skills and their loving interaction with those attending.'

Kevin Beint

To note – The many suggestions for improvements that need to be made at the School were consulted upon by the Bahá'í Council for Wales. The Council and the coordinating team are now in consultation with the Venue to make sure that next year's school is an even better experience!

Fleur Missaghian



'Home from the Bahá'í summer school in Wales - where else can you study the Bahá'í Faith, meet great friends, find new ones AND ski, trampoline, ride a horse, go-kart, walk the high ropes and the low ropes, race quad bikes, swim, rock climb, toboggan, learn archery, etc etc all in three days? A wonderful venue! And thanks to the team - and all the others who made the school so special.'

What did you like best about the school this year?

"Just being in a Baha'i environment - devotionals were great."



Islam and The Bahá'í Faith Course group photo

Farewell To Farshid and Geoff

It seems that not an issue of Undod passes without the need to remember dearly loved friends who have entered the next world. Since the last issue, both Farshid Youseffi-Rad in Newport and Geoff Akhurst in Swansea have both passed away.

Both were much loved for the care and concern that they showed to others. The funeral services for Geoff and Farshid were well attended by Baha'is and friends alike and had a powerful impact on all present – through hearing the Word of God, through the celebration of a soul's eternal journey towards God, and through the love, unity and fellowship evinced by the Baha'is on both occasions.

Although we are an ageing community, we should not feel that our ranks are slowly eroding! Rather, the troops in the next world are being reinforced to assist in the tasks of the coming Plan:

“The invisible battalions of the Concourse on High are mustered, in serried ranks, ready to rush their reinforcements to the aid of the vanguard of Baha'u'llah...”

We must learn to call upon their assistance, with the unfailingly expectation that it will be received.



Geoff Akhurst
Apologies that we do not have a photo of Farshid.



Welcome back **Kalim and Daniel**

We are very happy to welcome back to Wales Kalim Bartlett and Daniel Stollar. Both have been living abroad for a number of years, and both have recently returned – Daniel to Cardiff and Kalim to Abercarn! Naja Abbas and Haidi are also currently back in Wales until Summer 2016. If there are any changes in your community, please let the Editors know – births, marriages, deaths, new enrollments etc are all of interest to our growing spiritual community.

New Editorial Team

From 2016, the Undod Editorial team is changing. Fleur Missaghian is stepping down as Editor. Chris Abbas will be joined by Thenna Abbas and Anne Maund as the Editing team with Peter and Sandra Jenkins continuing in their invaluable role as proof-readers. Please continue to send your stories and photos to the team so that we can continue to encourage, inspire and uplift the Baha'is friends in Wales in all our teaching efforts, projects and activities.



Bahá'í Council for Wales

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Publication of photographs of children under 18 years of age

Under the terms of the Child Protection Act images of children may only be published if parental permission has been received. Permission may be implied by the sending of a photograph by a parent or legal guardian, otherwise it must be given in writing or by email from the child's parent or legal guardian when submitting the photograph/s to Undod's editorial team. Please continue to post or email photographs to Undod accompanied by the necessary permission.

Bahá'í Council for Wales

ORGAN DONATION – THE LAW IS CHANGING IN WALES FROM 1ST DEC 2015

From 1st December 2015 if you do not wish to donate your organs after your death it will be necessary to register this decision (opt-out) as every adult will be deemed to have given consent. If you want to be an organ donor you can register a clear decision to be a donor (opt-in). Everyone should ensure that family and loved ones know your organ donation decision. This law will apply to most adults who are living in Wales longer than 12 months.

You can go to www.organdonationwales.org or the NHS Organ Donor Helpline: 0300 123 23 23 to find out more information.

Consultations on this new law took place over several years and included a meeting with members of the Faith seeking the Bahá'í viewpoint on organ donation.

Rafi and Christine went to a coffee morning organised by Jon Luxton and Lu Thomas of Cognition Associates, who were engaged with the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) and Faith communities across Wales to ensure they had the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions about the new organ donation law.

Sharing news on the completion of their consultations Jon pointed out that as early as 1946 the Bahá'í community had looked into organ donation probably making it the first faith community to do so (letter dated Sept 6th 1946 from the Guardian through his secretary).

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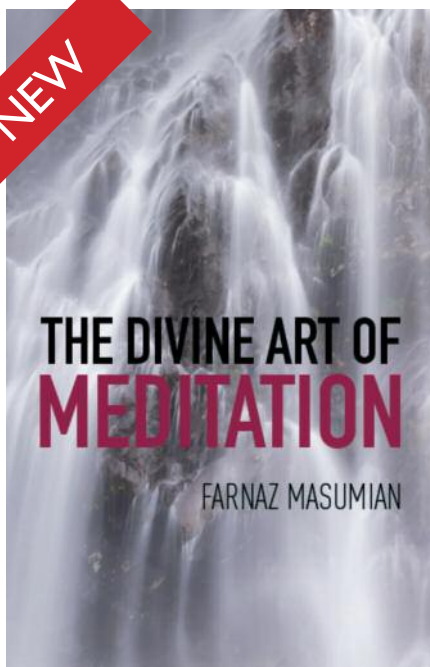
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Bahá'í Books UK

NEW



THE DIVINE ART OF MEDITATION

Meditation and visualization techniques for a healthy mind, body and soul

by Farnaz Masumian

The practice of meditation is becoming increasingly common among people from all walks of life. It is being encouraged in high-level corporate sessions, during coffee breaks, before academic tests and sports competitions. Drawing on the experience of the great masters and contemplative traditions of world religions, *The Divine Art of Meditation* looks at the benefits of meditation, presents various forms of it and offers suggestions for meditational practices.

'A wonderful work, with amazing clarity, honesty, and an openness to reality.'

Nader Saiedi UCLA, author of Gate of the Heart

'This is tomato bisque for the soul, where the reader can actually sample meditation techniques – drawn from the great masters and contemplative traditions of world religions. Here, the reader can taste the physiological, psychological and spiritual benefits of meditation . . . the author shows how these techniques, done singly or in combination, promote peace of mind, comfort, confidence, strength, wisdom and self-empowerment for the benefit of self and others – all with scientific evidence of meditation's powers to uplift body and mind. Professor Masumian authenticates her meditation handbook by sharing what she herself has experienced while performing these various meditations – a consummate personal touch. A gift by a gifted author.'

Christopher Buck, author of Religions Myths and Visions of America

'... really encouraging on the subject of persevering with one's practice and not expecting perfection. It deals with the Bahá'í approach to meditation in an appropriate and inspiring manner' . . . 'I would recommend this book to anyone interested in meditation as it offers hope that being able to meditate is really within anyone's grasp.'

Members of the Reviewing Panel of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom

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