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**Journal of the Bahá'í Community of the United
Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**
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Letters

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Whilst returning from the Czech Republic this summer, my wife, Carolyn, and I were fortunate to be able to do some travel-teaching in France and French-speaking Belgium. During our stay in France I heard a story which I feel moved to share with the friends.

During our visit to Strasbourg I encountered Lucien Crevel, chairman of the French National Assembly, and he suggested that I should phone his wife, Patricia, who had some interesting and exciting stories to tell me. She related how, while in Paris for a National Assembly meeting, Lucien had noticed a letter on the secretary's desk from the harbourmaster in Ajaccio, Corsica, asking for information about the Faith. Knowing that Patricia has special links with Corsica he suggested to the secretary that he pass it to her to deal with it. Patricia phoned the national office to find out what they usually did with such enquiries and learned that they sent out a standard package (the magazine *The Bahá'ís*, the *Promise of World Peace* etc). She asked how many enquiries they had and after checking they said about thirty-five the previous year. How many of them had accepted the Faith? – None. They sent them the information and that was it. Patricia felt this was unsatisfactory, that out of all these people who had taken the initiative to write not one had been convinced. So, the long and the short of it was that she was asked by the French National Assembly to take over the job and she started to establish a genuine dialogue with the enquirers, sending them what seemed to correspond to their preoccupations. The Corsican harbourmaster declared his faith and I asked how she had got on with the other enquirers. She told me happily that she'd been having over 100% acceptance of the Faith, because many brought in their husbands, wives, friends, uncles or aunts. This story might be of interest, and indeed relevant, in Britain and elsewhere.

I was also very encouraged to know that several, being of Christian background, had accepted the Faith after reading the "Lettre aux Chrétiens", a book I had written while living in France based on the *Lawh-i-Aqdas*. Patricia always checks with these new declarants what tipped the balance for them in their acceptance of the Faith. One lady bought ten copies of this book and sets off on her moped to distribute them to various friends and clergy. She lends them a book, telling them that it is a message from God to the Christians, so they must read it! Later she calls to get it back and pass it on to someone else.

Another fascinating case is that of an enquirer from a state prison who has accepted the Faith, been recognised as a "model prisoner" and been transferred to a superior prison where inmates have a key to their own cell. There the Roman Catholic chaplain has been so impressed that he has asked the Bahá'í to supply two or three Bahá'í prayers or readings to be included in the weekly Mass and has arranged for him to give official weekly firesides. There have been a number of declarations and one of the walls of the bar for prisoners is devoted entirely to pictures of the World Centre and the Terraces! Another prisoner in a different prison has also declared and is actively teaching.

Patricia and Lucien decided some time ago to undertake that daunting challenge – often

avoided by many as being too difficult, if not unthinkable – of systematically teaching the members of their own family. There are now thirteen of them in the Bahá'í community! Something else for some of us to think about and maybe even do!

Jeremy Fox
Bearsden

Dear Editor,

We discussed Ron Ford's letter in the October 2001 Journal at our last Feast and would like to make a few suggestions.

First of all, the purpose of the Feast is deeply spiritual: we are told on page 52 of the Principles of Bahá'í Administration, "Bahá'ís should regard the Feast as the very heart of their spiritual activity" and although attendance is not obligatory we should regard it as a duty and a privilege. Therefore to raise our standards, we should consider all, both young and old. To train children to sit with folded arms may be a part of a culture that is not applicable to all in the Bahá'í world.

We feel that music is most desirable, but should be a matter for general agreement. Most of us enjoy it at the start and end of devotionals, but to have it as a continuous background could be a distraction.

We strongly support the need for more involvement from all our members. At each Feast in our community one of us volunteers to give a short talk on the name given to each Feast, and this month our youngest member, who is twelve years old, spoke with great sincerity on "Knowledge" using the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Another suggestion we have is to bring the Journal to the Feast with a passage marked out for general discussion. We could have a "Family Newstime" when letters and news from other communities could be read aloud, thus drawing the bonds of love closer.

So we agree that both tolerance and flexibility should be encouraged, together with dignity, inspiration and joy remembering the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "... *that supper is the Lord's Supper* for the result is the same result and the effect is the same effect."

(Principles of Bahá'í Administration, p. 17)

Ruth Bradley
Dronfield, Derbyshire

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'í's of Zambia

October 27, 2001

Dearly Loved Friends,

50th Anniversary of the Introduction of the Faith to Zambia The Bahá'í Community of Zambia sends you its warmest love and greetings. With great joy we would like to share with you the exciting news that the year 2002 marks the 50th Anniversary of the introduction of the Bahá'í Faith to Zambia, in the heart of Africa.

In February 1952, Eric Manton, from England, was the first Bahá'í to pioneer to Zambia in answer to the call of the Guardian for pioneers from the British Isles to go to Africa. In his selfless effort to serve the Faith, Mr. Manton travelled throughout Zambia. Ten years later he travelled to the Northwestern Province of Zambia where he continued to proclaim

the message of Bahá'u'lláh, which in the years to come was embraced by numerous people. For thirty years, Mr. Manton served the Faith in Zambia until he was released from the limitations of this earthly existence. Today the Northwestern Province of Zambia has the largest Bahá'í population and the only Bahá'í Regional Council.

Over the years over 14,000 people embraced the Faith in Zambia and through it numerous pioneers came to this land, some left after many years and others are still here. Today the Bahá'í community of Zambia boasts Bahá'ís from many different backgrounds and nationalities working together to expand on the foothold established almost fifty years ago.

To celebrate the joyous occasion of fifty years of the Faith in Zambia, this Bahá'í community is holding a celebration in Lusaka from July 6-8, 2002. We will be inviting representatives from the World Centre, our top government officials, ecclesiastical institutions as well as the worldwide Bahá'í community and in particular those individuals that have pioneered and visited Zambia over the past fifty years, to join our national community in this event. No doubt, this will generate great publicity and further affirm the Faith in Zambia.

If representatives from your community are planning to attend this joyous occasion, kindly inform our Task Force at the addresses provided below as soon as possible.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
For the 50th Anniversary Task Force
National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Zambia
Private Bag RW22X
Ridgeway 15102
Losaka
Zambia

Dear Friends,

On Sunday September 15, 2001, a beautiful service was held at the Bahá'í Temple in Samoa. It was a service dedicated to peace for all the victims of aggression throughout the world. It was of course prompted by the acts of terrorism in America.

Of the many souls that gathered at the Temple it was particularly moving to have a reader who is an American Christian and another who is a Pakistani Muslim. There were also beautiful readings from various religious scriptures read in six different languages. In a world that is polarising in both the religious and political fields it was heart warming to see the Faith once again striving for a balanced and peaceful approach.

Bahá'í life here in Samoa continues to focus on building peaceful and loving communities through focusing on study circles, children's classes, devotional meetings, social and economic development and of course sharing the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh with those who will listen.

Love,
the Sier family

BJUK welcomes letters on any topic of general interest. Personal attacks or denigratory comments will not be printed. Letters may be edited for brevity or clarity. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the National Assembly nor the Editor. Editor: Patrick Morrissey, e-mail: p.morrissey@ntlworld.com , fax: 0870 136 3730
