

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

July 12, 2016

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

Dearly loved Friends,

On this first evening of the Bahá'í month of Words, we lovingly greet you, the devoted followers of the Exalted Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, the King of Glory, in this singularly blessed land. You are among the first of your countrymen to have responded to the call of these Twin Manifestations of God, to have imbibed the spirit of Their Revelation, to have been enkindled with the fire of Their love, to have the inestimable privilege of serving Their Cause. Though as yet few in numbers, it is your enviable mission to offer to our sisters and brothers across the nation the glad tidings of Their appearance and, with it, the dawning of the new Day of God.

In this spirit, we call your attention to the message from the Universal House of Justice circulated to all National Spiritual Assemblies on May 18 this year and subsequently shared with the community. Reminding us that the bicentenaries of the Births of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are steadily drawing near, the message conveyed guidance for the observances that will mark these auspicious occasions. Though published nearly a year and a half in advance of the bicentenary of Bahá'u'lláh's Birth, which will occur in October 2017, the Supreme Institution explained that it wished to afford National Assemblies ample time "to impress upon [their] respective communities the significance of the coming Festivals and [to] encourage preparations to begin."

Recalling its letter to the Conference of the Boards of Counselors on December 29 of the previous year, the House of Justice stated that "these Holy Days should be viewed as special opportunities for the friends to reach out to the widest possible cross-section of society and to all those with whom they share a connection—whether through a family tie or common interest, an occupation or field of study, neighbourly relations or merely chance acquaintance—so that all may rejoice in the appearance, exactly two hundred years before, of One Who was to be the Bearer of a new Message for humankind."

The House of Justice continued:

The locus of activity for the bicentenaries is to be at the local level. The House of Justice anticipates that in countless places across the world, both rural settings and urban centres, the friends will find creative ways to honour the Twin Manifestations Whose lives and sacred missions will be recalled on Their anniversaries. . . .

At the heart of these festivities must be a concerted effort to convey a sense of what it means for humanity that these two Luminaries rose successively above the horizon of the world. Of course, this will take different forms in different contexts, extending to a myriad artistic and cultural expressions, including songs, audio-visual presentations, publications and books. Such initiatives, coupled with widespread celebrations that are both uplifting and reverent, are also sure to spark the curiosity and wonder of many who may as yet be unfamiliar with the names of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. However, the real transformative power of the

Faith is likely to be perceived more readily still if people experience how worship and meaningful service are being woven into the fabric of the lives of Bahá'ís everywhere. Indeed, from the community-building activities of the Five Year Plan emerges a pattern of collective life within which anyone can discern the vivifying influence of the divine teachings brought by God's Manifestations.

The House of Justice then called on us to consider that "the six cycles leading up to the first of the special anniversaries can be viewed as an initial period over which progress toward the overall goal of the Five Year Plan can be measured. The steps taken during these months, and the achievements that come as a result, will constitute an offering of ardent love, yielded collectively to Him Who is the Unifier of the world on the bicentenary of His Birth."

Study of the entire letter in the months ahead will no doubt stimulate rich consultations and inspire a new spirit of energy and creativity throughout the community. Though we will hold special observances of the occasions at the House of Worship in Wilmette, these will be but one facet of countless celebrations in homes, neighborhoods, and communities in every corner of the country. We might well consider what opportunities the Twin Holy Birthdays this year—together with other Holy Days in the intervening period—might offer in building our capacity to reach out to others, interweaving the devotional and service strands of community life and enabling us thereby to establish the bicentenary events on a foundation of meaningful experience.

The Supreme Institution's May 18 letter is attached for your ease of reference. We look forward with joyful anticipation to news of your efforts to befittingly celebrate the appearance in the world of these exalted Beings—pure and stainless Mirrors of the attributes and perfections of God—central to the destiny of humanity and civilization. Be assured of our abiding love and of our prayers that you may ever live and thrive within Their nurturing embrace.

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



Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary

Attachment