

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

January 17, 2018

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

Dearly loved Friends,

Our hearts rejoice in the numerous reports we continue to receive from believers across the country, telling of their efforts to celebrate the Bicentenary of Bahá'u'lláh's Birth and of the confirmations they have experienced. Especially encouraging are their accounts of the ways they built relationships with others in the months leading up to the Twin Holy Birthdays and of their efforts since to strengthen these nascent bonds of unity through shared worship, study of the teachings, and service.

We share with you the following half-dozen examples from the many hundreds of stories we have received:

"Since being involved with our bicentenary events, friends that had been attending our regular devotions noticeably drew closer to the Faith. There was evidence that their hearts were deeply touched and some have advised they are seriously pondering joining the Faith. . . . Other friends, who have been friendly with Bahá'ís but never attended our events, stated they had no idea of the depth of the Faith or of who Bahá'u'lláh was before attending; after, they were notably impressed. We are hopeful they, too, will begin attending our regular gatherings. The bicentenary events assisted us both in planting new seeds and in nourishing our tender plants. We are very hopeful about the future."

"We went from dead to alive and we are now a magnet of unity working with active people in different communities from all over the Cluster on a variety of projects and seeker follow-up. [This includes] service to newly arrived refugees who would have been lost to the Faith if we had not found them, welcomed them, [and] assisted them through service—like getting their children registered for school, assisting with getting driver's licenses, and what to look for when buying a used car. . . . We are building a network of friendships that cross community borders and supporting each other's local initiatives."

"Individuals have made contacts with neighbors and friends of the Faith sharing information about the Bicentenary events. Children in a children's class in a receptive neighborhood practiced singing songs in class, then presented them at the celebration. Their parents (all friends of the Faith) attended the event and were very happy to see their children participate!"

"Here is an example of a thank-you letter from friends of the Faith who attended the Gala Celebration:

'Dear Bahá'í Community, [We] want to thank you for the lovely evening celebrating the 200th anniversary of the births of the Báb and the Bahá'u'lláh. It was such a wonderful evening and we always find such peace in the Bahá'í community. . . . I have been reading "The Promise of World Peace" and a "Gift of Prayers" (from the table that evening). The prophets of God are like teachers and the whole world is like a child. Different teachers come at different times in our lives. "When the student is ready, the teacher will come." We must be the change. Thank you again for a very inspiring evening.'"

“For the first time ever, I invited people from all the following categories: friends, family, neighbors, co-workers—and I went door to door. The last week before the event I tried to invite one person or family a day. As a result, I had many, many conversations about the Person of Bahá'u'lláh and the Bahá'í Faith on a level that was unprecedented for me as an individual. I felt the presence of the Supreme Concourse. And my grandmother—who we spent decades too scared to even invite to a Bahá'í gathering—not only came, but invited some of her friends to come. This was HUGE in building family unity.”

“We have been blessed this year—with so many contacts, seeking souls, friends of the Faith, new activities launched just to handle the inquiries and friendships made, they are too numerous to write about. I am 63 years old, born into a Bahá'í family as a fourth-generation Bahá'í, and I have never experienced a year such as this! We started [our efforts] early, in late September of 2016 when the Universal House of Justice wrote to us about the upcoming celebrations and asked us to consult on how to properly celebrate them and to not make [them] just one event. We have not stopped since and will not stop. It's as if a new culture was born of service, accompaniment, and teaching. Every aspect of our community has been touched—from the functioning of the LSA, to core activities, to teaching and an outreach to the greater . . . community reaping enormous spiritual benefits and growth in our community. We have had more declarations this year than I can ever remember. Bahá'u'lláh unleashed a power so great this Bicentennial year that it has been palpable!”

We hope these accounts, typical of many we are receiving, will underscore for us all the growing receptivity of our fellow-citizens to the Revelation of the Blessed Beauty and help keep the spirit of teaching alive during this continuing “period of special potency.” Be assured of our deepest affection for each and every one of you, of our boundless confidence in your abilities, and of our unceasing prayers for your great success in the exciting weeks and months that lie ahead.

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



Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary