

NATIONAL CONVENTION 2016 RECOMMENDATIONS – 22-24 April 2016

Subject	Recommendation	Response
Residential Schools	In line with strengthening the pattern of action in the new Plan, and to allow Bahá'ís and their friends to experience a Bahá'í atmosphere in a larger setting, <i>National Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly</i> consider encouraging even wider participation in regional residential schools and, in time, increasing the number of schools by organising them at the sub-regional level. In this way, Bahá'ís and their friends can experience and be empowered by being part of a nurturing, inspiring and exhilarating larger community. The schools could build on the strengths and themes of local core activities that Bahá'ís and their friends are already engaged in.	The National Spiritual Assembly had a fruitful and creative consultation regarding encouraging wider participation at Summer Schools and looks forward to seeing further developments as the plan unfolds. The National Assembly has also asked the Regional Bahá'í Councils to incorporate courses into Summer School that can encourage wider participation from seekers and newly declared believers.
National and Regional events	<i>National Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly</i> continue its strenuous efforts to keep the cost to a minimum. Also, it asks that the National Assembly ensure that the invitations to such events are issued sensitively and are as inclusive as possible and not selective	The National Assembly consulted upon this recommendation in great detail and notes that some friends were concerned that the Institutional Gatherings were not open to everyone to attend. As the name of the gatherings suggests, they are primarily intended for representatives of institutions as well as other friends who are working closely with the institutions in support of their plans. It was the first time in the United Kingdom that such gatherings were held at regional level, and hence it was a learning process for all. As a result the process of invitation needed to be flexible and it was found that as more of the gatherings were held, the extent of the invitations evolved in light of the learning garnered. Given that this is a new experience for the institutions, it is hoped that the friends will be patient as they learn about these events and the nature of the invitations

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		that are extended to participants. Nevertheless, the National Assembly will highlight for the relevant institutions the need for care and sensitivity in issuing invitations.
Children's Classes	<i>National Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly consider ways in which the experience / learning that has been gained in starting children's classes in a variety of settings is shared more widely, including any materials if available.</i>	This recommendation has been shared with the four regional training institute boards for their consideration.
Communication	<i>National Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly consider sending to all Local Assembly and group secretaries or all believers the links which are available to them, such as:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bahaidata.com • webchannel9 • others of this kind <i>Lots of valuable information and ideas are not available to the friends merely because they are ignorant of the existence of such online resources.</i>	It is the practice of the National Assembly to do this every May after the election of Local Spiritual Assemblies and this will be continued
Five Year Plan	<i>National Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly encourages institutions and agencies of the Faith to develop plans for the six cycles (18 months) up to the first bicentennial anniversary on 22 October 2017.</i>	The National Spiritual Assembly will encourage individuals, teaching teams, friends in neighbourhoods etc. to set their own goals for the first six cycles of the Plan. We note too that clusters agencies, even prior to the beginning of the Plan, had set goals for their clusters. Prior to setting the overall goals for the number of clusters to reach the second and third milestones, the National Spiritual Assembly will consult with the Regional Bahá'í Councils.
National Community building conference	National Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly reinstate annual national teaching conferences but with another name, such as 'national community building conference'. These conferences would be open to all Bahá'ís, and special encouragement and focus would also be given to inviting those from the community of	The National Spiritual Assembly embraces the spirit of this recommendation and is now actively looking into the possibility and

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	<p>interest who are involved with the work. The programme would revolve around the guidance, stories and experience of those active in community building, whether believer or otherwise. The programme would also include artistic/creative presentations and inspiring talks.</p>	<p>advisability of holding a national conference open to all, including family, friends and neighbours of Bahá'ís, that will take place during the forthcoming Bicentenary period.</p>
<p>Participation in discourses</p>	<p><i>National Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly</i> in collaboration with the Office of Public Affairs, consider ways in which insights gleaned and learning generated through participation in prevalent discourses at both the local and national level can be regularly shared and disseminated with the friends throughout the UK.</p>	<p>At this time, the experience of the Office of Public Affairs to engage in discourses is primarily shared with the community through the National Assembly's annual report, and the National Assembly may also comment on the discourse work from time to time in communications sent on NEWS. However, we are pleased to share that a website is being developed specifically for the Office of Public Affairs, and this will include further information on discourses, such as news of events and any written or oral submissions arranged by the Office. Subjects covered on the website will include the freedom of religion and belief, economic prosperity and religious education.</p>
<p>Unit Convention</p>	<p><i>National Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly</i> consider changing the date of Unit Convention from early December to early October. This will mean the Unit Convention will be held earlier in the year when the weather is likely to be more clement and thus more friends from the Unit (South West Scotland) are likely to attend Unit Convention. In recent years the participation has been low owing to the inclement weather in early December. Attendance at the Unit Convention has shown to be energising for many friends and leads to higher levels of engagement with community building activities.</p>	<p>Subject to learning and feedback in light of the new arrangements for unit convention, the National Assembly is minded to experiment with changing the dates to around early October. However, given that the bicentennial celebrations will be happening in October 2017, this change will not be implemented until 2018. The National Assembly will consider, as it always</p>

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		does, how to encourage greater participation at the upcoming unit convention.
Funds of the Faith	<p><i>National Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly consider making deepening materials on the Fund available to all the friends.</i></p> <p><i>National Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly consider putting together an audio-visual presentation highlighting how the National Fund is being spent and making this available to all friends.</i></p>	In light of these recommendations and also the paragraphs in the 29 December 2015 message of the Universal House of Justice to the Conference of the Counsellors concerning the funds, the National Spiritual Assembly has decided to make the subject of the strengthening of the Institution of the National Fund an important area of learning and development during the course of the coming Plan. This will include the provision of deepening materials and providing information to the community on how the funds of the Faith are being used.
Funds of the Faith	In order to assist the National Spiritual Assembly in making plans and budgeting for the year, <i>National Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly consider asking Local Assemblies and groups to inform the National Assembly how much money they will contribute to the National Fund in the upcoming year.</i>	The National Spiritual Assembly has created a deepening programme, which is intended to contribute to the strengthening and development of Local Spiritual Assemblies particularly in relation to the role of the institution in the support and advancement of the teaching work. An important element of this is the capacity to create and implement plans one of the outcomes of which is a budget that supports the plans made. Such a budget would naturally include contributions to the Regional Bahá'í Council and the National Funds. This programme has been made

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		available to Auxiliary Board members and Regional Bahá'í Councils for their use.
Funds of the Faith	<i>National Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly</i> distribute the PowerPoint presentation on the work being done at the site of the Guardian's Resting Place. Using photos and architectural / other drawings, the presentation would make the work, the plans and the current financial needs more tangible to the friends.	The National Assembly agreed that a presentation will be produced in a sharable format and would be reviewed by the National Assembly before distribution.
Funds of the Faith	<i>National Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly</i> encourage those friends who are UK taxpayers to contribute to their local fund via the national fund, in order for the National Assembly to collect Gift Aid on those contributions.	This is the current policy and practice of the National Spiritual Assembly
Funds of the Faith	<i>National Convention requests that the National Spiritual Assembly</i> reconfigure its growth / teaching funding allowance to enable adequate resources to match the 'Herculean Task' needed in the next six cycles and beyond. This is in light of information in the annual report showing that £133,072 was spent on growth; that the Growth Fund has a surplus of £687,196; and that the Deputisation Fund has a surplus of £41,910. A flow of funds into the Faith and a generous outpouring for growth surely attracts the confirmations of Baha'u'llah. A healthy reserve of funds may be deemed necessary but too much 'storing' may clog the flow of funds.	The spirit of this recommendation, which is to ensure that the funds of the Faith flow freely, is deeply appreciated by the National Assembly. Indeed, this inspired a number of related discussions on the flow and use of the funds, through which certain lines of action are being put in place. It should be noted, however, that the Growth Fund is an endowment fund consisting of donations from legacies. Moreover, the reserves that currently stand in the National Assembly's balance sheet were set up to secure the financial situation of the National Assembly on the advice of the Universal House of Justice.