

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

March 1, 2019

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

Dearly loved Friends,

As we gather tonight to joyfully celebrate this Feast, we are likewise mindful that, at sunrise tomorrow, our annual season of fasting will commence. Fasting is, of course, essentially a symbolic act through which we affirm, through our willingness to forgo food and drink during the hours of daylight, the strength of our love for the Creator and fidelity to His law. But the fasting season has other purposes: it is a time richly spiritually endowed, a time for drawing closer to the Almighty through prayer and reflection.

Perhaps one subject we would do well to contemplate is the remarkable growth and development of our Faith over a span of less than two centuries—a brief moment when measured against the lifetime of the stars! From the first glimmerings of its bright light in the stultifying darkness of 19th-century Persia to the planting of its banner of unity and oneness in the far corners of the earth, the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh has given rise in these first 175 years of its existence to an organized worldwide community of devoted adherents fired by a shared vision of a new social order founded on simple yet profound spiritual principles, honoring all as members of a single and indivisible human family.

The question of precisely how to translate this vision into living, breathing reality has been answered by the Plans of the Universal House of Justice that have taken us through the last several decades. In the community's arrangement into regions and clusters, in the steady development of the institute process, in the multiplying far and wide of a set of core activities, in the furtherance of programs of growth, in the launching of efforts at the grass roots to respond to social and economic needs, we are evolving a practical, workable system to reach out to and embrace multitudes of our bewildered and despairing fellow citizens, to familiarize them with our goals, and to welcome their contributions to our efforts to build the world anew, neighborhood by neighborhood.

These efforts and the many more that support them all require a continuous flow of funds, which serve as their sustenance, their very lifeblood. The beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, expressed this idea in many of his letters:

The supply of funds, in support of the national Treasury, constitutes, at the present time, the lifeblood of these nascent institutions which you are laboring to erect. Its importance cannot surely be overestimated. Untold blessings shall no doubt crown every effort directed to that end.

Dear friends, as we enter the month of March, contributions to our National Fund stand at about \$28.3 million, some \$ 9.7 million short of our goal of \$38 million with eight weeks remaining in the fiscal year. This means we will need contributions of nearly one-and-a-quarter-million dollars a week—a formidable figure—to fulfill our goal.

Let us reflect a moment on the metaphor of blood. Without the oxygen and nutrients the blood carries to them, our vital organs would before long falter and cease to function. Without a constant flow of life-giving funds—and the spirit of devotion and sacrifice that

provides them—the institutions of our Faith and their many agencies would be without means to carry out their plans and activities, vital to the continuing advancement of our Faith and realization of the vision of a unified, peaceful, and just world civilization the Blessed Beauty gave to humanity at such profound cost to Himself.

Let us not be the ones to fail Him; let us, instead, rally the same devotion, faithfulness, ingenuity, and enterprise that have time and again attracted Divine confirmations and blessings, enabling our storied community to surmount so many past hurdles. We can and will do it!

Our confidence in you is boundless, our prayers for the great success of your efforts constant and earnest.

With our love and deepest admiration,
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 style with a large, looping initial "J".

Juana C. Conrad
Treasurer