

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

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Precious relics

A representative of the family of Hasan Balyuzi, Hand of the Cause of God, recently met with the National Spiritual Assembly to present it with a number of holy relics associated with our beloved Faith. These precious treasures include a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh, a photograph of His Person and a lock of His hair; a photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá with His signature; and calligraphy written by the Báb as a child. The meeting was a great joy and privilege for the National Assembly members, and we are deeply grateful to the Balyuzi family for their generosity and kindness in entrusting these items to the Bahá'í community. The National Assembly is currently in dialogue with the Bahá'í World Centre regarding the appropriate location for the storage of these items.

Regional Bahá'í Councils

The National Assembly continues to give attention to the development of the capacity of the four Regional Bahá'í Councils, and in so doing, is learning how to develop its own capacity to effectively assist the Councils in the crucial services that they render for the Cause!

Representatives of the National Assembly have been studying guidance with the Councils and, together with Counsellor Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi, reflecting with them on the outcome of their plans and the progress of the programmes of growth in their respective regions. The National Assembly will be meeting with the newly elected and appointed Regional Councils in December to explore this further, especially in light of the need for programmes of growth to emerge in a further 21 of the UK's 50 clusters by the end of this Plan. In connection with this effort, an institutional meeting is also being planned for February 2014 in which consultations will focus on the goals of the Plan and the ways in which these can be achieved.

The National Assembly oversees the election and appointment of the Councils, including the appointment of tellers, who devotedly offered a great deal of time this year to complete the important task of counting ballots. We are most grateful to the tellers for their services!

Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity

Opportunities abound, within the framework for action described by the Universal House of Justice, to contribute to the advancement of civilization. Special opportunities for service are naturally afforded to youth by virtue of their circumstances and character and, as appropriate, the friends are warmly encouraged to celebrate this and lend their wholehearted and real support to

the younger members of the community.

Among the opportunities available for youth at this time are the undergraduate seminars run by the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity (ISGP). As you may know, ISGP is an agency of the House of Justice. Its seminars aim to help raise the capacity of university students to contribute to prevalent discourses in society, which is a key component of the Bahá'í community's overall efforts to build the world envisioned by Bahá'u'lláh. The seminars also help equip students to face the particular challenges that often arise at university, such as the assumption of a purely materialistic framework of understanding in their courses and the presentation of a worldview that challenges their most cherished convictions, leaving no space for a dialogue between science and religion.

The National Assembly has been delighted to witness the progress of the ISGP seminars since their inception in this country in 2008, and we strongly urge as many Bahá'í youth as possible to take advantage of them. The seminars take place every year during the summer holidays, and details about next year's seminars will be announced in due course. A letter was recently sent on behalf of the National Assembly introducing ISGP to Local Spiritual Assemblies, and we look forward to seeing how the community can encourage and support youth in their participation at the seminars.

Pastoral care in the community

The National Assembly encounters a wide range of requests for guidance and matters that are of a personal nature from among the members of the community. These include issues relating to marriage or residency, legal questions, chaplaincy, and the application of Bahá'í law. The Assembly endeavours, to the extent that it can, to offer guidance and, on the rare occasions when it is needed, to support the individuals concerned and their families. In carrying out these tasks, the National Assembly is grateful for the dedicated assistance of a number of individuals in the community who offer significant time and energy on behalf of the Assembly in an effort to assist in such matters.

Junior youth spiritual empowerment programme and youth conference materials

For two days, the members of the National Assembly gathered for a special meeting to immerse in the materials of the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme with the kind assistance of Dr. Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi and the resource person for Northern Europe, Mrs. Clare Stephens. The weekend included visits to junior youth groups, which were of great benefit in understanding more clearly how the programme operates and how it is being implemented in the UK. Through this study weekend, awareness was heightened yet further as to the importance of this area of service, the support that is required for the programme to spread throughout the country, and its amazing capacity to transform communities!

Separately, the National Assembly also had occasion to study the materials of the London youth conference. These materials were disseminated by the Universal House of Justice and offer a marvellous overview of the mission of this generation of youth, the opportunities available to them, and their potential to contribute to the society-reviving processes unleashed by Bahá'u'lláh. The National Assembly hopes that every believer will take the opportunity to study these materials.

Financial and legal support

In alignment with the principles of our beloved Faith, the National Assembly is in the process of consulting Bahá'ís who have expertise in financial matters to consider how to improve the management of its financial resources. To this end, it is looking to appoint a committee to advise the National Assembly and oversee this aspect of work and thereby make optimum use of the funds that are contributed so lovingly by the friends in the UK.

Along similar lines, the Assembly is currently exploring how best to draw on expertise from within the community to handle the many and various legal matters that inevitably arise throughout the course of its work. Consultations in this regard are ongoing.

It is a great joy and a bounty to serve the blessed, steadfast community of Bahá'u'lláh's followers in these islands, and we assure you of our heartfelt prayers at each of our meetings for the success of your noble endeavours.

With our warmest love,

National Spiritual Assembly

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM