

FEEL that the dominating purpose inspiring the assembled friends, delegates and visitors alike, should be a twofold one. The first is a challenge to the individual, the second a collective responsibility. The one seeks to reinforce the motive power of our spiritual activities, the second aims at raising the standard of administrative efficiency so vitally needed at this advanced stage of our work. We should first and foremost endeavor by every conceivable means, to revitalize our precious Cause, rudely shaken by the constant vicissitudes attending the outward departure of a vigilant and gracious Master. Our next object should be to seek to approach, through more intimate association, fuller and more frequent consultation, and a closer familiarity with the character, the mission and the teachings of the Cause, that standard of excellence which should characterize the cooperative efforts of Baha'i Communities in every land.

"High aims and pure motives, however laudable in themselves, will surely not suffice if unsupported by measures that are practicable and methods that are sound." —Shoghi Effendi, letter to the 1925 National Convention.

A PLAN OF UNIFIED ACTION TO SPREAD THE BAHA'I CAUSE



Ya Baha'il Abha!

A PLAN OF UNIFIED ACTION Submitted by the National Spiritual Assembly to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada.

"O our God! We beg of Thee by the King of Names and Maker of heaven and earth, by the rustling of the leaves of the Tree of Life and by Thine utterances, through which the realities of things are drawn unto us, to grant that the unity in the love of God may be speedily established throughout the world; that Thou wilt guide us always and unmistakably to whatever Thou wouldst have us to do, and that we may ever be strong and fully prepared to render instant, exact and complete obedience."—Baha'u'llah.

Dear friends in 'Abdu'l-Baha:

Four years have passed since the Center of the Covenant withdrew into His world of spirit where, as we have been so definitely assured, His unfailing protection, help and inspiration can be extended universally to guide the Cause of God and bless those who sincerely strive to assist its promotion East and West, North and South.

During this time the anxieties of His followers have been allayed, their griefs transmuted into deepened faith, their divisions removed, their doubts been turned into ardent yearning, and their devotion to Him kindled into a flame of selfless prayer for the success of His divine mission to humanity in this great Day of God.

With unbelievable swiftness the beloved Guardian, the Master's last gift to the world, has established the firm basis of worldwide Baha'i unity, created the means of consultation, produced the facilities of definite decision, and multiplied our capacity for concerted action.

Now the hour has come when the believers of the United States and Canada are spiritually and materially prepared to undertake in absolute harmony, with joyful determination and with full and reverent appreciation of its importance, a plan capable of revealing to the people of this continent, and to the world, some worthy expression of the spirit breathed into the hearts of the friends of God. A PLAN OF UNIFIED ACTION

Such a plan has been formulated by the National Spiritual Assembly, deeply conscious of its responsibility both to the Guardian and to each and all of the friends for the success of that signal portion of Baha'i services committed to the believers in the United States and Canada.

OBJECTS OF THE PLAN

"Know thou, verily, all the doors are closed except the doors of the Kingdom of God! All the trees are without fruit except the tree of life planted in the paradise of God! All the winds are disquieting to the soul except the breeze of God! All the cups are bitter except the cup of the love of God! Every benefit vanisheth except the food of heaven. It is incumbent upon thee to partake thereof."—'Abdu'lBaha.

The objects of the plan are, in brief, to unify the efforts and enlarge the numbers of the Cause in North America, penetrate the consciousness of the public with the spirit of Baha'u'llah, and, by the end of three years at most, accumulate, in response to the request of Shoghi Effendi, a fund of \$400,000.00 to construct the first unit of the superstructure of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar at Wilmette, Illinois.

ITS METHOD

To realize these objects, suitable methods in keeping with their noble character and great scope are essential.

First of all the National Spiritual Assembly carefully reviewed and scrupulously studied the instructions sent us during the past four years by the Guardian of the Cause. Both in the letter and in the spirit the members found that these instructions urgently counseled a greater unification of all phases of our national Baha'i activity, especially those of teaching and Temple. It became perfectly apparent that to separate these activities either in fact or purpose would defeat our aims of service. It became equally apparent that the power and effectiveness of any and all the activities presupposes the development and maintenance of at least a minimum of permanent central organization, such as is represented by the News Letter, the National Office, the Star of the West and a nucleus of teachers serving with their entire time.

These considerations impelled the National Spiritual Assembly to adopt a Financial Budget as a fixed principle necessary to give the plan full effect.

Next the present condition of the Cause in North America, with respect to its numbers of adherents, active local centers, national committees and financial capacity was likewise surveyed. It was found that regular monthly contributions to the National Fund on the part of every recognized believer, of an average amount well within our resources and abilities when moved by

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true sacrifice and enthusiasm, continued uninterruptedly for the period of three years from January 1, 1926, to December 31, 1928, would, at the end of that specified period, produce a capital sum of \$400,000 for the Temple, while meanwhile extending the teaching work and making it possible to spread the Message as never before.

THE THREE YEAR BUDGET

"The progress and extension of spiritual activities is dependent and conditioned upon material means."—Shoghi Effendi.

The financial part of the plan is made clear in the table of figures appended to this letter.

The friends will note that the total amount to be raised within three years through voluntary contributions to the National Baha'i Fund includes all those several items or classifications of expense heretofore met by more or less irregular labeled contributions. For example, in the teaching field, the Budget provides for the expenses of two traveling teachers, as now, but also contains the additional item of \$500 a month for extending the teaching work along lines explained under the heading of "Teaching" on the following pages. Meeting the current upkeep of the Temple work, we have the items of payments to the architect to conclude the contract approved by the National Convention of 1921; payments to the caretaker; and such expenses as light, telephone, heat, etc. Of a permanent character are the two sums of \$850 needed to finish payment on the caretaker's house* and \$400,000 for new construction, to be undertaken as soon as this amount is in hand or as and when directed by the Guardian of the Cause.

The remaining portions of the Budget refer to the maintenance of a Central Office, with its incidental costs for postage, printing the News Letter, etc., estimated deficits in the Baha'i Magazine, Star of the West; traveling expenses of members of the National Spiritual Assembly to and from meetings which cannot be met from personal incomes; a minimum contribution to the International Baha'i Fund; and a minimum to be retained for emergencies.

Adding all these items, a total is obtained for the three year period of special consecrated effort, and this when divided by the number of recognized, active believers at the present time gives the average of the contribution

^{*}The pledges received at the Green Acre Convention in 1925 covered the item of \$3000 for the caretaker's house, but of the total pledged \$2000 has not yet been received by the National Treasurer.

A PLAN OF UNIFIED ACTION	A	P	LA	N	0	F	U	N	1	F	I	Ε	D		A	C	т	I	0	N	l
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needed from each believer per month from January 1, 1926, to December 31, 1928.

Careful analysis of the general problem will show that this Budget system is far superior to the method of irregular labeled contributions employed up to this time. It has never been possible to plan definite methods of service either in the teaching or Temple field more than a few weeks ahead. Furthermore, the labeling of contributions has (until this year) prevented the National Spiritual Assembly from creating any adequate foundation whereon might be built the superstructure of service required for the work of the National body and its several working committees. The believers are therefore requested to give particular attention to the new method of contributing to the Cause represented by the adoption of this Budget-namely, that each item in the Budget is of equal importance, that no discrimination can logically be made between them, and that only by supporting the Budget as a whole can we hope to prepare for the larger responsibilities of the future, while increasing our capacity to serve every requirement of the Cause at the present time. The only effective distribution of funds is that which is made after the contributions are received-not while they are being given. The Budget is like a spring fed from many sources, each activity dipping into the spring and sharing its abundance according to its own relative importance to the work as a whole. The Budget reflects the unity of the Cause, as well as its expression of activity in many different fields

This Budget has been drawn up, necessarily, on the basis of our present active membership. Every increase in our numbers will mean that the objects of the plan can be secured sooner than three years, or that the teaching work can be extended, or that a cash reserve can be laid aside against the cost of building the second unit or level of the Temple. Such adaptations of the plan can be decided from time to time by the then National Spiritual Assembly in consultation with the Convention delegates and under advice from the Guardian of the Cause.

At present the successful outcome of the plan rests squarely upon our faith that the present number of loyal and active believers is capable of contributing a total of \$486,000 in three years, or an average of \$0.00 from each believer per month—thirty cents a day.

