

CommuniQué

Newsletter for the Bahá'í Community in Northern Ireland

'Alá' 169 BE/March 2012



Bahá'í Council for Northern Ireland

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Rebuilding Belfast

A series of vibrant devotionals is currently taking place in the Windsor/Village area of South Belfast. These devotionals, each with a different mood and atmosphere, allow for creativity and flexibility in the approach we are taking to teaching in the area. We have learned that hosting a devotional is a very simple act of service that can easily become a stimulus for growth. In September 2011 we had one devotional with around five regular participants per week. We now have three different devotionals, three study circles, a junior youth group, and a potential children's class, with over 30 individuals participating on a weekly basis, in a geographical area that can be traversed in a 15 minute walk.

We are beginning to see cohesion among the core activities, with our friends joining us in our efforts to transform our community. As a result of this, "a nascent programme for the sustained expansion and consolidation of The Faith can be perceived". (UHJ Dec 2010, Para 4)

J. Anderson & D. Graham

Progress in Seven Valleys



The Seven Valleys cluster has been busily beavering away these past few months. There are regular activities in four localities. Our tireless servants in Magherafelt have been holding regular devotional meetings which turned into a Book 1 study circle in the autumn. The Ballymena area holds regular devotionals, study circles and a junior youth group. The Coleraine area, despite having lost many of its longstanding Bahá'ís to other far flung lands has maintained a steady level of activity and two declarations in the past three months.

The cluster's identity and spirit of community has grown substantially over the past year thanks to regular reflection gatherings and the participation of a number of the members from the cluster in a Book 8. This event proved to be a wonderfully collaborative experience over two weekends with a number of friends from the cluster coming in to help out with refreshments and lunches so the participants could concentrate all their time and energies on completing the intensive course. A similar spirit of collaboration and support could also be felt at the start of February this year when dear Colin Rodgers lead a group of participants to commence their training as junior youth animators in Book 5. While the training was interrupted with Colin's sudden passing, you can be assured that this group will pick up this training in the near future with renewed ardour and dedication to advance the empowerment of junior youth throughout the cluster, a group so dear to Colin's heart. We do ask for everyone's prayers for the strengthening and growth of this cluster over the coming month, particularly in its efforts to maintain and advance the junior youth group in Ballymena.

K. Holmlund

Magherafelt's Mad Scientists and Omagh's Inspirational Leaders

Vida Lake has retired after 11 years of dedicated service as a classroom assistant in the Integrated Primary school in Omagh. She was the recipient of well deserved thanks from many. One touching memory from a little girl was of her time when she attended the Bahá'í children's class at Vida's home. The final very special honour was a school cup, in Vida's name, which will be presented each year to the "most helpful pupil of the year."

The bond between the Bahá'ís and the school has remained strong over the years and the school will continue to have Bahá'í support as Vida has been invited to remain as a member of the Board of Governors.

M. Lake

The Magherafelt community recently saw the completion of the study circle course *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit* with eight local participants. The exceptionally enthusiastic group found it to be a very enjoyable experience where they met new people, laughed a lot and encountered new ideas. The memorisation technique worked and was much fun, and a practical exercise in reflecting on life included astronomy appreciation and the successful extraction of banana DNA using only chemicals and items found in the kitchen!

L. Gornall

Love and fellowship at Northern Lights Winter School



When we first learned about the Cluster Schools, we had no idea what they were. We had been attending regular devotionals at Nad and Inge's home and enjoyed them thoroughly, but the first time we were invited to a Cluster School we politely declined simply because we were worried we mightn't fit in or that we might do the wrong thing. Oh how wrong we were! When we decided to go to the Winter School, we had already made some close friends and our connection to The Faith had grown substantially, but it still felt like a big step. When we arrived at beautiful, peaceful Lorne House, however, and received a great sense of welcome from everyone, we immediately felt relaxed and at home.

The Rota for helping with food preparation and service made us feel like we could contribute in a small way and were not just observers. Being included in the running of the school gave us a welcomed chance to meet and chat to new friends – it's amazing what you can learn from each other while peeling and chopping a mound of vegetables! The meals were diverse and tasty, thanks to the guidance of Edwin and Mahvash.

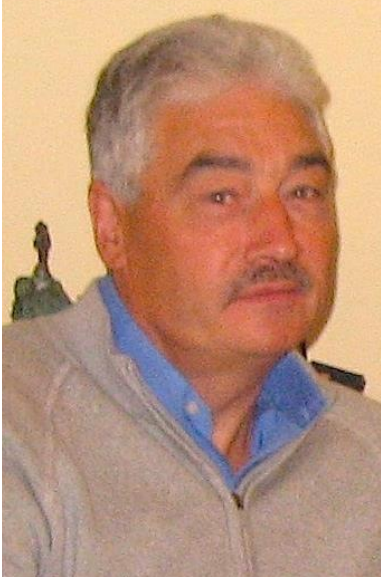
The atmosphere created by the daily devotionals was spiritual and tranquil, using wonderful music, song, readings, and prayers from each community to take us out of our physical surroundings. Inspiration, rejuvenation, motivation, purpose, and meaning are only some of the feelings we encountered during these daily devotionals. We felt real unity and harmony between those attending and found the devotionals to be uplifting, giving us time to contemplate and more deeply appreciate our lives and those we have in them.

The evenings in the school started with interesting talks by Edwin, Barbara and Kathleen followed by some more light-hearted activities. 'We' especially enjoyed the world dancing with Adib! Although we didn't stay over, we left late every night full of enthusiasm, discussing the day's events and discoveries.

The Lantern Walk was one of our highlights with people from all walks of life coming together – unity at its best. We both agreed it was difficult to describe how a cold New Year's Eve could have such a warm atmosphere and the calm that surrounded us all. You just had to be there!

The Winter School definitely changed how we look at life. We want to retain and build upon the feeling of spiritual calm we found at the school. We have introduced readings and prayer into our daily routine and we feel we have started a new journey in our lives with a wonderful Bahá'í Community to accompany us.

J. & N. Stewart



My Granda was more than just a Granda. He was like a daddy to me. Now that he is gone, because he was a huge part of my heart, I am sooo sad. I couldn't ever express how sad I am.

On my birthday something didn't feel quite right. I didn't know what it was but maybe God was trying to warn me. He didn't seem unwell or anything on Thursday. I am glad and happy for him now because he is in the best place ever and is with his mummy, his sister and other friends and family. Not forgetting his reason for coming to this world, God and all His Messengers.

He was truly the best man I knew and the best man I will ever know.

He was my heart.

M. Hajiabadi

To Mama Buzurg

Finally rising from your bed
Cajoled, badgered by sincere intent
Unaware that it would be the last
Stiff ascent to the vertical
The last battle with gravity
That your body would require.

You expired like a candle
Like snow melting
Like sun touched frost
A fading to white
A dissolving into memory
A returning to loved ones
A crystallisation of regret.

Sitting with your body
Here in the still silence
The full moon arcing overhead
Star pins of light spattering the dark
Firmament
I am convinced you have joined them
Already
Gone far from here,
No more worrying about doors and
lights and keys.

The reward
For all your waiting is
To join the graceful souls
Smouldering holes in heaven.
My reward is to have known
Just a little of you.

B. Elliot

Newtownabbey Community

Due to a reduction in numbers, the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Newtownabbey is likely to lapse at Ridvan unless a declaration occurs or a pioneer arrives before then. We ask for your prayers in order to assist this longstanding community.