

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

Office of the Treasurer

Preserving the Lifblood

"... All the believers ... must contribute according to their means, no matter how small the sum may be. God does not ask from any soul except according to his ability. This contribution must come from all cities and villages from all the believers of God ... In brief, O ye friends of God, rest assured that in place of this contribution, your commerce, your agriculture and industries shall be blessed many times." (1)

"I regard it of the utmost vital importance that individuals, as well as local Assemblies, throughout the land should ... as an evidence of their absolute confidence in their national representatives, endeavour ... to contribute freely toward the upkeep and increase of the National Bahá'í Fund."(2)

The National Spiritual Assembly has recently written to all believers in the United Kingdom informing them of the serious state of the National Fund. It has asked for their immediate and generous support lest the Assembly has to resort to turning to the World Centre for assistance at this challenging time. Individual believers may contribute to the National Fund either via their local treasurer or directly to the Office of the Treasurer. Contributions made to the local treasurer may either be given personally or mailed to him or her - they can be made outside of the Nineteen Day Feast.

Payments sent to the Office of the Treasurer should be made out to "NSA of the Bahá'ís of the UK" and sent to the Office of the Treasurer (address above).

1. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of the West, reprinted 1978, Vol 4, p139
2. Shoghi Effendi, to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, 26 November 1923

Gift Aid - a simple and advantageous way of giving to the Fund

Taxpayers are warmly encouraged to donate to the National Fund (indeed, to all Funds of the Faith) by using the Gift Aid scheme. This came into effect on 6 April 2000 and replaced the Deed of Covenants. Please note that there are no more covenants: existing ones can run their course. Furthermore, all donations from taxpayers will now be treated as Gift Aid donations with their consent.

If you are a taxpayer and do not use the Gift Aid scheme when donating to the Bahá'í Funds, money is being paid in tax to the government that could otherwise have gone to the Bahá'í Fund. The National Spiritual Assembly, as a registered, incorporated charity, greatly benefits from this simple and advantageous process. Indeed, it is estimated that just about 1/6th of the income to the National Fund during this financial year will result from tax refunds as a result of the Gift Aid scheme.

Gift Aid applies both to single, one-off donations from as little as £5 and to standing orders. Further, a taxpaying donor can make a declaration covering all future donations to the Bahá'í Funds. The different Gift Aid forms together with accompanying instructions and notes can be obtained either from local treasurers or from the Office of the Treasurer (see above for address). National Treasury staff will also be more than happy to answer any queries about the Gift Aid scheme.

Some commonly asked questions (with answers) -

Q: How can I make a Gift Aid donation?

A: Simply send in your cheque together with a duly completed purple Gift Aid declaration with one-off payment

form.

Q: How do I make sure that every payment is treated as a Gift Aid donation?

A: Fill in the grey declaration form, registering yourself as a taxpayer.

Q: There is nowhere for me to enter my tax district and National Insurance number.

A: The Inland Revenue no longer requires this information (this process is therefore much simpler than the old Deed of Covenant scheme).

Q: How may I give to my local Bahá'í fund using the Gift Aid scheme?

A: Make your cheque to "NSA of the Bahá'ís of the UK" and send with a note stating that you wish the donation to be returned to your Local Assembly/Group.

Q: If I only send in a cheque how does the Office of the Treasurer know to treat it as a Gift Aid donation?

A: If you have already completed the grey Gift Aid declaration form, then you will automatically have been registered on the National Spiritual Assembly's database of Gift Aid donors so that all future donations will be treated as Gift Aid ones.

Q: What if I am a higher rate taxpayer - can the National Spiritual Assembly claim a greater tax refund as a result?

A: No it cannot. The National Assembly can only reclaim tax at the standard rate. The difference between the standard and higher rate tax goes back to the donor. However, this refund can be donated back to the National Assembly.

Q: Can I give regularly by standing order through the Gift Aid scheme?

A: Yes, this is perfectly possible. Simply complete a blue standing order form (available from the Office of the Treasurer) and send it along with the grey Gift Aid declaration form if you have not already completed one.

Q: Can I use the Gift Aid scheme to give to other Funds of the Faith?

A: Yes, you can use the scheme for all the Bahá'í Funds - the Local Fund, National Fund, the Continental Fund, the International Fund, Deputisation Funds, and Huqúqu'lláh.

Q: Can I pay by cash?

A: Yes. The best way is to give the cash to your local treasurer and ask him or her to issue an Assembly cheque for that amount and made payable to "NSA of the Bahá'ís of the UK".

Q: How are my contributions accounted for and acknowledged?

A: If you send your own cheque to the Office of the Treasurer, the National Assembly will issue you with a receipt. If you give cash to your local treasurer, then s/he will issue you with a receipt and the National Assembly will then acknowledge the local Assembly by way of a separate receipt.

Junior Youth Festival at National Conference 2000 SPECIAL! YOU'VE GOT TO COME!

Calling all Junior Youth. Did you know that the Universal House of Justice has made your particular age group a special focus? Check it out for yourself in the Ridván Message if you haven't already. This year's National Conference in Scarborough will be very exciting and extra special for you. You definitely don't want to miss it. It's extra special because it will be a celebration of the Birthday of Bahá'u'lláh.

YOU know who you are - now WE want to know who you are! We would like you to register for the Conference, just as you would for youth camps and schools. To do the best for you we need to know who you are, how many of you are coming (all of you, we hope) and what your talents are. Everybody has them - such as your love for Bahá'u'lláh and each other, your desire to make our world a better place, your musical, acting, speaking, writing, story-telling talents ... anything!

This will help us to plan the Best Junior Youth Festival ever at this important time in the history of the world, as we cross the bridge between times ... leaving behind the twentieth century and the old world order and entering the new Bahá'í era at the stage of the Lesser Peace. If you don't know what this is, ask someone who does.

Remember youth camps, weekends and schools you've attended? - such as Wetlands, Livin' La Vida Loca, SDR2, The Spiritual Matrix, Youth in the Year 2000, Bahá'íland Gathering, Sidcot, Arts Academy etc...? - where you've made life-long friends? From 10th - 12th November you will be with your friends again and make new ones.

This is your opportunity - seize your chance, show the Bahá'í community, and all those you'll come into contact with, just how great you can be - how great you are! Make your parents proud, make the National Spiritual Assembly proud.

We have a special programme lined up for you to have great fun learning more about the Faith and the world around you ... and best of all, be with your mates. We're making a brilliant junior youth chill out area too!

It's essential for you to register for Conference. You can do it yourself or get your parent to do it for you. By e-mail is easiest but you could call or write. Contact us right away giving your name, age and community. We're waiting to hear from you!

e-mail: <mailto:angela@bahai.cix.co.uk>

Phone: Angela, Tel: 020 7584 2566 9am-5pm MonFri or Tel: 01206 513773 after 7pm. Write: NCC Junior Youth Registrar, 27 Rutland Gate, London SW7 1PD

National Conference

Friday 10th - Sunday 12th November Scarborough Spa Complex

ENDS AND BEGINNINGS committed to growth, prepared to learn

Just once a year United Kingdom Bahá'ís meet as a community to celebrate their successes, discover new opportunities for service and plan for the future. This year our gathering takes place at National Conference 2000. It's when we come face-to-face with each other as a national community to renew bonds, forge links with new friends, cement friendships, introduce our young people to a wider circle and learn for ourselves what has happened, what is happening and what will happen - and what we as individuals, local communities and institutions can do. This is a time to rejoice in the progress of the Faith in these islands, to share our joy in being Bahá'ís and stoke up the fires of our faith in Bahá'u'lláh. National Conference is essentially a time when our love for each other and for the Faith can shine. We will be so happy to see you there.

The National Spiritual Assembly

A note to parents

By this time you will all be aware of the importance stressed in the Ridván message of children, particularly junior youth, who represent a special group with special needs. The Universal House of Justice says that creative attention must be devoted to involving them in programmes of activity that will engage their interests, mould their capacities for teaching and service, and involve them in social interaction with older youth. With this in mind the National Conference Committee would like to request that you register junior youth as soon as possible (see opposite for details) to enable us to cater for them in the best possible way at the National Conference.

Throughout the duration of the conference parents are primarily responsible for the care and behaviour of their

children. We encourage you to ensure your junior youth attend all sessions, which have been specially prepared for them. Junior youth are old enough, and should be responsible enough, to get to and from their sessions after the first visit. Each will be issued with a name badge, which should be worn at all times. This is for their protection and safety.

There will be a designated "chill out" area for junior youth, as we know they love to be together and it is important to their spiritual development and Bahá'í identity. We strongly discourage children and junior youth from leaving the premises without the permission of their parents and accompanied by an adult. A full programme of sessions and activities, which will include a beach walk, will be available at the Welcome Desk on arrival.

The International Criminal Court Campaign

Shortly after Ridvan the Office of External Affairs wrote to Local Spiritual Assemblies in the UK, asking for their assistance in a campaign to support the early ratification by the UK Government of the Rome Treaty to establish the International Criminal Court. This new institution will serve to call to account the perpetrators of some of the most barbaric acts in human history, including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The creation of the new court takes the world closer to the vision of a Supreme Tribunal as foretold by Bahá'u'lláh.

Local Assemblies from every region of the United Kingdom have worked with unity and efficiency to communicate our Faith's support for the court to a great number of Members of Parliament. Much of this correspondence has been drawn to the attention of the Government and it has been pleasing to note that Foreign Secretary himself has invited the views of the Bahá'í community in the consultation on the draft legislation for the court.

On 26th August, Daniel Wheatley, the National Assembly's Government Relations officer, was part of a delegation representing twelve human rights groups that met with Minister of State Peter Hain at the Foreign Office to collect the first copies of the draft legislation. The Office of External Affairs is planning to facilitate an interfaith response to the draft bill and it is our hope that the government will publish the actual legislation in time for the next session of Parliament.

Great thanks and praise is due to the magnificent energy of all of the local Spiritual Assemblies who have played a vital role in this process. By our collective actions the message of Bahá'u'lláh is spreading, reaching the ears and the hearts of the most influential people in our society. The contribution of the Bahá'í Faith is increasingly welcomed at significant forums of national and international importance. All of these processes are rooted in the writings of the Faith, and in the Bahá'í institutions at local level.

"For is it not your clear duty to restrain the tyranny of the oppressor, and to deal equitably with your subjects, that your high sense of justice may be fully demonstrated to all mankind?" (Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p 247)

If you wish to read the draft bill yourself, check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office web-site: www.fco.gov.uk

Bahá'í Information Office

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e-mail: <mailto:bio@bahai.org.uk>

Useful paper for Agenda 21

"A Vision of World Citizenship is Essential for the Effectiveness of Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection - A Wake-up Call for the World's Travel and Tourism Industry"

This paper, by Peter McAlpine of Mahidol University, Thailand, is written from a Bahá'í standpoint, even though the Faith is not mentioned, and is an interesting and useful item for those involved in Agenda 21 activities, promotion of world citizenship, etc.

To obtain a copy (hard copy) contact the Bahá'í Information Office. SAE appreciated as always.

Do you get "green papers"?

The government, and statutory bodies, regularly put out consultation documents ("green papers") on matters of public discussion where changes in the law or practices are being considered. The National Spiritual Assembly is on the mailing list for some of these, and by submitting Bahá'í responses is helping to establish the Faith as a body whose ideas should be sought. However, the process has a long way to go.

The number of these consultation documents is surprising, and they cover a wide variety of subjects. BIO is trying to make sure that opportunities to put across the Bahá'í viewpoint are not missed. You can help.

If you see or receive any such consultation documents, in the course of your work or in connection with a voluntary organisation, we would like you to send them on to us as soon as possible. They can be studied and a response drafted and reviewed by the National Assembly. This can take time, and the papers often have a closing date quite soon after they are issued, hence the need for forwarding them quickly. Please do not worry if the subject seems out-of-the-way or specialist, it is often possible to find guidance relating to the most unusual of themes!

Some notes on Bahá'í proofs based on the Qur'an

We have received many requests for this interesting resource. In addition to its being available in hard copy (on paper) from the Bahá'í Information Office, it can now be obtained in electronic form as an attached RTF file via e-mail. Please send an e-mail request to BIO.