



Scottish Bahá'í Newsletter issue 12

of the Auxiliary Board, are remembered with admiration and gratitude. May his dedicated endeavours in sharing the Message of Bahá'u'lláh with the people of Scotland be an enduring source of inspiration to all those who knew him. Kindly convey to his wife, Ruhyyih, and their children the heartfelt sympathy of the House of Justice for the loss they have suffered and assure them of its ardent supplications in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his radiant soul throughout the divine realms. Prayers will also be offered for the comfort and solace of their hearts in their bereavement.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat

cc: International Teaching Centre Counsellor
Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi

National Spiritual Assembly

nsa@bahai.org.uk

12 March 2016
12 'Alá' 172 B.E.

To all believers in the United Kingdom

Dearly loved friends,

The National Spiritual Assembly is deeply saddened to share with you the news of the passing of our much loved former colleague, Dr. John Parris, after a short, but courageous battle with cancer.

We recall with admiration John's outstanding, devoted services to the Cause of Bahá'u'áh in the United Kingdom, through his membership - and as Treasurer - of the National Spiritual Assembly. In particular, we remember the pivotal role he played in the remarkable process of purchasing the Edinburgh Bahá'í Centre at the request of the Universal House of Justice in 2005.

John's 15 years on the National Spiritual Assembly were preceded and succeeded by two periods of equally distinguished service in Scotland as an Auxiliary Board member. He served with exceptional commitment and enthusiasm, tirelessly travelling across the length and breadth of Scotland diffusing divine fragrances wherever he went. It was in this capacity that John was among the first believers in this country to pioneer experiments in neighbourhood outreach, attracting large numbers



John B. Parris

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

Transmitted by email: nsa@bahai.org.uk

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

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The Universal House of Justice was grieved to learn from your email letter dated 11 March 2016 of the passing of dearly loved John Parris, consecrated servant of the Blessed Beauty. His stalwart services to the Cause of God, including as a member of your National Spiritual Assembly and

of youth into activities. His commitment to, and love, of the believers in Scotland, and in particular his high hopes and efforts for the development of the Faith in the Scottish Islands, will belong remembered.

Believers across the United Kingdom who knew and loved John will no doubt recall his friendliness and exemplary courtesy, his gentle, pure-hearted enthusiasm and encouragement, his depth of

understanding of the Writings, his humbleness, his joyful spirit and infectious humour.

John faced his final illness with indomitable faith and deep gratitude for the loving prayers of support that were offered by family and friends. The National Spiritual Assembly will continue to pray for the progress of his luminous soul through all the worlds of God and for the comfort of his beloved wife Ruhy and his children, Iain, Claire and Dawn. Our deepest condolences and sympathies go out to them.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

National Spiritual Assembly

Patrick O'Mara,
Secretary

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## Bahá'í Council for Scotland

Dear Friends,

The Baha'i Council for Scotland sends you loving greetings at the close of the Festival of Ridvan. This Ridvan of course marks the beginning of the new Five Year Plan from the Universal House of Justice and the Council was delighted that so many of the friends were able to attend the recent gatherings in Aberdeen and Edinburgh to deepen their understanding of the Plan and to take the first steps together. It is clear already that this new Plan is the most exciting, ambitious and challenging yet. But progress will be achieved in all communities by assessing the current reality and starting with small regular steps. The Council hopes that whatever your circumstances, the year ahead brings blessings for you and you take your share of all the

opportunities that come to share the message of Baha'u'llah with others and to collaborate in helping build the new world that He envisioned.

With loving Baha'i greetings

**Baha'i Council for Scotland**

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One hour before sunset on the 20th April 2016 another Candle was lit in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh



On the 1st day of the Festival of Ridván, 20th April 2016 at 19:30hrs, one hour before sunset, the first Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Newton Mearns was successfully elected. There was full participation from all the adult members of the community, and there were no spoiled votes.



There was a wonderful spirit at the meeting and all the children participated in the opening devotional to create a very uplifting spirit in which the votes were cast. There was a real feeling that this was tangible evidence of the establishment of part of the New World Order described by Bahá'u'lláh.

2 Gatherings - North & South One Purpose The New Five Year Plan!!



Some of Bahá'ís from the Southern Clusters at the Edinburgh (2nd/3rd April)

Nearly 40 Bahá'ís from 6 of the Clusters in the South of Scotland and the Faroe Isles gathered at the Bahá'í Centre in Edinburgh and over 60 Bahá'ís from the remaining Clusters in the North of Scotland gathered in Aberdeen to read and study the letter of the Universal House of Justice of the 29th December 2015, and to make initial plans for the **New Five Year Plan**.

In Edinburgh the Gathering began with a wonderful devotional arranged by the Clyde Area Teaching Committee, which opened with a recording of Luke Slott singing "Create in me a Pure Heart" and followed by uplifting readings which included the **2nd Tablet of the Divine Plan revealed by 'Abdúl-Bahá, in the garden adjacent to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh**. This was followed by a thought provoking slide show set to music and the words of "The Fire Tablet", and in Aberdeen, the following weekend, the pattern was similar. The letter of the Universal House of Justice of the 26/03/2016 to the Bahá'ís of the world "Acting under

the mandate of 'Abdúl-Bahá" was read and which quoted the Guardian saying that this was "the mightiest Plan ever generated through the creative power of the Most Great Name."



(Gwendoline Philbrow and Sue Philbrow from the Faroe isles)



Some of the Bahá'ís at the Northern Gathering on the 9th/10th April.

A video of the "London Institutional Gathering" held in January was played and covered the developments of the Faith from 1996 - 2021 and took us through the happenings, changes and accomplishments of various Plans and through to the New Five Year Plan including the Education of larger and larger numbers of people in the Institute Process with the capacity to build for the children and the empowerment of Junior Youth.

During both weekends the Gatherings were split into Cluster Groups to discuss and deepen on the various aspects of the **Universal House of Justice letter to the Counsellors (29th December 2015)**

- *Strength the pattern of action.**
(paragraphs 7 to 21)
- *The Institute Process: Training & Accompaniment.**
(Paragraphs 7 to 9)
- *Learning through action: Cycles of activity and Group Clusters**
(Paragraphs 13/15 and 19 to 21)
- *Establishing a basic Junior Youth Programme and Releasing the Potential of the Youth.**
(Paragraphs 34 to 39)



Also during the weekend the friends made a collective plan to carry out over the next two weeks to ensure that the spirit generated during the weekend was realized in action.



The North East Cluster explores the concept of Accompaniment

In Inverurie we had an Ayyam-i-Ha party. This party was a wonderful way for our community to share their various talents and put on a wonderful party for the families in the area. 23 adults and 16



children attended, many helping with the various activities on offer. Friendship cards were made; faces painted in rainbow colours; lego turned into pieces of sculpture; cupcakes topped with mounds of yummy icing; and finally games got folks energised and thinking about their virtues. At the end, gifts which had been made were given out to each child. It is hoped that more of these parties can take place in the future as families really liked the space created for both children and adults to explore their talents.

In early January the North East Cluster hosted a youth volunteer, Romina Riazaty from Melbourne, Australia, who served with us for 2 months. She would spend five days in Aberdeen and two days in Aberdeenshire every week. It was great to have her here in Aberdeen, to help with our efforts to start a junior youth group in Marshall Court. She arrived at the start of our expansion phase, so our first two weeks were mainly focused on outreach. We would meet every day in the afternoon, study a text (from Ruhi Book 5 'Releasing the Powers of Junior Youth' and some messages from the Universal House of Justice), do a short skit and then go out to talk to people. We have learnt a lot from her, especially about how to approach people and have natural conversations. Not only Baha'i youth, but also friends of the Faith, really learned how to work together as a team.

In Aberdeenshire Romina would accompany 2 families and their friends for 2 days. It was really great to have someone who could be there with us on the nursery run, join in mother and toddlers groups as well as help existing activities. Because of her accompaniment we were able to strengthen our existing children's classes activities, reflect on how to move things forward, start a study circle

with the mums, and create the beginnings of a junior youth group. The ease with which she could speak about community building inspired us to try new things and rely on God. We miss her, though all the new activities remind us of Romina and her dedication to the Faith.

.....from the friends in the North East.

Ayrshire Bahá'ís "Big Picnic"

Once again the wonderful Ayrshire Bahá'í community are inviting everyone to their now legendary "Big Picnic"

On the 26th June - 12-30 pm to 4 pm

As usual it will take place at the home of Svend Kamming. There is no need to reserve a place, just turn up, bring your own lunch (tea, coffee etc. Provided) and enjoy the company!! So please do come along and bring your friends.

If you need any further information just ring:-

Telephone 01563

and the full address is :

**Blagray Cottage, Commonhead Farm,
Kilmarnock, KA1 5LN**

Its all happening on Isle of Lewis!

January: World Religion Day

The monthly interesting and often thought-provoking talks, continued in January with Rolf Schmidt as speaker. It was apposite that Rolf's talk was on world religions, as World Religion Day was also observed in January. In addition, a talk on Interfaith was given to senior pupils at the local secondary school.

February: 'The Half Of It Was Never Told'

Carolyn Sparey Fox talk centred around excerpts from her book about three men engaged in a spiritual search during the time of Adventism, – William Miller, Joseph Wolff and Mulla Husayn.

March:

Daren presented a varied talk in March entitled "The Prisoner of Akka with the key to World Peace". It was based in part on the Ruhi Institute Book 'Arising to Serve'.

February: Residential Camp at Scaladale

16 young people and supporting adults gathered at



Scaladale, North Harris over 2 days during the February holidays. Children and Junior Youth attended workshops, and 4 people progressed with their study of 'Arising to serve'.



The young also enjoyed ice-skating and football in the snow. Thanks to John Chan and Howard Moshtael for their continuous loving help



and support. Thanks to Daren for cooking and all the others for helping. Thanks to Mary for bringing heaters in case we needed them, to Steven's mum and dad for sharing parts of book 2 and to Steve T for being there.

Service Project by Children & Junior Youth



The Children and Junior Youth Group made valentine cards for the elderly at a nursing-home. The cards were gratefully received, reflected the joy the children felt in making and presenting the cards. Afterwards they sang 'Blessed is the spot'. As a thank you to the children the staff laid on a big spread with lots of goodies for the young people.



Our Regular weekly events include a Children and Youth Group meeting on Thursday evenings in Stornoway, and a devotional in the Western Isles Hospital on Saturday afternoons.

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## Some Quotes from Ayrshire.

"If you want others to be happy practice compassion: If you want to be happy, practice compassion."

"A person who does things that count, does not usually stop to count them."

## **A Storm Called 'Frank' and the Story of the Fruits of Intensive study of 'The Covenant' (Ruhi Book 8) in Strathtay, Dec 2015**

It was the Christmas holidays once again and our little Bahá'í community -- composed entirely of six family members who live on the same rural road in Central Scotland -- were casting about for a plan. **What could we do with a national holiday that we didn't celebrate; preferably something that we hadn't done before?**

The answer came from the Training Institute Board for Scotland and the Area teaching Committee for the Northeast Cluster, who both encouraged us to become a training location, a hub, for an Intensive Book 8 Unit 1 study circle. We happily accepted and for four days Bahá'í friends from around the NE Scotland became our houseguests while we studied The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, the Will and Testament of Bahá'u'lláh and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and much more. One family member catered lunch and dinner. Another took over child-minding. Eight people benefited from a thorough immersion in the Writings; an experience that left me feeling energised and inspired like never before.



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The gathering ended with a big question mark-how to apply what I'd learned as fast as possible? We'd each made a study plan and a teaching plan and I was anxious to get started while the **"iron was hot"**

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But I found myself back home, **a heavy storm called Frank** pelting on the roof as trees swayed and snapped in the forest next to the cottage. I awoke the next morning to discover that the driveway had washed away and taken part of the garden with it -- and felt pleased that I'd parked in the lane on hearing the forecast. Below our hill the water damage was unbelievably bad. News from the neighbours said that both ends of the only road to civilisation had flooded and we were trapped. It sounded like the end of my high-flown plan to dive into teaching.

**At noon I prayed not to lose momentum,** to hang onto the elevated feeling of our Book Eight course.

But matters looked rather bleak when the weatherman predicted three more days of rain and worse flooding to come. It was late afternoon when I heard a furtive knock that gradually got louder and louder as I made my way to the front door. A neighbour stood on the porch, her coat soaked, her face anxious. A few moments later we were settled before a wood fire in the living room, sipping tea. A bit tearful, she explained her adventure on the flooded roads, that she was unable to get anywhere and stood watching the river rising below our houses. She was worried about the state of the world and wondered if I agreed that humankind was being "punished" by an angry God.

I was frankly surprised, thinking this was the last person I'd have expected to express such frustration to me. I'd invited her to an open event explaining Bahá'í principles earlier in the year and literally had the door closed in my face as I offered the half-page leaflet we'd made.

**"I'm a life-time Catholic," she said. "I'm satisfied and not looking for anything else."**

After that experience I'd been careful to remain in touch, but apply no pressure to discuss religion if she chose not to. We'd always been friends and that was important to preserve.

**Now she sat by the fire, tearful and worried.**

"I stood there looking at the river and felt the most awful despair," she said. "Like I was seeing an awful act of God. I'd never seen water like that. It had a mesmerising power that terrified me. And the flooding on the road. Realising I had no way out."

**I imagined surrounding her with the comforting love of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá** and began to explain where I'd been for the past four days. Before I knew it we were deep into an explanation of the Covenant of God with mankind.

**To my astonishment she leaned in, eyes wide, wanting to hear more.**

I told her that Bahá'ís don't believe in a punishing God, but that we're given choices and need to take control of our own future. Whether we choose to join hands and overcome the prejudices, hatreds and greed that plague us will predict our victory or

continued suffering. The world is unbalanced, I agreed, and certainly that's echoed in our environment, but we have Writings that recommend a road to collaboration and community building that can change everything for the better. It's not a time to worry so much as to act on the plan for universal accord that is our destiny.

**"Really? A plan?" she asked.**

We talked for an hour and my neighbour left wanting to talk again when she'd had a chance to digest what she'd heard. We walked together in the pouring rain to the edge of my driveway that was no more and watched the torrent out to the farm lane.

"I think I'll advertise this as a fishing beat!" I told her and we laughed.

**"Save a rod for me," she said. "I'll be back."**

.....Nancy Warren.

**The National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom** received a most wonderful letter and a poem from a Mr. Peter Brown who lives in the Dumfries and Galloway area of Scotland. Mr. Brown who is retired, and lives and works in the Loch Arthur Village Christian Community Centre, has always had a "passionate" interest in the Religious Faiths of this world". He goes on to say in this letter that the Bahá'í Faith "is the only Faith that I feel any strong moral and spiritual connection to and this is mostly due to the tolerance they adopt to the other Faiths of this world" The poem that Mr. Brown wrote is called;

### **"A Beautiful Whisper"**

In a clear shaft of bright light  
I felt the infinite presence of a divine God  
And acknowledged such a real presence  
With an eager nod.

I heard him gently whisper  
But felt no needless surge of fear  
Only a new awakening of a deep spiritual peace  
That such a profound presence can be  
so casually near.

I watched him forgive my sin  
And then wept with an obvious happiness  
That such an unfair weakness  
Can so easily forgiven by him.

(Peter Brown, January 2016)

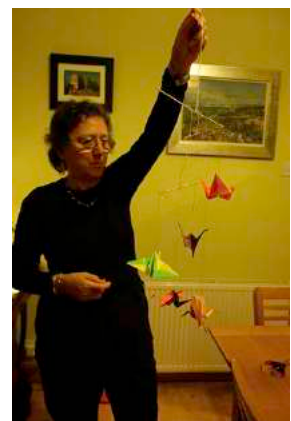
## **"All Art is a gift of the Holy Spirit"**

"All Art is a gift of the Holy Spirit. When this light shines through the mind of a musician, it manifests itself in beautiful harmonies. Again, shining through the mind of a poet, it is seen in fine poetry and poetic prose. When the Light of the Sun of Truth inspires the mind of a painter, he produces marvellous pictures. These gifts are fulfilling their highest purpose, when showing forth the praise of God.".....'Abdu'l-Bahá

**Stirling Bahá'ís** and their friends recently held a neighbourhood arts day. We started off with tea and



fresh scones, and then listened to some readings on the importance of arts, crafts and sciences. The rest of the day was split into workshops. These included weaving, making stars and sun-catchers



making mobiles and a Persian rice cookery demonstration (**the results of which we ate for dinner!**). We prepared the meals together, washed dishes, and had a great blether in the workshops. It was a very joyful day to which everyone contributed something.



## Sticky Toffee Pudding and Naw-Rúz!!

This year, to be different, all the Bahá'í Communities in Lanarkshire decided to celebrate Naw-Rúz by having a 'Naw-Rúz Lunch'.



