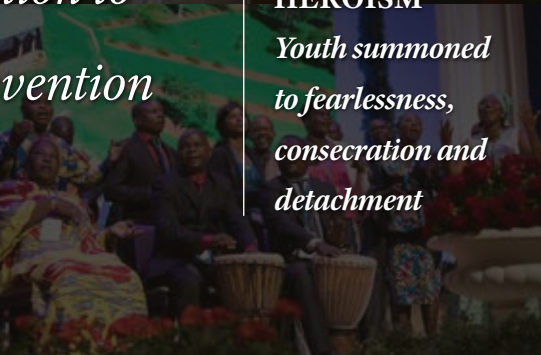
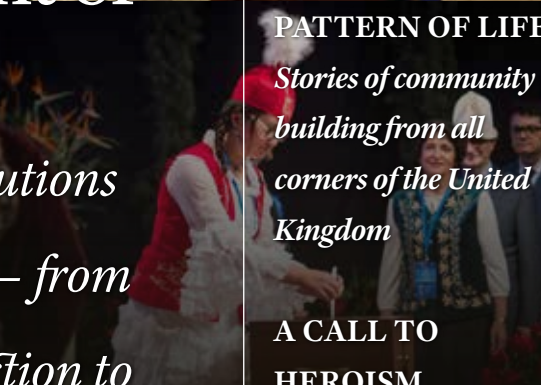
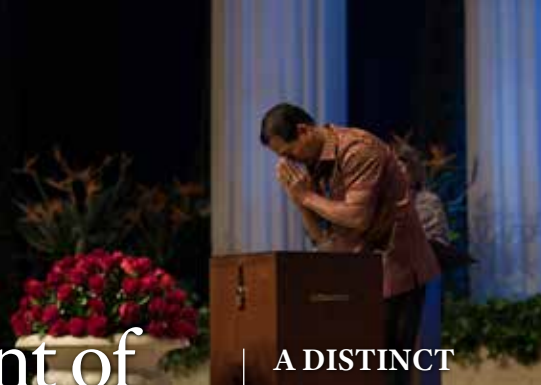


UKBAHÁ'Í

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A Movement of Souls

Individuals, institutions and communities – from neighbourhood action to International Convention

A DISTINCT PATTERN OF LIFE
Stories of community building from all corners of the United Kingdom

A CALL TO HEROISM
Youth summoned to fearlessness, consecration and detachment

POLITICS, PROTESTS – OR PURE AND GOODLY DEEDS?
How to contribute to the advancement of society

HARTMUT GROSSMANN
Dedicated champion of the Faith



Welcome to UK Bahá'í

This edition of UK Bahá'í covers the full range of activities and processes that have engaged the worldwide Bahá'í community in the past few months, "in the enduring afterglow," as the Universal House of Justice has described it, "of those memorable events that marked the bicentenary of the Birth of the Blessed Beauty."

There has rarely been a busier time for the community – from burgeoning activities in neighbourhoods around the UK, through to the election of the Universal House of Justice itself.

The activity, hopes and insights of a people on the move, engaged in a global spiritual enterprise, is captured in this issue.

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introduction

A Unique Period in History

As humanity emerges from its collective childhood and approaches maturity, the need for a new understanding of the relationships between the individual, the community, and the institutions of society becomes ever more pressing.

THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF these three protagonists in the advancement of civilization has to be recognized and old paradigms of conflict – in which, for example, institutions demand submission while individuals clamour for freedom – need to be replaced with more profound conceptions of the complementary roles to be played by each in building a better world.

To accept that the individual, the community, and the institutions of society are the protagonists of civilization building, and to act accordingly, opens up great possibilities for human happiness and allows for the creation of environments in which the true powers of the human spirit – of love, justice and unified action – can be released.

For society to function at a higher level than that of a mere assemblage of individuals, institutions are required to give structure to its collective endeavours, to promote unity of vision and action among its members, to allocate resources equitably, and in general to administer its affairs. Parliaments, courts, universities, artistic establishments, and non-governmental organizations are among the many institutions that play an important part in shaping the life of communities throughout the world.

The Bahá'í community is organized through local, national, continental, and international institutions whose purpose is to channel energies into patterns of action that

promote the betterment of society. The last few months have seen the election of the institutions of the Bahá'í world – from the Universal House of Justice, elected once every five years at the International Convention, through to the National Spiritual Assemblies, and the Local Spiritual Assemblies.

Service to the needs and wellbeing of the community is the principle that governs the functioning of all Bahá'í institutions; indeed, to a large extent, it defines their very identity. The relationship between the individual and institutions is a reciprocal one. Bahá'ís strive to carry out the plans of the institutions with loyalty and enthusiasm. Institutions, in turn, come to view their function as one of channelling and directing the burgeoning talents, abilities, and collective energies within the community.

These collective energies are today being expressed through community building in many hundreds of clusters throughout the world where growing bands of believers are learning how to maintain, with those around them, a sustained focus on nurturing growth and building capacity. As the Universal House of Justice stated in its Ridván 2018 message, “Raising up and accompanying an expanding nucleus of individuals in each place—not just at the level of the cluster but within neighbourhoods and villages—is at once a formidable challenge and a critical need. But where this is occurring, the results speak for themselves.”



The Universal House of Justice

RIDVÁN 2018

DEARLY LOVED FRIENDS

WE GREET YOU in the enduring afterglow of those memorable events that marked the bicentenary of the Birth of the Blessed Beauty. As we consider what transpired then and since, we find that the global Bahá'í community now in view is not the same as when it embarked on the first six cycles of the current Plan. It is more conscious than ever before of its mission. It has experienced an unprecedented surge in its capacity to bring friends and acquaintances into contact with its community life; to inspire neighbourhoods and villages into unified endeavour; to articulate how spiritual

truths can be translated into sustained practical action; and, above all, to converse not only about the teachings that will build the world anew, but about the One Who taught them: Bahá'u'lláh. Accounts of His life and of His suffering told in myriad tongues by adults, youth, and children touched countless hearts. Some showed themselves ready to explore His Cause further. Others pledged collaboration. And many a receptive soul was moved to an avowal of faith.

One telling indicator of progress was the numerous places where it became clear that the Faith had emerged from obscurity at the national level. There were government leaders and leaders of thought who stated publicly—and sometimes emphasized privately—that the world stands in need of Bahá'u'lláh's vision and that the Bahá'ís' endeavours are admired and should be expanded. It delighted us to see that

it was not only Bahá'ís who wished to honour Bahá'u'lláh and celebrate His life—special gatherings were hosted by some from beyond the Bahá'í community. In areas where hostility to the Faith exists, the friends were undismayed; showing marvellous resilience, they encouraged their compatriots to examine the truth for themselves, and many joyfully participated in the festivities. The bicentenary also gave rise to a seemingly limitless efflorescence of artistic expression, magnificent testimony to the wellspring of love from which it stemmed. The character of the Bahá'í community's entire approach to this occasion was confirmation of how much has been learned over more than two decades now, since the current series of global Plans began. The individual believer took initiative, the community arose in collective effort, and the friends channelled their creative energy into the plans prepared by the institutions. A significant anniversary, marking the passage of two centuries, offered a powerful stimulus to the work of building communities for the century to come. In the period leading up to the second bicentenary, let every seed so lovingly sown at the first be nurtured patiently towards fruition.

Two years into the present Plan, although naturally progress is not uniform from country to country, the number of intensive programmes of growth in the world is approaching half the five thousand contemplated in the current global endeavour, and the rate at which this number is rising has been steadily increasing. Looking more closely, there are promising signs of how the powers and potentialities of individuals, communities, and institutions are being manifested. For the believers everywhere, the experience of the bicentenary celebration demonstrated that many of their day-to-day interactions with the people around them can be infused with the spirit of teaching. And as the work in thousands of villages and neighbourhoods gathers momentum, a vibrant community life is taking root in each. The number of clusters where the system for extending this pattern of activity to more and more locations is becoming well established—enabling, thereby, the friends to pass the third milestone along a continuum of development—has grown markedly. And it is here, at the frontiers of the Bahá'í world's learning, particularly in the movement of populations towards the vision of Bahá'u'lláh, where not only are large numbers coming into the widening embrace of Bahá'í activities but the friends are now learning how sizeable groups come to identify themselves with the community of the Most Great Name. We are seeing the Faith's educational efforts take on a more formal character in such places, as children move seamlessly through the grades year after year and one level of the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme reliably succeeds another. In these places, the training institute is learning to ensure that sufficient human resources are being raised up to provide for the spiritual and moral edification of children and junior youth in ever-increasing numbers. Participation in these foundational activities is becoming so embedded in the culture of the population that it is viewed as an indispensable aspect of the life of a community. A new vitality emerges within a people taking charge of their own development, and they

build immunity to those societal forces that breed passivity. Possibilities for material and spiritual progress take shape. Social reality begins to transform.

Cherished friends, this is truly a moment to give thanks to the Best-Beloved. There are a great many reasons to be encouraged. Yet we are only too aware of the scale of the task that remains. Fundamentally, as we have previously indicated, there must emerge in many hundreds of clusters a growing band of believers who can maintain, with those around them, a sustained focus on nurturing growth and building capacity, and who are distinguished by their ability and their discipline to reflect on action and learn from experience. Raising up and accompanying an expanding nucleus of individuals in each place—not just at the level of the cluster but within neighbourhoods and villages—is at once a formidable challenge and a critical need. But where this is occurring, the results speak for themselves.

We are reassured to see that the institutions of the Faith are keeping this supreme need at the forefront of their thinking, devising effective mechanisms to enable the insights arising from progress to be widely applied. At the same time, greater experience is endowing national, regional, and local bodies alike with broader vision. They are becoming involved in all aspects of the community's development and are concerned with the well-being of people beyond its formal membership. Conscious of the profound implications the institute process holds for the advancement of peoples, they are paying particular attention to how the training institute can be strengthened. They remain mindful of the need to maintain the community's focus on the requirements of the Plan and call the ever-widening circle of friends to higher and higher levels of unity. They faithfully uphold their responsibility to refine their administrative and financial systems so that the work of expansion and consolidation can be properly supported. In all this, they are ultimately occupied with cultivating in the community those conditions that conduce to the release of powerful spiritual forces.

As the work of community building intensifies, the friends are using the new capacities they have developed to improve conditions in the society around them, their enthusiasm kindled by their study of the divine teachings. Short-term projects have soared in number, formal programmes have expanded their reach, and there are now more Bahá'í-inspired development organizations engaged in education, health, agriculture, and other areas. From the resulting transformation visible in the individual and collective lives of peoples may be discerned the unmistakable stirrings of the society-building power of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. No wonder, then, that it is from such instances of social action—whether simple or complex, of fixed duration or long sustained—that the Offices of the Bahá'í International Community are increasingly taking inspiration in their efforts to participate in the prevalent discourses of society. This is another important field of endeavour for the Faith that has advanced well. At the national level, contributions to discourses that are meaningful to that society—the equality of men and women, migration and integration, the role of youth in social transformation, and religious coexistence,

among others—are being made with growing confidence, proficiency, and insight. And wherever they live, work, or study, believers of all ages and backgrounds are making valued contributions to particular discourses, bringing to the attention of those around them a principled perspective shaped by Bahá'u'lláh's vast Revelation.

The Faith's standing in various spaces in which discourses unfold has been much enhanced by its official presence on the World Wide Web, a presence which has expanded considerably through the launch of numerous national Bahá'í websites and the further development of the family of sites associated with Bahai.org. This has immense value for both the propagation and protection of the Cause. Over the span of just a few days a large global audience was attracted to carefully conceived content about the Faith that was presented on the bicentenary website and updated in nine languages simultaneously, and which has now been augmented by individual country pages illustrating the diversity of the celebrations that occurred. Plans are already far advanced for introducing to the Bahá'í Reference Library site a feature that will allow previously untranslated and unpublished passages or Tablets from the Holy Writings to be released online over time. As well as this, new volumes of Bahá'u'lláh's and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Writings rendered into English are set to appear in the coming years.

In Santiago, Chile, and Battambang, Cambodia, the world's most recently dedicated Houses of Worship are becoming established centres of attraction, beacons to their societies of all that the Faith stands for. And their number is about to grow. We are delighted to announce that the dedication ceremony for the Temple in Norte del Cauca, Colombia, is to take place in July. Further, the construction of more Houses of Worship lies just over the horizon. In Vanuatu, permission is being obtained to start building. In India and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a highly complex and exacting process has at last led to the successful acquisition of land. The joy at seeing the design of the first national Mashriqu'l-Adhkár unveiled in Papua New Guinea at Naw-Rúz had hardly subsided when the design of the local House of Worship in Kenya was also revealed. Meanwhile, we have every expectation that the recently released statement and compilation about the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, prepared by our Research Department, will further stimulate the friends' appreciation of the significance of worship in community life. For in their acts of service, especially in their regular devotional gatherings, Bahá'ís everywhere are laying the spiritual foundations of future Houses of Worship.

Only three years remain of a quarter-century effort that began in 1996 focused on a single goal: a significant advance in the process of entry by troops. At Ridván 2021, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh will embark on a Plan lasting a single year. Brief, but pregnant with portent, this one-year endeavour will begin a new wave of Plans bearing the ark of the Cause into the third century of the Bahá'í Era. During the course of this auspicious twelvemonth, the Bahá'í world's commemoration of the centenary of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá will include a special gathering at the Bahá'í World Centre to which representatives of every National

Spiritual Assembly and every Regional Bahá'í Council will be invited. This, however, is to be but the first in a sequence of events that will prepare the believers for the demands of the decades to come. The following January, the elapse of one hundred years since the first public reading of the Master's Will and Testament will be the occasion for a conference in the Holy Land bringing together the Continental Boards of Counsellors and all members of the Auxiliary Boards for Protection and Propagation. The spiritual energy released at these two historic gatherings must then be carried to all the friends of God in every land in which they reside. For this purpose, a series of conferences will be convened worldwide in the months that follow, a catalyst to the multi-year endeavour that shall succeed the coming One Year Plan.

Thus, a new phase in the unfoldment of the Master's Divine Plan is approaching. But a thrilling and more immediate prospect lies directly ahead. The bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb is now just a year and a half away. This is a period in which to recall the extraordinary heroism of the Martyr-Herald of our Faith, Whose dramatic ministry thrust humanity into a new era of history. Though separated from our own time by two centuries, the society in which the Báb appeared resembles the present-day world for the sense of oppression and for the longing of so many to find answers to slake the soul's thirst to know. In considering how this two-hundred-year anniversary might befittingly be marked, we recognize that these festivities will have a special character of their own. Nevertheless, we anticipate a flourishing of activity no less rich and no less inclusive than that which accompanied the bicentenary just passed. It is an occasion to which every community, every household, every heart will undoubtedly look forward with eager expectation.

The months ahead will also be a time for calling to mind the lives of the Báb's intrepid followers—heroines and heroes whose faith was expressed in matchless, sacrificial acts that will forever adorn the annals of the Cause. Their qualities of fearlessness, consecration, and detachment from all save God impress themselves upon everyone who learns of their ventures. How striking, too, is the young age at which so many of those lionhearts made their indelible mark on history. During the coming period, may their example give courage to the entire company of the faithful—not least to the youth, who are once more summoned to the vanguard of a movement aimed at nothing less than the transformation of the world.

