

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

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When replying please

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To all believers in the United Kingdom

Dearly loved Friends,

The National Assembly is acutely aware that society is going through one of the most challenging times in living memory. The coming winter months of uncertainty will undoubtedly add to the trials and difficulties that people are facing, not only within the Bahá'í community but also for those around us.

In its message to all National Spiritual Assemblies, dated 9 May 2020, the Universal House of Justice stated that “creative approaches will be required to sustain the collective spirit of the community during difficult times.” In this respect, the National Assembly has been giving thought to the role that the arts can play as a means of sustaining and uplifting the spirits of individuals and of the community at this particularly testing time. The aim is to further enrich Bahá'í community life – including Holy Days, Nineteen Day Feasts, devotionals, firesides, children's classes, junior-youth activities and study circles – by lifting spirits, creating joy and connecting hearts.

“All Art is a gift of the Holy Spirit”, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells us. Through engagement in crafts and arts, whether collectively or individually, hearts and spirits are uplifted and connected, and are touched by that which is beautiful. As a community, perhaps we can embrace a golden opportunity to learn together about creative engagement with the arts? How can we consciously strive to integrate the arts naturally into our lives and the lives of others? For many, indeed for most, our interactions will continue to be online in spaces such as Zoom, and it is acknowledged that this can be challenging. How can we these spaces be further infused with creativity, beauty and joy? If art is a gift of the Holy Spirit, then it is natural to fill our lives with the joy of creating, and to share this gift with others.

The range of arts and crafts is vast – from the performance-based arts such as singing, drama, puppet making and story-telling, to the quieter pursuits of creative writing, poetry and painting; using materials that can be found in homes, or can be made available quite easily; knitting, crochet, basket weaving, origami, macramé and jewellery-making; flower arranging and pressing, or making collages from nature; pencil drawing, photography, calligraphy and bottle painting; making cakes and jam to share with neighbours and friends; composing and singing a piece of music; soap carving and sculpture from playdough; making and sending postcards. The possibilities are endless. Some forward planning may of course be needed for some of these activities.

To support this deeper engagement in the arts, a section of the *Elevate* website called *Elevate Create* <https://www.elevateworld.org/create> has been prepared as a resource and inspiration bank, suggesting creative pursuits, sharing artistic offerings and ideas that can be used or adapted to suit the needs of the community or a particular activity.

It is the hope of the National Spiritual Assembly that those hosting devotionals, tutors, animators, teachers of children, Regional Councils and their agencies, training institute boards and their coordinators, Local Spiritual Assemblies – indeed everyone – will give serious thought to further imbuing Bahá'í community life and its interactions with those around it, with the arts.

The National Assembly looks forward to seeing the flowering of the arts at this testing time for humanity:

The plant most pruned by the gardeners is that one which, when the summer comes, will have the most beautiful blossoms and the most abundant fruit.

*'Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p.184*

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Patrick O'Mara', written over a horizontal line.

Patrick O'Mara,  
Secretary

cc. Counsellor Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi  
Auxiliary Board members  
Regional Bahá'í Councils  
Training institute boards  
Local Spiritual Assemblies