

The official Newsletter of the Bahá'í Council for Wales

Summer 2016 – 170 B.E

Fellow wayfarers on the path of service

“O God! Create in the hearts of Thy beloved
the fire of Thy love
that it may consume the thought of everything save Thee.”
Bahá'u'lláh



Service



Study



Joy



Friendship

"The next 6 cycles lead us to the celebration...of the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'llah".

...page 4

"We set a goal to have 50 conversations with local people"

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"We have laid a firm foundation for the 'herculean labour' this Plan requires"

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"I had met some Bahá'ís over 20 years ago"

...page 9

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Message from the Bahá'í Council for Wales

Dearly loved Friends,

The Bahá'í Council for Wales sends its love and warm greetings to all of you.

Following the Five Year Plan gathering for Wales, the Council, in consultation with its partner Institutions, has now drawn up a plan for Wales' onward progress. This is shown on page 3 of this edition of Undod. This is an overarching plan for the whole of Wales, put together through consultation about the existing resources in Wales, and also relying on the Hand of Divine Assistance to strengthen us further and bolster our efforts.

Of course, the detail of this plan will be added at the cluster and individual level, either at a cluster reflection meeting or through individual prayer and reflection. Each one of us, whatever our circumstances, can offer our part to Bahá'u'lláh, however small. We can make every effort to pray, reflect on our reality and make our own teaching plan, however modest it may be, and some of us may also be able to join collectively in a teaching project, for example. In the Ridvan Message 2016 from the Universal House of Justice we read:

"Small steps, if they are regular and rapid, add up to a great distance travelled. By concentrating on the advance that must be made in a cluster in an initial period—for instance, in the six cycles occurring before the first of the bicentennial anniversaries—the friends will do much to bring their goal for the full five years within reach. In each cycle are vested fleeting opportunities for a stride forward, precious possibilities that will not return."

The Council is heartened to see examples of some these small steps taking place around Wales and several of these are highlighted in this edition of Undod. Examples include the near-doubling of core activities by the end of the last Plan, the collective action in Caerphilly, where much has been learnt that can be applied in other areas, as well as contributions from people new to the Faith or to Wales, and the many examples of love and friendship, warmth and unity. Of course the articles included are only a snapshot of what is happening across the principality. At each of its meetings the Council receives reports from each of the clusters in Wales and then consults on how it can best support and walk shoulder to shoulder with the friends.

The Council looks forward to hearing more of your stories from across Wales as the plan progresses.

With loving greetings,

The Bahá'í Council for Wales

The Plan for Wales

“By concentrating on the advance that must be made in a cluster in an initial period – for instance, in the six cycles occurring before the first of the bicentennial anniversaries – the friends will do much to bring their goal for the full five years within reach.”

Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 2016

The Baha'i Council for Wales, in consultation with the Training Institute Board for Wales and Auxiliary Board members, has considered the advances that we feel can be made in Wales in the next 18 months. This follows lengthy consultation on the 29 December letter, beginning with the UK Institutional meeting in January and including the Welsh Institutional gathering in April.

The Plan calls for 5,000 clusters across the world to reach the 2nd milestone in the process of growth, and Wales' contribution to this will be at least the North and South Wales clusters. The position in Mid and West Wales will be reviewed as they pass the first milestone and stride beyond during this Plan.

Moving Towards the 2nd Milestone

The 2nd milestone is defined in the 18th paragraph of the 29 December message (at the top of page 6). It is reached by developing all the elements and capacities described in the preceding 11 paragraphs.

The Movement of Youth

Vital to raising our capacity to reach the second milestone is developing the movement of youth – learning how to engage youth in conversations about the progress of their community, to invite them to serve, and then to train them and accompany them in offering core activities. In particular, we need to build capacity to implement the junior youth programme – a process that extends beyond learning how to form and sustain junior youth groups, to visiting parents and extended families, organising of service projects, and eliciting the support and involvement of the wider community.

South Wales is well advanced along this path, with a united and spiritually vibrant community, accustomed to the rhythm of 3-month cycles, and having witnessed an upsurge in personal teaching. There are two main areas for development: the first is to learn how to use the training institute effectively, so that those proceeding through the sequence of courses are supported to offer the related acts of service and able to attract others; the second is to learn more about collective teaching, through organised projects and working in small teaching teams. Strides have already been made in both these areas in the first cycle of the plan, as shown by some of the news reported in this issue of Undod.

The arrival of new pioneers in Bethesda and Bangor has created a small pool of people with the time and experience to dedicate to learning about this vital component of the Plan. Hence, the Council expects to North Wales to make the most rapid advances in this area.

What we have, therefore, is a coherent strategy, in which the two most advanced clusters in Wales will progress with plans that are based on their own strengths and resources (as directed in the Ridvan message). Lessons can be shared between these two clusters, and also gleaned from the most advanced clusters in England (particularly those near Wales – Manchester and West Midlands). As our “reservoir” of resources grows, greater and greater support can be offered to **West and Mid Wales clusters**, who will continue to receive focused attention from the Auxiliary Board members and the Council. The next 6 cycles lead us to the celebration in October 2017 of the bicentenary of the Birth of Baha'u'llah. By the grace of God, we may also be celebrating at least one cluster in Wales passing the 2nd milestone. At this time the Council will assess how we can build on the achievements in this period to make even greater progress across Wales in the subsequent 2 years of the Plan, culminating in the two-hundredth anniversary of the Birth of the Bab. Each of us has a part to play. May we all “kindle a spirit of faithful endeavour” to make our contribution to this “noble undertaking”.

“Friends. Knowledge. Insight.”



That's one answer a youth gave to the question, 'What did you get out of the service project?'

The junior youth group in Morrision is about to complete its third year with another summer camp, where we will study our 5th JY book. It's been a long, hard road and many times I thought it was going to fall apart. But persevering through the dark times meant that every challenge became a learning opportunity – and I've learnt a lot.

This group has never shown a great interest in social issues or in service.

Towards the start of this year we studied the book “Drawing on the Power of the Word”, and early on they considered the question “Do you want to build a world where people live in harmony and where war and poverty no longer exist?” One of them said “No, someone else can do that.” When we explored this, it emerged that they simply had no belief that they could make a difference – the idea was too ridiculous for them to even contemplate.

So using the book as a starting point, this year has been a space to explore this concept. And now they are starting to discover that they do have “knowledge” and “insight”. And even power.

It's slow going, because this is my first group and I'm learning as I go, but these are the first glimmerings of the potential that this programme has for the transformation of South Wales.

Now how do we convey this possibility to others? How do we learn to invite others, especially older youth, to help us implement this programme? What do we need to learn next?...

The Right of God and its Relationship to the Current Plan

Since its inception by the Universal House of Justice in 1998, the training institute has taken root in Bahá'í communities around the world. The process of consultation, action, and reflection has led to important advancements in the frontiers of learning: the core activities increasingly shape the life and work of individuals and communities. The same “spiritual insights, the knowledge, and the skills”¹ fostered by the institute process are nurtured by obedience to and love for the Law of Huqúqu'lláh. Far from being a mere calculation of debt, the Right of God is “directed to the vital task of raising the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, which is the essential prerequisite for the enduring resolution of the afflictions humanity is now experiencing”². Moreover, like prayer and service, the Right of God is a constant component of our Bahá'í lives. Just as the institute process aims to “deepen ... knowledge of the Faith, cultivate ... inner spiritual lives and develop abilities of service”, so the Right of God develops within us gratitude and harnesses the material resources needed to “intensify ... individual and collective exertions in the teaching field and ... result in a commensurate acceleration in the expansion of ... communities”³.



Reciprocity, mutual aid, and cooperation define relationships in both; the transformative effect of participation is seen in both; and both demonstrate that the creation of a just world requires spiritual and material resources.

International Board of Huqúqu'lláh, Contributed by Anne Maund: Huqúqu'lláh Representative

1 “Training Institutes: A document prepared for and approved by the Universal House of Justice, April 1998”.

2 Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 25 July 2006, published in Huqúqu'lláh: A Compilation, #112.

3. Training Institutes: A document prepared for and approved by the Universal House of Justice, April 1998

Caerphilly Collective Action

When the South Wales Cluster Agencies asked if we in Caerphilly would take part in an intensive project, we jumped at the chance. After our initial eagerness, someone asked the question on everyone else's mind... "So what is one of those?!" Fortunately there is a wealth of knowledge from around the UK about how to plan and run what are commonly known as "intensive projects".

We came together as a community then on a few occasions to learn more about what a project would look like in Caerphilly, once with the help of the Auxiliary Board Member and project coordinator, and twice more as a community to study the first two workshops from the Youth Conference materials.

Guided by these consultations and guidance we set our focus of the project: reaching out to youth age 18-25 in order to invite them to train to become animators of junior youth groups. We had lots of questions about the small details, and at times doubted our own capacity, but realised there would always be those questions and challenges when charting the unknown. What kept the focus was a common desire to learn a new skill set and try out meaningful conversations with new friends.



The project itself centred around one of the Caerphilly friends' houses and followed the model outlined in Ruhi Book 6 (prayers in the morning followed by deepening, practising the conversations we would have on the streets with each other, outreach and then reflection back at base). We set a goal to have 50 conversations with local people in the area and by day four of the project we had reached it. The whole experience was a real insight into our local area and we met people who were really quite keen to talk about what spiritual transformation means in their community.

On two of the four evenings of the project we booked a local café out as a meeting place for any potential new contacts - but we quickly learnt the Euro 2016 tournament trumped our event for many people...good learning for next time.

By the end of the project we identified two youth in the community who might take things further by training to be animators. Regardless of whether they do or not, the effort everyone put into the project has brought the community together, sparked our love of outreach again, and we all want to do it again next cycle! The project we were involved in has given many of us new insight into where we live, and even one month later we still have the mentality that everyone we meet is a potential person to strike up a conversation with about community transformation and their part in it.

Caerphilly Friends



First “International Symposium on Multi-Faith and Cultural Harmony”

On 6th July Robina Nicholson and Tracey Roberts-Jones were invited to attend an exciting event held at Lampeter University entitled the ‘First International Symposium on Multi-Faith and Cultural Harmony’.

The aim of the event was “to move towards mutual understanding and harmony among different faiths” with an all-day programme, including a panel discussion in the afternoon “Journeying Together to Enrich Community and Interfaith Perspectives” chaired by the Reverend Jeremy Duff (Principal of St Padarn’s Institute). Robina and I were able to take part in a lively discussion kicked off by the chair who wanted to quantify the meaning of harmony through the Christian Faith.

Other parts of the programme included keynote addresses by the Right Reverend Wyn Evans, Bishop of St Davids, and the Venerable Master Chin Kung AM, President and Founder of “Pure Land Learning College Association”, and a presentation on “The Toowoomba experience - a model city for peace and harmony” by Mr Haniff Abdul Razak.



The Symposium was the first part of a three-day event which concluded on the Friday 8th July with the opening of a new Sinology department by HRH Prince of Wales.

Robina and I enjoyed the event greatly, making new friends with participants and looking forward to the opportunity to work with other faith members in the future.

Tracey Roberts-Jones

Growing the Faith in the last Plan

The focus of the previous Plan was to assist 5,000 clusters in the world to advance past the first milestone in the process of growth.

This is achieved when the first souls in a cluster are assisted by their tutor to offer acts of service to their community, as they proceed through the sequence of courses of the Training Institute, committed to the vision of the individual and collective transformation they foster.

In the final year of the Plan, the National Spiritual Assembly set a goal for the UK to double the number of core activities – an audacious goal that prompted the friends to consider the possibilities in their own lives for offering these acts of service.

The response in Wales was marked – almost double, in percentage terms, the increase across the UK as a whole – and this growth has continued in the new Plan, with more activities being initiated. We have laid a firm foundation for the “herculean labour” this Plan requires. For example, in South Wales the Area Teaching Committee has now set a goal to double the number of devotional meetings in just the first cycle of the new Plan.

	Devotional Meetings	Children's Classes	Junior Youth Groups	Study Circles	Total
Ridvan 2015	10	1	1	12	24
Ridvan 2016	14	6	3	18	41
Increase	4	5	2	6	17

Finding Love & Sharing It

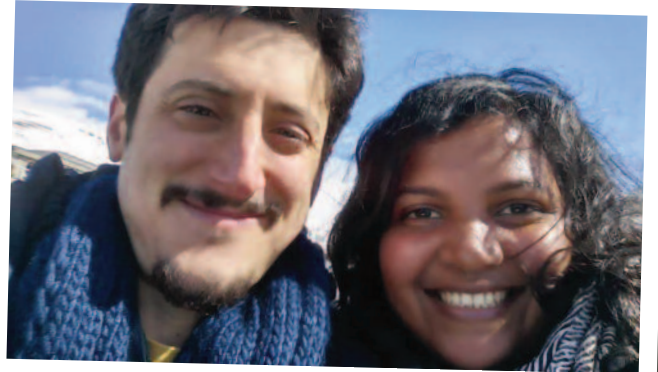
Daniel and I had met in India in 2013 while we both served at the National Baha'i Centre in different capacities. A process initiated at the Delhi Baha'i House of Worship, the following three years brought confirmations, learning and self-realisation. Through reflection, life situations, service and conscious efforts in the direction of marriage this has led us to commit ourselves to each other for life and eternity.

