UNIDOD

UNITY

The official Newsletter of the Bahá'í Council for Wales

Winter 2016 – 173 B.E

ONE PEOPLE





'The object of life to a Bahá'í is to promote the oneness of mankind; Our aim is to produce a world civilization which in turn will react on the character of the individual'.

Shoghi Effendi, 'The Priceless Pearl'



'...it is important for individuals and institutions to create spaces together so as to collectively support and encourage each other in our diverse acts of service.

...page 5

'My lasting memories of Bahá'í Summer School is the welcoming, familial atmosphere and the vibrant, kind people we met.'

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'I wanted to tell everybody at school about the Bahá'í Faith...' 'The purpose of the day was to explore the diversity of faiths in Wales...'

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...page 10

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Views expressed in Undod may not necessarily be those of the editors or the Bahá'í Council for Wales or of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom.

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Message from the

Bahá'í Council for Wales

Dearly loved Friends,

The current membership of the council started its term of service on 25th November, the Day of the Covenant this year, then on the first weekend in December all the UK Councils attended a meeting with the National Spiritual Assembly at Rutland Gate. Here we all studied guidance on the role and functioning of regional Councils. We are being urged to attain to ever higher levels of functioning in light of the 'herculean labour' required to reach the goals set before us for the remainder of the five year plan.

In its Ridván 2016 message the Universal House of Justice stated that

'by concentrating on the advances 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'.

We are now nearly halfway through that period so the Council has much to learn how best to accompany the friends in Wales in their efforts. We were able to consult in depth with Counsellor Shirin Fozdar Foroudi who encouraged us to adopt a humble posture of learning and to think in new ways. One outcome of this was the decision not to rush to appoint new members of the South Wales but to see what capacities naturally emerge from the groups, It is thanks to the valiant efforts of all the friends who have served on the ATC for so many years that the process is strong enough in South Wales for the Council to have full confidence that activities will continue to grow and develop through the mutual support of friends working together in the interim period. Of course the Training Institute and Auxiliary Board will have a full part to play. Indeed an area for learning over the coming year will be how to strengthen the relationship between the different agencies in Wales.

This edition of Undod gives many examples of the activities happening throughout Wales.

The Council would particularly like to draw your attention to the article on the importance of the celebration of the Bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh in 2017.

May the blessings of Bahá'u'lláh accompany you in all the services you offer to him over the coming year.

With love to all,

The Bahá'í Council for Wales

The Bahá'í Writings in Welsh

O Arglwydd Caredig! Plentyn bach wyf fi, dyrchafa fi trwy fy nerbyn i'r deyrnas. Daearol wyf fi, gwna fi'n nefol; o'r byd islaw rwyf fi, gad i mi berthyn i'r deyrnas uwchlaw; yn dywyll drist, caniata i mi fod yn ddisglair; yn faterol, gwna fi yn ysbrydol, a chaniata i mi amlygu Dy roddion diderfyn. Ti yw'r Grymus, yr Holl-Gariadus.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

O Thou kind Lord! I am a little child, exalt me by admitting me to the kingdom. I am earthly, make me heavenly; I am of the world below, let me belong to the realm above; gloomy, suffer me to become radiant; material, make me spiritual, and grant that I may manifest Thine infinite bounties. Thou art the Powerful, the All-Loving.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

A time to celebrate!

Next year sees the Bicentenary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh, with the Twin Holy Days celebrating the births of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh falling on the weekend of 21/22 October.

The Universal House of Justice wrote to all National Spiritual Assemblies on 18 May, calling for befitting celebrations to be held specifically at the local level to celebrate the bicentennial anniversary of the birth of, 'the Bearer of a new message for humankind.' The National Spiritual Assembly then drew this to the communities' attention through a letter to the Feast of Kalimát.

The Bahá'í Council for Wales now wants to repeat this call, but draw one particular aspect of this to your attention. The Universal House of Justice are not giving us so much advance notice because they expect celebrations of such grandeur and complexity that we need this time to prepare. Rather, they call us to consider the first 18 months of this Plan – the first six cycles – in this light:

'The steps taken during these months, and the achievements that come as a result, will constitute an offering of ardent love, yielded collectively to Him Who is the Unifier of the world on the bicentenary of His Birth.'



Thus, they are giving us this advance notice so that we can ensure that we have taken steps that are worthy of being such an offering of love.

These steps, our personal and collective teaching plans, will no doubt enable us to widen and deepen the connections we have in the community around us, and the celebrations will then provide an

opportunity for us to convey to these souls what the coming of Bahá'u'lláh and His Divine Mission 'means for humanity'.

The Universal House of Justice is clear that this 'auspicious occasion', will release 'spiritual forces' propelling us forward in the Plan and enabling, 'a tremendous flourishing of activity'.

The Council calls on the friends in Wales to reflect, individually and collectively, on what steps we will take, in the year that now remains, to offer to Bahá'u'lláh when we come to celebrate the bicentenary of His birth.

Bahá'í Council for Wales

An Auxiliary Board member's Perspective on 2016 - transitioning from one plan to the next

Whilst I was enjoying a cosy winter holiday cottage in Beaumaris, Anglesey, and hugging the wood burning stove after a particularly bracing walk along the beach, the letter to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors touched down on the 29th December 2015.

Although eager to read its contents, I was also slightly in awe of what the guidance would be for the next five year plan, and very conscious that we would return to study this letter repeatedly in the coming months and years in different groups, and settings. Two hours, and a cup of tea later, it was clear that the worldwide community was about to experience a huge learning curve to respond to the call of the House of Justice. In particular, the role of the Auxiliary Board members was highlighted in paragraph 48:

'They are concerned with much of what occurs in the community; attentive both to the development of each stage of the educational process and to the strengthening of the cycles of activity, they promote coherence among the lines of action being advanced in a cluster and fan into flame a passion for teaching. In the exercise of their responsibility to foster learning and to help the friends enter the arena of service, they draw heavily on the training institute, aspects of whose work align closely with theirs. But their other duties are equally demanding'.

Everything has felt like a whirlwind since then - first the cascade of the study of the letter - the UK National Institutional gathering in Heathrow in January, the weekend with the UK Auxiliary Board members and Counsellor Shirin Fozdar Foroudi in February, regional gatherings in March and April, and then assessing the goals of the last plan reached by Ridván 2016, and, hitting the ground running for the new plan. This required the institutions to learn quickly, and it was so touching and uplifting as souls visibly strove together to grasp the implications of the changes required to fulfil the plan in front of us. Despite the overwhelming challenges, I felt huge gratitude for the beautiful way in which the House of Justice laid out the lessons gained worldwide - enabling us all to clearly define and describe the 1st, 2nd and 3rd milestones - the initial markers of our progressive journey to unfold the process of building communities as described in paragraph 2:

'.....raising communities whose habits of thought and action are rooted in Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation.'



My move in November 2015 from a town in rural Cheshire, where I was an isolated believer, to home-front pioneer in urban Birmingham, not only reduced my consumption of petrol, but also gave me the joy of being part of a small group of friends serving and learning together in a focused neighbourhood in Edgbaston.

That's a story which can be told another time, but important to mention here is the benefit of walking a path of service in the company of a group of friends, sharing unqualified love to mutually support each other through the most testing times, and maintain commitment to longterm sustained action. As stated in paragraph 7 of the 29th December letter, it is one of the features of passing the 1st milestone:

'Before long, there forms a nucleus of friends in a cluster who are working and consulting together and arranging activities. For the process of growth to advance further, the number of people sharing this commitment must rise, and their capacity for undertaking systematic action within the framework of the Plan must correspondingly increase'.

I am aware that many friends in Wales have to sustain themselves in quite isolated locations, adding to the challenge to work systematically, and to recover from setbacks in service. This is why it is important for individuals and institutions to create spaces together so as to collectively support and encourage each other in our diverse acts of service. With this pattern of study, action, reflection, it becomes possible to recognise progress and identify the next steps to take.

continues on page 5...

Another challenge in Wales is that there are very few local spiritual assemblies, cluster agencies or Institute coordinators at present. So, if it is difficult to meet with others to pray and serve together regularly, there is a need to find creative solutions to sustain the pledge of service to Bahá'u'lláh. Our spiritual sustenance begins with our individual daily

devotions and study of the writings, and without this inner transformation, we will have little effect on the communities around

But even this daily obligation can be testing for many different reasons. I would urge everyone to find a way of feeling connected to the collective movement, maybe through a phone buddy or a Skype buddy if there is no one nearby. Additionally, in paragraph 16 we are reminded of the process which began in the last plan, which helps us find new people to accompany us:

'...inviting the participation of friends, co-workers, extended family, and acquaintances did much to raise the

level of activity throughout the cluster. Indeed, widening the circle of participation in this way has become a familiar aspect of Bahá'í life and remains essential'

And, paragraph 14 stresses the importance of the Word of God and conversations of significance.

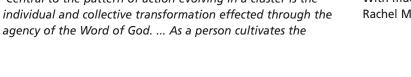
'Central to the pattern of action evolving in a cluster is the individual and collective transformation effected through the habit of study and deep reflection upon the Creative Word, this process of transformation reveals itself in an ability to express one's understanding of profound concepts and to explore spiritual reality in conversations of significance.'

> It would be lovely to hear stories from individuals in Wales who are learning how to use the opportunities of their own unique circumstances in order to further develop their process over the next 12 months in response to the final call of the House of Justice in paragraph 50:

'During the Five Year Plan about to commence, there will occur two momentous occasions of this kind: the two-hundred-year anniversaries of the Birth of Rahá'u'lláh and of the Birth of the Báb in 2017 and 2019 respectively.

These glorious Festivals will be opportunities for Bahá'ís in every land to attract the largest possible number of believers, their families, friends, and collaborators, as well as others from the wider society, to commemorate moments when a Being peerless in creation, a Manifestation of God, was born to the world.'

With much love, Rachel Murray, Auxiliary Board member for protection.



Following on...

Undod has already heard of one area where making connections has begun: In the Criccieth area a multi-faith reaching-out project started a few years ago, known as The Women's Wing of Prayer. People are invited to join for prayers to strengthen the, 'women's wing' of the world, a prerequisite to world peace, by joining together each Friday to pray for women in dire need all around the world, especially in war torn countries and zones. The group already has some international members in Australia, Canada, Norway, as well as in the UK, so think in terms of meeting in prayer, if not in person. There is no set time. Those who can meet do. Others link prayers over the telephone/Skype. A widespread growing group begins meditating at 10am UK time. A reminder email link goes out each Thursday evening.

There is also a request that if anyone would like to link in prayer to support Gerry Williams' chaplaincy devotional at Ysbyty Gwynedd, on the first Tuesday of the month (at 6.30 pm) you would be most welcome. Gerry has staunchly held that beacon of light aloft for several years with some Bahá'ís supporting him by praying at home.

If anyone would like to link in with either of these prayer initiatives contact Undod and we will pass your name on.

CREATIVE EXPRESSION

'The Prisoner

The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá are rich in exquisite imagery that inspires our own creative language. But in deep contrast to the beautiful images conjured up by the 'sweet-scented streams' and the 'fragrant breezes of Thy joy' is a dark and sorrowful imagery that takes us to a place

far removed from that lightness of being that so invigorates our souls.

The Prisoner, a folded book, is, in a small way, an attempt to tell the story of the darkness and sorrow that befell Bahá'u'lláh.

Folded books, also known as 'origami books' and

'maze books', take many forms. For the purpose of making this book I have used the 'hidden book' format. In my artwork I like to incorporate an element of story-telling; folded books are ideally suited to this.

The initial inspiration for the book came through the Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as He describes His Father's suffering in the Síyáh-Chál.

His Words are both shocking and heart rending. I felt my book needed to be dark; to have a heaviness about it that would try to express something of the horrors of the place in which Bahá'u'lláh was incarcerated.

The book itself is encased in an outer folder, representing the 'containment' of Bahá'u'lláh. The viewer must first undo the twine that fastens it; a symbolic gesture that resonates with the chains

that bound Bahá'u'lláh. The open outer casing reveals the

folded book that lies inside; this is also fastened with twine. It is a slow process . . . The words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá tell the story of the imprisonment of Bahá'u'lláh; His words are simple but laden down with sorrow. The images I chose to

> illustrate His words are an attempt to take us to that place; they are purposefully dark and shocking. We can't know the depths of the suffering of Bahá'u'lláh but perhaps we can momentarily glimpse the edges of its shadow.

At the last pages we are plunged into grief as we read 'Abdu'l-Bahá's final words: '. . . the burning pain of the stocks and fetters gave Him no moment's peace.' But then we remember this is a 'hidden book' - there is more to come. And for us at least, there might be some relief.

As the book is refolded it reveals its secret, hidden message inside. Set against an image representing stained glass, the Words of Bahá'u'lláh ring out. . . here is the explanation; the reason for Bahá'u'lláh's imprisonment and His sacrifice. This background image is also dark, representing the presence of His suffering that still remains; but the gold painted edges of the paper represent the light of His Faith that has emerged from the depths of sorrow and ordeal, and enables us, His followers, to '. . . attain unto abiding joy .

. . ' with heartfelt gratitude.

The book is constructed from a variety of handmade and machine made papers and illustrated with pencil drawing, digital print, scrim fabric, pencil rubbings and calligraphy.

Carolyn Moss-Williams



It's all about the ingredients

Mavis recently held her first devotional meeting at her home in Griffithstown. Mavis, Ann and I were all looking forward to sharing information about the opening of the new Temple in Chile. Indira, a new friend of Mavis', (who she had met at the cake stall in Asda) came to the meeting. She had never heard of the Bahá'í Faith and seemed very interesting in learning more about it. We changed our planned devotional material and just responded to her by having a general discussion about our Faith.

We all had a wonderful afternoon with plenty of cakes and other goodies provided by Mavis. Indira left with some books given to her by Mavis and we are hopeful that she will join us again one day.

A wonderful Welsh Summer School

Stories and insights from those who attended

It was my second time attending the Welsh Summer School and I had a good time. The school had a lovely community spirit and I found the course I was on to be very insightful. I'm planning to attend again next year; although I might need to remember to bring more clothes as I got covered in mud when I tried out the quad biking!

Matthew Thompson

The marriage course I did was very helpful and interesting. I'm so glad I chose it. Even though I am young and not as experienced as others, I really felt that my contributions to the sessions were listened to, and hearing what other people from different backgrounds had to say on the subject was very useful. It was lovely to talk to so many new people, and catch up with old friends. The facilities were really good, the staff very friendly. I loved being able to choose a different activity to do every day - I was able to try new things and have fun. I especially enjoyed the archery and quad bikes, but I loved the walk we had over to the beach. My whole experience was amazing, and I highly recommend it to anyone and everyone.

Greta Bosma (age 15 at summer school)





This summer, my family and I attended the Bahá'í Summer School in Llangrannog. My son, Tom, attended children's classes and really enjoyed his time there. Darryl and I signed up for a workshop on Marriage. I found the workshop a very peaceful, creative space to relax and talk. My lasting memories of Bahá'í Summer School is the welcoming, familial atmosphere and the vibrant, kind people we met. We also enjoyed the varied activities in the afternoons ... and the beautiful setting.

Kate Tucker



I was very happy to be able to attend the 2016 Welsh Summer School. Work has been so demanding, that I haven't been able to join in many local activities. When I saw that I could actually attend this year, I quickly booked the dates. It was wonderful to see old friends and meet new ones. I think there were over 200 people attending. How soul-lifting to meet a diversity of friends and witness the power of the Faith.

The five days gave me time to reflect, assess, reassess, and to immerse myself in the Writings. There was also time to mingle, sing, laugh, serve, and simply recharge the batteries. I absolutely loved the talent night and had a blast joining in the show! I am looking forward to the next Summer School and hoping dates are set soon so that I can save them! Hope to meet you there!

Carol Adams

Pontybodkin Live!

Last Friday, 14th October, Rosie Smith performed a house concert for Stephen and me at our home in Pontybodkin. We had 22 guests and everyone loved the beautiful weaves of songs and stories. It was mostly local friends and neighbours who came, bringing food to share for supper. Because Rosie talks about her life and experiences there are many references to how the Bahá'í Faith moves and motivates her. The evening has given us the opportunity to extend invitations to our weekly devotional gatherings.

Every Monday evening around six to eight of us enjoy some peaceful time reading, sharing and reflecting together. Winona and David Hardy live in the next village and come along too so it has increased our enthusiasm!

Love from Anne Maund



UK Bahá'í Histories Project

Have you thought about writing your Bahá'í story? UK BAHÁ'Í HISTORIES are endeavouring to collect as many 'stories' as possible of how UK believers have become Bahá'ís. The Welsh Bahá'ís have done especially well to date in writing their stories.

However, please don't delay in writing your own story. Not only is it going to be interesting to others, it will become a valuable part of our national Bahá'í history. Especially welcome are stories from new Bahá'ís and those young in age. To send in your story, or for further guidance as to how to go about it, please contact:

Jenny Lockwood on **01242 676597** or email: **bhp1uk@gmail.com**. You can also follow us on our Facebook page: **http://www.facebook.com/** or follow us on Twitter: **@bahaihistoryuk**

Teaching the teachers in Crickhowell



'I wanted to tell everybody at school about the Bahá'í Faith so that maybe they would like to look into it. So I decided to do a PowerPoint about the opening of the new Bahá'í Chilean Temple and all the other Bahá'í Temples. My teacher said I could do it for the wholeschool assembly on the 20th

October, but I should also tell them about the Founder of the Faith. I picked a friend who I thought had no idea about it so we could learn together and we made the PowerPoint and a script. I also made some Bahá'í prayer cards to hand out during assembly and some traditional Chilean biscuits to hand out to my class and my brother handed out to his class. The biscuits were sweet, coconutty and lovely.

The assembly went well and we got some questions at the end, like:

What's your favourite Temple? Have you ever been in one of the Temples?

I said that I had been in the Ugandan Temple when we lived in Uganda and that my favourite Temples were the Ugandan and Indian ones.'

Daisy Ochom

A day that got me thinking about Huquq'u'llah

In the first week of November I attended a two-day regional conference run by the Institute of Fundraising. The plush and comfortable luxury of the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Chester, was a surreal backdrop for the theme of the conference – which, no matter how it is presented, is the always the same: 'How can charities secure income for their cause, increase giving, and encourage people to leave legacies in their Wills?' Every charity there was worthy of support and I met a lot of very dedicated people striving to make the world a better place from their particular area of influence. It's a very hard job.

After the day spent networking, I headed to the cinema with a friend to watch 'I, Daniel Blake'. This film was an education for me as I hadn't fully realised there existed such gaping holes in the welfare state system. The story shows us poverty, sacrifice, tragedy, fear, injustice and wasted lives. We left the cinema in tears.

I know I can't solve all the problems in the world. I can try to be more aware and mindful of other people, more considerate, a better friend and neighbour, more generous to charity, to the Food Bank. I can do all these things, but still the world is in turmoil. But when we look at the broken lives of so many, we don't need to feel powerless. We can be grateful, for the Law of Huqúqu'lláh.

In the document 'The Right of God and its relevance to the current Plan' it states: ... 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'.

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'.²

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.

Since 'poverty cannot be alleviated without a just distribution of material wealth among the peoples of the world ... the institution of Huqúqu'lláh provides a powerful means for fostering the prosperity of humankind.'³

Here, the Law of the Right of God sheds light on the connection between justice, unity, and reciprocity.

The friends have been charged with carrying forward an ever-advancing civilization, both materially and spiritually prosperous, representing the next stage of the evolution of humanity. Each one of us has not only, 'the right to benefit from a materially and spiritually prosperous civilization' but also the 'obligation to contribute towards its construction'4

The Law of Huqúqu'lláh, which touches every aspect of our lives - and not simply our financial transactions can inflame the hearts of all, and provide the material and spiritual resources to transform the planet.

If you would like further information or to arrange a study workshop or a visit in your area, please see back page for details.



Reference

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

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

(3)Social Action: A paper prepared by the Office of Social and Economic Development at the Bahá'í World Centre, 26 November 2012.

(4) Ibid.

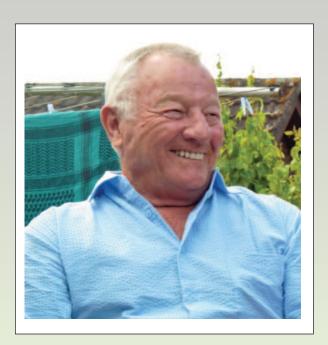
COMMUNITY NEWS

Les Gumsley 9.4.46 – 16.10.16

On the 1st November (the Birth of the Báb) Les Gumsley was laid to rest in the hollow of a peaceful and uplifting meadow burial ground at Usk, surrounded by his dearest family and friends. Writings and prayers from the Bahá'í scriptures were read at the spot including readings by his grandchildren.

Les, originally from Nottingham, was lovingly described by friends as a very intelligent, loyal and humorous man. He was a 'fixer', but not of things; he wanted to fix people, for them to have the best out of life; in particular, he had a great influence on young people who were touched by his kindness, modesty, forgiveness, generosity and sharp intelligent questioning. Les also loved old people, all of the elderly neighbours looked upon Les as the man in charge. The reception, following his burial was held at the Bridges Centre in Monmouth where Les did voluntary work helping older women.

He loved travelling, with June, his wife, and friends, and they visited a great many parts of the world. Wherever they went he could often be heard remarking, 'We could live here, June!'



Inter Faith Day

A window on world faiths

Organised by Dyfed-Powys Police at their Headquarters in Carmarthen with representation from all areas of mid and south Wales.

The purpose of the day was to explore the diversity of faiths in Wales and to provide a safe environment in which to learn from each other and develop an understanding of the things we have in common.

Bahá'í communities of South and Mid Wales were invited to send representatives to this exciting new initiative by the Police in Carmarthen.



We were able to set up an information table and interact with the other invited groups joining in lots of discussion and making great contacts. Represented were Islam, various Christian groups, several Buddhist groups, Hindus, Sikhs, the Polish community and the Nepalese community, both in traditional dress, and other organisations like the Migrant

> Support Group from Cardiff. It was a vibrant and colourful occasion with lots of dialogue and interaction between the groups, plus music and traditional dancing.

The representative from the Black Association of Women Step Out (BAWSO) gave a graphic and instructive account of

Female Genital Mutilation which affects many girls and women in Wales from African roots.

Hopefully the Interfaith Day will be an annual event and become a source of greater cohesion in our communities.

Rita Green

Bahá'í Council

for Wales

Council Secretary: Council Treasurer: Small Projects: bcw@bahai.org.uk treasurer@bahai.org bcw.projects@bahai.org.uk

Publication of photographs of children under 18 years of age

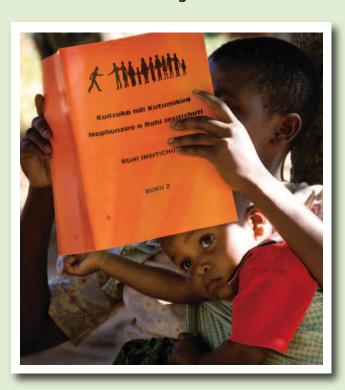
Under the terms of the Child Protection Act images of children may only be published if parental permission has been received. Permission may be implied by the sending of a photograph by a parent or legal guardian, otherwise it must be given in writing or by email from the child's parent or legal guardian when submitting the photograph/s to Undod's editorial team. Please continue to post or email photographs to Undod accompanied by the necessary permission.

Bahá'í Council for Wales

New Pre-Publication Institute Email

The new email address for pre-publication institute materials such as the new Book 3, books 8-10, and several of the JY books has been changed to:

tibmaterials@bahai.org.uk



Change of Address?

Please email: **records@bahai.org.uk**Telephone: **020 7584 2566** (office hours)

Huqúqu'lláh Representatives

South Wales - Anis Zeighamnia: anis.zgh@gmail.com 07928 436 224

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- The latest guidance from the Universal House of Justice
- National Assembly reports
- Dates of training sessions around the UK
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Bahá'í Books UK

Expressing Faith through Poetry



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