



## Bahá'í Council for Northern Ireland

The Bahá'í Council for Northern Ireland hosted a regional conference on 1st April 2001. The venue was the Somme Heritage Centre, Newtownards – quite a poignant venue as the centre has an exhibition on one of our esteemed early Bahá'ís, the late George Hackney, who was a veteran of the Battle of the Somme.

The purpose of the conference was twofold, firstly for the Northern Ireland community to socialise with each other and meet the Council and, secondly, to share plans and ideas together for the advancement of our beloved Faith.

The Mayor of Ards, did us the honour of welcoming the Baha'is to the district. He then opened the Conference, entitled "Over the bridge – hand in hand into the future."

A wonderful message of love and encouragement was received from our own National Spiritual Assembly as well as a similarly encouraging message from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Republic of Ireland. The Council then read its own message to the community describing the significance of the hour and encouraging the friends to arise and serve as never before.

Friends gathered at the conference also had the privilege of listening to our Counsellor, Mr Shahriar Razavi, who talked inspirationally about his recent visit to the World Centre for the opening of the Seat of the International Teaching Centre and about recent statements from the Universal House of Justice. Also attending the Conference were Auxiliary Board Members, Ann O'Sullivan and Denis Coyle.

A special audio-visual presentation had been commissioned for the event. The presentation showed recent developments at the World Centre and placed these developments in the context of messages from the Universal House of Justice.

A vision statement was presented to the friends stating some of the things we are going to achieve over the next few years – an exciting challenge for us all – particularly in the light of the imminent boundary changes that will come into operation this Ridvan. The subject of boundary changes provoked many questions and much discussion.

The Council was encouraged by the mature consultation that took place. We all felt that an important process had begun. The Council is deeply grateful to all who contributed to making the day such a success.

With loving greetings,  
Bahá'í Council for Northern Ireland

**Bahá'í Council for Northern Ireland**

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# Bahá'í Council for Scotland

## Major Bahá'í Exhibition in Glasgow Museum

Opening on June 2nd, 2001, Glasgow Museums is putting on a major exhibition on the Bahá'í Faith in the St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art. As well as a series of panels outlining the teachings, history and profile of the Faith, it will include an original letter from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Andrew Carnegie, a Tranquillity Zone, a model of the New Delhi House of Worship, a multimedia display and a series of works of art by Bahá'í artists. The exhibition will run for almost five months, closing on October 21 and is expected to attract over 40,000 visitors. It is almost certainly the biggest public event about the Faith to take place in Scotland since the visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Edinburgh in 1913.

The exhibition marks the fruition of a long-term relationship which the Bahá'ís have had with the museum since it opened in 1994. Although at the time, it was disappointing that the Faith was not included in the museums "Gallery of World Faiths", a positive contact was maintained and developed. Interestingly, the event which finally prompted the museum to host the exhibition was a letter from a Bahá'í couple who visited the museum and who asked why there was so little about the Faith displayed there. The exhibition is being partly sponsored by the Bahá'í Council for Scotland. Both the design and acquisition of items is being done in collaboration with the museum and the Council for Scotland.

Two very noteworthy items to be on display are a 'One-World Tree' and a model of the New Delhi Temple. The tree consists of branches being constructed by Scottish Bahá'ís around the country and will be used to collect 'Hopes for Humanity' which visitors to the exhibition can hang on it. The temple model is being borrowed from the Peace Museum, in Verdun in France, and measures 2.2m x 2.2m. It is a beautiful scale version of the House of Worship.

To coincide with the exhibition, the Publishing Trust is preparing a booklet which complements the display panels, will be available to visitors at the museum, and can also be used as a general booklet introducing the Bahá'í Community in Scotland. In addition a series of events are planned to run in parallel with the exhibition including seminars, arts presentations and discussion groups. If you are planning to be in Scotland any time between June and October, please come and visit the exhibition. The museum is on the grounds of Glasgow Cathedral in the centre of the city. It is open 10-5 every day of the week and admission is free.

### **Bahá'í Council for Scotland**

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*Bahá'í Councils and Training Institutes* 

## Training Institute for England

Following the decision of the National Spiritual Assembly the Training Institute for England now comes under the jurisdiction of the Bahá'í Council for England. The new members serving on the board are:

Brigitte Beales (Community Course Coordinator), Jennifer Chapa (Study Circle Coordinator), Arezoo Farahzad (Secretary), Farnaz Heidari (Chairman), Varqa Khadem (Treasurer), Coorous Mohtadi (Vice Chairman), Sarah Richards, Ann Vickers and Rana Walker.

The Universal House of Justice remind us of the importance of establishing systematic programmes of training in their Ridván 98 letter:

Towards ensuring an orderly evolution of the community, a function of Bahá'í institutions is to organize and maintain a process of developing human resources whereby Bahá'ís, new and veteran alike, can acquire the knowledge and capacity to sustain a continuous expansion and consolidation of the community. The establishment of training institutes is critical to such effort, since they are centres through which long

of training institutes is critical to such effort, since they are centres through which large numbers of individuals can acquire and improve their ability to teach and administer the Faith. Their existence underscores the importance of knowledge of the Faith as a source of power for invigorating the life of the Bahá'í community and of the individuals who compose it.

They underline the most effective line of action as the formation of local study circles in their Ridván 2000 letter:

In the increased capacity of individuals to teach the Faith, as shown in the thrust of individual initiatives; in the improved ability of Spiritual Assemblies, Councils and committees to guide the endeavours of the friends; in the introduction of new patterns of thought and action which influenced the collective behaviour of the local community—in all such respects the system of training institutes demonstrated its indispensability as an engine of the process of entry by troops. By extending their operation through local study circles, many institutes magnified their capacity to cover wide regions with their programmes. Mongolia, for instance, set up 106 study circles and, as a result, recorded a significant rise in the number of new believers.

Study circles are a delivery system and part of a distance-education curriculum administered nationally and delivered locally. Currently, the most comprehensive programme available and used internationally in the Bahá'í world is based on the material developed by the Ruhi Institute in Columbia. Many communities around the world have used this material successfully. There are 9 books (some in preparation) which deal with various aspects of training. We have made an excellent start in using this material and even at this early stage some communities are beginning to see some fruits in the form of declarations, changes in the direction and focus of the community and closer bonds of unity.

Much of the emphasis of the board over the last year concentrated on

- Ensuring that we have a number of trainers of tutors for books 1,2,3, and 6.
- Training tutors of book 1 in various parts of England. We now have 92 trained tutors of book 1.
- Encouragement and support of the tutors to establish study circles.
- Establishing the core facilitators for the community courses: 19 Day Feast, Building Communities, Making Consultation Magical

Friends everywhere are responding to the calls of the Universal House of Justice and forming local study circles in welcoming and making advances in the process of entry by troops. This constitutes a solid foundation that the community can build on during the Five Year Plan.

We are currently in the process of establishing a more regular pattern of training for tutors and facilitators of community courses so that individuals, communities and Assemblies can plan their activities with training at its core.

The following are answers to some frequently asked questions:

1. **Why do we need tutors for study circles?** All study circles should be facilitated by trained tutors. This will ensure that the study circle is part of our established network and that proper support will be given to the tutors and study circles by the Training Institute when necessary.
2. **We don't have a tutor near our community. How do we proceed?** One possibility is to encourage one or two members of the community especially the youth to become tutors. The youth are the ones usually with most spare time and it will give them an important responsibility. Communities that have done this have seen how wonderfully their youth shine in this vital task.
3. **Why does tutor training take such a long time?** Tutor training program for all books is in two sections. The first section is primarily going through the specific book in some detail. The second section deals with the responsibilities of tutors and their training. The friends who have been participants in study circle on any of the books need only complete the second part of the training to become a tutor for that book. The actual length of training for any of the books differs depending on the book itself.

4. **Do we all have to go through the training programmes?** No, but all of us will be touched by the training process. The training process is primarily intended for friends to help raise their capacity to serve the Faith, through closer contact with the Word of God, developing closer bonds with other members of the community, benefiting from the new insights and developing skills for teaching the Faith or other paths of service.
5. **Are study circles the only means of training?** No. study circles are only part of the intended training programme. Community courses, seminars, other campaigns of training and other specialised courses all form the totality of training. We currently have some of the elements of this training in place.
6. **What is the sequence of books and which book do we do next?** The sequence of books followed by a study circle depends largely on the path of service chosen. This choice is left at the discretion of members of the study circle in consultation with the Area Coordinators but the following are some recommendations:
  - o Books 1,2,4 and 6: to raise one's capacity to teach the Faith
  - o Books 1,2 and 3: to raise one's capacity and to build one's enthusiasm to consider serving a community school or teaching children locally.

Please note also that Children's Bahá'í Education Service has a number of courses which are especially designed for teaching children's classes in the UK and these should be followed by any of the friends who wish to teach children's classes at any level. The Training Institute is consulting with CBES regarding the road ahead.

7. **Who do I contact to find out more?** The friends who are interested in study circles, community courses or those who would like to serve as tutors or facilitators please contact:

Jennifer Chapa, <mailto:jchapa@tinyworld.co.uk> or  
Brigitte Beales, <mailto:brigitte@beales.demon.co.uk>

We look forward to any ideas, suggestions or recommendations friends may have with regards to any of the aspects of the work of the training institute.