

communiqué

Jamál 173 BE/April 2016



There is service for us all: Northern Ireland regional gathering

As you probably know, the House of Justice recently released a letter describing an outline of the next Five Year Plan. In light of the weighty content, the Council called a gathering to discuss this, and invited all the friends in Northern Ireland to come and take part.

The gathering was on 27th February at Antrim Business Centre. Many took up the invitation, and an inspiring and empowering day was had by all. Colette Rodgers reflects on her experience at the event:

The introduction to the day, delivered very lovingly by our Beloved Council, included an historical summary of how we have arrived at this point in the development of the Faith and a very structured summary of the current plan. We then divided into groups to study paragraphs thirteen to seventeen.

I found these paragraphs very relevant to Northern Ireland. The vision for the advancement of the Cause of God given to us in this latest plan may be a little difficult to digest but I certainly gained a deeper understanding of the role I can play as an individual, and the assistance that will become available to us from our Institutions and Auxiliary Board Members. All this from the study

From the Universal House of Justice

The vision that unfolds before our eyes is of a grassroots stirring, an organic flowering, a resistless movement that has grown imperceptibly at times and at others in great surges to eventually embrace the entire world: God-intoxicated lovers exceeding their personal capacities, embryonic institutions learning to exercise their powers for the well-being of humanity, communities emerging as shelters and schools in which human potential is nourished...

Before you, beloved friends, lies stretched out the blank scroll of the future on which you and your spiritual descendants will inscribe fresh and lasting deeds of renunciation and heroism for the betterment of the world.

26 March 2016

of these few paragraphs! I feel truly humbled and blessed to be receiving such Divine Guidance.

It was encouraging to hear of the many successful core activities happening in Northern Ireland and to see so many new faces was confirmation that our Faith is growing. No need to feel frustrated or useless, there is service for us all within growth.

I came away wanting more; more time to study the message, more time to spend with the Friends, more songs I want to learn, just more days like this, but more importantly I was motivated to do something that would make a difference in a community or neighbourhood near me and as an isolated believer I now feel this motivation is essential.



Days of sharing and giving: Ayyam-i-Ha celebrations in Belfast and Whitehead

The Belfast Ayyam-i-Ha celebrations took place in the Morton Community Centre during the regular Friday evening activities. It was a wonderful evening full of life, spirit, and the sharing of food – with a record number in attendance (more than 80 people were counted). The evening started off with a beautiful devotional, followed by a potluck meal where everyone brought a dish to share, and ended with activities for the children.

...

The children's class in Whitehead has been running for about four plus years. Usually a Naw Ruz party is held and looked forward to with

great excitement by the children who would present a short item related to their learning throughout the year. However this year an Ayyam-i-Ha party was held instead. Friends and family members were invited. It turned out to be a community effort with contributions from all including a delectable pot of rice from Kaveh. The children had gifts for everyone: a yellow rose decorated with a little bird bearing a greeting for the adults and a special chocolate flower for the children who could not be there. It was a very enjoyable occasion where we all got to know each other a little better.

... From the writings

“It is clear and evident, therefore that the first bestowal of God is the Word, and it's discoverer and recipient is the power of understanding. This Word is the foremost instructor in the school of existence and the revealer of Him Who is the Almighty. All that is seen is visible only through the light of its wisdom. All that is manifest is but a token of its knowledge. All names are but its name, and the beginning and end of all matters must needs depend upon it.”

(Bahá'u'lláh. *The Tabernacle of Unity*, page 4)

From Northern Ireland to Northern Thailand:

Bob shares some highlights from his travels



On one of my recent trips to Northern Thailand I was privileged to attend the celebrations of the twin manifestations at the Chiang Mai Bahá'í centre.



Both nights consisted of readings, prayers, stories and music, followed by an outdoor party with marvelous food and entertainment. Whilst there I met many friends from all over the world.



It was heartening to witness so many young Thais studying the Bahá'í writings in their own language and in English.



Later, on one of my visits to Chiang Mai Old Town, I was able to gift some Bahá'í prayer books and other literature to some local residents, who expressed their love of the Bahá'í prayers.



Music, art and gentle guidance: Children's class in Bangor

The Bangor Baha'i Community has started a children's class at the end of January 2016. The class is held on Sundays from 11:00-12:00 noon and is held at the home of Patrick and Barbara Boyle. Barbara facilitates the class and is supported by Lisa Sabour. There are currently four children at-

tending the class, their ages ranging from 4 to 10 years old. The children are learning the prayers and stories of the Baha'i faith using music and art. An important aspect of the class is the reflection on the virtues to let the children voice their thoughts and give them gentle guidance.

- Babara Boyle

Love and Unity and Hope: Weekly community devotional in Omagh

Following a meeting with the Omagh Community on 16th of January a weekly devotional has been held in the Omagh Community House. This community centre was built in response to the 31 people who lost their life in the Omagh bombing in 1998, including a mother pregnant with twins. The building overlooks this area of devastation 18 yrs ago and it is from here that prayers are said every Sunday from January 31st to Ridvan.

The program starts at 3pm to 5pm and follows themes such as the Purpose of Creation, Healing Conflict, Health and Healing, Peace, Happiness, Love and Unity and Hope. It builds on the wonderful steadfast work of the staunch friends in the area over many years by inviting their friends and contacts to attend.



To date three of these contacts have been regular attendees with others occasionally supporting the event.

Friends from all over Northern Ireland have supported the event and organised the programmes, as a result most devotionals have up to 10 to 12 attendees. At the end of the readings discussion has become more and more relaxed and explorative of our spiritual reality.

- Patricia Jamshidi

Thoughts from an area co-ordinator

The 29th December message from the House of Justice, with which we are currently becoming more familiar, explains that over the next five years, a key element for development will be "an institute process gaining in strength."

Last April 2015, the Training Institute Board UK was devolved into four regional ones in England, Scotland, Wales, and N. Ireland, each comprising three members; a Board Member, an area co-ordinator and one other experienced and familiar with the Institute process. In TIBNI this is Farah Khavari, Susie Agahi, and Darragh Graham.

Of course, the TI is much more than the Board. It is really a network; the sum of all those who take part in the it's activities; tutors, the co-ordinators, and area and regional co-ordinators.

"We have in mind a systematic and concentrated effort by this collaborative group to gather and apply insights emerging from the grassroots..

Having a TI board in a region means that there can be a close understanding of how things are developing, and make strategic plans that can address the needs, and support the development of all involved.

Almost twenty years ago, the House of Justice published the Training Institute Document, with detailed explanation of its purpose, and how it would function.

The purpose is to "help develop in each participant a deep love for Bahá'u'lláh, a good understanding of His essential teachings, and an awareness of developing the spiritual life of each individual through prayer, meditation, and immersion in the Sacred Writings."

" They will also cover such practical matters as how to teach the

continued on next page



“Material and spiritual progress”

The theme of this year’s spring school in Northern Lights was “Material and Spiritual Progress”. Even though Lorne House was being refurbished lots of people came to take part, and it turned out to be one of the biggest cluster schools ever.

The main course running through the school was The Circle of Existence by Declan Howlett, with other activities and art workshops as usual. Although the weather was rather cold, the school had a warm atmosphere, and the food was excellent!



... it is with gratitude that the Baha’i Council for Northern Ireland is able to share with everyone the joyful news that signs of a nascent programme of growth are now evident in both goal clusters in our region, Stars of the West and Hainsworth. As the friends know only too well, it is ultimately our love for the Blessed Beauty, and His vision of a new civilisation, that taps the deepest roots of motivation within the friends. It is their love for Him that continues to stir the hearts and inspire them to make the great sacrifices required in the arena of service. And, indeed, what else but the quickening power of the Word of God and His Revelation could move one to continually expend their energies for such noble aims? Many of the friends in Northern Ireland have played a crucial role in the channeling of the divine energies towards the passing of the milestones. In particular, the Council are sincerely grateful to the mighty effort made by those who served as visiting-teams and pioneers, making truly extraordinary sacrifices in pursuing the aims of the Universal House of Justice. We bow our heads in humble gratitude that the community in Northern Ireland has the opportunity to play our part, however small or large, in the unfoldment of the Divine Plan in the coming years.

The Bahá’í Council for Northern Ireland – 19 April 2016

Thoughts from an area co-ordinator *continued*

faith for there are too many who, for lack of confidence in their ability to do so, are hesitant to convey the message.” (Ridvan 1996 to the Bahá’ís of Europe)

“These centres of Bahá’í learning will have as their goal, one very practical outcome, namely the raising up of large numbers of believers who are trained to foster and facilitate the process of entry by troops with efficiency and love”. (Ridvan 1996 to the Bahá’ís of the World).

Now, added to these aims in this most recent message is “the promotion of children’s classes, junior youth groups and study circles. (paragraph 44)

Each part of the Training Institute; the tutors, the co-ordinator and the Board, share and learn from each other, and it is only through the loving collaboration of all that we will be able to advance this spiritual enterprise and “contribute to the spiritual and material well-being of our communities” (28 Dec 15)

– Susie Agahi

Announcements

The Northern Ireland Bahá’í Summer School will be held on 17–21 August, 2016 at Lorne House.

Contacts and Information

To contact the Bahá’í Council for Northern Ireland or subscribe to the email news service:
Email: bcni@bahai.org.uk

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Please send stories and photos to:
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Deadline for submissions for the next issue is 1 July 2016

Please note, views expressed by various contributors are not necessarily those of the editor, the Bahá’í Council for Northern Ireland or the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United Kingdom.