It was agreed that the venue for the Lunch would be Lanark Loch, a wonderful area on the outskirts of Lanark town. So on Sunday the 20th March, with the Sun shining, and turning the area into a 'picture postcard' many Friends from throughout the Lanarkshire area, Pebbles and Glasgow

came and gathered at this very picturesque Loch and headed straight to the 'Inn on the Loch' for their Lunch!! The food ranged from soups, pâté, lamb, beef and a vegetarian alternative; and we'll not say who or how many of the Friends had a sweet including the 'Hot Sticky Toffee Pudding' with ice cream!!



Fun and laughter was also on the menu, with some really good stories and conversations on various topics. After the meal and the 'hot sticky toffee pudding!!' many of the Friends decided to walk around the Loch whilst others retired for tea and coffee. All in all a wonderful celebration enjoyed by everyone.

## Naw-Rúz in Stirling



**Stirling Bahá'ís** and their friends celebrated Naw Rúz on the afternoon of the spring equinox. Participants were warmly welcomed with a brief introduction to the Faith and an explanation of the community building processes which Bahá'í communities are involved in. This led nicely into a presentation of the 'Frontiers of Learning' video from Bihar in India. Finally, we were blessed with some high quality musical performances.



There were some pieces on the violin and viola, a fascinating recital on the Chinese urhu, and some amazing singing with guitar accompaniment.

Over 50 people attended, the majority of whom were community of interest. Our thanks go to everyone who helped to make it such a great event

## Training Institute Board about the Forth cluster.

The beginning of the last cycle of this Five Year Plan was a time of great effort and intense teaching activity. During the past few months, friends in Forth cluster have had ongoing conversations about how to translate the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh into reality. In the January expansion phase a conscious effort was made to invite friends to participate in the sequence of courses and learn about service together. As a result, three new book 1's have started in our cluster; currently 17 friends of the Faith are studying the Writings through the Ruhi books. This is a significant increase and shows people's interest in learning more about the spiritual life of the soul.

In the study circles, participants discuss how to apply the Writings to their individual and collectives lives. They consult about how to create environments that put people in contact with the spiritual forces released through prayer and devotion. They explore the effect service projects have on a community, and how to contribute to the spiritual and material wellbeing of the community they live in.

When walking a path of service, help is needed from the whole Bahá'í community; how do we accompany friends in their first steps on a path of service? What spaces can we create for them to deepen their knowledge of the Faith? Are there opportunities of service where we could learn together about the spiritual reality of our community? This naturally led to the holding of a tutor gathering in Forth, where both the tutors of current study circles and those wishing to learn about this field of service came together. We had a wonderful evening, studying the guidance, sharing insights and experiences, and making plans of action.

A lot can still be done in preparation for the next Five Year Plan. The spiritual forces released during the Fast and celebrations like Naw Ruz and Ridvan provide a wonderful opportunity for everyone to have conversations about the Faith with their friends. It would be great to hear of these and share them with the rest of the community!

"Of course, it is not the provision of training by itself that brings about progress. Efforts to build capacity fall short if arrangements are not swiftly made to accompany individuals into the arena of service. An adequate level of support extends far beyond encouraging words. When preparing to take on an unfamiliar task, working alongside a person with

some experience increases consciousness of what is possible. An assurance of practical help can give a tentative venturer the courage to initiate an activity for the first time. Souls then advance their understanding together, humbly sharing the insights each possesses at a given moment and eagerly seeking to learn from fellow wayfarers on the path of service. Hesitation recedes and capacity develops to the point where an individual can carry out activities independently and, in turn, accompany others on the same path." .....(from the **The Universal House of Justice message 29th Dec 2015**).

### Scottish Summer School

"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."

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**Universal House of Justice, Message to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, 29th Dec 2015**

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We are excited to once again announce that the **Scottish Baha'i Summer School will be taking place this year from 30th July to 3rd August** in the beautiful setting of Strathallan School in Perth. Registration for the school will be opening soon.

The Summer School is not only a chance to learn and spend time with likeminded people, but is also an opportunity to transform service oriented thoughts into action.

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### Huqúq'ulláh

"co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly" .....(Abdul'Baha)

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**Regional Board of Trustees of Huqúq'ulláh  
for Ireland and the UK  
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### Remember we still need your stories.

We always need all your stories and suggestions, on Teaching Activities, Projects and generally whats happening in your Areas.

Deadline for next issue will be August 2016.

Email Dereck Redfern. ([redfernrocks@aol.com](mailto:redfernrocks@aol.com))

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