Solicitations for support of individual activities, whether the requests are for funds or time and strength, should be weighed with extreme care. The only agencies in the Cause authorized to ask or receive funds are the local and national treasurers or their duly appointed representatives; even the Star of the

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West, Green Acre, and the Publishing Committee finances being now incorporated in the National Baha'i Fund. The strict adherence to this rule will save the friends (and the Cause) many thousands of dollars, as actual experience has proved. Demands for assistance in this or that "Baha'i" service must also be referred to one simple but important principle; namely, that local Baha'i work can only be initiated by the local Spiritual Assembly, and national Baha'i work by the National Spiritual Assembly. As the Guardian has written: "Not only with regard to publication, but all matters without any exception whatsoever regarding the interests of the Cause, individually or collectively, should be referred exclusively to the Spiritual Assembly in that locality, which shall decide upon it, unless it be a matter of national interest, in which case it shall be referred to the National Body. With this National Body also will rest the decision whether a given question is of local or national (Baha'i) interest." (March 5, 1922.) This instruction is not to promote arbitrary authority, but to unify thought, will and action. A body acting under divided wills is doomed to perish.

TEACHING

"Verily, God hath made it incumbent upon every soul to deliver His Cause, according to his ability. Thus hath the command been recorded by the Finger of Might and Power upon the Tablet of Majesty and Greatness."—Baha'u'llah.

Let us now consider how the three year plan stimulates the all important work of teaching the Cause. To the National Teaching Committee the National Spiritual Assembly has added as executive chairman Mrs. El Fleda Spaulding of Chicago, one who brings to the work an exceptional experience and capacity in organizing the schedules of public speakers on a large scale.

Mrs. Spaulding is prepared to arrange a series of teaching circuits as recommended by the 1925 Convention, in which each local Assembly and group will be visited at regular intervals by well qualified teachers. Each Baha'i center is surrounded by numerous souls already attracted to the Cause, and from among the general public, as we all know, an amazing number of seekers find their way to meetings where the Message is delivered with true knowledge and eloquence. The result of regular public meetings of this nature will unquestionably so increase the number of adherents in the various local Assemblies that each and every Assembly can, by the end of the three year period, fulfill its entire obligation in the Budget, even though the obstacles at present seem very large.

It is of the very essence of the general plan that the teaching work shall be immensely extended, with circuits linking up every Baha'i group in the land. A PLAN OF UNIFIED ACTION

This is the spiritual blood stream capable of bringing new life and energy to all the friends and arousing each of us to a deeper realization of our own personal opportunities to give the Message day by day.

Assemblies and groups should communicate with the National Teaching Committee at once, informing it as fully as possible about local conditions from the point of view of teaching, especially with respect to the names of those who are qualified to teach publicly and free to travel even occasionally and for brief periods of time. Thus the National Teaching Committee will have the data necessary to put the circuits into effect, some circuits connecting a few nearby Assemblies and groups, others extending through several States. The development of circuits will be fully reported in the News Letter from month to month.

Of special significance to the teaching work was the development of a Baha'i School at Green Acre last summer, where the believers found a unique opportunity to perfect themselves in the art of public speaking. This School will be continued on a larger scale, and Green Acre should consequently be the Mecca of all who wish to participate effectively in the most fundamental service of the Cause. Each Assembly, however, can and should also maintain its own class on Baha'i teaching, and advice and assistance in this can be obtained from the Teaching Chairman of your region.

The teaching circuits will not only serve the Temple indirectly, through adding to the number of our adherents: since each teacher is prepared to make the significance of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar one of his or her foremost subjects for public addresses, general interest and support for the Temple will also be directly secured.

THE MASHRIQU'L-ADHKAR

"Now the day has arrived in which the edifice of God, the divine sanctuary, the spiritual Temple, shall be erected in America! I entreat God to assist the confirmed believers in accomplishing this great service and with entire zeal to rear this mighty structure which shall be renowned throughout the world.

"Whosoever arises for the service of this construction shall be assisted with a great power from His Supreme Threshold and upon him spiritual and heavenly blessings shall descend, which shall fill his heart with wonderful consolation and enlighten his eyes by beholding the glorious and eternal God!"—'Abdu'l-Baha.

