

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

August 18, 2016

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

Cherished Friends and Co-workers,

As we approach the midpoint of the Bahá'í year, the first of the 20 three-month cycles that will comprise the current Five Year Plan is complete, and we are now well into the second. In this brief span of time, we have observed with increasing satisfaction a great mobilization of the community in support of the Plan's aims. Reports we are receiving tell us that the friends everywhere are devoting considerable time to studying and deepening their understanding of the guidance of the Universal House of Justice. The Regional Bahá'í Councils have held teaching conferences to combine such study with the formulation of plans of action and the fostering of both individual and collective activities. Gatherings of youth have been held in every corner of the country to marshal their particular skills and characteristic energy and audacity in service to the teaching work. Hundreds of Local Spiritual Assemblies have striven to impart their sustained, loving encouragement to the friends and, in collaboration with cluster agencies, have created special opportunities for reflection and service.

Activities are now in progress to advance some 325 clusters from the first to the second milestone on the continuum of growth, requiring an increase in participation in each cluster from a handful to some 100 or more. Work is also underway to strengthen some 300 more clusters currently at the second milestone, an effort calling for involvement in the work of community building on the part of hundreds more in each cluster. Many of these same clusters will doubtless progress to the third milestone, joining 14 others in the continental United States where there are now upwards of a thousand souls on the path of spiritual and social transformation. And those at the most advanced level may well expand to embrace thousands in the coming years—reflecting the rich diversity of the peoples of this land and offering examples, in action, of the transformative powers latent in Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation.

These promising beginnings are taking place at a time of great unease and turbulence in our country, conditions that should serve as a reminder of our urgent, sacred, and inescapable responsibility to establish patterns of life that can offer direction and hope to our fellow citizens. As the Universal House of Justice remarked in its most recent Ridván message:

In society at large, alas, the symptoms of an ever-deepening malaise of the soul multiply and worsen. How striking that, as the peoples of the world suffer for want of the true remedy and turn fitfully from one false hope to another, you are collectedly refining an instrument that connects hearts with the Word of God eternal. How striking that, amid the cacophony of fixed opinions and opposing interests that grows everywhere more fierce, you are focused on drawing people together to build communities that are havens of unity. Far from disheartening you, let the world's prejudices and hostilities be reminders of how urgently souls all around you need the healing balm that you alone can present to them.

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May contemplation of these words inspire each and every member of the community of the Greatest Name to a fresh resolve to advance, together with her or his fellow believers, the vital work of the current Plan. As you do, be certain you proceed with our warm admiration and full confidence in your ability to rise to unprecedented heights of service and accomplishment.

Our abiding love and prayers for your great success at all times accompany you.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kenneth E. Bowers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "K".

Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary