

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

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Dearly loved Friends,

The National Spiritual Assembly would like to share with you news of some recent developments in its ongoing efforts to serve the community.

### **The progress of the Five Year Plan**

From 2 to 4 September, the National Spiritual Assembly was privileged to consult with Counsellor Alison Milston, member of the International Teaching Centre – along with European Counsellors Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi and Saba Mazza. For three highly stimulating and insightful days, we reviewed the progress of the community over the past two decades and, studying guidance of the Universal House of Justice, deepened on a number of conceptual aspects of the Five Year Plan, particularly in relation to the process of human resource development.

The meeting was one of only nine such gatherings taking place across the globe – in Brazil, Canada, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Kenya, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Tajikistan and the United Kingdom.

Throughout the consultation, the National Spiritual Assembly's understanding was further deepened in several areas, including: the centrality of the training institute for the process of growth; the particular role of the National Assembly in systematically following progress of the institute process and clusters; and the need to learn how to gather and analyse relevant information, document understandings, insights and learning, and share them appropriately. As a result, the National Assembly understood that it must now, in full collaboration with the Institution of the Counsellors, begin to function more strategically.

This will significantly impact the way the National Assembly operates. To this end, arrangements are now being put in place to enable it to pursue these aims and assist the community to a victorious conclusion to the current series of Plans in 2021.

The National Assembly, along with the Counsellors, offered prayers on behalf of the entire UK Bahá'í community and its institutions, at the Resting Place of Shoghi Effendi, beseeching Bahá'u'lláh for divine assistance and confirmations.

## **Bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, October 2017**

In just eleven months' time, the entire Bahá'í world will mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, entering into a unique period that will also include the Bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb in 2019. The National Assembly has been consulting on appropriate ways of marking this most profound of occasions, to rise to the expectations of the House of Justice, as stated in a letter written on its behalf dated 18 May 2016, "that in countless places across the world, both rural settings and urban centres, the friends will find creative ways to honour the Twin Manifestations... and to convey a sense of what it means for humanity that these two Luminaries rose successively above the horizon of the world."

It is the National Assembly's hope that every believer, community and Assembly, through their pursuit of the activities of the Five Year Plan between now and October 2017, will strive to reach out to the widest possible cross-section of society, in preparation for a "tremendous flourishing of activity" by Bahá'ís and their friends to mark these auspicious occasions. The National Assembly is developing resources to support this effort, and eagerly looks forward to hearing about the community's creative responses to the call of the House of Justice.

### **The law of Huqúqu'lláh**

On Saturday 29 October, the National Assembly was delighted to consult, together with Counsellor Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi, with the Regional Board of Trustees of Huqúqu'lláh for Ireland and the UK, and to learn that there has been a significant rise in communities holding gatherings to reflect on this important law. The number of such deepenings has risen dramatically in the past year, as have the number of believers who are striving to apply this law. The meeting was characterised by a strong spirit of common purpose and the sharing of future plans.

### **Developments at 17 Royal York Crescent, Bristol**

Efforts are continuing to restore the apartment in Bristol – where the beloved Master stayed on two separate occasions in 1911 and 1913 – as a place of historic and spiritual importance, which will in due course be open to the friends for visits. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had blessed each room in the building and expressed His hope that it would become "a centre of peace and rest" and "a centre for pilgrims".

Following permission being granted by Bristol City Council for the site to become a place of prayer and meditation, the National Assembly has been reviewing developments with the team appointed to oversee the renovation process. Modern additions to the apartment will now be stripped back, hopefully to reveal more information about its authentic appearance at the time when the Master visited. We feel sure that the friends will join with us in prayers and the raising of the necessary resources to see this project through to completion.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,



Patrick O'Mara,  
Secretary