The culmination of the "Plan of Unified Action" is the construction of the exquisite Bourgeois Temple design at Wilmette, in the heart of this continent, the supreme visible symbol and proof that a new spirit has been revealed to humanity in this age.

All reasons for doubt and hesitation are for ever swept away. It is the fixed and unalterable intention of the National Spiritual Assembly to so administer the affairs of the Cause, and so assist the friends, that the amount specified by the Guardian—\$400,000.00—can be gathered together by December 31, 1928. It is the Divine command to us all that this edifice of unity and universal spiritual consciousness shall be firmly established in these days. Can we for one instant believe that upon us has been laid an unreasonable or impossible bidding? Can we not glow with the conviction that with the command there came also the capacity to render full and perfect obedience? Who can doubt but that this mighty continent, "the field of the effulgence of light, the Kingdom of the manifestation of mysteries; the home of the righteous ones and the gathering of the free," has within it the power and also the willingness to establish a thousand Temples of the one true God?

But we are the instruments, unworthy though we be, of this command, and it is from our radiance, our unity and the spiritual faithfulness of our lives; it is from our sacrifice, that the first and essential steps of obedience must proceed. We are told that it was the humblest of shoemakers who convinced the great Abu'l-Fadl of the truth of the Baha'i Cause. Thus may we measure the confirmations that await any sincere effort to cooperate in service at this time.

As a beginning of renewed understanding of the Temple, of renewed devotion to this mighty ideal, the friends are urged to study individually and in their meetings the Report drawn up by the Temple Committee, accepted by the 1925 Convention, and since published and distributed to the entire mailing list. Much improvement has been made in the appearance of the grounds and the arrangements of the Foundation Hall since this Report was prepared. But the people of the entire country await the fulfilment of our preliminary promise. Nothing save the completed edifice can satisfy the requirements and produce the results promised by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

At the end of the three year period, the condition of the Fund will be laid before the Guardian of the Cause. It would be entirely possible for him, in the event of our failure, to take the responsibility from our hands and place it in the hands of worthier Baha'is in other countries. But, apart from our grievous shame at failure, what would be the result? Even if the Temple were fully completed in this way, the American people could rightly claim that the Baha'i Cause, in reality, is not a universal spiritual movement, but merely a movement confined to the Muslim Faith: a criticism we should have lost all power to deny. Such an outcome is one that no believer, East or West, could for a single instant accept. To avoid even partial failure in our intention to erect the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar at Wilmette, the National Spiritual Assembly feels it essential that individual and collective loyalty to this branch of the work should express itself through donations given in accordance with the Budget principle.

It is our matured decision and deepest conviction that deviations from the one general plan will but confuse the issues, divide the interests, weaken the resources and betray the hopes. We ask that contributions be sent unlabeled until the entire Budget has been met.

THE OPERATION OF THE PLAN

"Every great Cause in this world of existence findeth a visible expression through three means: first, intention; second, confirmation; third, action."—"Abdu'l-Baha.

To carry this plan steadily forward to a successful conclusion means that contributions must average nine dollars per month from every confirmed American Baha'i beginning January, 1926, and continued uninterruptedly until December, 1928.

Since this sum of nine dollars a month is beyond the power of some of the most loyal friends to contribute, the average can only be maintained by proportionately larger donations from the rest of the Baha'i body.

It is for each believer to examine his own affairs and take steps to arrange his or her life on the basis of true sacrifice. It should be a high spiritual privilege for each to feel a direct responsibility for his or her share of the Budget up to the limit of personal effort and capacity. Who can estimate the reinforcement that will come when the fixed resolution has been made and the divine aid besought in this task? Everything depends upon the intention to place *all* one's powers and capacities at the disposition of the Cause in North America during the next three years. Let us center our thoughts and purposes upon this mutual ideal, assisting and encouraging each other until the final victory is won.

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkar at Ishkabad was constructed through the supreme sacrifice of one inspired soul—one believer who gave his all. Who among the American friends will arise to give some portion of his capital to the Fund in behalf of the plan? How encouraging to all the friends it will be to announce within the next few weeks that an impressive beginning has already been made upon the total amount required!

Where a loved one is desperately ill, who stints his fortune? Yet do we not as Baha'is know and feel for the desperate ailment of humanity in this day? Where a country is besieged by bitter enemies, who counts the cost of defense? Yet do we perceive the little band of the friends of God surrounded by hostile ignorance, indifference or fanaticism, bent upon destroying the blessed Word! "Now is the accepted time! Now is the accepted time!"

Upon the members of all local Spiritual Assemblies falls the special responsibility of executing the details of the new general plan. That is, upon them largely rests the work of making the plan thoroughly familiar to the body of the believers by distributing copies of this report, devoting regular monthly meetings to the subject, appointing capable assistants to the local treasurer, and endeavoring to see that the full share of contributions is transmitted to the National Treasurer from time to time.

While the financial cooperation asked for would seem to involve a serious disarrangement of present activities—especially in cities where the Baha'is have assumed the rental of a public room or hall—nevertheless the National Spiritual Assembly feels that this problem can and will be met and that a satisfactory adjustment between local and national requirements will be discovered through the power of consultation and prayer. It is in fact confidently expected that this concentration upon one national effort, with its extension of the teaching work, will soon redound to the great benefit of each and every local Assembly, the bedrock upon which the future of the Cause so largely depends.

We suggest that each local Spiritual Assembly strengthen the influence and increase the function of their treasurer by giving him the services of a special committee of two or more persons, of which committee the treasurer would usually be the chairman. Upon this committee should be placed those who are particularly fitted by experience and character for intensive executive work. This committee should personally meet with every active believer in the community without delay, explain the purpose, method and operation of the plan in sufficient detail, and assist the believers as much as possible to arrange their affairs in accordance with the three year Budget plan. The local finance committee, after securing a preliminary estimate of the various donations that can be made from the members of the Assembly, can then if necessary consider carefully what steps should be taken to complete the total local donation required for the National Fund.

It might well be that in certain Assemblies the total amount of individual donations would fall short of the ideal, even when all possible sacrifice has been made. In this case the Spiritual Assembly can undertake collective action, such as the organization of bazaars or other special sales, musical or artistic entertainments, etc. All activities involving the general public should be dignified

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and also efficiently arranged, to avoid all taint of solicitation or "charity". We believe that every Spiritual Assembly is fully qualified to maintain the high standard of the Baha'i principles in this respect.

The treasurer or some other member of the committee should report directly to the National Treasurer who, in turn, acting with the National Finance Committee, is prepared to serve with advice based on knowledge of methods employed successfully by other Assemblies. What is required to make the plan completely effective is a threefold contact between the local Spiritual Assemblies and the National body: first, the contact of the local secretary with the National secretary, which is already established; second, contact between the local teaching body and the National Teaching Committee; and third, contact between the local treasurer and the National treasurer, also already established but capable of great further development.

As this threefold relationship is made vigorous and efficient, the result will be to draw into active service many capable believers whose work lies in the practical rather than the devotional fields. It is the blending of all types of character and capacity, each working in his own chosen field, that makes a Baha'i Assembly so significant and the source of unfailing power. There is work for every believer to do, of so diversified a character that all should be joyfully conscious that he or she is indispensable to the final result.

The National Spiritual Assembly looks to the older believers—those who have been fully matured and ripened in the teachings and instructions—to lead the way in understanding of and service to the Plan of Unified Action. These have, time and again, experienced the most poignant sorrow when disunity has destroyed the public effectiveness of the Cause. More than others, they are conscious of how slowly and painfully have been taken the steps toward national Baha'i unity, and they perhaps have most carefully pondered the significance of the worldwide Baha'i unity that is to come. The older believers, in brief, appreciate that unity of faith must be fulfilled in unity of action mutual cooperation in one definite but comprehensive plan.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

"And now as I look into the future, I hope to see the friends at all times, in every land, and of every shade of thought and character, voluntarily and joyously rallying around their local and in particular their national centers of activity, upholding and promoting their interests with complete unanimity and contentment, with perfect understanding, genuine enthusiasm, and sustained vigor. This indeed is the one joy and yearning of my life, for it is the fountainhead

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from which all future blessings will flow, the broad foundation upon which the security of the Divine Edifice must ultimately rest. May we not hope that now at last the dawn of a brighter day is breaking upon our beloved Cause?"—Shoghi Effendi.

The three year period January 1, 1926—December 31, 1928 is to be a time of supreme effort on the part of all the friends of 'Abdu'l-Baha and coworkers of Shoghi Effendi in North America.

The teaching work is to be intensified and placed upon the firm basis of organized circuits eventually including every local Baha'i center large or small.

The National Fund will be given a fixed budget, whereby the work can be planned in advance, maintained without interruption and perfected so as to proceed smoothly and evenly toward one definite goal—the construction of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar at Wilmette.

Contributions to this end are requested amounting to an average of nine dollars per month from each believer. Where this is at present impossible, the friends are urged to accept the amount as a fixed ideal to be realized before the end of the three year period.

This general plan was adopted by the National Spiritual Assembly after inviting suggestions from all local Spiritual Assemblies and Convention delegates. It has been unanimously approved by the Temple Committee in joint meeting with the National Spiritual Assembly. It represents the collective thought and will of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada.

To succeed, the plan demands heroic labor and true sacrifice on the part of Assemblies, groups, National committees and isolated Baha'is. It is placed before the body of the believers by the National Spiritual Assembly in a spirit of humility and devotion to the best interests of the Cause.

The body of the Cause contains rich resources of organizing ability scarcely yet drawn upon. Many now inconspicuous workers of great capacity will undoubtedly emerge from the ranks to promote the new plans.

If in each local Assembly the friends are drawn closer and closer together through their determination to make the plan succeed, this result alone would more than justify the wisdom of its adoption. The National Spiritual Assembly feels strongly that the course of world events is tending more and more to make the Baha'is a distinct community, with new and different manners, customs and standards of living. Baha'u'llah has said: "The source of courage and power is the promotion of the Word of God, and steadfastness in His love." Therefore the friends one and all are urged to realize that the very effort to respond to this plea for action —the determination to share in its complete success—must inevitably increase our individual and collective capacity, and produce a body of trained, disciplined Baha'i workers worthy to be called "soldiers in the Army of the Lord of Hosts".

Yours faithfully, in love of 'Abdu'l-Baha,

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

MOUNTFORT MILLS, Chairman Roy C. WILHELM, Vice Chairman HORACE HOLLEY, Secretary FLORENCE MORTON, Treasurer AMELIA COLLINS ALI KULI KHAN ALLEN MCDANIEL CARL SCHEFFLER SIEGFRIED SCHOPFLOCHER

December, 1925.

BUDGET OF THE NATIONAL BAHA'I FUND

January 1, 1926, to December 31, 1928

INCOME Contributions requested to the amount of (representing an average of \$0.00 monthly, from 1500 American Baha'is, for 3 years). Estimated interest on sums placed in Savings for Temple Division Total	16,000.00		
EXPENDITURES A—Fixed monthly charges. National Office, maintenance and supplies. Baha'i News Letter and printing. Meetings of N. S. A. International Baha'i Fund. Baha'i Magazine Star of The West (Note 1). Reserve for emergency. Teachers devoting full time to Baha'i Service Teaching Circuits—traveling expenses, etc. Temple, architect's contract. Temple caretaker, living expenses. Temple up-keep—lighting, telephone, coal, etc. Total. Total monthly charges for 3 years.		\$350.00 100.00 150.00 190.00 600.00 275.00 275.00 500.00 250.00 130.00 100.00 \$2,745.00	
B—Fixed yearly charges. National Convention, estimated cost \$500.00 Total yearly charges for 3 years	1,500.00		
CAPITAL ITEMS Construction of caretaker's house Construction of 1st Unit of Temple (Note 2) Total Expenditures Total Income Expense Balance December 31, 1928	850.00 400,000.00 \$501,170.00 502,000.00 501,170.00 \$830.00		

Note i—This item represents a deficit caused by insufficient subscriptions to meet the cost of The Star of The West, its publication. As subscriptions increase this expense will be saved, and the amounts placed in the total fund.

Note 2—Construction will only start when the total of \$400,000.00 is in the bank. It should be understood that this special Temple Fund must accumulate from contributions over and above the amount required to meet the fixed monthly and yearly charges itemized under A and B above, but all amounts available for this fund will be transferred to a separate savings account, to accumulate interest, and The Temple Fund so created will be considered a separate and distinct part of the Budget.