Having both been born and brought up in different religious backgrounds and the transformation which we have been through in our spiritual paths, we share common grounds and beliefs of creating our own culture conducive to the Baha'i teachings. In this spirit, the day following our engagement in Haifa, we agreed to organise a devotional meeting with friends serving at the Baha'i World Centre. As hosts, receiving guests from Wales, India and beyond brought beautiful confirmations, strengthening our embryonic decision of marriage. I knew in my heart I had made the biggest and the best decision to marry Daniel.

As the round of prayers began the sweet melody filled the room dilating our hearts and souls and drinking the dew drops of silence that followed. In that stillness we all spoke silently in reverence and peace, reconnecting our beings with our Creator.

We let the meeting proceed at its own pace, slowly and naturally. Memories came flooding to my mind as Daniel went on with a presentation based on his 2 years of service in India. Friends from different walks of life wondered at the contrast of life in India, its diverse culture and tradition. The discourse gently redirected our minds towards a life of service which we all shared in that room, and many of the guests spoke of their humbling experiences in the Holy Land. Followed by a casual potluck lunch, uplifting conversation and plenty of laughter, the room continued to fill with a spirit of joy and bliss.

We were so moved by this experience that we had to replicate this beautiful event in Cardiff when I was visiting Daniel and his family for the first time in April. In my new home, under a candle lit room more happy and bright faces of near and dear ones gathered in a house with a history of strong bonds of friendship and spiritual growth. This was not only to celebrate the promises that two people had made to each other but also to extend our circle of love to envelope family, friends and the community. To draw this circle even further we revolved our prayers and discussions around justice and human rights violation in Iran.



The friends being persecuted for their religious beliefs in the cradle of the Faith were constantly in our thoughts. Our hearts were saddened, but, there was hope and absolute faith in our Creator. The different dynamics of this particular devotional gathering surprised me. Though equally powerful to the one in Haifa, it had a unique essence. Perhaps it was the Welsh spirit; the expression of unity and closeness that so many of the friends extended to one another in conversation and gesture.

So powerful have been these acts of devotion in Wales and Israel, their affects will undoubtedly extend and build into our family and community life that we intend to make in Cardiff.

Tuhina Gupta & Daniel Stollar



Faith Community Collaboration

The Reverend Lewis Rees, a Unitarian minister, became friends with some Bahá'ís in Swansea, Bill Jenkins and Noreen Atkinson. He even studied some of Book 1 with them until moving to the church in Nottage (Porthcawl). He told members of his congregation about attending Bahá'í devotionals and study sessions and they seemed interested to know more. He suggested holding a joint service and this took place on 22nd May. Over 20 Bahá'ís travelled to Nottage to join the local congregation, and some Unitarians who had also travelled from further afield. The service included readings and songs, a presentation by Bill Jenkins on the Faith and one by the Reverend Rees on his spiritual journey. The whole service was filmed by Unitarian TV and can be seen on-line at www.ukunitarian.tv?nottage-service. After the service everyone was warmly welcomed to take refreshment in the hall.

Learning that the Unitarians held a coffee morning every Friday, Sandy and I attended the first one following the service, and have attended a number since. They are sparsely attended --only four or five Unitarians, the same each time, but they have been pleased to see new faces, and we have had warm and friendly conversations.

Wishing to follow up on the service, Sandy and I decided to hold meetings for prayer and reflection on specific subjects on Tuesday evenings in June. We prepared fliers about the meetings and gave them to the Unitarian friends and to two of our neighbours. To our delight, the latter attended the first meeting and appeared to enjoy it.

Our neighbours also told us about the Zambian minister of the church they attend in Porthcawl. Having lived in that country many years ago (Sandy was born and bred in Rhodesia), we went to see him the following morning and had a very pleasant half hour of conversation, discovering that he had warm feelings towards the Bahá'ís in his country of birth. We also told him that our beloved daughter, Jane, had been born in Zambia, and discovered that he had attended in Harare, Zimbabwe the same university (where Sandy and I met in 1961) that we had graduated from some 30 years earlier in Salisbury, Rhodesia, as it was then.

We subsequently gave the minister the flier for display in his church.

Our neighbours have attended all but one of the devotionals since, and we have been supported by Baha'i friends from Newport, Maesteg and Cowbridge. We decided to hold the meetings every second Tuesday in July (our neighbours being away part of the time), and have again taken fliers to the two churches. We live in the hope that our efforts may bring some benefits to those attending.

