

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

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When replying please

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To all believers in the United Kingdom

Dearly loved co-workers,

Preparations for the current global Plan are over, and the first of the six cycles – each of which is a “fleeting” opportunity “for a stride forward” – is already well underway. At this significant moment, the National Spiritual Assembly has been reflecting with Counsellor Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi on the achievements of recent months, and has looked forward to the requirements of the next year and a half, leading up to the first of the bicentennial anniversaries in October 2017.

The UK community set out five year ago to make its contribution to the global goal of establishing a programme of growth in 5,000 clusters. The aim, to this end, was to have a programme in all of our 50 clusters. Perhaps we did not fully understand at the time what the achievement of that goal would entail, but through perseverance, considerable sacrifice on the part of many friends, and through engaging in a systematic process of consultation, action and reflection, the capacity of the community and its institutions was raised to a level where we learnt how to establish programmes of growth. By Riḍván 2016, 42 of our 50 clusters had passed the first milestone, and we can anticipate that perhaps another four will do so by the end of the summer. We should not underestimate the significance of this achievement which, in itself, is remarkable. Rather, we can confidently, joyfully recognise the proficiency with which the community and the institutions have developed the capacity to establish programmes of growth – learning that can now be applied in villages, neighbourhoods and other settings across the UK.

And what of the ambitious goal the National Assembly set for the community at Riḍván 2015 to double the number of core activities in the final year of the Plan? By Riḍván of this year there were 964 core activities – an increase of 40% in the year. Looking behind these figures, we can see many exciting achievements, some of which we highlight below:

- The number of devotionals now stands at 451, children's classes at 143 and junior youth groups at 78. In all cases this is the highest number ever recorded. In addition, the number of friends of the Faith participating in each of these activities exceeds anything recorded previously. In the case of junior-youth groups, 78% of participants are friends of the Faith.
- Nearly 2,000 friends of the Faith are involved in the community's core activities. Thus, unprecedented numbers of people from the wider community are joining us in our humble efforts to build a better world.
- Enrolments in the last six months of the Plan exceeded the number of enrolments in the previous twelve months. In other words, the number of enrolments more than doubled in this six-month period.
- London, the largest cluster in the United Kingdom, now has sufficient of the elements in place necessary for it to have reached the third milestone. With nearly 200 core activities, London has demonstrated that the processes in place are strong enough to sustain a high

level of participation in all aspects of the institute process and to manage the high degree of complexity that this entails. Of course many of these aspects need to be strengthened, which the cluster will no doubt aspire to do in light of the guidance of the Universal House of Justice.

Adding to the achievements of the last Five Year Plan, was the engagement of the three protagonists – the individual, the community and the institutions – in preparing for the current Five Year Plan in the three months leading up to Ridván 2016. Around 800 adults, youth and children participated in nine institutional gatherings across the United Kingdom to study the House of Justice’s letter of 29 December 2015 and to consider its implications for their clusters. Initial plans were made for most clusters and, in an unparalleled manner, the community of the Greatest Name prepared itself to immediately commence the work of this Plan, the outcome of which, the House of Justice suggests, may perhaps be “epoch making”.

With the period of preparation over, the Supreme Body summons us all “to a new five-year commitment of courage, resolve, and resources.” Emboldened by the achievements of the previous Plan; drawing upon the capacities which the community has with great sacrifice acquired; applying the proven strategies that we have gained so much experience in; and, above all, drawing upon the power of the Divine Forces that this spiritually charged period in history is releasing into the world, we urge you all, individually and collectively – families, neighbours, teaching teams, local communities, Local Spiritual Assemblies and groups of clusters – to systematically translate the plans you have already made into action. Look to where you wish to be after the next six cycles. With your plans in hand take “small steps”, “regular and rapid”, and impelled with a sense of urgency by the world’s desperate conditions, labour on for His sake:

The present Plan’s broad scope enables every individual to support this work, however humble one’s share. We ask you, cherished co-workers, adorers of Him Who is the Best-Beloved of the worlds, to spare no effort in applying all you have learned and every God-given ability and skill you possess to advance the Divine Plan into its next essential stage. To your own ardent supplications for heavenly assistance we add ours, offered in the Holy Shrines, on behalf of all who labour for this all-encompassing Cause.

Universal House of Justice – Ridván 2016

With loving Bahá’í greetings,



Patrick O’Mara,  
Secretary

cc. Counsellor Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi