



Scottish Bahá'í

Newsletter Issue 7

groups are being maintained by those progressing through the sequence of institute courses and committed to the vision of individual and collective transformation they foster."

The five areas that are working towards this goal are West Highland (including Mull, Fort William, Oban and Helensburgh), North Highland (including Skye and Inverness), Orkney, the Borders, and the Western Isles (including Lewis, Harris and the Uists).



Bahá'í Council For Scotland

The Baha'i Council for Scotland sends you its warmest love and greetings. It would like to share some of its recent activities and deliberations with you. The Council's June meeting was held in Fyvie, rural Aberdeenshire. One of the things that Council would like to learn more about is how to make the best use of the time it has for consultation. It experimented with splitting up into smaller groups for part of the day with each group presenting its discussions at a plenary session. The smaller groups for part of the day with each group presenting its discussions at a plenary session. The consultation included a focussed discussion on the Islands which acknowledged the importance placed on them by the beloved Guardian. The Council also visited some of the friends in the area in the afternoon and attended a beautiful devotional in the evening.

Summer of Service

The Council is delighted to note that 26 people of all ages have volunteered some service this summer. The service periods range in duration from several weeks to a weekend. People will be giving talks, holding firesides, facilitating devotionals, visiting each other and taking part in outreach activity. A very successful Summer camp for children and Junior Youth has already taken place on Skye, and a couple of families are in the process of trying to move into goal areas to help establish a programme of growth. The Universal House of Justice has described a programme of growth to us as follows:

"in whatever combination and however small in number, devotional gatherings, children's classes and junior youth

Home front Pioneering

'Abdu'l-Bahá exhorts us to "...spread abroad the teachings and ordinances of the loving Lord so that the world may become another world, the darkened earth may become illumined and the dead body of the people may obtain new life." Pioneers are individuals who move to another area, with the primary purpose of furthering the progress of the Faith. This sometimes involves moving a considerable distance, but may also involve a much shorter move over a boundary into another area. For example, the Toronto section of the 'Frontiers of Learning' video describes how youth moved from one part of the city to another in order to live in a particular neighbourhood where they could help with community building activities. Pioneers and visitors would undoubtedly be of service in many areas of Scotland. Specific examples include Dumbiedykes in Edinburgh (Junior Youth group), Townhead in Glasgow (Children and Junior Youth activities), Dumfries (Children, Junior Youth and Devotionals), Stornoway (Children, Junior Youth, Devotionals, Public talks) Broadford on Skye (children, devotionals. These are just a few of the many opportunities for service in Scotland). Anyone interested in finding out more should contact the Council's secretary at bcs@bahai.org.uk.

A very moving video has been issued by the National Assembly about pioneering. If you or your community have not yet had the opportunity to view it, the following are the instructions for streaming or downloading the film. Please note that the links are case sensitive:

- To stream at standard definition use the following link in your web browser: goo.gl/ZzLknA
- To stream at high definition use the following link: goo.gl/8SofgC
- To download the standard definition video file for later offline viewing use the following link (file size = 444MB): goo.gl/dQSgZy

- To download the high definition video file for later offline viewing use the following link (file size = 959MB): goo.gl/JdHKbZ

Cluster Agencies - what are they and what is their role?

"A cluster advances as more and more capacity for service is developed in a growing number of individuals, who are then assisted to initiate a growing number of interdependent activities that embrace ever-larger numbers of participants. This capacity-building process must, as time goes on, be complemented by an ever more sophisticated system of coordination and support."

('Insights from the Frontiers of Learning')

As the process of growth gathers momentum in a cluster, certain structures gradually come into being and assist the process. These are the 'Cluster Agencies'.

- If you want to attend or facilitate a study circle, the **Institute Co-ordinator can help**. Their role is to accompany tutors and enhance the quality of the Institute Process.
- **Junior Youth (JY) Co-ordinator's' role is to** accompany animators and enhance the quality of JY groups.
- **Children's Class Co-ordinators** are there to assist you if you want to run a children's class.
- **Area Teaching Committees (ATCs)** accompany teaching teams, organise spaces for reflection, help the spread of devotionals/firesides etc, work with LSAs and support teaching campaigns.
- **Auxiliary Board Members** assist and support all of the above structures.
- **Co-ordinators** are appointed by the Training Institute and the **ATCs** by the Regional Councils. At present there are 2 ATCs in Scotland - Forth and NE clusters.

Dumfries & Galloway "Spiritual conversations!"

What does the above phrase bring to mind?

Spiritual? About the spirit, soul, life after this life?
"Relating to or affecting the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things"
(oxford online dictionary)

Conversation? An informal chat with a friend or acquaintance. "A talk, especially an informal one, between two or more people, in which news and ideas are exchanged" (oxford online dictionary) I am continually amazed at the number of people

who long to have a spiritual conversation, may be a little shy to initiate it... and so when they meet a willing soul then the result is a very uplifting and refreshing dialogue at a deep level between two kindred spirits.

My inspiration for knowing that everyone, (family, friends, seekers) is yearning for some kind of meaningful conversation, are the stories of the early believers, Hands of the Cause and Knights of Bahá'u'lláh who travelled to faraway places and encountered souls who longed to have a spiritual conversation, explore the purpose of life and find out how they could contribute to the betterment of humanity.

One of the most memorable spiritual conversations I am blessed to have had was in a café, where I just happened to be sitting beside a lady having coffee and cake (I was just having coffee!). We both looked at each other and smiled! And the rest is history... the lady happened to be an economist from a European country.. she had moved to the area a couple of years ago and was working (but not as an economist). Since that was her area of interest I wondered if in her studies there was discussion of solutions to local, national or international economic problems? Deciding that the current economic and political solutions were not having an impact that gave us a point of agreement to search for answers! That was the opportunity to introduce Bahá'u'lláh's teachings about spiritual solution to economic problems.



She was most intrigued... we had to have a second cup of coffee and by then we had moved to one table and were engaged in a wonderful conversation between two friends searching for a possible solution to alleviate the suffering of our fellow human beings. We then agreed to meet again and discuss the roots of these amazing ideas (so who was Bahá'u'lláh she had asked). Was this a spiritual conversation or just two friends having a nice chat over coffee (and cake) or a bit of both?:-)

Shetland Junior Youth Group

For about two years now we have been holding a junior youth group in our local area, which is out in the wilds of Shetland. The group is held right next to the school that the junior youth attend, immediately after school for ease of transport. The animators were based in a town 20 miles away during the day, and didn't drive, but this problem was overcome by the kind input of my parents who came to pick us up to take us to the group. At first the group was animated by myself and a couple of wonderful year of service youth.

The group was going well and the participants were really enjoying it, so when the time for the year of service to leave came, we had to think long and hard about what to do next. I was discussing the problem of a lack of animators with one of my friends (who had been in a junior youth group in the same village when she was younger). As someone who understands the importance of service to community she happily offered to co-animate the group. With a new animator the dynamic of the group changed of course, but as the junior youth grow and develop so must the group, and so it added a nice new dimension. The group is now reaching its end but has been thoroughly enjoyed by both participants and animators..... Ilona Kater

Intensive training Aberdeenshire, Fyvie

Over the week end of the 18th to 20th of April 2014 an intensive Ruhi training week end took place in Fyvie, Aberdeenshire. The training was unusual in that there were 4 books running in parallel, with roughly 15 people in total, which meant about 2 or 3 people in each study circle plus a tutor. Books 1, 2, 4 and 6 were studied.



It was a fantastic experience, in part because this framework lent itself to focused and concentrated conversations in small groups, but also in larger

groups during breaks, meal times, evenings and common sessions. An interesting feature of the training were morning and sometimes evening sessions, which were for everyone and in which parts of relevant messages were studied to create a better understanding of the purpose of the institute process and to place it into a framework for action. During group sessions it was fantastic to have inputs from participants doing different books, since each had their input. These group sessions were also an opportunity for the various study circles to share some of their newly acquired insights or to share about the service activities done as part of the weekend.

Interestingly, even though it was close to Aberdeen, there were very few people from Aberdeen who committed to the week end. However, a special emphasis was placed on the first evening, to which the whole community was invited and one could really see the desire of several people to stay on and participate or to come back at least over the course of the weekend.

Also worth noting is the excellent accommodation and cuisine. It was great to have a delicious meal with wonderful people after several hours of intensive studying of the Ruhi books! These meals, combined with the loving and very welcoming atmosphere created by the host family added to a joyous and uplifted atmosphere.

Personally I feel, that the intensive training has inspired me in my everyday life and interactions. Even though I studied the concepts beforehand, new insights are brought to light every single time one studies a Ruhi book. Also being with other friends, with the same mindset; seeking to advance humanity, is always very inspiring, even more so, because it is over a whole week end. What I also enjoy about intensives is that one spends time with others for social, recreational purposes and bonds of friendship beyond service are created.

“Paralleling the growth of his inner life through prayer, meditation, service, and study of the teachings, Bahá’í youth have the opportunity to learn in practice the very functioning of the Order of Baha’u’lláh. Through taking part in conferences and summer schools as well as Nineteen day Feasts, and in service on committees, they can develop the wonderful skill of Bahá’í consultation, thus tracing new paths of human corporate action.....Wellspring of Guidance, UHJ.

Further insights

We were a small group of four people for book 6. Only one of the participants had fully done the book before. Our discussions and conversations were

deep and fruitful, and all participants had very enriching thoughts. Due to the good dynamics within the group, we managed to go through the material relatively quickly.

Previous to the intensive weekend, the participants had been asked by the tutor to arrange a few visits which would take place during the intensive weekend. The early preparation of those visits was very helpful, since the participants from early on started thinking about the practical component of the Ruhi training and hence saw it as an integral part of the book. One of these visits was carried out by one of the participants together with the tutor, and they also reflected about the visit afterward. The tutor was in touch with the other two participants and they, too, are keen to continue with the book (which wasn't finished during the intensive training), and would like to practice presenting the faith to friends in the community. What stood out was the creativity among the participants and their willingness to memorise prayers and quotations in different ways, such as composing songs and memorisation with gestures. This kind of creative practice enriched the intensive study and brought joy to all of the intensive weekend's participants.

I have been a tutor for a long time and happily done Ruhi Book one many many times, every time being like a first time, as each group has been different and unique. At Easter time I had two lovely people in my class, at first I thought that I may have a challenge before me, as one of them had learning difficulties and the other language problems. However, together we managed to overcome all of our obstacles and actually completed the book over the weekend. The participants enjoyed the experience so much that they would like to start Book Two as soon as possible.....**Andy Reischi.**

Forth Cluster Expansion Phase

Dearest Friends,

The expansion phase has now drawn to a close, and we hope that you have all been confirmed and blessed in your efforts during these past two weeks. At the last Cluster Reflection Meeting, Forth cluster pledged to have 70 spiritual conversations during the expansion phase. The Area Teaching Committee would like to share some stories with you from the friends around the cluster that took place during this time, which we hope will inspire you and give us an insight of the events and conversation that took place around Forth.

In Stirling, two evenings of spiritual conversations were held on the Monday and Wednesday, which were attended by the community of interest. These

two evenings proved to be a wonderful opportunity for the friends to delve deeper into spiritual matters and profound topics, and the community of interest also enjoyed being able to contribute to these conversations. This also led to one of the community of interest organising a picnic which will mark the end of the expansion phase and no doubt strengthen the ties of friendship in the community.

There were other opportunities that invited spiritual conversations. For example, two of the friends in the cluster were getting their kitchen refurbished. Due to no fault of the builder, the worktops for the



kitchen were damaged and had to be sent back. A second lot of worktops were delivered and were also damaged, which delayed all the work by a few days. The builder was surprised that these two friends did not get upset, and when he asked why they weren't more angry about it, one of the friends said that the builder had done everything he could to solve the problem and reduce the inconvenience that was caused, so justice demanded that the builder was respected and not given a hard time about it. This inevitably led to a good conversation about justice.

Another individual in the cluster was able to have an uplifting conversation with her friend over breakfast. Her friend is a Christian who attends Christian services regularly, and so this individual Bahá'í asked to hear about the various Christian denominations in Scotland and what makes them different. Furthermore, when this Bahá'í told her friend that she was going to a meeting organized by the Episcopal Church soon, it transpired that this was the very church that her friend is currently attending and feels closest to. This then led to a conversation about the importance of engaging in community life and living in the present day and modern society; the similarity of spiritual scriptures from various religions; and what it means to be free by obeying spiritual laws. They arranged to study parts of the Gospels together, and the friend said that she would be interested in coming to a Bahá'í event.

Another story that took place demonstrated the potency of the Word of God in touching human hearts and lives. A friend of the Faith, who is currently working through the Ruhi sequence, had prepared a presentation for an "Arts Evening inspired by the Bahá'í Writings" that he was attending in Edinburgh. He was with one of the Bahá'í friends in a coffee shop, sharing some of the quotes from the Writings and other scriptures that he was planning on sharing at the Arts evening, when they bumped into his friend from university. His friend was amazed that he was doing this presentation and they ended up sharing some of the quotes with her, which led to a conversation about attraction to beauty. As the friend was studying product design, she was also able to offer her own perspective on what it means for something to be beautiful. A few days after this conversation at the coffee shop, the same friend of the Faith sent a message to his previous study circle tutor asking to meet up on a troublesome matter. When they met up, he said that he was worried about a friend of his, who wasn't doing so well, and that he wanted to say some prayers for her. This really touched his tutor who could see just how much this individual was touched by the Bahá'í Writings and how he is applying them to his daily life.



These are just a few stories that we hope you will find inspiring, and that demonstrate the endless possibilities for an elevated conversation to take place. (Area Teaching Committee Astrid, Shirin, Yasmin)

Renowned Bahá'í Architect Visits Scotland

At the beginning of May **Scotland's Bahá'í Community** was honoured to welcome the most distinguished and renowned Bahá'í architect Mr Hossein Amanat to the **Edinburgh Bahá'í Centre**. His many achievements include the designs for the Bahá'í House of Worship in Samoa, the Azadi Tower in Teheran and many of the Bahá'í buildings on the Arc on Mount Carmel. Mr. Amanat who



along with his wife was visiting Scotland for the first time was given a tour of the Bahá'í Centre in Edinburgh which greatly impressed them, and afterwards they visited some sites in Edinburgh including those that were associated with 'Abdul-Bahá, who had visited Edinburgh in 1913.

For your Diaries



Peace One Day

12th September 2014

(Art Hall 1) Grand Hall, Kilmarnock, 7:30 pm.

Organised by the **Ayrshire Bahá'í Community** under the auspices of the Ayrshire Peace Group, once again invite everyone to join them in celebrating the United Nations "**Day of Peace**". Speakers include Francis Hume, Development officer Interfaith Scotland and Dee Matthew of Show Racism the Red Card. The subject will be **Peace in the Home, Peace in the Community and Peace in the World**.

Music by Willie Sinclair and friends.

The Ayrshire Friends do hope that everyone will support them in this project which is now becoming a yearly event in Ayrshire. Although it was a short visit, they truly enjoyed the experience and expressed their desire to return for a longer period in the near future.

Scottish Announce

Do you receive messages from Scottish Announce? It is the quickest and surest way to make sure you receive information from the Council. Please send an email to bcs@bahai.org.uk asking to subscribe to Scottish Announce if you would like to join.

Jeremy & Carolyn Travels in Orkney



Colleen MacLeod and David & Rosemary McLaughlin

Carolyn and I arrived in Kirkwall on Tuesday, March 25 in the evening and stayed at Colleen & Ian McLeod's home. On the way up we had the pleasure of an unannounced visit to Harold Lane in Dornoch.

On Wednesday we went to the library, set up the display panels and information about the public meeting and visited the chief librarian, Gareth Amos, whom I had met previously. We stayed with him for almost an hour. He told us more about his Jewish background and I promised to give him details of a book published in the States about the growth of the Faith among Jewish Iranians which also includes an appendix about some European Bahá'ís of Jewish background.



On Thursday we went to the BBC radio station and had a brief interview about our visit which resulted in an announcement of the public meeting to be held the next day.

Thursday evening we had a deepening in the Centre attended by Colleen, Rosemary, Verdun and Ingrid. This was an excellent opportunity to discuss their perception of the future development of the Faith on the island. They decided the first step was

to develop the devotional meetings on a regular basis, opening them up to the wider community.