This, then, is our bright, bright hope. In the six cycles that lie between this Ridván and the next bicentenary—indeed, throughout the remaining three years of the current Plan—let the same all-consuming, all-surpassing love that spurred the Báb's disciples to the diffusion of the divine light inspire you to great deeds. That you may be the recipients of heavenly aid is our supplication at the Sacred Threshold.

– *The Universal House of Justice*

“For in their acts of service, especially in their regular devotional gatherings, Bahá’ís everywhere are laying the spiritual foundations of future Houses of Worship.”



The newly-opened local House of Worship in Norte del Cauca, Columbia



Design for the local House of Worship in Matunda Soy, Kenya



Design for the national House of Worship in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea



Design for the local House of Worship in Tanna, Vanuatu

international news

Twelfth International Convention

Joy, purpose and a unique election.

ON 25 APRIL 2018, the nine members of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom arrived in Haifa – along with some 1,300 other delegates representing more than 160 countries – to participate in the International Bahá'í Convention. This unique gathering is held once every five years.

Prior to their primary task of electing the Universal House of Justice for the coming five-year term, and then participating in the Convention, delegates were privileged to have a period of praying and meditating in the Sacred Shrines of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as well as visiting the Bahá'í holy places.

ELECTION OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

After three days of spiritual preparation, the delegates cast their ballots for the election of the Universal House of Justice in a rarefied and spiritual atmosphere. One-by-one, they filed across the stage at the convention centre, reverently placing their ballots into a designated box. Including absentee ballots, the total number of representatives participating in the election surpassed 1,500.

The casting of ballots is the culmination of a global electoral process in which every adult Bahá'í can participate. Bahá'í elections are distinctive for their lack of nominations and campaigning. Delegates to the International Convention voted by confidential ballot for the nine individuals they believe are best suited for membership on the Universal House of Justice.

HOLY DAY AT BAHJÍ

Following the election, the delegates joined the staff of the Bahá'í World Centre in the environs of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh to celebrate the festival of Ridván, marking the anniversary of Bahá'u'lláh's proclamation of His station as a Messenger of God. Many of the delegates wore the distinctive dress of their country or people, representing the remarkable diversity of the worldwide Bahá'í community.

ELECTION RESULT

The following day, the Ridván message of the Universal House of Justice was released to the delegates and read in session. This was followed by the announcement of the election of the nine members of the Universal House of Justice. The elected members were: Paul Lample, Chuungu Malitonga, Payman Mohajer, Shahriar Razavi, Stephen Hall, Ayman Rouhani, Stephen Birkland, Juan Francisco Mora, and Praveen Mallik.

CONSULTATION SESSIONS

The remaining days of the Convention, spent in consultation, were characterized by joy, focus, and a strong sense of purpose. Delegates shared how the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are finding concrete expression in their communities and societies. They also explored how insights from this process can be offered to those in the world who are interested in building unity and peace.



Many delegates attributed the growing opportunities before their communities to the celebration of the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh in October 2017, which was accompanied by an upwelling of support from public figures and dignitaries, as well as from countless neighbours, friends, and co-workers who attended the festivities.

The members of the National Spiritual Assemblies also reflected on how the institutions on which they serve can increasingly nurture environments in which individuals and communities are empowered and grow in their capacity to take action for the betterment of the world.

In an extraordinary display of unity in diversity, delegates from around the world described developments in their Bahá'í communities and shared experiences that are yielding valuable lessons about community-building and social transformation.

“We are fully aware that in our work spiritual forces will assist us,” said Sophie Menard, a delegate from France. “But we will have to show a high level of devotion, sacrifice, and heroism.”

“We see our world changing,” said Dorothy Whyte, a delegate from Jamaica. “We see it demonstrated here at the International Convention. We can take what we are consulting on here, go home, and spread it throughout the entire world.”

“Humanity is going through two processes that are very clear—disintegration and integration,” said Plinio Lacayo, a delegate from Costa Rica. “The process of disintegration is advancing rapidly, and humanity is suffering. But because of this, we know that we have to work harder and harder. We have to be more intense, more active, and more constant.”

“I live on the small island of Yap,” said Sophia Laiyolap, a delegate from the Caroline Islands, addressing the Convention. “Just six years ago, the majority of the people on the island, including myself, were unaware of the person of Bahá'u'lláh. Today, there are more than 1,000 people who are connected and inspired by His teachings.”

“Such is the power of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh that,

even in territories in the middle of the ocean, their light can radiate,” said Ana Sancho, a delegate from the Canary Islands.

Delegates spent the final morning of the International Convention in a rich consultation about the involvement of Bahá'í communities in the life of their societies. In particular, they discussed their communities' experience with social and economic development endeavours as well as their participation in forums and settings where contemporary issues of concern to their societies are being considered by government and civil society organizations.

Ouawi Tchompaare, from Chad, talked about the decade-long experience of a Bahá'í-inspired development organization in the country supporting dozens of community schools in rural and urban settings. “We focus on two lines of action at this time: a health programme, which focuses on prevention and hygiene, and an agriculture programme about crops and fields.

“Among the children in these schools, we have seen a dramatic change in hygiene and cleanliness standards, which has in turn inspired families to adopt new patterns in their homes,” Mr. Tchompaare said.

“In Kazakhstan, there is a widespread concern about the disenchantment of youth with the state of the world. The Bahá'í community is participating in a discourse concerned with the spiritual aspirations of youth. What we are finding is that this offers them hope and a path for constructive change,” said Lyazzat Yangaliyeva, a delegate from Kazakhstan.

Describing efforts being made in Spain, delegate Sergio Garcia shared: “We understand that our work with different discourses in our country is a long term endeavour. Ultimately, we are working for peace in the world, but we also realize that the path is long and that we need to learn together what the next steps are, for example how to prevent and stop conflict between peoples and how to foster cohesion among diverse populations in our country.”

Following the extraordinary Convention period, delegates left the Holy Land to return home, inspired and energized.



UK news

National Convention

A call to arise.

NATIONAL CONVENTION took place over the weekend of 26-28 May 2018, in Kenilworth, Warwickshire. The gathering was characterised by the great spirit of joy and purpose witnessed at the International Convention, with the highly focused consultation – lovingly guided by Counsellor Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi – exploring the essential and critical needs of the remaining years of the Five Year Plan.

Discussions were inspired by the vista for the work ahead laid out in the 2018 Riqvân message of the Universal House of Justice. The film, *A Widening Embrace* – which was screened early in the Convention proceedings – also served to sharpen the delegates' vision of the potentiality of the institute process to effect far-reaching change.

Delegates considered how, of the 50 clusters in the United Kingdom, 41 will need to reach a level of intense activity such that it can truly be said that they have passed the second milestone. The intention, also, is that the number of clusters that pass the third milestone – which presently stands at two – will significantly increase. The National Assembly wishes to see this goal substantially achieved by the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb in November 2019.

It became clear to all present that the key tool in advancing all clusters – no matter what stage of their development – will be the further development of the institute process, and the emergence and strengthening of expanding nuclei of friends. These small groups of individuals strive to learn together, working, consulting and arranging activities.

On the final morning of Convention, the National Assembly shared this message that it asked delegates to take back to their communities: that the key tool in advancing all clusters, no matter what stage of their development, will

be the emergence and strengthening of expanding nuclei of friends – small groups of individuals who are striving to learn together, working and consulting and arranging activities. Growth will occur naturally when we learn how to raise capacity in a few souls who begin to champion the community building by helping others study the materials of the institute. And thus it was understood why it is essential for cadres of tutors to emerge in every cluster – tutors who are reflecting and learning together how to raise capacity in others. This will fuel the engine of the institute.

Commitment to long term action, especially in focused areas, as well as patience and endurance are essential. Each prong of this two-pronged approach reinforces the other as learning is shared swiftly between each.

The mode of operation in all endeavours must be one of learning through action, reflecting regularly on the guidance in light of our experience. Progress occurs on a sound and swift basis if we are constantly drawing and reflecting upon the guidance of the Universal House of Justice. Commitment to long-term action – especially in focused areas – patience and endurance, are essential. Given this, and the scale of the task ahead, it became obvious that further sacrifices of time and energy were a crucial element that must be addressed.

There was one other vital element that the National Assembly wished to highlight: the power of divine assistance. The Writings and guidance available to us are replete with references to the promises of blessings and confirmations when we arise to serve.

The election of the National Spiritual Assembly was carried out in an atmosphere of prayerful devotion. All of the 95 delegates voted; 94 were present at the Convention. The following friends were elected to the National Assembly: *Vivien Craig, Barney Leith, Fidelma Meehan, Wendi Momen, Patrick O'Mara, Vafa Ram, Darren Smith, Olinga Tahzib and Robert Weinberg.*

After its election the National Assembly met to elect its officers for the coming year. They are: *Vivien Craig (Chair), Olinga Tahzib (Vice-Chair), Patrick O'Mara (Secretary) and Darren Smith (Treasurer).*





feature article

A vibrant, meaningful and distinct pattern of life

All around the world, Bahá'ís and their friends are engaged in community building. Exciting stories are emerging about their efforts from many different places.

IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC), the people have suffered for more than a century as a result of a series of violent struggles. Huge numbers have died or been displaced. Despite the disruption, the Bahá'ís of the DRC are learning to transcend the traditional barriers that divide people. Engaging in a process that seeks to foster collaboration – regardless of religious background, race, gender or social status – they are building capacity in growing numbers to contribute to profound social transformation.

At the heart of the resilience and the positive action demonstrated by

the Bahá'ís of the DRC, alongside their Bahá'í brethren throughout the world, are community-building programmes of education and training for children, junior youth, and for youth and adults.

These training institute programmes have a remarkable impact on the villages and neighbourhoods where they take place. When the island of Tanna, part of the South Pacific Vanuatu archipelago, was ravaged by a tropical cyclone with winds of up to 320 km/h in March 2015, the community – which had been learning about community building through the institute process – made sure that the education of children and youth would continue. Their top priority was to reconstruct the buildings

Opposite: Ditalala in the Democratic Republic of Congo – a village named 'Peace'

where the classes for the young people had taken place.

The youth of Tanna, who had previously attended a youth conference in Vanuatu's capital city, Port Vila, stepped up to play an important role in the reconstruction of their island.

A Bahá'í from one of the villages destroyed by the storm commented, "They demonstrated a spirit of selflessness in helping others, ensuring all were safe... They lit fires to make sure everyone was warm and dry and all were fed. They did not care just for their own families, they cared for all. Many families are still thanking them. They say if it were not for their help, they would not have survived."

Human beings were not created to live alone but, rather, to belong to communities. Collaboration with others is vital to our well-being and progress. 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote, that in a person's life and being "cooperation and association are essential. Through association and meeting we find happiness and development, individual and collective."¹

The United Kingdom has its own challenges, such as the increasing inequalities and resulting injustices, which are weakening the cohesion of society. Young people in some neighbourhoods are challenged to find any purpose and structure in their lives – and some join gangs as a way of compensating for what they lack. More people feel they can no longer trust a polarised political system. Murderous terrorist attacks lead to a feeling of lack of safety in public places. These, and many other trials, call for the healing medicine of Bahá'u'lláh's message.

The culture, the attitudes, and the patterns of thought and behaviour of any community are largely defined by its members' collective sense of purpose. When that purpose is to contribute to the betterment of society, the community becomes a setting in which individual and collective volition are blended. The community's members embrace the need for concerted action for the common good.

Bahá'ís in the United Kingdom, and around the world, are learning how taking initiative within the framework for action established by the Universal House of Justice is a potent way of beginning to build genuine

and loving communities within neighbourhoods, towns and villages.

The Universal House of Justice has described the community building process in which the Bahá'í community is engaged in the clearest terms:

The essence of the series of Plans that have unfolded since 1996 is relatively simple. Individuals, communities and institutions are called upon, within the context of a cluster, to create a programme of growth involving a vibrant, meaningful, and distinct pattern of collective Bahá'í life, infused by the spirit of the Creative Word, and open not only to the believers but to those from the wider society. At the core of this community-building process are certain activities – devotional gatherings, the educating of children and junior youth, and the raising up of those who can engage in acts of service – that serve as portals for the participation of ever-increasing numbers. The four core activities are but the nucleus of an organic pattern of life that, as the number of individuals who can initiate activities multiplies, increases in complexity over time, eventually requiring coherence among a range of efforts that also includes visits to homes, social gatherings, Feast and Holy Day observances, deepenings, administration, strengthening the Fund, social action, involvement in the discourses of society, and so on.²

Bahá'ís live and work in tens of thousands of localities in every continent of the globe. They represent the diversity of humanity. Bahá'í families and friends worldwide are learning how to contribute to the building of communities in which acts of worship and efforts to promote the common good are woven together. This community building process raises the capacity of more and more people to take charge of their spiritual, social, and intellectual development. They are no longer passive spectators of events beyond their control, but come to see themselves as active agents of their own and their communities' progress. And everyone willing to participate in this process is welcome.

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace, Talk at Orient-Occident Unity Conference, Washington, D.C., 20 April 1912.*

² 17 February 2014, written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer

Below: Tanna island Bahá'ís



Around the UK

A Call to Heroism

Youth from all over the United Kingdom gathered in May and June to discuss their role at the spearhead of efforts to win the goals of the Five Year Plan.

AT EVERY STAGE of the history of the Bahá'í Faith, youth have played a critical role in rising to the needs of the hour. With great joy and sacrifice, they have given of their time, their energy and their talents, playing their part as the spearhead of the work of the Cause.

In order to reflect upon the urgent, pressing work of the Bahá'í community, the National Spiritual Assembly called for gatherings of youth in three cities in England, and one each in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Around 350 youth in total took part in the gatherings, at which the National Assembly laid out the pressing needs of the Bahá'í community during this “period of special potency”.

In each of the meetings, members of the National Spiritual Assembly, the Regional Bahá'í Councils and Auxiliary Board members, encouraged the youth to reflect upon their particular capacity to serve and called them to acts of heroism. Guidance from the Universal House of Justice was studied and participants reflected on what service they could pledge. International pioneering goals in the Balkan states were also presented; some of the youth present pledged to move to those countries.

In Gawley's Gate, Northern Ireland, some seven young friends of the Bahá'í community who are active in the Windsor neighbourhood in Belfast participated fully in the gathering, bringing their insights built on experience to the consultation.

To end the day's programme, the National Assembly arranged a special spiritual experience for the participants. In London, this entailed prayers offered at the Guardian's Resting Place; in Oxford, the youth enjoyed a special devotional in the chapel of Balliol College, where Shoghi Effendi had studied; in Edinburgh, the friends visited the Georgian House in Charlotte Square, where 'Abdu'l-Bahá had stayed. In both Manchester



and Gawley's Gate, the National Assembly sent a few precious archives to be displayed. In Manchester, this included a lock of hair belonging to Nora Crossley, an early believer from the city. She famously cut off her beautiful, long hair and had it sold to be able to make a contribution towards the construction of the Mother Temple of the West. In Northern Ireland, a piece of original plaster from the prison of Mah-Ku – where the Báb was incarcerated – was a particularly moving reminder of the youthful sacrifice of the Báb.



Alfie Lee, who was at the Oxford gathering, said that the meeting acted as a timely reminder. “Though it is clearly difficult, seeing all of the youth so focused on their goals was reassuring,” he said.

“The atmosphere that was created was one of joy and enthusiasm,” said Nabil Taleb, who attended the Manchester event. “I am certain that the plans and contributions that the youth are to make over the next few months will be extremely heroic and confirmed by Bahá'u'lláh.”



England

Harnessing the energies of the neighbourhood

Much of the power of community building in a neighbourhood is that it allows for residents to become agents of change in their own localities.

TWO YEAS AGO a Bahá'í family from Cumnor near Oxford attended an institute seminar in order to learn about the process of community building. Since then, activities in their neighbourhood have resulted in a thriving community.

An attitude of learning characterised the beginning stages of their efforts. The family reached out to those with experience of growth at a neighbourhood level in order to gain some insight into the practical elements of approaching local residents. Neighbours were approached with a loving directness, inviting them to take part in a process that aims to build a united, loving, and vibrant neighbourhood, founded on the teachings and principles of the Faith.

Consolidating these conversations, the family invited their neighbours to their home in order to study passages relating to service, and showed clips from the *Frontiers of Learning* film, in order to convey a sense of the institute process. One resident was so receptive that the family gave her a presentation directly about the Faith. What emerged was a clear sense of the need for the involvement of the widest possible number of people in the community. This neighbour was encouraged to identify others she believed would be receptive to the process. As a result of this, another family was contacted and a Ruhi Book One soon began.

During the course of this study, efforts were consistently made to reach out and perform acts of service for neighbours and residents in the wider community. In so doing, bonds of friendship were established through such simple acts of



sharing food and studying a few passages from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. Alongside *To Serve Humanity* videos and clips from *Frontiers*, the residents were able to begin developing a vision for their own neighbourhood. With two families declaring their Faith in Bahá'u'lláh soon after, the friends began their efforts. It became clear that the residents of Cumnor were enthusiastic not only about the process of community building in their own area, but the wider vision of a unified world that is fundamental to the Faith.

Accompaniment became a fundamental part of their activities. Though they displayed great fervour, many of the new participants were only beginning to learn how to conduct activities. As a result, the friends undertook to learn together. In one instance, a mother with three children began a children's class in her home. Bahá'í youth and the mother worked alongside each other to plan and deliver the lessons. Walking the path of service together in this way increased the confidence of all of those involved. The children's class soon grew to 16 members, with three different classes.

Harnessing the energy shown by residents, the friends put together a neighbourhood family camp, in which the sessions focused primarily on the changes that could be made within Cumnor. This event, friends in the neighbourhood said, was "uplifting and joyful with prayers, music, service opportunities, barbecues, marshmallows, hot chocolates, and singing Bahá'í songs around a campfire!"

Though the Cumnor neighbourhood now features activities including multiple children's classes, junior youth groups, study circles and devotional gatherings, one of the fundamental qualities required during the initial stages of community building was that of detachment. Faith in the words of Bahá'u'lláh allowed for the friends to overcome any sense of deflation brought about by indifference. Instead, the community became enthused by the positive reaction of the area in general, and engaged constantly in reflection and consultation, discussing how to enable more friends to begin the process of community building and take the first steps on the path of service.



Northern Ireland

The community that prays together stays together

Friends from a neighbourhood in Belfast went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, forging a greater degree of love and unity.



ON A PERSONAL level, the experience of travelling to the Holy Land for Bahá'í pilgrimage is deeply moving, spiritually reinvigorating, and potentially transformative. Looking beyond the individual, however, it is also an element of Bahá'í life that, when undertaken as a community, can encourage friendships that translate into positive action back home.

Embracing the opportunity to strengthen bonds of friendship in the community, Bahá'ís and their friends working in the Windsor neighbourhood of Belfast embarked on pilgrimage as a group. Initially motivated by a number of new friends joining the Faith, the community also desired to pray for the progress of their entire neighbourhood.

In order to prepare for their travels, the friends met together many times. Studying the life of Bahá'u'lláh created a sense of

unity and readied them for the experience. Each week, a group would present aspects of Bahá'u'lláh's life to the others, taking it in turns to explore concepts that would be furthered during the pilgrimage.

For many, this action of preparing together created a sense of anticipation and joy. Each keenly felt the support of their friends. The group also looked beyond itself, compiling a prayer list of individuals and activities for which all of them wished to pray. Such unity of thought and purpose brought the group closer in their relationships with one another and the wider community.

The time spent in the Holy Land enhanced the group dynamic further. "It was just lovely to gather at lunchtimes and in the evenings, singing, talking, planning, and enjoying each other's company, getting to know each member even better," said Lian Foroudi, who went with the group. "One of the most special memories of this pilgrimage is the fact that it landed on the Twin Holy Days and so special celebrations were held, something I will cherish and remember for a long time, and which made the pilgrimage even more special."

Another member of the group, Thomas Lee – who serves as a children's class teacher in the neighbourhood – spoke about how the interests of the group as a whole were placed above individual desires. "From praying together, to enjoying one another's company, the emphasis was always placed on how to create the best environment for the group at large," he said. "Though this did require compromise at times, it ensured that the friends were always mindful of each other's needs, ensuring that every member of the group could make the most out of the journey to the Holy Land."

Upon returning, Thomas described the feeling as being akin to a "wave of energy and enthusiasm... Everybody came back fired up with the blessings of the Holy Land, ready to teach our friends and strengthen the endeavours already happening in the community."

The experience also allowed him to contextualise the efforts in his locality, providing insights into the worldwide scope of the endeavour. "It gave me the drive to press forwards and assist those in our area to walk a path of service," he said.

"For me, the Holy Land was a spiritual awakening and being part of a group, my closest friends, only aided this! The very people who taught me the Faith were there to guide me through the Holy Land and its many wonders. From looking down upon the terraces for the first time, to laying my head upon the threshold, it was a bounty to have them with me."





Scotland

Sunshine on Leith

The first and foremost principle for those involved in the community building process in Leith, Edinburgh, is that Bahá'u'lláh's message is for everyone.

THIS CENTRAL IDEA, which eliminates any space for prejudice, allows for the friends in Leith to approach every member of their neighbourhood with the Message, regardless of who they are.

Leith itself is one of the more diverse regions in Edinburgh, with a mix of people from different backgrounds. After exploring different areas and having conversations with residents, it became clear that the Leith neighbourhood showed a great deal of promise. As a result, a young Bahá'í couple moved there, with more youth joining them later on.

This group of youth have been invaluable to the community building process in Leith. Their energy and desire to learn led to two projects taking place over the summer of 2017. These projects were primarily focused on the message of Bahá'u'lláh, His mission and community activities. Before trying to begin core activities, the friends ensured that they built friendships in which they focused on the central and unifying vision of the Faith. They then explained how the core activities are fundamental for the realisation of this vision. As a result of these two projects, a children's class was established. This class soon drew eight to ten children regularly. During the bicentenary period, the children's

class held a celebration that their respective families attended, engaging with the wider community and building networks of friendships.

Events that incorporated the families of children involved in the class were fruitful, as conversations soon led to two of the mothers beginning a Ruhi Book One and Two. In Leith, emphasis is placed upon actively involving members of the neighbourhood in the process of community building. Auxiliary Board member Ashkan Ziaie, a member of the Leith community, said that the friends "truly want to build capacity in the local population so that they become resources" themselves. Involving neighbours and friends in the area ensures that community building efforts can be sustained even when those on Years of Service leave the area.

In serving the community, teaching the Faith, and building spirit and bonds of fellowship within the neighbourhood, Leith has gone from having no core activities to six within the past eight months. Such progress could not have been made without a recognition of the power and energy harnessed by unified communities. For Ashkan, the people he has met and served with have been a source of inspiration: "Becoming part of their lives, helping them move house, spending time together in service in its many forms has been joyous."

The friends are still learning how to expand their community building efforts further. Regular reflection, consultation, and taking small steps have helped in this. Particularly, the process of community building has given many members of the community courage to invite people to participate in the activities. What has been most pertinent, for Ashkan, is the clarity that "building friendships and teaching happen concurrently, and the best friendships are those in which conversations about service and the Faith are at the centre."



Wales

Glimmerings of transformation in Cardiff

The efforts being made in Pengam Green are the result of enthusiasm shown by a family of homefront pioneers who settled there in August 2017.

MOTIVATING THESE PIONEERS was the desire to learn how to initiate the process of community building in a neighbourhood setting, the demographic of Pengam Green consisting of predominantly families and young working couples.

Such efforts were not without their obstacles. One of the pioneers emphasised that the community faces a lack of community space such as a community centre, only houses... This lack of space for people to socialise, combined with busy schedules of work and family life, means that the neighbours

don't necessarily know each other or make time to get to know each other – so there isn't a strong sense of community or connection to the area."

To overcome this obstacle, the friends in this neighbourhood have focused primarily on bringing people together, reporting that their neighbours were touched by the simple acts of friendship that were offered to them. These acts of friendship often took the form of home visits or calling on neighbours door-to-door. Reaching out in this way allowed the friends to gain a deeper understanding of the reality of the community. Many of the most fruitful conversations with neighbours centred around children – with the spiritual education of children being a recurrent topic of discourse.

In acknowledgement of this, the pioneers endeavoured to bring the children in the community together in classes that promoted spiritual values as well as forging a sense of companionship among the neighbourhood's families. Though the first attempt to begin a children's class lapsed, a valuable lesson was learned upon reflection: the need for consistency. One pioneer said of this lesson: "We needed to show that we are as committed to the programme as we expect them to be... We need to show through word and deed that the relationships we've built are important to us and that we are sincere in our desire to create unity in our community."



After an Ayyám-i-Há celebration, which featured an open house with refreshments, craft activities for children, and the collection of donations for Cardiff's food bank, the friends turned their attention back to community building through children's classes and social action. In recognition of the need to serve the particular needs of the community, the friends organised action that was beneficial to every member of Pengam Green, such as litter picking.

Reflecting on the status of their relationships, the friends soon realised that in order to truly establish a sense of unity among the community, it was important to engage not just with children and their mothers, but also with entire families. Through concerted efforts, constant reflection, and tireless outreach, this small number of homefront pioneers have made great steps in developing a greater sense of companionship and unity amongst the Pengam Green community, particularly understanding the need for enduring and genuine friendships.

"What motivates us," said another of the pioneers, "is the glimmerings of transformation in our neighbours - a soul to soul conversation where new understanding dawns; a motivation to action that wasn't there before - these confirm us and keep us going. When we see our neighbours as protagonists and not passive recipients, it reminds us that we do genuinely need everyone's contribution to achieve anything."

And the honour and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world's multitudes should become a source of social good. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, THE SECRET OF DIVINE CIVILIZATION



feature article

Politics, protests – or pure and goodly deeds?

What is the most effective way for a Bahá'í to contribute to the advancement of society?

IN THESE TURBULENT TIMES, issues of concern in various countries – including our own – can often prompt us to want to add our voices in support and sympathy for our fellow human beings, who are suffering in so many ways.

Surely no conscientious person can remain untouched by the pitiful plight of peoples everywhere. Bahá'ís being called upon by others to join them in expressing our concerns is natural in the face of such distressing occurrences. “We can well perceive how the whole human race is encompassed with great, with incalculable afflictions,” observed Bahá'u'lláh, exhorting humanity “to be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and centre your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements.”

As every Bahá'í well knows, the “remedy the world needeth in its present-day afflictions” is the prescription

offered by Bahá'u'lláh, the All-Knowing Physician, for the long-term, sustainable healing of the world's ills. Yet, faced with the chaos and confusion that is brought to our attention each day, it may often be a challenge not to want to raise our voices to call for an immediate or expedient, apparent solution. The Bahá'ís then find themselves faced with the dilemma of whether or not to share certain posts on social media, or to take part in marches and demonstrations.

All too often, however, even those campaigns that aim to highlight in a non-partisan way a particular injustice or promote a principle that resonates fully with Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, can deteriorate into the vilification of public figures or the condemnation of the actions of governments.

The following guidance of the Universal House of Justice, dated 22 January 2010 to an individual believer, sums up the Bahá'í position:

Opposite: Student protests in Parliament Square, 2010. Photo: Bobby D'Marca/Wikimedia Commons

Members of the Bahá'í community, wherever they reside, avoid engaging in partisan politics or meddling in political relations among governments, refraining at all times from becoming involved in the contest for worldly power. They have chosen this path in accordance with the teachings of their Faith, that they might focus their attention on working towards the greater goal of establishing a united and prosperous society. This choice is not intended as a criticism of any particular political party or of the approach taken by other groups. Needless to say, in following this path Bahá'ís categorically reject any form of sedition or recourse to violence.

While eschewing partisan political activity, Bahá'ís are to vigorously engage in constructive public discourse and in a wide range of social endeavours aimed at the betterment of the world and the progress of their respective nations. They undertake such activities with humility, discernment and respect for prevailing laws and social conditions, in a spirit of learning and in collaboration with like-minded groups and individuals, fully confident in the power inherent in the principle of unity in diversity and in the efficacy of mutual aid and cooperation.

As to the question of taking part in demonstrations, individual Bahá'ís in every country are, in principle, free to participate in efforts and activities, for instance in peaceful rallies, that aim to further laudable objectives such as the advancement of women, the promotion of social justice, the protection of the environment, the elimination of all forms of discrimination, and the safeguarding of human rights. However, should such activities begin to deviate from their original purpose and assume a partisan character or degenerate into violence, they must of course be avoided...

In such consultations, the friends will no doubt readily acknowledge that participation in demonstrations is by no means the only way, or even the most effective way, to contribute to the advancement of society. Whether in the discharge of their personal spiritual obligations or in their commitment to the call for "pure and goodly deeds" and for "commendable and seemly conduct", whether through their participation in the fruitful discourses of society--perhaps through writing articles as you suggest--or through their involvement in activities of social and economic development,

Bahá'ís should recognize the numerous ways in which they can work alongside their fellow citizens to promote the welfare of their country...

The Universal House of Justice has often reminded us of the evident forces of integration and disintegration that are operating in society today, and the relationship between the rise in receptivity to the Faith and the failings of the world's systems. In considering a Bahá'í response to the world's problems, the following guidance from the House of Justice's Ridván message of 2008 may assist us in identifying where our energies may best be deployed:

Humanity is battered by forces of oppression, whether generated from the depths of religious prejudice or the pinnacles of rampant materialism. Bahá'ís are able to discern the causes of this affliction. "What 'oppression' is more grievous", Bahá'u'lláh asks, "than that a soul seeking the truth, and wishing to attain unto the knowledge of God, should know not where to go for it and from whom to seek it?" There is no time to lose. Continued progress must be achieved in the activity and development of the three participants in the Plan.

On the 29 December 2015, setting out the huge challenge of winning the goals of the present Five Year Plan, the House of Justice wrote:

But faced with the plight of a world that suffers more each day bereft of Bahá'u'lláh's elixir, we cannot, in conscience, ask anything less of His devoted followers.

And at Ridván 1993, we read:

"These are the darkest hours before the break of day. Peace, as promised, will come at night's end. Press on to meet the dawn."

Such thoughts must surely assist us to make informed choices when faced with the myriad of worrying issues and calls upon our attention, today and in the days and months ahead.

Below: A Bahá'í International Community representative speaks on a panel regarding community resilience in the face of climate-driven extreme events.



Chile Temple

South America Temple bridges two eras

On the edge of Santiago in the foothills of the Andes, the continental Bahá'í House of Worship for South America has been illuminating the mountainside for over a year and a half.



IN THAT TIME it has attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors to its radiant edifice, which has received multiple prestigious architecture awards.

Since its dedication in October 2016, the Temple has been a recipient of an International Architecture Award as well as awards for structural artistry from the Institution of Structural Engineers, for innovation in architecture from the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, for innovation from the American Institute of Architects, for design excellence from the Ontario Association of Architects, for “Best in Americas, Civil Buildings,” from World Architecture News, and for Architectural and Cultural design from American Architecture Prize.

But the Temple’s impact has been much more than that. It has also impacted the hearts and minds of the people in Santiago and beyond.

“People understand that the House of Worship is here to help with the spiritual development of our society,” explained Rocío Montoya, from the public affairs office of the Chilean Bahá'í community.

“There are many families that are coming to the Temple. Religious groups come to pray together. Many people in their advanced years also come for hours and sit at the picnic tables and enjoy fellowship. People here see the House of Worship more and more as their Temple.”

The House of Worship has become a sanctuary for thousands upon thousands of visitors. They gather on

its grounds each week to immerse themselves in the beauty of the natural landscape. They pray and meditate in the tranquil atmosphere of the central edifice. They participate in a range of uplifting conversations and activities oriented towards the betterment of the surrounding communities.

“Young people especially are finding that programmes on the Temple grounds help them to gain a deeper and nobler sense of purpose,” said Jenny Perez, a representative of the Chilean Bahá'í community. “They focus not only on their personal development, which is very important, but also on the development of their communities.”

Like other continental Bahá'í Temples, the House of Worship for South America was an innovative architectural endeavour that had international scope. The project broke new ground in architecture and engineering, and it drew on the material support of the worldwide Bahá'í community. Yet the more than decade-long project emerged at a time when Bahá'í communities were also learning intensively about the spiritual and social development of neighbourhoods and villages, and the construction process developed in parallel with community-building endeavours in the surrounding area.

“It is in the consciousness of the people,” said Ms. Perez. “They feel its impact. People are asking, why is this beautiful structure here? How did it come about? What is its purpose? How

can we learn more?”

The award-winning House of Worship—the final continental Bahá'í Temple—is a bridge between two eras. With its complex aerospace engineering technology, it embodies the architectural ingenuity and uniqueness of the Bahá'í continental Temples. But like the Temples now rising for local and national communities, it has emerged in the midst of a vibrant community-building process.

The Temple has become a focal point for learning about the dynamic relationship between worship of God and service to humanity. The surrounding community has contributed to a native flora project on the land. The Temple hosts programmes for the moral and spiritual empowerment of youth, who become committed to the progress of their communities. And on its grounds are numerous events, some held in collaboration with the municipality and some with local and national NGOs.

With the dedication of the local Bahá'í House of Worship in Battambang, Cambodia, last year and several more local and national Temples planned for the coming years, Bahá'í communities will be learning much more about how these structures, embedded in a locality, can be in harmony with the social and material environment and support the advancement of a population.



our spiritual heritage

Understanding, commitment and action

This extract from Century of Light demonstrates how 'Abdu'l-Bahá stimulated the expansion of the Persian Bahá'í community to create a culture that was unlike anything humanity had ever known.

AS EARLY as 1875, responding to Bahá'u'lláh's instructions, 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to the rulers and people of Persia the treatise entitled *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, setting out the spiritual principles that must guide the shaping of their society in the age of humanity's maturity. Its opening passage called upon the Iranian people to reflect on the lesson taught by history about the key to social progress:

Consider carefully: all these highly varied phenomena, these concepts, this knowledge, these technical procedures and philosophical systems, these sciences, arts, industries and inventions—all are emanations of the human mind. Whatever people has ventured deeper into this shoreless sea, has come to excel the rest. The happiness and pride of a nation consist in this, that it should shine out like the sun in the high heaven of knowledge. "Shall they who have knowledge and they who have it not, be treated alike?"

The *Secret of Divine Civilization* presaged the guidance that would flow from the pen of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in subsequent decades. After the

devastating loss that followed the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, the Persian believers were revived and heartened by a flood of Tablets from the Master, which provided not only the spiritual sustenance they needed, but leadership in finding their way through the turmoil that was undermining the established order of things in their land. These communications, reaching even the smallest villages across the country, responded to the appeals and questions of countless individual believers, bringing guidance, encouragement and assurance. We read, for example, a Tablet addressing believers in the village of Kishih, mentioning by name nearly one hundred and sixty of them. Of the age now dawning, the Master says: "this is the century of light," explaining that the meaning of this image is acceptance of the principle of oneness and its implications:

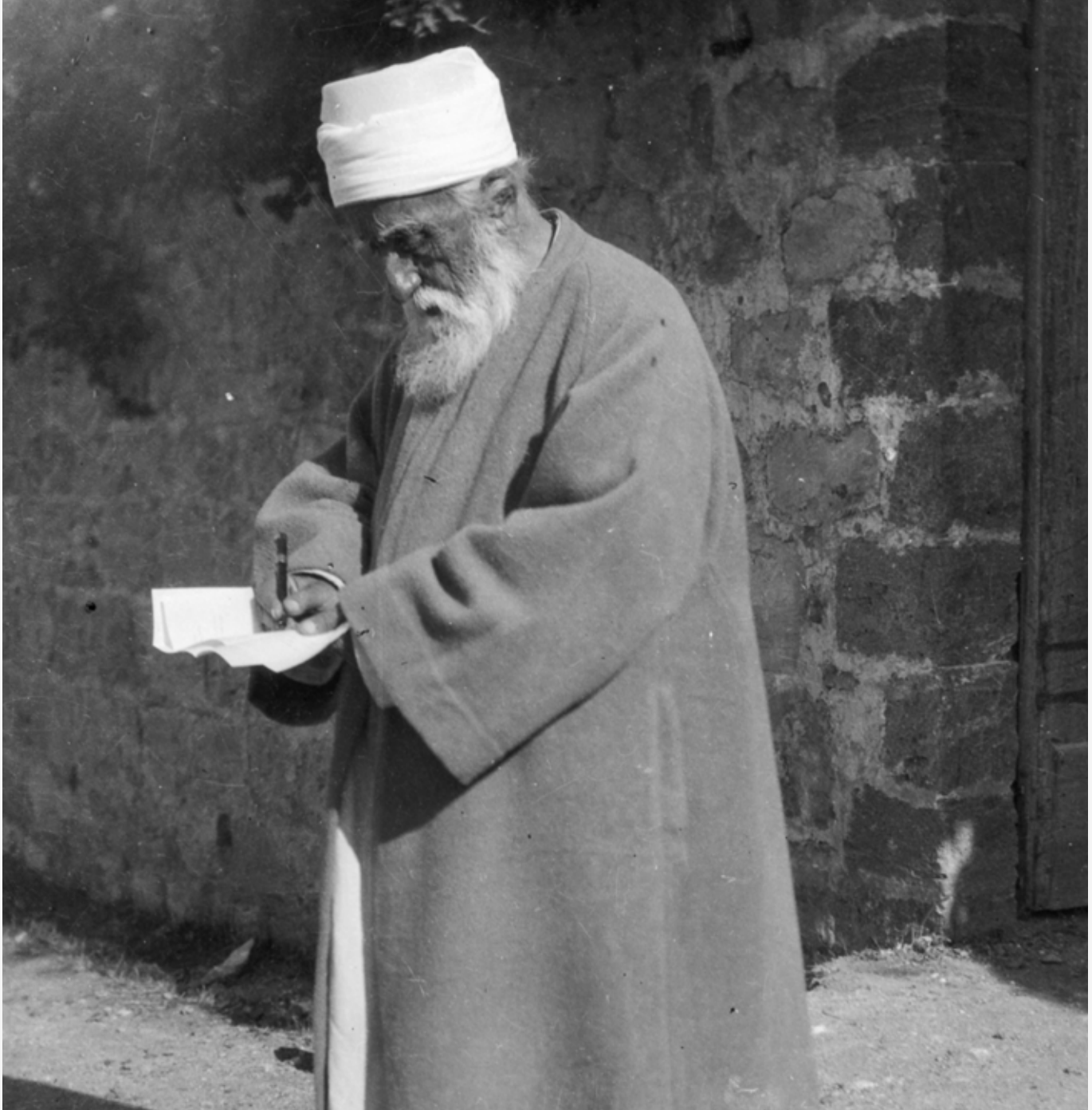
My meaning is that the beloved of the Lord must regard every ill-wisher as a well-wisher.... That is, they must associate with a foe as becometh a friend, and deal with an oppressor as beseemeth a kind companion. They should not gaze upon the faults and transgressions of their foes, nor pay heed to their enmity, inequity or

oppression.

Extraordinarily, the small company of persecuted believers, living in this remote corner of a land which still remained largely unaffected by the developments taking place elsewhere in social and intellectual life, are summoned by this Tablet to raise their eyes above the level of local concerns and to see the implications of unity on a global scale:

Rather, should they view people in the light of the Blessed Beauty's call that the entire human race are servants of the Lord of might and glory, as He hath brought the whole creation under the purview of His gracious utterance, and hath enjoined upon us to show forth love and affection, wisdom and compassion, faithfulness and unity towards all, without any discrimination.

Here, the call of the Master is not only to a new level of understanding, but implies the need for commitment and action. In the urgency and confidence of the language it employs can be felt the power that would produce the great achievements of the Persian believers in the decades since then—both in the



world-wide promotion of the Cause and in the acquisition of capacities that advance civilization:

O ye beloved of the Lord! With the utmost joy and gladness, serve ye the human world, and love ye the human race. Turn your eyes away from limitations, and free yourselves from restrictions, for ... freedom therefrom brings about divine blessings and bestowals.

Wherefore, rest ye not, be it for an instant; seek ye not a minute's respite nor a moment's repose. Surge ye even as the billows of a mighty sea, and roar like unto the leviathan of the ocean of eternity.

Therefore, so long as there be

a trace of life in one's veins, one must strive and labour, and seek to lay a foundation that the passing of centuries and cycles may not undermine, and rear an edifice which the rolling of ages and aeons cannot overthrow—an edifice that shall prove eternal and everlasting, so that the sovereignty of heart and soul may be established and secure in both worlds.

Social historians of the future, with a perspective far more dispassionate and universal than is presently possible, and benefiting from unimpeded access to all of the primary documentation, will study minutely the transformation that the Master achieved in these early years. Day after day, month after

month, from a distant exile where He was endlessly harried by the host of enemies surrounding Him, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was able not only to stimulate the expansion of the Persian Bahá'í community, but to shape its consciousness and collective life. The result was the emergence of a culture, however localized, that was unlike anything humanity had ever known. Our century, with all its upheavals and its grandiloquent claims to create a new order, has no comparable example of the systematic application of the powers of a single Mind to the building of a distinctive and successful community that saw its ultimate sphere of work as the globe itself.

IN MEMORIAM

Hartmut Grossmann (1933-2017)

With the passing of Hartmut Grossmann, the worldwide Bahá'í community lost a most dedicated, distinguished and capable champion of the Faith.

HARTMUT GROSSMANN'S life was of great significance not only for the expansion and consolidation of the Cause in his native Germany, but also for the wider European Bahá'í community and, indeed, for Bahá'ís throughout the world.

Mr. Grossmann was born on 1 November 1933 in Neckargemünd, a suburb of Heidelberg in southern Germany. His father, Herman, had accepted the Bahá'í Faith in Leipzig in 1920. Three decades later, Herman Grossman was appointed a Hand of the Cause of God by Shoghi Effendi.

The young Hartmut's life was overshadowed by World War II and the rise of the Nazis preceding it. His mother and grandmother were also Bahá'ís. The story of the Grossmann family in those years is one of faith and idealism triumphing against all odds.

Mr. Grossman met Ursula Frener on a train going to a Bahá'í youth conference in 1950. He was 17, she a year younger. They married five years later. They went on to have five daughters together and their 62-year-long marriage was so close and cooperative that they came to be considered as "one soul in two bodies". This phrase was chosen by Mr. Grossmann for the inscription on Ursula's headstone, when she died hardly a month before he passed away.

After his university studies in German and English language and literature, Mr. Grossmann worked in publishing, then teaching. From 1963 to 1969, he served on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Germany, contributing to the establishment of their Bahá'í



Publishing Trust.

The growing family then moved to Finland, where he became head of the German Department of the Translators' Training Institute at the University of Joensuu in Savonlinna. They opened eastern Finland to the Bahá'í Faith and their home became the focal point for speakers, travel teachers and visitors from Germany and farther afield.

Mr. Grossmann was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Finland in 1977, serving on that institution until 1980, when he was appointed to the Continental Board of Counsellors in Europe. Eight years later, he was called to the Bahá'í World Centre to serve on the International Teaching Centre. His responsibilities initially encompassed the countries of the Eastern Bloc, later extending to

the Far East, although his travels and work touched virtually every part of the world.

He served for five years on the Universal House of Justice, after having been elected in 2003. The Grossmanns moved back to Finland in 2008 and continued their travels until 2015, supporting Bahá'í communities in places as wide-ranging as the US and Canada, Austria, Romania, Lapland, New Zealand and Indonesia.

In its tribute to Dr Hartmut Grossmann, the Universal House of Justice stated that he "combined immense personal warmth, generosity of spirit, and serene humility with utter consecration, unwavering obedience, firmness in the Covenant, and vigilance in the protection of the Faith".



*Supreme happiness is man's,
and he beholds the signs of
God in the world and in
the human soul, if he urges
on the steed of high endeavour
in the arena of civilization
and justice.*

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ



Further Reading

Realization of the principle of the oneness of humanity is at once the goal and operating principle of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation. Bahá'u'lláh compared the world of humanity to the human body. Within this organism, millions of cells, diverse in form and function, play their part in maintaining a healthy system. Similarly, harmonious relationships among individuals, communities, and institutions serve to sustain society and allow for the advancement of civilization.

The website of the worldwide Bahá'í community, www.bahai.org, has excellent articles on the essential relationships between community, institutions and individuals. These include:

The individual and society: www.bahai.org/beliefs/essential-relationships/individual-society/

The community: www.bahai.org/beliefs/essential-relationships/individual-society/community

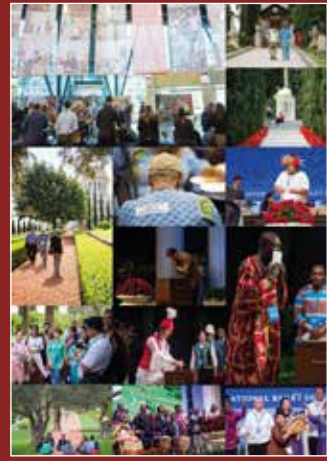
The institutions: www.bahai.org/beliefs/essential-relationships/individual-society/institutions

Western Liberal Democracy as New World Order? In this essay, first published in *The Baha'i World 2005-2006*, Dr. Michael Karlberg argues that Western liberal democracy, or competitive democracy, has become anachronistic, unjust, and unsustainable in an age of increasing global interdependence.

www.bahai.org/documents/essays/karlberg-dr-michael/western-liberal-democracy-new-world-order

*The supreme need of humanity
is cooperation and reciprocity.
The stronger the ties of fellowship
and solidarity amongst men,
the greater will be the power of
constructiveness and accomplishment
in all the planes of human activity.*

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ



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The assembly also represents the
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