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Focus on Children

## 'I want to be a Bahá'í' Sophie C. – age nine

DEAR FRIENDS,

The following is a charming story that I have shared at various meetings and in response to an urge from the English Council I am putting the story down in the hope that it may delight and enthuse others.

When our daughter, Sophia, began school at five she befriended a lovely young girl, Sophie. Both girls are now nine years of age. Our Sophie has never been backward in stating that she is a Bahá'í and has no problem with sharing the principles of the Faith with others. She even encountered a little opposition from other children at school with comments like...“Every thing is Bahá'í with you isn't it!”

*The two Sophies*

However, the two Sophies have remained close friends throughout school. I remember one night in particular when Sophie was sleeping over at our home. I just happened to walk past Sophie's bedroom and to my surprise and delight I heard the voice of Sophie C. reciting the short obligatory prayer, which our Sophie had written on her bedroom wall. I was even more surprised to hear our Sophie's voice instructing Sophie C. to learn this prayer by heart.

Sophie C. began to attend some of our family outings, camping trips and fun days, and the two Sophies took up Chinese Dancing classes together, with the instructor being a lovely Chinese lady and a member of our Bahá'í community. Sophie C. became almost a family member. Our three-year-old boy, Joseph, would love to bake cakes and present them as a gift to Sophie.

Due to the fresh impetus on Children's Classes given in the recent letters from the House of Justice, there is a resurgence in the activity of our area's children's classes. We decided to hold an inaugural meeting to kick off this resurgence at one of the friends' homes in Shrewsbury. The two Sophies went along and gave a demonstration of their Chinese Dancing at this meeting.

On the way home Sophie C. asked if she would now be coming to Children's Classes. We said that she was most welcome but she must explain it to her parents and obtain their consent.

Her parents had no objection. Sophie became a regular attendee at Children's Classes and in fact every social event in the Bahá'í Community. We discovered that Sophie's parents had borrowed a book from the local library on World Religions and that the Bahá'í Faith was well represented in its pages. Sophie even brought the book around for us to see.

At about this time I was pursuing the idea of developing some new Declaration Cards. I had always felt that the act of signing a declaration card was, for some, a personal and cherished statement to God and a significant point in the beginning of a new existence. For this reason

I had, with the approval of the National Assembly, developed a new and I felt more attractive and less formal Declaration Card. I printed a dozen or so of these to show around communities.

One day the two Sophies were deep in conversation on the phone together and talking about the Faith. Sophie C. asked if she could be a Bahá'í and our Sophie described the new Declaration cards to her. Sophie C. immediately said she wanted to sign one. Sophie spoke to her mother saying that she wanted to be a Bahá'í and could she fill in one of the cards. Mum said yes she could...and she did!

Kerry, my wife, met Sophie's mum in the school playground and by way of approaching the subject said, "This has all gone rather fast hasn't it?" Sophie's mum stopped her and said, "Oh don't worry we are fine about this. We always said we would allow the children to choose whatever religion they wanted."

Sophie C. is now a full member of Telford community life. She joins in with prayers, children's classes and all social events. She has recently sung, together with our Sophie, on a new recording called "Incredible Love" on an album of Bahá'í songs I am currently preparing.

It was wonderful to see the natural way that Sophie was introduced to the Faith and community life and how she so naturally and without any obstacles whatsoever, simply went to her parents and said "I want to be a Bahá'í."

Steve Day

PS: The template for the Declaration Card in Microsoft Publisher format or Word 97 Format will be available for download at <http://www.crimsonhearts.com>.

