

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

June 22, 2016

To the American Bahá'í community
for the Feast of Rahmat

Dearly loved Friends,

As you gather to celebrate the Feast of Rahmat, we are delighted to share with you joyful news of a most significant administrative development in our national community.

As you no doubt will recall, in 1997, four Regional Bahá'í Councils—corresponding to the four regions addressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Tablets of the Divine Plan—were, for the first time, established in the United States. Adjustments to their boundaries increased their number to five; then, in 2008, to six. To better meet the needs of the Five Year Plan then in progress, in 2012 the wide and diverse span of states still encompassed within each of their boundaries was reduced further by enlarging the number of Councils to 10.

In recent months, we have been engaged in extensive consultations with the Continental Board of Counselors on ways our national community's capacity to meet the formidable requirements of the new Plan might be increased. With the approval and encouragement of the Universal House of Justice, we are pleased to announce that the number of Regional Bahá'í Councils in the United States will again be enlarged, this time to 12.

The new Councils are being brought into being by altering the boundaries of the current Great Lakes States and Atlantic States regions, each of which is being divided in two. Thus, the former Great Lakes States region now becomes the Heartland States and Midwestern States regions; the former Atlantic States region now becomes the Appalachian States and Atlantic States regions. States within their respective boundaries are as follows:

Appalachian States: Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia

Atlantic States: Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia

Heartland States: Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin

Midwestern States: Indiana, Michigan, Ohio

The three newly created Councils will be in operation by summer's end. As its membership is unaffected by the change, the current Atlantic States Council will continue at that point to function as before, albeit within its new boundaries. This augmentation of their number will, we fully expect, provide the entire body of the Councils with greatly increased capacity to discharge, in the Supreme Institution's words, the "inescapable obligations of the latest stage of a spiritual enterprise on which the fate of humanity ultimately depends."

Be assured of our prayers that each one of you—the favored disciples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and chief executors of His Divine Plan—will avail yourselves, in cycle after cycle of the five years just begun, of the "fleeting opportunities for a stride forward" each precious one presents.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES



Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary