

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

December 11, 2019

To the American Bahá'í community
for the Feast of Masá'il

Dearly loved Friends,

Just two weeks ago, on the Day of the Covenant, we celebrated the establishment of the Covenant, that core institution of our Faith—firmly rooted in the explicit instructions of Bahá'u'lláh—that has guaranteed the continuity of authoritative interpretation of His teachings and leadership of the Bahá'í community. It is fitting that every year on this occasion the seating of our 12 Regional Bahá'í Councils is announced with great joy.

Though now a well-established feature in the life of the community, this facet of our electoral process—in which members of each of the now 975 Local Spiritual Assemblies across the nation cast ballots for their respective region's Council—is relatively new. The story of the birth and evolution of the Regional Bahá'í Councils is a testimony to both the strength and the flexibility of our Administrative Order, which the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, has called “the very pattern of [Baha'u'llah's] New World Order.”

It is just two decades since the Universal House of Justice decided that the time was propitious in the United States to introduce Regional Bahá'í Councils to our national administrative structure. With the Councils' addition, the teaching work and many of the tasks attendant to it were further decentralized and their coordination and guidance was brought closer to the grass roots—where the majority of that work actually takes place. Initially four in number, the regions assigned to the first Councils proved too vast for one institution to effectively administer and their number has several times been increased to the present 12—with their assigned regions redrawn to reflect more manageable bounds.

Today's Regional Councils shoulder many tasks at one time directly managed by the National Spiritual Assembly and its national committees. Of primary importance are the tasks associated with the Five Year Plan and the success of the community-building work at every level—from entire regions to individual neighborhoods. In this vital work, the Councils are regularly advised by members of the Continental Board of Counselors and assisted by members of their Auxiliary Boards. With the aid of this guidance, the Councils encourage the progress of clusters from one milestone to another along the continuum of growth mapped by the Universal House of Justice, a task requiring close observation of the vibrancy and effectiveness of the institute process from cluster to cluster as well as the number of core activities in place and the level of participation in them by Bahá'ís and friends of the Faith. They take keen interest in modest projects begun at the neighborhood level that aim to answer social and economic needs. They inspire progress through the holding of regional conferences and smaller and more focused institutes and seminars. To support the work, they actively recruit and help to place homefront pioneers in particular neighborhoods and clusters—and several hundred have so far been deployed.

Taken together, these efforts constitute some of the most exciting manifestations of positive energy, growth, and development taking place across the length and breadth of the American Bahá'í community. They are the nexus where the noble ideals of our Faith are every day being translated into practical action. But all this work, like a great warming fire, requires a constant supply of fuel.

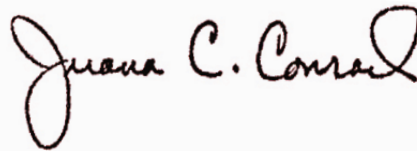
Dear friends, as the Regional Councils continue to evolve, they are gradually developing the capacity and tools to raise and manage their own independent Funds, but it would be a mistake to think that, at this juncture, they are self-sustaining. At present, they must still rely to a great extent on funds supplied by the National Spiritual Assembly.

It is your regular giving to our National Fund that provides the fuel needed to energize the work of our Regional Councils—the vital work of rebuilding society on an entirely new and spiritual foundation. Contributions to the Fund for 2019–20 have accelerated but still lag behind anticipated levels. At present, with well over half of the year already behind us, they stand at about 35 percent of our \$40 million goal. With just 21 weeks remaining in the year, it will take approximately \$1.2 million a week to meet our goal.

Without a doubt, the challenge is formidable and the time is short. Yet our confidence remains high that you will answer this urgent call, that you will—as you have proven on so many previous occasions—not fail to respond to the need for consummate devotion, enterprise, and sacrifice, that you will yet another time vindicate the beloved Guardian's description of the members of this community as "the champion-builders of a divinely conceived Administrative Order, the standard-bearers of the all-conquering army of the Lord of Hosts, the torchbearers of a future divinely inspired world civilization."

Our belief in you is unswerving, our admiration for you boundless, our prayers for you unceasing.

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 style with a large, looping initial 'J'.

Juana C. Conrad
Treasurer