Peter & Sandra Jenkins



To My Friends...

To all my Bahá'ís Friends

I count myself very lucky to have discovered the Bahá'í Community in South Wales

I had been asking God for a community I could belong to when I left another spiritual organisation last year. Strange how our prayers are answered, and, even stranger that we are shocked when they are answered!

I had met some Bahá'ís over 20 years ago at an Interfaith Centre, so the doorway had already been opened for me. Then my friend Phillipa invited me to a devotional meeting at her house and I was amazed at how friendly everyone was and felt immediately at home in the community.

Since then I have been privileged to meet so many more of the community and am so grateful to all those who have taught me and accompanied me on my journey. My friend, Viv, gave me a copy of "Paris Talks" by 'Abdu'l-Bahá when teaching me the Ruhi book 1.

As I started to read it I found myself thinking I THOUGHT THAT TOO and, gradually came to the understanding that I had been a Bahá'í most of my life and never knew it.



The warmth of the community is amazing and I never cease to be thankful for the TREASURE I have found within it. I have met and shared The Writings and Prayers with many of the older Bahá'ís. They have kept the GEMS OF INESTIMABLE VALUE nurtured and watered in readiness to plant them as seeds in the hearts of the newer members of The Cause.

Peace and Light
Ann Evans

Editors' reflection

Ann has given us a wonderful insight into the importance of making true friendships and accompanying those friends on their journeys of discovery and service. Ann, herself, is already seeking out her own friends and inviting them to participate in whatever way she feels they would feel comfortable. This might be taking friends to meet Bahá'ís, sharing prayers with them or inviting them to study or come to devotionals.

The Writings in Welsh

O fy Nuw!

Na fydded i mi unrhyw ddrwg mewn cyfnodau o dreialon, ac mewn munudau diofal arwain fy nghamau yn gywir trwy Dy ysbrydoliaeth.

Y Báb

O My God

Let no harm beset me in times of tests, and in moments of heedlessness guide my steps aright through Thine inspiration.

The Báb

COMMUNITY NEWS



Goodbye

Cardiff community sends a fond farewell to long term resident Kerry McGrath. Kerry, and her new husband Tom are packing their bags for life in Malaysia. Wishing them both all the best for the move - Kerry will be missed by all.

North Wales Cluster Reflection Meeting

Friends in North Wales gather together for the Cluster Meeting – teas & coffee fuelling all.



Abercarn 'Hub'

Abercarn now hosts some occasional Saturday morning meetings in between the Cluster Reflection meeting to enable friends to share stories and continue to encourage one another. The space has been named "The Hub" and is a mix of devotional, reflection and fireside space.

Photo shows Asif from Newport with Viv and Fleur singing one of Asif's own songs.



Bahá'í Council for Wales

Council Secretary: bcw@bahai.org.uk
any correspondence for the treasurer to be sent to this address also.

Publication of photographs of children under 18 years of age

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Bahá'í Council for Wales

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How friends accompany one another

I've been a Bahá'í for over 30 years and it has been one of my dreams to open up my small home for Bahá'í activities. A Bahá'í friend (Ann) asked me if she could use my home for a study circle. If I were younger (I'm 76) I would have jumped to the moon and back. I've just learned that her friend has just declared. I feel that my patience has paid off. I'm so happy. Thank you Bahá'u'lláh. After I was first asked to host the study circle, Ann and I decided that, for this friend, it would be good to start off with showing her a few videos. So we held a fireside where a video of Kevin Locke (Native American Indian Bahá'í and Hoop Dancer) was played. At another time some of the World Congress video was shown, in particular, the diversity of humanity and the talks of Rúhiyyih Khanum.

Mavis Bodenham

NEW Prayer app now features Welsh Language

Bahá'í prayers in Welsh are now available to read on-line by going to <https://BahaiPrayers.net>

It is an app with many other languages, Welsh being the latest to be included (with the English translation underneath each prayer).



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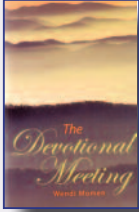
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Bahá'í Books UK

Devotional Meetings

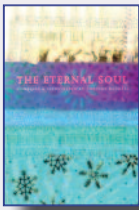


THE DEVOTIONAL MEETING

by *Wendi Momen*

This book looks at: the devotional life of the individual; the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár; planning devotional meetings; using music and arts; hospitality and provides more than 50 examples of devotional meetings from all parts of the world.

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