J & C with Igrid Johnson (YOS), Rosemary, Colleen and Verdun Wake. Behind is Jo Constantine's beautiful quilt "Blessed is the Spot"

On Friday we visited two primary schools, one in Orphir and the other in Stenness. In each we briefly presented the Faith centring on the principle of unity through a story of the Farmer and his three sons conjoined with musical sounds provided by



Carolyn on her viola. We finished with a farandole, the whole school dancing off to their various classrooms. There is great scope for taking the faith into the schools on

Orkney. The Secondary schools in Kirkwall and Stromness were interested in a presentation but the timing was bad - exams and end of term imminent.

That evening we held a public meeting at the Baha'i Centre and taking our audience on a powerpoint visit to "Other Islands", mainly relating to our travel teaching trips to Mauritius and Madagascar.

We also managed to visit most of the Bahá'ís in their homes with sadly the exception of Lorraine & Steve Miller, and the Constantines due to lack of time.



On our way home we enjoyed a lovely meeting with friends in Inverness, held at Tom & Ann MacKenzie's home.

Scottish Summer School

"To Serve Humanity"



This year's Scottish Baha'i summer school took place at Strathallan school in the beautiful Perthshire countryside. Approx 120 people gathered to share four wonderful days of fellowship and study with each other. Communities from Shetland to Cornwall were represented at a school which was also blessed by the presence of families from China and Germany.



The adult programme started each day with a plenary session on the subject of **'To Serve Humanity' which was given by Dr John Parris**. His unique combination of insight, knowledge and humour resulted in sessions which were both inspiring and thought-provoking.



Following this, the adults explored the topic of community building using the materials from last

year's youth conferences. The afternoons were spent in workshop sessions; participants chose to follow one of four themes throughout the school 'Opening Creative Channels', 'Junior Youth', Enhancing the Devotional Character of the Community, and 'the Spiritual Education of Children'. Folk shared their experiences and ideas about community building and we were encouraged and inspired to plan to reach out to neighbours and friends on our return home. The Junior youth and children had their own programmes which ran in parallel to the adult sessions.



The school was characterised by a strong sense of participation and fellowship This was encouraged by a system of 'family groups' which carried out acts of service and helped to organise the devotionals and evening programmes. The weather was that of a typical Scottish summer – bright sunshine one minute followed by torrential rain the next! Luckily, the day of the Bahá'íland games was glorious and people competed in events such as wellie tossing and tug'o war. The school was blessed with many wonderful musicians who played and sang for and with us.

Huqúq'ulláh

"co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly" (Abdul'Baha)

Regional Board of Trustees of Huqúq'ulláh for Ireland and the UK

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For your Diaries

The Edinburgh Baha'i Centre has its public open weekend this year Sat 27 & Sun 28 Sep, between 14:00-17:00.

Ayrshire Community's Annual Picnic!!



Once again the **Ayrshire Bahá'í Community** staged it's Annual "Big Picnic". This year it was held at the end of June in the gardens of Sven Kamming in the outskirts of Kilmarnock.



Again it was well supported by the Bahá'ís and their friends from all over Lanarkshire, Glasgow and of course Ayrshire.



Loads of good food and laughter were the order of the day.



along with some truly wonderful **'Spiritual Conversations!'**

Calling all young Bahá'í adults!

Would you like to know more about the law of Huquq'ulláh?

Would you like to explore the spiritual aspects of the institution of Huquq'ulláh and how this will "contribute to the spiritualization of humanity through the promotion of a new attitude to the acquisition and use of material resources"? (Universal House of Justice, Jan 2003)
Then please come along to a deepening on Huquq'ulláh facilitated by Parvin Morrissey:

When: Wednesday 10th September, 7.30pm
Where: Carmelia's flat, 11/1 16 Castlebank Place, Glasgow G11 6DS (buzzer No 111)

Remember we still need your stories.

We always need all your stories and suggestions, on Teaching Activities, Projects and generally whats happening in your Areas.

Deadline for next issue will be early December.
Email Dereck Redfern. (redfernrocks@aol.com)
