

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

April 20, 2018

To the American Bahá'í community

Dearly loved Friends,

With the imminent approach of the Ridván Festival, and with it the conclusion of the second year of the current Five Year Plan, we observe with deep satisfaction the efforts that have been made towards its major goal: for growth to be accelerated in every cluster, such that by Ridván 2021 there will be some 625 intensive programs of growth in the United States. Among these will doubtless be a few dozen that will have seen notable progress, engaging a thousand or more souls from the wider society in the community-building process.

As much as has been accomplished in the past two years, still greater efforts, characterized by the Universal House of Justice as no less than “herculean,” are needed to achieve this goal. This includes, among other strategies, the deployment of hundreds of pioneers on the homefront. According to the estimates provided by the 12 Regional Bahá'í Councils, there is a need for some 600-700 friends to arise as pioneers in the coming months, with as many as possible settling in their posts by the midpoint of the Plan in October. Such an ambitious undertaking, reminiscent of past efforts on the international front and calling for a similar spirit of self-sacrifice, will be essential in fostering the emergence everywhere of patterns of activity that welcome all to partake of the healing message of Bahá'u'lláh—especially such populations of historic significance as American Indians and African Americans, as well as the great diversity of peoples who have recently immigrated to our shores.

An historic shift, involving the concentration of efforts primarily on the homefront, was described by the House of Justice in its letter dated March 26, 2016 to the United States and Canada. In this same letter, marking the 100th anniversary of the revelation by 'Abdu'l-Bahá of the first of the Tablets of the Divine Plan, the Supreme Body foresaw the significance of this endeavor to the spiritual destiny of the nation itself:

The tasks confronting you are not identical with those of an earlier age. With the international spread of the Faith largely concluded, demands on you are now most pressing on the homefront. The process of entry by troops that emerged so tenuously in the Ten Year Crusade, and was fostered in the decades that followed, is now being extended through a sound process of community building in center after center in all those countries and territories that 'Abdu'l-Bahá marked out so long ago. Your sister communities, so many of which you helped to establish, are now mature, and you stand with them ready to take on the sterner challenges that lie ahead. The movement of your clusters to the farthest frontiers of learning will usher in the time anticipated by Shoghi Effendi at the start of your collective exertions, when the communities you build will directly combat and eventually eradicate the forces of corruption, of moral laxity, and of ingrained prejudice eating away at the vitals of society.

Among the clusters now in need of pioneers are those where programs of growth have only recently emerged, and which must now be strengthened so that they may achieve an intensive level of activity. In

other clusters, receptive populations have been identified and considerable headway has already been made—a situation which now requires devoted and capable friends to settle among them to consolidate these gains and to assist their further movement towards Bahá'u'lláh. Although primarily involving the younger generation, who can most successfully tap into the receptivity of their peers, this arena of service is open to all who are so inclined—especially those who have substantial experience with the institute process.

Many of the regions will be able to place sufficient numbers of pioneers using friends already residing in their communities, but some will require outside assistance. The Regional Councils have already begun to convene gatherings for the expressed purpose of calling the friends to serve in this capacity, so please take note of any being held in your area. Many have also developed systematic plans for training and accompaniment, about which you can learn more. If you feel inspired to serve, please contact your Council for further details, or consult with your Auxiliary Board member.

The Blessed Beauty lauded the significance of movement on the part of the believers from place to place for the sake of teaching His Cause. We close with these words from the Supreme Pen, which surely have a bearing on the present need:

They that have forsaken their country for the purpose of teaching Our Cause—these shall the Faithful Spirit strengthen through its power. A company of Our chosen angels shall go forth with them, as bidden by Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Wise. How great the blessedness that awaiteth him that hath attained the honor of serving the Almighty! By My life! No act, however great, can compare with it, except such deeds as have been ordained by God, the All-Powerful, the Most Mighty. Such a service is, indeed, the prince of all goodly deeds, and the ornament of every goodly act. Thus hath it been ordained by Him Who is the Sovereign Revealer, the Ancient of Days.

Whoso ariseth to teach Our Cause must needs detach himself from all earthly things, and regard, at all times, the triumph of Our Faith as his supreme objective. This hath, verily, been decreed in the Guarded Tablet. And when he determineth to leave his home, for the sake of the Cause of his Lord, let him put his whole trust in God, as the best provision for his journey, and array himself with the robe of virtue. Thus hath it been decreed by God, the Almighty, the All-Praised.

Be assured of our loving gratitude and of our constant prayers that Bahá'u'lláh's confirmations may attend all your devoted efforts on the path of service.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,



Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary

cc: Continental Board of Counselors
for the Americas