

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

July 12, 2018

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

Dearly loved Friends,

Evidence is mounting that the settlement of hundreds of homefront pioneers in villages and neighborhoods across the country will be a vital factor in the advancement of the Five Year Plan. Such service aims, as we affirmed in our message for the Feast of Núr, “to befriend and invite to join in our community-building work various receptive populations—especially American Indians, African Americans, and the diverse immigrant groups who have in recent years arrived on our shores—[as] one of the greatest possible expressions of our belief in the fundamental oneness of humanity.”

We are delighted that, at this writing, there are now 435 friends serving as homefront pioneers in clusters throughout the 48 states. Some three dozen more are expected to arrive at their posts in the coming weeks, and many more are making plans to arise as soon as their circumstances permit.

The stories that follow—taken from reports we have received—illustrate the unique confirmations and blessings that await those who arise to undertake this service:

An Iranian Bahá'í youth was serving in another area of the Heartland region, devoting himself to learning about reaching out to other youth and inviting them to participate in the training institute as a way to serve younger youth and their community. He had heard of the special opportunity to learn intensively about inviting youth and others living in several neighborhoods as part of the Heartland Initiative [an effort focused on the three clusters surrounding the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette] but was not sure if he should leave his current cluster. He prayed and consulted with many others but was still not sure if he should relocate to the Chicago area or stay in his current community. During a visit to the House of Worship, he offered intense prayers and later that night had a dream in which his family, whom he had left in Iran, told him that their suffering and sacrifice had been offered up so he could serve in the place where 'Abdu'l-Bahá's footsteps had trodden. Following his dream he arose to offer his service as a pioneer with the Heartland Initiative.

A couple serving as homefront pioneers in a Pennsylvania neighborhood related the following about the young people with whom they have come in contact:

[T]he youth who are staying with us have released a veritable storm of effective action on many fronts. Every night they attract to our home for dinner—followed by prayers, the recitation of odes, and the singing of songs—a bevy of young people from the college and the community; every morning they are intensely engaged in study . . . and every afternoon they take up the study of Books 1, 3 & 5 with the young people who have been magnetized by their consecration and love. Just the other day one of the students . . . who has been summoned to service by this group, declared his belief in the Blessed Beauty and proclaimed the simple fact that he had entered the gates of heaven. Their exploits suggest that they represent a new generation [of consecrated and effective teachers].

A youth of both African American and Mexican-American heritage who recently became a Bahá'í will be one of the first individuals in the South Central region—if not the very first—to complete the full sequence of Ruhi courses in under a year. She too has arisen to serve as a homefront pioneer in a cluster other than her own. Describing her experience with the institute process in a recent report, she told of its impact on her understanding of the oneness of religions and what it means to lead a truly spiritual life: “I’m excited to give back. That’s what I think now. The Bahá'ís helped me in my lowest time, spiritually. They helped me *find* myself spiritually, and I’m looking forward to helping others. I will finish Book 7, *Walking a Path of Service*, in [her current cluster] before starting my year of service.”

We conclude with a story that demonstrates that opportunities for service and the spiritual rewards that accompany it are available to believers of all ages:

At age 69, I was beginning my 47th fast—the last fast [that] I was bound to observe. I had not consciously experienced the miracles of [the Fast] before and asked Bahá'u'lláh to make this last fast the most amazing of all fasts and it was.

It began when . . . the Regional Coordinator asked if I would move to [another] cluster. I said yes. She said, “What? Really?” I said yes and, from then on, I felt that I was in a different reality. Every day was full of confirmation and guidance; blessings and gratitude. . . . We found the focus neighborhood and, by the end of June, we had the first junior youth group meeting, with expectations of more joining after school starts in August. By the grace of God, we found [a mother and son] who really understand the program and are willing to encourage people in the neighborhood to participate. People rally around this family.

Personally, it’s been challenging to keep up with the youth—buying a house, selling a house, moving, keeping up with the responsibilities and working. Another challenge was really understanding the process. Since I come from the direct teaching days of the 70s . . . there was a lot for me to detach from, learn and transform. Our team made me feel totally loved and supported. This is one of the happiest times of my life. I’m right where I am supposed to be. I’ve already fallen in love with this neighborhood and I look forward to seeing how it will grow.

Dearest friends, we hope these wonderful stories will inspire others to arise and add their own stories to a growing nationwide movement of pioneering on the home front. We invite you to join with us in offering prayers for the great success of the precious souls who have so far answered the call at this critical juncture in our history.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

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Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary