

FROM THE TABLE OF THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

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Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programme

In recent months, the National Spiritual Assembly has consulted extensively with our beloved Counsellor, Dr. Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi, regarding ways to increase understanding about the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme across the entire community – including for the National Assembly members themselves! A number of strategies have already been set in motion, among which is a gathering for institutions to deepen on the programme’s purpose, methods and materials, with a view to assisting the various institutions to plan and act together with greater effectiveness.

There is no substitute for experience in the field, and the Assembly has been especially pleased to note momentum gathering for initiatives – such as intensive, practical training in the junior youth programme – emerging at the cluster level.

The National Assembly also looks forward with great anticipation to the gatherings that are being organised by the Regional Bahá’í Councils, and to the energy that they will no doubt release and channel into the junior youth programme and other community-building activities.

Year of Service

Mindful of the changing needs of the Faith and of the opportunities for growth that lie latent in neighbourhoods and villages across the UK, the National Assembly decided to ask the UK Pioneering and Travel Teaching Committee to organise, in consultation with Dr. Fozdar-Foroudi, gatherings to encourage youth to consider offering a period of service in this country. The gatherings will be annual and primarily for Lower VIth students and their parents. Further details will be announced in due course.

Statistics

The National Assembly was grateful to be joined in its December meeting by the National Statistics Officer, who offered valuable insights into the progress of the Plan in the UK. Statistics are an indispensable tool for understanding the processes of growth and for identifying both areas that require additional focus and particular strengths in the community on which to build.

The National Assembly is keen to learn how to draw on information which is provided by statistics to assist its effort to obtain a clearer picture of activities in the UK and thus to enable it to consult and plan more effectively. The contribution of the Statistics Officer was an important and timely step in this direction.

Artefacts of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The Assembly was thrilled and moved to learn that, while carrying out conservation work on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s abá, the Textile Conservator found two handkerchiefs in the pocket. This was the same robe that was shown to the Queen earlier in the year and, together with one of the handkerchiefs formed part of an Archival display that was shown to Ministers of Government at a reception at the Department for Communities and Local Government on 28 November.

A repair is also to be carried out on the samovar that was used by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá whilst visiting these shores.

Prayers with Staff

The National Assembly was delighted to welcome a number of staff and volunteers, some of whom have only recently joined the National Office and some who had recently departed, to the opening devotional of its December meeting. In addition to being a special time to join together in offering thanks to Bahá’u’lláh for being given the opportunity to serve the institution of the National Assembly, it was also a wonderful chance for those members of the Assembly who are only occasionally able to visit the Ḥazíratu’l-Quds to meet the new staff that serve there.

Faroe Islands

The National Assembly considered an extensive report of a visit of one its members to the Faroe Islands. The Faroe Islands is a small self-governing territory under the sovereignty of Denmark; however, since Riḍván 2006 the community there has fallen under the aegis and care of the National Assembly of the UK. During its consultations the Assembly considered a wide range of issues such as the growth of the Faith on the islands, the functioning of the two Groups in Tórshavn and Tófir, ensuring a better flow of communications, the care of the resting place of Knight of Bahá’u’lláh, Eskil Ljungberg, as well as financial and other matters.

The Assembly will be consulting further with Dr. Fozdar-Foroudi at its next meeting on the development of the Faith on these islands.

Arts

At its December meeting, the National Assembly devoted considerable time to discuss a number of issues and suggestions, including resolutions from the 2012 National Convention, concerning the arts. With great pleasure, the Assembly has decided to call for a two-day conference to be organised for a small number of invited artists and others to come together to consider such matters as the promotion of the arts and how this can contribute to building vibrant communities within the framework for action provided by the Plan. The outcome of the event will inform further consultations of the National Assembly on this subject.

UKBahá’í

Having reviewed the costs associated with producing and distributing the UKBahá’í publication, the National Assembly has decided to reduce the number of editions from six to

four a year. The National Assembly is keen to reduce the production costs yet further, and encourages all those who can view the UKBahá'í online to unsubscribe from receiving printed copies. UKBahá'í can normally be accessed at admin.bahai.org.uk, although the site is temporarily undergoing maintenance.

Next meeting of the National Assembly

The dates of the National Assembly's next meeting were changed from 18-20 January to 25-27 January 2013.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

National Spiritual Assembly