

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

September 25, 2016

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

Dearly loved Friends,

Nineteen years have passed since, in May 1997, the Universal House of Justice introduced the Bahá'í world to the new institution of Regional Bahá'í Councils—created to meet the needs of an evolving global community and invested with great promise to facilitate our efforts to decentralize and move closer to the grass roots the coordination of the friends' efforts to teach. Later that same year, our national community was among the first to elect four such Councils, each of them corresponding to one of the four regions addressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Tablets of the Divine Plan.

Over the course of these years—through the increasing part they have played in the victorious prosecution of three Five Year Plans—the Councils have gained experience, skill, wisdom, and maturity. As they have grown, so have their formidable tasks and responsibilities become wider ranging and more complex—to the extent that we have, with the Supreme Institution's consent, successively increased their number from four to six to ten, and, most recently, to 12, at the same time drawing tighter and closer to them the boundaries of their respective regions. We fully expect this development to increase the Councils' effectiveness in enabling the friends in cluster after cluster to successfully shoulder the "herculean labor" that will be necessary to fulfill the goals of the current Five Year Plan, enabling us to conclude this first century of the Faith's Formative Age triumphantly, with a significant advancement in the process of entry by troops to lay at the feet of our beloved Master.

Though the Councils are working toward the development of their own ability to raise funds, at present they continue to rely to a great extent on our National Fund to finance their all-important activities. When we understand that it is they who recruit, place, and provide modest financial assistance to young people volunteering to pioneer in key clusters, they who encourage the formation and travels of mobile teaching teams, they who empower and oversee the work of their Regional Training Institutes and cluster agencies, they who are engaged in responding to inquirers and in much gathering of data, they who bring together at timely intervals members of the Faith's various institutions to reflect and consult on regional progress, it is not difficult to see why providing each of the 12 Councils with a generous allotment of our precious Funds is both a necessity and a sound investment.

For all this work so critical to the progress of the Plan to proceed unhindered, funds must be readily available when needed. This is why we have established milestones measuring our progress toward our National Fund goal at quarterly intervals throughout the fiscal year.

At present, with about five months of the fiscal year already behind us, our contributions stand at \$9.1 million, about 26 percent of our National Fund goal of \$35 million. Without a concerted effort to achieve the \$14.7 million expected at the year's midpoint on October 31, we could enter the second half of the fiscal year with contributions lagging significantly behind, once again creating for ourselves an urgent situation requiring extraordinary measures to remedy.

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Dearest friends, the challenges of the current Plan will be with us for some time to come; if they are to be successfully surmounted, the multitude of vital activities taking place in the 12 regions of the country must be maintained. As a letter written on behalf of the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, so aptly puts it:

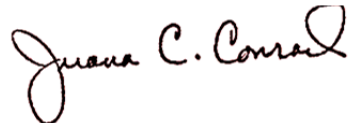
The Guardian would advise your Assembly to continue impressing upon the believers the necessity of their contributing regularly to the [N]ational [F]und. . . . Nothing short of a continuous flow of contributions to that [F]und can, indeed, ensure the financial stability upon which so much of the progress of the institutions of the Faith must now inevitably depend.

We turn to you, members of a community characterized by a loving Guardian as “the outstanding protagonists of the Cause of God,” confident in your readiness—so often and so remarkably demonstrated—to respond, at any hour, to the pressing needs of that Cause. Let us, with a fresh outpouring of contributions to our National Fund, ensure that the exciting community-building work taking place in scores of clusters across the nation continues, without abatement, to be encouraged, aided, and stewarded by our highly capable 12 Regional Bahá'í Councils.

Our love and prayers for your happiness, well-being, and great success surround you at all times.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juana C. Conrad". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Juana C. Conrad  
Treasurer