

# *Ré Nua*

New Day

Magazine of the Bahá'ís of Ireland  
Spring 2016 Volume 241



**Winter School  
A Fire in the Pacific  
Nabil**



Teaching Weekend in Waterford 1982  
(Photo from Corinne Cunningham Goggins)

Standing L to R: Michael Mcguire, Brian McNeill, Atieh Donnelly, Pat McAuliffe, Anne Keane, Caroline Sloan with Elli, Bridget McNamara, Dorothy Riordan, Breda Nagle, Eithne Earley, Joe Donnelly, Dave Foley, Mike Maunsell, Mary Keane.

Seated: Alan Keane, Noreen McNamara, Ken Nagle holding Jeff Nagle, Sabina Nagle with Laura

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# WINTER SCHOOL

## Winter School

By Sabina Nagle

What a joy it was to attend winter school. For young and old and all the ages in between a varied and uplifting programme was provided. The talks in the adult programme were wide ranging and extremely interesting. We were taken on a journey with the Mystic Wayfarer, learned more about the inspirational life of Bahayyih Khanum, got further insights into the life of our Irish Hand of the Cause, George Townsend, and learned about the importance of encouragement in our parenting. These were just some of the wonderfully varied and uplifting talks we experienced as well



as studying together the Universal House of Justice letter to the friends in the Cradle of the Faith. The junior youth also studied aspects of the life of the Bab, culminating in a wonderful visual presentation of their images from the early history. The children also had a varied programme and it was a real joy to have them participate with their

beautiful singing in the morning devotionals.

As our spirits were nurtured with uplifting talks, so too were our bodies well taken care of with hearty meals lovingly prepared by a group of willing volunteers. Group yoga for young and old in the morning, walks in the afternoon and circles of light and a quiz for evening entertainment all served to enrich





their lives were changed and revolutionised by meeting the Báb. The sections studied were; The Mission of Siyyid Kazim and Shaykh Ahmad; The Declaration of the Báb; The Conference of Badasht; The Siege of Shaykh Tabarsí. Most of the sessions were in the form of reading and discussion but in the last session we requested Daniel Cunningham and Illir McGill to relate the

our days in Newgrange Lodge and to recharge our batteries. Many thanks to the hardworking Winter School Committee for organising the event and to all who attended and brought a special spirit of love and cooperation to the gathering.

story of Shaykh Tabarsí. They told the story in such spell-binding fashion that we felt we could see the enactment of those scenes before our eyes.

## The Dawnbreakers at Winter School

By Seán OhAnnrachain

At Winter School this year the youth were studying *The Dawnbreakers*. Because it is such a large book it was decided to concentrate on some key moments from that history. The first day they read some of Ruhi Book 4 to get an overview of the events of that time. In subsequent sessions we looked at these events in more detail, in particular at how the character of the individuals involved and

As a presentation to the rest of the school of what was studied, the youth painted a long scroll of pictures capturing the major themes of their learning. The photo shows, from left to right; the lights of Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim and Mullá Husayn shining brightly and guiding souls through the darkness of those times; the wonderful spiritual qualities of Mullá Husayn; The Declaration of the Báb – the dawning of a new day; the tearing of the veil at the Conference of Badasht; the heroism of the martyrs of Shaykh Tabarsí. The youth were reminded that this is their history and that it belongs to them as much as their family history does, as it tells the story of their spiritual ancestors.



# CORE ACTIVITIES

## Children's Classes

### *The Story of Churchill*

The story of the blossoming of children's classes and junior youth groups in a sparsely populated rural area of the North-West of Ireland around the small village of Churchill has many layers to it. I will try to describe some of the elements leading to this very dynamic bunch of children and junior youth enrolling in Bahá'í children's classes and in the junior youth empowerment programme in a strongly traditional Catholic community.

Let's first give you some numbers: over 50 children and junior youth are now regularly attending the classes – to put some perspective on these numbers, one of the two schools serving this area has 80 students in total.

So, let's go back to where it all started – in the nearest big town, which back in 2006/2007 started a junior youth programme that has been running every year since. This programme inspired a number of youth to serve as animators, children's class assistants and teachers today in Churchill – none of these youth are Bahá'í, but have been inspired to work for the betterment of all people .

Now a number of years back, a lady in her late seventies attended a Book 1 in the nearby town, and was inspired to start a regular devotional in her home in the village of Churchill. This devotional every month for five years laid the

foundation for a young mother of four children living just outside the village to embrace the Faith. She wished to have her children attend Bahá'í children's classes – so Martha, the elderly lady, now deceased, offered her home for children's classes. Another mother, a friend of the Bahá'í mum, also sent her three girls along to the classes.

This children's class eventually had to be moved to a bigger venue due to Martha's deteriorating health. The local L.S.A offered to support the hiring of the new venue. Other children came to the class through their parents attending a Book 1 and their children attending a junior youth group in the nearby big town.

Now the classes with 7 or 8 children, started to present a problem for the



teachers due to the different grades that the range of children represented, so it was decided to do an out-reach to increase class size, so that all grades could have full classes.

At this stage, a newly enrolled Bahá'í youth moved back to her family home in the Churchill area and started working along with the local mum. They, in consultation with the Auxiliary Board, cluster agencies and LSA, decided to do a 3-day summer camp in the village. They used social media to help them outreach and were expecting around 10 extra children. In fact, they had to stop registering children at 31.

Help in running the event came from youth animators, many friends of the Faith returning from University for the summer break, and the local Bahá'ís in a nearby town. The summer camp used all Bahá'í materials to facilitate the classes.

Any initial fear from parents of their children being converted was quickly dispelled by the mother whose children attended the classes for the previous 2 years – as she put it “My children are better Catholics now, from attending these Bahá'í children's classes”.

This summer camp was done from the original idea to finish in under two weeks. Feedback from the local community was very positive, so they decided to ask the parents to attend a PowerPoint presentation on developing a spiritual empowerment programme for their children just before the beginning of the new school term. Again, they used social media to promote the event. Not many parents showed up on the night, but about six families attended and wanted to become involved.

The local parish priest was also met and informed out of courtesy and in a spirit

of unity, defusing any suspicion – he was also invited to become involved, which he declined.

When over 50 children arrived to attend the classes, the local Bahá'í community and their friends arose to conduct the classes. Even before the call was put out for assistance, the local Bahá'ís were asking if they could help – so now all classes have the numbers of teachers and assistants needed to run the classes.

Many of the day to day challenges are being met through the process of action and reflection held on a regular basis by the group facilitating the classes.

Throughout the whole learning process, the local Bahá'ís used the Cluster agencies and Auxiliary Board members to help them guide their actions in reaching out to the local community .

The long term effects in a tightly-knit rural community on the fringes of Europe will be interesting to watch over the next decade or so.

This area, Churchill, has an interesting religious history too. One of the leading figures of the early Christian church in Ireland was born and grew up in this area. St. Columba( Colmcille )was one of the main figures in the conversion of the Picts of Scotland to the Christian Faith.

## **Junior Youth**

*Thinking About Numbers makes you  
THINK!*

By Ann O'Sullivan

It was a Sunday in December, the day after Limerick city itself finally succumbed to the winter floods and chunks of Corbally were inundated. West of the Shannon, in Clareview, the floods kept a



Junior Youth enjoying 'bubbles' after studying *Breezes of Confirmation* at a halting site Shannon

respectful distance and so a planned day of study was able to go ahead. Nine intrepid souls gathered, copies of *Thinking About Numbers* were shared around, and the fun began.

*Thinking About Numbers* is a book for Junior Youth. Designed to stimulate discussion on mathematical concepts, it is generally studied during the first year of the programme, so it's aimed at those aged 11-12. Though you wouldn't think that from the reaction of the group of adults who had come together to familiarise themselves with this book! Brows were furrowed and brains taxed as we struggled to come to grips with concepts such as mathematical correspondence, pi and the idea of rational and irrational numbers.

The book is terrific. Through literally 'thinking about numbers', we came to a new awareness

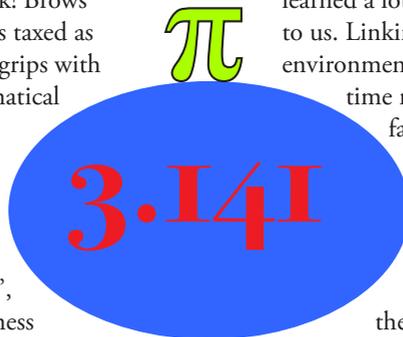
of how numbers and mathematics can be used to benefit the world. The more deeply we studied, the more I regretted that this approach to mathematics had not been available to me when I was young.

The study group that day, under the kindly and patient mentoring of Dylan O'Neill, had decided to familiarise themselves with this book in order to be better able to describe it to others when discussing the Junior Youth Programme with family, friends and neighbours.

We certainly achieved that, but we also learned a lot from it that was new to us. Linking mathematics to the environment and conservation, to

time management, to ethical farming, to a new way of looking at efficiency - all of those made me re-evaluate what I thought I knew.

I thought about the book a lot during the



following days of a wet December, and tried to memorise and internalise the new concepts I had learned so that I could describe them faithfully to others. And I couldn't help but reflect on the floods around me. I caught myself thinking that the junior youth of today who study Thinking About Numbers may be the engineers of tomorrow who will know how to apply ethical mathematics to effective river management. That's an inspiring and reassuring thought.

Soon the Stan Wrouth Junior Youth Coordinator will organise another day of study, for friends to familiarise themselves with another one of the texts. If you're free on the day, I highly recommend it.

## **A most interesting evening**

By Seán OhAnnrachain

The youth group in Coolaney are currently studying Book 1 and are about half way through the book. As part of the unit on prayer, it was decided to do a home visit to one of the Friends – Seosamh MacSuibhne /Joe Sweeney, who lives in Donegal. So five of us, Emmanuel, Mati, Ciaran, James and myself, set off last Tuesday to visit Joe. There was plenty of craic on the hour long journey with Emmanuel telling jokes and stories.

When we got to Joe's house, we were warmly welcomed and then Joe and myself went to pick up a special guest. When we finally gathered and when all the introductions were done, he started the evening with a prayer in Irish. This special guest, Jimmy, has a most unusual background and life story in that he is of the Blackfoot tribe in America, not, as he gently explained in his soft quiet voice, an

American Indian or a Native American, but as part of the people who called themselves the First Nation.

He told us of his difficult childhood in New York where he grew up, and of the ethnic discrimination he suffered, particularly in one school. He had to fight to defend himself. He is a Blackfoot on his mother's side and has links to Montana where the Blackfoot tribe originated. He also told us the story of the Choctaws and how they had sent money to help the starving Irish during the Famine though they themselves had been dispossessed and in dire poverty. Though he is Italian on his father's side, you can see his Blackfoot heritage clearly in his looks. He spoke quietly and simply, answering our questions without drama and amazed us all when he told us that he had done two tours in Vietnam with the Green Berets when he was 19. He lost good friends there and the whole experience left him still with nightmares and flashbacks all these years later. He was very lucky to have survived one ambush when four of his team of six were killed, and only that a helicopter flew over and scared the attackers he would have died as well.

He also told us of how he came to be living in Donegal, where he has lived for 20 years and which he now regards as his spiritual home. We also read the letter by Chief Seattle to the then President of America, Franklin Pierce, the most beautiful letter about taking care of our environment (look it up). Emmanuel had brought a book about the history of the First Nation people and was delighted to have Jimmy sign it.

The whole evening was a wonderful eye-opening experience for the youth; it shows that there are amazing souls living among us.

## Learning about growth in Europe

By Maria McNamara

I had the chance last October to attend part of a seminar in Holland about the Junior Youth programme in Northern Europe. As part of the seminar we reflected on our own clusters and studied documents that outlined some of the insights that have been gained over time working with the programme

Another aspect of the seminar was a field project to open several junior youth groups in the area and in neighbouring communities. These communities are growing rapidly each cycle and they are intensively working the cycles to learn how to attract new souls, especially youth who can form new Junior Youth groups.

One amazing outcome of this focus is that the number of other core activities has also grown. Over four cycles the core activities grew from 1 to 16. Each cycle, the friends visited people in the community with a view to finding those who would like to be accompanied to open new groups. After a few cycles, they ran out of people to visit and they needed an outreach to find new people. The projects that resulted allowed them to come in contact with scores of youth. These youth began to gain a vision of themselves serving the community and they joined a growing movement of youth and adults joyfully learning how to invite the inhabitants of their neighbourhoods into the community building process. I learned a lot in those few days and met some wonderful people.

The lady I stayed with for the week was a Bahá'í of one year and she had recently married another Bahá'í. They will soon

be moving to a neighbouring community, which is a goal area. This lady was met in the street a few cycles previously at a time when she had independently decided to try to do something to help the youth of the neighbourhood. She was surprised then when she was approached and offered just that opportunity. The team who approached this lady was accompanying a friend to catch a train and had no time to chat so she followed along with them to find out more. She later mentioned if she had known at this point it was a religion she would not have been interested. When she was in Book 1, she found out that it is inspired by the Bahá'í Faith, but she was okay with it and finished her training, becoming both a children's class teacher and a Bahá'í at the same time. A few months later, she met and married her husband who is also a Bahá'í.

I met two wonderful Bahá'í youth, one of whom had recently finished university and decided to do a year of service and came every day for the project. I learned that he had come from a Bahá'í family, but was not very actively involved until he received a visit from a Bahá'í friend asking for his help with the Junior Youth programme. This allowed him to learn about the programme and he gradually became involved with the projects. He was so happy to meet so many other youth, all trying to learn together, and over a period of time he decided to give a year of service.

During our outreach together over some days, he found an affinity with a group of junior youth in the neighbourhood we were in and he decided to open a group there and to consider doing his service right there. In the course of the home visits to the new families whose youngsters would join the programme we were able to be very direct. We told them that the

programme is Bahá'í-inspired. We were also able to tell them about the Person and Mission of Bahá'u'lláh. In some cases we also shared a lesson from *Glimmerings* with the family. It was amazing to see the receptivity and trust of these families.

One youth had exams the whole time of the project but would come in the evenings for feedback. He still managed to form his group and had the first session that Friday. There were a number of friends who supported him to make this happen. The feedback sessions were about an hour each evening and the statistics were first collected in a project booklet kept by the ATC and any new insights gained were described. Joyful and full of songs, these were at the same time very purposeful and not occasions to share stories so much as share what had been learnt in the interactions that day. In this way insights could be collected and recorded for future efforts.

A youth who had randomly been met three cycles ago and had a junior youth group already, began helping another youth to form their's. She had also just become a Bahá'í a few days before we arrived and completed Book 2 intensively.

The intensive training on the second week of the expansion phase enabled youth to also come from other communities to complete some of the books in a vibrant and joyful way and to benefit from meeting these new youth who are so on fire with service. In three cycles, this young lady had gone from being a stranger in the street to being an animator accompanying other animators and a Bahá'í. There wasn't anything that special about this area of Holland – it's quite an ordinary place and hadn't been considered to be especially receptive.

Another effort was to open a Junior

Youth group around an Eritrean family who are Bahá'ís and see if there were other families who might like to join. This effort seemed very confirmed and was resulting in many visits to junior youth and their families.

A lot happened in a short space of time and on the last weekend the teams were joined by many members of the community and also institutions that wanted to come to learn about the conversations. These endeavours are very well planned and since they are doing them so often a system has emerged and each time it seems to get easier. The materials used are modified each time to take into account what has been learnt in the previous efforts.

We could do things like this here in Ireland. There wasn't anything special about this area in Holland before they started. They just made efforts in unity and were confirmed.

## **Book 4 in Galway**

By Eile Watson

From 13 to 15 February, a Book 4 for youth took place in Galway. We travelled from all around Ireland to the Rahmanis' house in Galway during midterm break so that we could do Book 4 together. It was brilliant! We spent the whole day doing the book and in the evening our day changed from the history of the Faith to a game of Mafia. We had so much fun doing the book and we loved staying in the Rahmanis' beautiful home.

(see photos on next page)

Right: Child-minding, Book 4 style

Middle Front row L-R: Kian Hennessey, Jonathon Reinartz, Saoirse Jackson, Maeve Samali, Samar Nezamabad, Shírín Shakeri  
Back row: Kent Chadwick holding Layli Chadwick, Ben Suarez, Eile Watson, Dan Maguire, Dara Samali, Sarah Sabour-Pickett

Bottom: Book 4 study



# NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

## Townshend Cluster Activities

By the ATC & Cluster  
Coordinators

“How many the lands that remained untilled and uncultivated; and how many the lands that were tilled and cultivated, and yet remained without water; and how many the lands which, when the harvest time arrived, no harvester came forth to reap! However, through the wonders of God’s favour and the revelations of His loving-kindness, We cherish the hope that souls may appear who are the embodiments of heavenly virtue and who will occupy themselves with teaching the Cause of God and training all that dwell on earth.” - Bahá’u’lláh

Where we are now?

We are 25% into this cycle’s expansion phase. It began on 12th February and will close on the weekend of Sunday 28th February during Ayyám-i-Há. Then we will come together in celebration, savouring the bounty and benefit of lending our energies to the realisation of Bahá’u’lláh’s vision for humanity.

The Expansion Phase

The Universal House of Justice tells us that the aim of the expansion phase is “to



augment the number of those willing to participate in core activities” and to “find receptive souls and to teach them.” So with that in mind.....

What Has Happened So Far?

In this expansion phase more than 23 people outlined their specific hopes and plans for this cycle!

Every day the cluster is joined in reciting a single prayer calling for aid and assistance in our efforts.

Plans range from training and refreshing on institute courses; establishing and expanding classes for the spiritual training of children; initiating programmes which release the spiritual, intellectual and physical powers of teens; holding firesides on diverse topics, both to directly present



- Devotionals
- Child Class Expansion
- Junior Youth Empowerment Programme Expansion
- Ayyám-i-Há gatherings
- 

For each of us to consider

How are you progressing with your ideas and plans?

If you needed one piece of support....what would it be? Let us know by reply email.

There are friends waiting to help, with visits with experience, with ideas and energy, programmes, training and more.

the Bahá'í Faith and to open the path to core activities for friends and neighbours.

Many of those plans were put into action straight away, resulting already in new devotionals attended by friends and enquirers; new firesides about spiritual conversations and how to bring them into the workplace naturally; firesides on the Life of Bahá'u'lláh; refreshers of a number of study circles, new training for Junior Youth Animators; visits to the homes of friends and neighbours to talk about spiritual and social needs; new teams assisting each other in word and deed.

## Cork

Still to Come in the Next 10 Days

- Two Weekends of Expansion Phase Efforts
- Distinctive and Meaningful conversations about spiritual and social reality.
- Home Visits to friends and neighbours
- Youth Night at the National Bahá'í Centre
- Firesides on diverse topics



Children at the Cork Relection Meeting

## Kilkenny



Top: Kilkenny gathering for peace included Baha'i prayer

Left: Kilkenny Feast in Liz Kennedy's home  
Below: Joe and Atieh Donnelluy visiting the Sacred places. They met their daughter, Melody, and her husband, Eric, who live in California at the Baha'i World Centre! Eric grew up in Israel as his parents were volunteer workers in the World Centre and he speaks fluent Hebrew.



# THE YARAN

## Jamaloddin Khanjani

By Wendy Momen

Imagine the sadness of not being able to attend the funeral of your close friend, someone you have known all your life. Now imagine the heartbreak of not being able to attend the funeral of your spouse, someone so close to your soul that you are virtually one person.

This was the plight of Jamaloddin Khanjani, 81, whose dear wife of more than 50 years, Ashraf Sobhani, passed away in March 2011.

Why was Mr Khanjani unable to attend his wife's funeral? Because he was in prison. And why was he in prison? Because he is a Bahá'í -- and lives in Iran.

How did this happen to a dynamic, self-made businessman who grew up on a dairy farm, received a high school education only, yet became the successful owner of the first automated brick factory in Iran?

The first step from factory owner to prisoner came after the 1979 Islamic revolution. Mr Khanjani had already been married for more than 20 years by this time and had four children to support. He had worked his way up through a number of jobs, including purchasing supervisor for Pepsi-Cola and turning entrepreneur by setting up his own charcoal production business. Mr Khanjani's entrepreneurial skills were at their height when he established the brick factory and he gave jobs to several hundred people.

But then, suddenly, Mr Khanjani found that the religion he belonged to, the Bahá'í

Faith, was considered so dangerous by the new Iranian regime that even successful businesses that were adding to the prosperity of their communities were required to close if they were owned by Bahá'ís. Mr Khanjani was forced to shut down his factory and let his workers go. Later the abandoned factory was confiscated by the government.

The second step from factory owner to prisoner quickly followed, as Mr Khanjani was under the threat of death from the Iranian authorities. Why? Because he was a Bahá'í -- and living in Iran. He spent most of the 1980s on the run.

And why were the Iranian authorities so interested in Mr Khanjani? Largely because, like all Bahá'ís, he volunteered his time to teach the Bahá'í Faith to those who were interested and he also served as a volunteer on various administrative bodies of the religion. Most significantly, in the early 1980s he was elected to the national governing council of the Baha'is of Iran, the National Spiritual Assembly.

Now that was a very dangerous occupation! In 1980 the entire membership of the Assembly had been abducted and was never heard from again. Their nine successors were arrested and executed in 1981. And the danger to Mr Khanjani was not exaggerated. Four of his Assembly colleagues were executed by the government in 1984.

The third step from factory owner to prisoner came in the latter 1980s. He was arrested and imprisoned for two months. He was subjected to intense questioning. But his answers to his gaolers went a long way towards convincing them -- for a



such as his son and granddaughter, were incarcerated themselves and others were repeatedly called in for questioning.

The fifth step along the path from factory owner to prisoner was taken when Mr Khanjani was accepted to serve as one of the seven Bahá'ís who tended to the spiritual and social needs of the 300,000-member Bahá'í community of that country: the 'Yaran' or 'Friends in Iran',

The sixth step on Mr Khanjani's journey from factory owner to prisoner came on on 16 May 2008 -- almost eight years ago -- when he was arrested at his home. The other five members of the Friends were arrested on the same day, Mahvash Sabet having been arrested two months earlier. Did Mr Khanjani's ill-health, heart-disease, and that of his wife matter? No. Did his advanced age matter? No.

while -- of the non-threatening nature of the Bahá'í Faith, and he and many other Bahá'ís were eventually released -- for a time. Mr Khanjani was arrested and imprisoned on at least two other occasions during these years.

The entrepreneurial Mr Khanjani was not deterred in either his work ethic or his faithfulness to his religion. He established a mechanized farm on family properties in the 1990s.

But the fourth step from factory owner to prisoner followed immediately. Not only were swingeing restrictions placed on Mr Khanjani, but his children and even more distant relatives had restrictions placed on them too. So, they could not get loans, their business dealings were restricted, many of their places of business were closed down and they were not able to travel outside the country. Not easy to make a living from business when you can't actually operate it! Some family members,

The seventh step on the journey from factory owner to prisoner was the last step. Mr Khanjani was put on trial at Branch 28 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, charged with 'assembly and collusion against national security', 'propaganda against the state', and 'espionage'. None of the charges held water. Yet Mr Khanjani and the other Friends were sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Mr Khanjani appealed; the Friends appealed. Their appeal was dismissed.

Today, Mr Khanjani has 13 more years to live in the prison. It is likely his last days on earth will be spent there.

And in any case, the prison is now the only home Mr Khanjani has. Just a month ago, on 22 April, Iranian police demolished his ancestral home in Semnan province.

## A TEACHING STORY

(The following is an excerpt from *Follow the Instructions*, a book by Jenabe Caldwell published by the Bahá'í Publishing Trust of India in 1995)

It was the last four months of the nine-year plan and I [Jenabe Caldwell] had just come out of India. As usual when I was anywhere near Israel, I would stop for a three day visit, go to the Shrines and thank Bahá'u'lláh for His blessings and beseech Him for my future protection.

When I entered the Pilgrim House, Hand of the Cause Dr Rahmatu'llah Muhajir was talking to Hand of the Cause Ali Akbar Furutan in the middle of the room. When Dr Muhajir saw me he motioned me to come to him.

He said, "Jenabe, you are now going to Germany."

"No, Dr Muhajir, I am not going to Germany." I replied, "I am going home to Alaska. I have been out now for over six months and I am going home."

Hand of the Cause Dr Rahmatu'llah Muhajir went right on, "We are now down to the last 4 months of the nine year

plan and Germany has not won any of its numerical goals of the plan. The only way they can possibly reach their goals is by mass teaching. You are a mass teacher so you are going to Germany."

Dr Muhajir then took out a note pad and wrote a telegram to the National Assembly of Germany, which he showed me. "Last opportunity to win goals nine year plan. Mass teaching, mass teacher Jenabe Caldwell arriving. Give every support. Dr Muhajir."

I remonstrated with him, "Dr Muhajir, I will need at least the three months to get my teachers and train them to do the teaching"

Undaunted he replied, "Bring your Alaskans. They are already trained."

"Dr Muhajir," I cried. "It will take a fortune to bring over the Alaskan Bahá'ís to Germany."

"Go to Hamburg," he calmly explained. "They will give you the money."

Still unconvinced, I responded, "Dr Muhajir if I go to Hamburg they won't even give me the time of day let alone their money."

"You go to Hamburg and they will give you the money," he insisted.

I went to Germany and I met with the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Germany. First they wanted to know what was the first step to be taken by them.

Jenabe and Motoko Caldwell on Maui in 2015



I explained that the first step would be putting together a teaching team and we would need some German Bahá'ís willing to give three or four months to the teaching work.

I suggested the National Spiritual Assembly sit down together and draft a real love letter to every enrolled Bahá'í in Germany, requesting that they come for three or four months. I asked that divine institution to write the letter together, not to just give it to the secretary to write. I strongly felt that such a letter would require the inspiration promised by Bahá'u'lláh to that body in full consultation.

Their unanimous decision was that they would be wasting their stamps as they explained that they had great difficulty in getting the friends to come to a Saturday night pot luck.

I responded that I might not want to come to a pot luck, but might come for the spiritual conquest of Germany. They agreed to try it and I assured them that if no one came, I would go on by myself.

They then wanted to know how I planned to do the mass teaching in Germany. I told them that the only way I knew how to do it was to go out and meet the people and talk to them. They assured me that this approach in Germany would not work as people did not talk to strangers in Germany. I explained that I did not know of any other way to teach the Faith without talking to the people.

They then agreed (only because Hand of the Cause Dr Rahmatu'llah Muhajir had instructed them to support this effort) to let me try street teaching in Germany.

“All-praise and glory be to God Who, through the power of His might, hath delivered His creation from the nakedness of non-existence and clothed it with the

mantle of life.” Bahá'u'lláh

I would like to pause here in this narrative to make an important point. We the Bahá'ís limit the power of Bahá'u'lláh by our own negative feelings. The power that put the sun in orbit has given mankind all it needs to build the kingdom of God on earth, but He has made it a - Do it yourself kit -, and assured us of His unfailing aid if we will just “follow the instructions”.

“Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All Wise. On him shall also descend the concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.” Bahá'u'lláh

I then went to Hamburg and there was a large community of very wealthy Persians in Hamburg. I guess Hand of the Cause Dr Rahmatu'llah Muhajir had asked them to come. That evening they all came and donated over \$30,000US.

Then I went on to Alaska and got 15 God-intoxicated lovers and well-trained soldiers in Bahá'u'lláh's army of light. These were all battle scarred veterans from Alaska's Massive Encounter. Their way and expenses were paid so none of the Hamburg money was needed and this was returned to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany.

We started our program with a teacher training course. I waited to see if any of the German friends would come. First a young man walked in.

I greeted him and enquired, “How is it that you came for such a long time?”

He explained, “You know I got this beautiful love letter from my National Spiritual Assembly. When I read it I felt like it was a love letter from God, and He

was asking me to come for 3 or 4 months. Now tell me how could I refuse?

“What did you have to do to come?” I asked.

“Well,” he said, “I had to drop out of my University and I had only 3 months left to go to get my degree. This means next fall I must go back, pay again the tuition, and do the whole thing over again.”

When this beautiful spiritual lad explained what he had done, I knew in my heart that we had won the goals of the nine-year plan. One thing I know for sure and that is this Cause of God is built on sacrifice. If there is no sacrifice, believe me there will be no victory.

“The moth is a sacrifice to the candle. The spring is a sacrifice to the thirsty one. The sincere lover is a sacrifice to the loved one and the longing one is a sacrifice to the beloved.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Another lady walked in and I asked, “What happened to bring you here?”

She answered, “I got this beautiful love letter asking me to come and I went right over to the phone and called my neighbour and asked her to feed my cats, and here I am.”

Another man came in and I asked the same question.

“I got this letter and I went to my boss and asked for time off and he told me that it was a good time as business was slow. So here I am.”

The next one explained, “I asked for time off and the boss said no way, so I quit and here I am.”

The next, “I got this very beautiful love letter and I called my mother-in-law and told her to feed her son and take care of the grandchildren. I was going on a nine-year plan and would be gone for three months.”

So they came from every corner of Germany. Self-sacrificing, spiritual souls for

a total of 45 front line German soldiers and the 15 Alaskans. I still was at a loss as to what these Alaskans could do in Germany as not one of them spoke German. We had a team of 60 God intoxicated angels of Bahá'u'lláh.

During the teacher training institute, they wanted to know how we were going to go about it and when I explained that we were going out on the streets in Germany and tell these people about Bahá'u'lláh the Germans were aghast. One and all they told me that this could not be done in a country like Germany. As I had told their National Spiritual Assembly, I told them that in all my life I have never been able to teach anyone without talking to them. These Germans were something very special. They did not like the idea, and they were sure it would not work, but they were willing to have a go at it anyhow.

We must also bear in mind that this Cause of God started on May 22nd 1844 with a street teacher. The Bab went out of his house, walked out to the edge of town, and met a stranger and invited him to His house. Then He asked questions, listened and had a fireside. This resulted in the first declaration on May 23rd, 1844.

It was a cold day in February and the snow was on the ground. We arrived at the Frankfurt House of Worship at about 4.30am. All 60 of us circumambulated this Mother Temple of Europe, each one saying quietly to themselves the Tablet of Ahmad. Then silently we filed into the building and one by one went to the podium and said a Tablet of Ahmad. Truly it was a lifetime soul enriching experience. We then left the House of Worship just as the sun was coming up.

We had buses and so we went to a dorf. This is like a village in Germany. That evening the whole team returned with long

faces and unhappy reports. One member of the team told me that it was truly awful. He said he had tried to talk to a man and this man grumbled and walked off.

The Alaskans explained to me that they felt the trouble was that the love was coming from their heads and not their hearts. So I took them into our hall and we had consultation on love. I read all the tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá I had on love.

“The essence of Bahá’u’lláh’s Teaching is all-embracing love, for love includeth every excellence of humankind.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

We had a 24-hour prayer watch, I instructed the team members to pray, to beg, to beseech Bahá’u’lláh for loving hearts when they went to their prayers that night.

The next evening when the team came in, it was transformed. One man told me, “I didn’t try to stop everyone on the street as I did yesterday. I just stood on the corner several blocks away and I thought to myself, ‘I do love that man. He is my brother. I left my job and came here because I love him so much that I want to share with him the most precious thing I have in my life which is the Cause of God.’

I no sooner had this inner conviction than I felt such love flowing through me. This love was like a river and it flowed from me and down the street and when it reached this man, he began to smile.

I walked towards him. He walked towards me. When we came together, I said, ‘Have you ever heard of Bahá’u’lláh?’ “No,” he said. “Please tell me.”

So I invited him into a coffee shop and everything I said he responded with, “Isn’t that wonderful.” You could feel this intense divine and spiritual love all around us. After about 2 hours this person asked if he could please be a Bahá’í.”

All the team members were glowing and they all had stories similar to this one. In three months all the goals of the nine-year plan were won.

“Make my heart overflow with love for Thy creatures ...” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

I think every Bahá’í, deep down inside, knows that love is the answer and the secret of successful teaching. If we don’t feel this love or are unable to show it, then let’s do as the Germans did and supplicate the Blessed Beauty to give us that loving heart.



# IN THE HOLY LAND

## The Encounter

By Duanne L. Herrmann

The man entered the room from outside. He was surprised to see how simply it was decorated, almost barren, really, but not quite. The floor was richly carpeted with ornate designs: flowers, leaves and tendrils. He could see through the interior doors to the other rooms that were similarly carpeted.

The walls were unadorned light, pale yellow, almost white. Exterior doors and windows were covered with obviously thick, dark curtains with elegant edging that did not distract. He was sure they would muffle any outside sounds, as would the two-foot-thick stone walls. The original structure was somewhat fortress-like, but with too many doors and windows for that.

The most interior wall, the one he was facing as he entered, was adorned with three items. Centered on each side were large, framed texts. He could not read them from his distance, but he could recognize that one was in a script he could not read. In the center of the wall, just below the ceiling, was another framed inscription in the same script which he could not read.

In each of the two corners he was facing were plant stands with lamps with large globes which were lit from within so they cast a soft, warm light. Their light was inconsequential compared to the chandelier hanging in the center of the room. None of these lights compared with the lights in the center room directly in

front of him and the center of the square building. That room was open to the others with a large archway which opened the center half of the wall.

This center room was separated from the rooms surrounding it by a light, filigree lace, transparent curtain and its raised floor. The most noticeable difference from it and the outer rooms were the contents. Whereas the outer, surrounding rooms were empty, the center room was filled with lights. It was light upon light: multiple candelabras, chandeliers and candles. No one walked in that room. And, many of the lights had cut glass to reflect the light: light upon light. This was an obvious effort to bestow in death light upon One who was denied even a single candle in His prison cell on dark, freezing winter nights.

The man stood, just to the side of the door, and watched others come in, singly, after him, slowly, reverently. Nearly all would pause midway into the room, as if to catch their breath and possibly to say a brief, silent prayer. Then they would approach the center room but with a slower, even more reverent, pace.

Upon reaching the threshold to the central room they would, invariably, kneel on the soft carpet, then bow their heads to the threshold in respect and tribute to the One buried there. Some would touch the threshold, some would not.

The threshold, in front of the filigree curtain, was marked off with a thin cloth of dark green, the green in respect for the descendancy of the One buried within from the Prophet Muhammad. Down the center of this cloth were carefully scattered

rose petals and on each side stood a vase of fresh roses. The man now identified the scent of roses which greeted him upon entering the room. It was powerful, but not unpleasant.

The people who knelt would generally not remain there for long. They would get up reverently, back themselves away, then side over often to an empty space along a side wall of the room or in the back, though some would find a spot in the larger space of the room, and sit on the carpet in whatever manner felt comfortable to them. Some would close their eyes in prayer, others would read silently from a prayer book. There were several available from a small chest upon entering the portico surrounding the building. Upon entering that surrounding space everyone took off their shoes in respect.

The man decided to go forward to the threshold also. It seemed the most reasonable thing to do, and kneeling also.

At first he placed his forehead on the cloth on the threshold as he had seen others do, but this did not feel “right.” He then lowered his head to the side of the threshold. This felt much more appropriate, though he did not understand why. Before he could begin to wonder about this, he began to feel as if he was a small child pushing his head against the knees of a person sitting before him. He wanted to join with that person and become part of the One greater than himself. He pushed his head more firmly against the knees. He inexplicably wanted to be as close to this person as possible.

Suddenly, in the midst of this powerful desire, he “felt” arms reach out above him to extend over his head, but not touching him. Before he could more than begin to wonder about this, he felt loved.

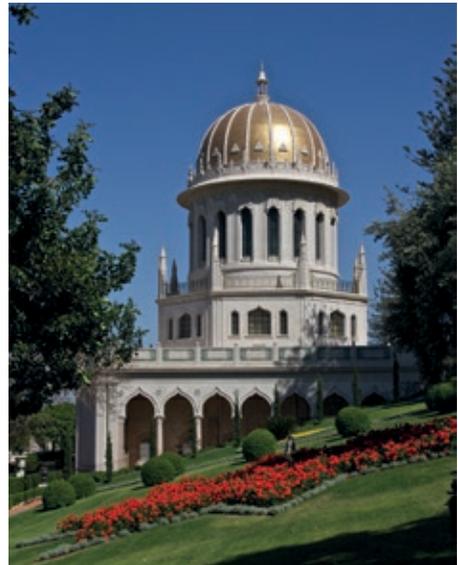
He felt love of such power that

surprised him, love that was deep and intense, love that he had never before experienced in his life. No one had ever loved him like this. No one. The power of this love could not even be compared to the love he had received from his parents, grandparents, wife or children. He could not think, He could not reason – he felt suspended in space and time. Then he sobbed. His body shook and tears flowed. He could not stop, he could only cry.

Gradually the sensation ceased, as did his sobbing. He pulled himself up, looked furtively around to see the reactions of the others in the room. This was not his typical response to anything! There was no indication from any of the others in the room that anything unusual had occurred. He backed away, as he had seen the others do, and found a spot where he could lean against a side wall. He was drained of emotion and astonished that such an experience could actually happen, and happen to him!!

What had just happened?

He did not know.



# INTERNATIONAL BAHÁ'Í NEWS

## After catastrophe, youth lead reconstruction in Vanuatu

4 February 2016

TANNA, Vanuatu — Ten months after Cyclone Pam devastated Vanuatu, the island of Tanna has made remarkable strides towards recovery, with youth at the heart of the process.

Tanna lies in the South Pacific Ocean along the archipelago making up the Republic of Vanuatu. It is one of five locations worldwide in which the first local Bahá'í Houses of Worship will soon be

raised.

Over the past decade, Bahá'ís and their fellow islanders have been working to strengthen the fabric of community life there. In villages throughout the island, collective worship has become part of the regular pattern of life. Bahá'ís have witnessed a rise in social harmony and cooperation between different groups. Barriers that had previously divided people have gradually fallen away. And urged on by the support of village chiefs, the young people of the community have, in recent years, found the means to contribute to the betterment of their society through a variety of practical projects.



Bahá'ís in the village of Lenkanal demonstrated courageous resilience after the devastating cyclone in March 2015

In March 2015, the island of Tanna was ravaged by Cyclone Pam—a tropical cyclone with wind speeds reaching up to 320 km/h.

“Our houses were being blown away one by one,” explained a mother from the village of Tumah Mine. “We decided to take refuge at the school in the next village. We had to walk for about one kilometer. It was going to be a very dangerous walk as many large trees and branches were falling, and objects were flying everywhere.

“I prayed and asked Bahá’u’lláh to please protect us, especially our children. Sometimes we had to run, sometimes we crawled, and other times we lay flat.”

Despite Cyclone Pam’s catastrophic impact on the island of some 30,000 people—destroying not only houses, buildings, and roads but also decimating local agriculture—there were remarkably few fatalities.

Director of the Vanuatu Immigration Service Henry Tamashiro—a Bahá’í in the national capital, Port Vila—has been following developments on Tanna very closely and has been struck by the response of the population there, during and after the storm.

Describing the community’s priorities in the immediate aftermath of the storm, he explains, “They tried to re-conceptualize the meaning of ‘relief phase’ and ‘reconstruction phase’ in light of what they had been learning about community-building.

“They concluded that

Iala Jacob, a local coffee farmer on the island of Tanna, in the newly-established nursery

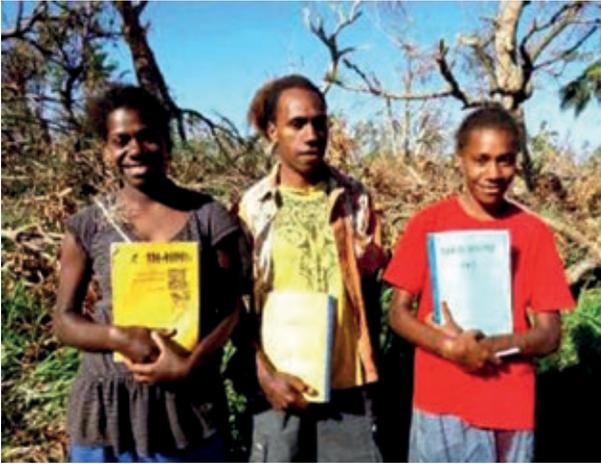
the response to the cyclone could not just be about building structures. The most important thing to the community was to make sure the education of the children and youth would continue.”

The first priority then, Mr. Tamashiro explains, was to reconstruct the buildings that had hosted classes for the young. Those structures would also be used to house the vulnerable members of the community.

Mr. Tamashiro particularly emphasizes the pivotal role youth have played during and after the storm. A year and a half before Cyclone Pam, some 600 youth from Tanna attended a conference in Port Vila organized by the Bahá’í community. They joined over a thousand young people from several Pacific islands. Mr. Tamashiro credits the conference for reinforcing a high sense of purpose among the youth and an orientation to service for the betterment of their communities.

Following the cyclone, this sense of purpose was manifested to great effect. While the storm was raging across the island, the youth of Namasmetene village, seeing almost all of the houses blown away, helped to carry the children and the elderly





Youth from Tanna ensured that the education of younger generations continued unabated following the cyclone

to a school where the people of the village took refuge.

“They demonstrated a spirit of selflessness in helping others, ensuring all were safe...They lit fires to make sure everyone was warm and dry and all were fed. They did not care just for their own families, they cared for all,” said Mrs. Naiu, a Bahá’í from the village. “Many families are still thanking them. They say if it were not for

their help, they would not have survived.”

The people of the island have had a strong sense of ownership and participation in their own recovery. For example, speaking about the impact on local agriculture, Iala Jacob, who is the founder and chairman of a local coffee farmer’s cooperative which is patterned on Bahá’í principles, explains:

“The cyclone destroyed most of the coffee farms. Soon after the cyclone the Board of our cooperative met and decided to set up a nursery and plant 36,000 coffee seedlings...We will soon distribute the seedlings free of charge among the farmers.”

Mr. Jacob expects that the seedlings will be enough to cover about 22 hectares of farmland and will assist the coffee farmers to get off the ground again after the devastation of the storm.

Reconstruction has stimulated the community to reassess its building practices and learn how to draw more resourcefully from local materials. In August 2015 local Bahá’ís in Tanna



Children gathered for a class some ten days after the cyclone. Their protection and continuing education, during and since the devastating cyclone that struck Tanna in March 2015, has been a central feature of the island’s response

began to rebuild a center in Nakayelo that had been destroyed by the cyclone. The site had been an important center of activity.

About 20 local youth worked together with an architect from Papua New Guinea to design and start the construction of four buildings on the site. As part of these efforts, they also began experimenting with potential building materials that could be found locally.

“The intention of these experiments is to learn about sustainable building practices using resources within their environment,” said Henry Lape, the architect who was assisting with the project. He added that the group of youth would continue a process of learning, experimentation, and building after his departure.

Reflecting on the reconstruction process in Namasmetene village, Mrs. Naiu says, “These projects encouraged the community members to arise and take charge of the reconstruction process rather than waiting for an aid agency. We knew that we should not depend on aid donors, but that we

should take charge of our own development.”

Far from deflecting the community from its course, the cyclone has served to reinforce its commitment to the progress of its people, explains Henry Tamashiro. And in the aftermath of the storm, amidst all of the work to rebuild, there is a great excitement about the House of Worship soon to be erected for the entire island.

Mr. Tamashiro attributes the inspiring response of the people of Tanna to their trust in Divine Will, even in the face of such a severe natural disaster that continues to impact their lives so many months afterwards.

“All they say is ‘Thank God’. They thank God for saving their lives and the lives of their children. For them, all the material things they have lost are secondary.”

Bahá’í World News Service

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## A Fire in the Pacific

By Earl Redman

‘In the Pacific area, where Bahá’í exploits bid fair to outshine the feats achieved in any other ocean, and indeed in every continent of the globe, now competing for the palm of victory with the African continent itself. . . .’ Shoghi Effendi (Messages to the Bahá’í World, 1950-1957)

There is a Mashriqu’l-Adhkár in Samoa and new ones are being built in Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. All are in the Pacific Ocean area. What is happening in that vast island-studded area? We went to

find out.

Our first Pacific stop was Hawaii, where we discovered that the most active groups were Marshallese, Pohnpeians and Chuukese, all Pacific Islanders who had migrated to Hawaii. On the island of Hawaii, junior youth groups were mostly composed of these islanders and the excitement was palpable. Most of the adult islanders kept their distance from the Faith, but didn’t mind their junior youth and children participating. And the changes in their children increased their interest in what the Bahá’ís were doing and brought them into study circles and devotionals. In some cases, whole families came into the Faith.

Then we went to Fiji and visited a group of youth. There were clusters of very focused youth on the porches and in the classrooms, each concentrating on a different Ruhi book. Though they were all working hard to get through their various books, laughter was common and their comradery was obvious. The 35 youth from the different islands of Fiji, from Kiribati and Tuvalu were participating in a two-week intensive study of the Ruhi books. A large number of those youth were not technically Bahá'ís, but you couldn't distinguish them from the Bahá'í youth. All were focused on learning the lessons and skills of the books so they could put them in practice. Such an energetic atmosphere!

The Suva cluster in Fiji consisted of three Local Spiritual Assemblies in the



capital city area. There were 110 core activities going on in the cluster, but this two-week intensive study was unique. It was the first major self-funded project of its kind in the cluster. This came about when the three Local Assemblies asked their communities for contributions to support the event. There was little response, so each Assembly divided the lists of Bahá'ís

in each area into nine groups. Each Assembly member took a list and visited everyone on it in their home, even those who were inactive. The result was enough money to pay for everything needed for those 35 youth to be trained, including food, accommodation and materials.

The youth weren't just going through the books. They really wanted to put them into practice and their enthusiasm was contagious. All could speak English, but they commonly spoke among themselves in their own languages. The universal language of the Ruhi books, though, was conspicuous. Their Fijian conversations were sprinkled with clearly understandable 'Book 1' and 'Book 6'. We had heard this



Above: Chuukese Cecilia and Lewis and children  
Below: Junior Youth Group with Marshallese





Intensive Ruhi courses in Fiji before, in Swahili in Tanzania.

The adults facilitating the books, most of whom were fairly young themselves, told us that it was the youth and junior youth who were driving the community forward. The adults were just trying to keep up with and guide the younger generation. It was a challenging task given the fire and energy of the youth and their junior youth cohorts.

On our final evening in Fiji, the Book 4 group presented the life of the Báb. Two of those doing the presentation were not Bahá'ís and one was a brand new Bahá'í. The story they told was full of enthusiasm and life, though it was the first time they had ever done it before a group. The promise of Fiji's future was clearly demonstrated.

We spent three days on Fiji, much of it with the exciting youth. Then we went to Samoa.

Samoa, too, was youth driven. When



we arrived, there was a seminar for junior youth and children's class coordinators. They came from the various islands in the Samoan area as well as Kiribati. As in Fiji, there was an air of excitement among the participants and much of their consultation was about the junior youth program, because it had proved to be the door to opening the Faith to the older Samoans.



In Samoa

There is an amazing number of churches from a surprising number of Christian denominations on Samoa with an attendant ‘competition for souls’. This competition expressed itself in huge imposing and/or ornate church buildings. Gardens, if there were any, were small and made to fill in blank areas. The Bahá’í House of Worship, in contrast, is set well back from the road and at that distance, doesn’t look particularly large, though

it is very unique in its design. The big difference is that the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár is surrounded by extensive gardens through which you have to walk to reach the temple. So there is a tranquillity that is absent at the big churches sitting

alongside the busy roads.

As in Samoa, initially the parents weren’t interested much in the Faith, but allowed their children to participate in children’s classes and junior youth groups. And, again, the changes the parents saw created interest in the Faith behind those changes. As a result, there are several thousand Bahá’ís on the island of Upolu, the main island. The island is one cluster and there were 220 core activities going on while we





were there.

Our last night in Samoa, we told stories to a group of two dozen Samoans of all ages. During the devotional beginning, the children were fully involved in the prayers and the singing. Samoans love to sing and have the most remarkable harmonies. After the talk, it was the youth who had the most questions. Sharon was surrounded by a group of young ladies.

Shoghi Effendi's prediction for the people of the Pacific Islands was prescient.

We saw a fire in the Pacific Ocean. Bahá'u'lláh said: 'Should they cast Him into a fire kindled on the continent, He will assuredly rear His head in the midmost heart of the ocean and proclaim: "He is the Lord of all that are in heaven and all that are on earth!"' We couldn't help but feel that that is exactly what has happened.

Above: Book 6 in Fiji  
Below: Samoa (photo by Steve Percival)



# BAHÁ'Í HISTORY

## Life of Nabil

By Joe Donnelly

Nabil-i-Zarandi, more commonly known as Nabil-i-A'zam, was the poet laureate of Bahá'u'lláh, and was born in the year 1831. He came from the Táheri tribe who were nomads, and worked as a shepherd in his early life. His father, Ghulam Ali, was a devout Muslim and often visited the city of Qum, where he became closely associated with some of its leading mullahs.

Nabil became disillusioned with the character and insincerity of the clergy. He loved solitude and often recited prayers of

Ali, successor of Muhammad, beseeching him to guide him to the truth. His father would sometimes rebuke him for his temerity and restlessness, 'I fear, he often remarked, that your aversion to these mujtahids may some day involve you in great difficulties'.

One day when Nabil was in a village he overheard two men excitedly discussing the appearance of a holy person from Shiraz, His Declaration, and subsequent arrest, His departure for Isfahan, and the signs and wonders manifested by Him. Nabil recalls, 'every detail of that story excited my curiosity and stirred in me a keen admiration for a Man who could cast such a spell over His countrymen'

In 1848, Nabil heard of the besieged followers of The Báb and was preparing to travel to Shaykh Tabarsi when he learned that most of them had been martyred.

His first meeting with Bahá'u'lláh was in Tehran around 1850. At that stage however, Nabil did not appreciate the loftiness of His station. Later, when the Bábí community seemed leaderless and the believers became dispirited and confused, Nabil in his delusion claimed to be 'Him Whom God will make manifest' and disseminated some of his writings among the Bábís. After a few years he travelled to Baghdad and attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. This time his inner



eye beheld the glory of His revelation and his soul was transformed. He prostrated himself at His feet and begged for forgiveness. As an act of repentance he cut his beard, which was a sign of a man's dignity, made a brush and swept the approaches to the House of Bahá'u'lláh.

Nabil became an ardent lover of Bahá'u'lláh and always longed to serve Him. His loyalty and devotion was seldom matched by any of the believers, and it was these qualities which enabled him to become one of the outstanding teachers of the Faith.

Nabil was a gifted poet and historian, some of the narratives being composed in verse. Passages from the 'Dawnbreakers' have been written in this style!

Bahá'u'lláh sent Nabil to Persia on many important missions for the Faith. During these travels he brought news of Bahá'u'lláh and inspired the friends to teach the Cause. Another mission with which Bahá'u'lláh entrusted Nabil was to proceed to Egypt to appeal to the Khedive on behalf of seven fellow-believers who had been thrown into prison at the instigation of one of the enemies of the Faith, the Persian Consul General in that country. Soon after his arrival however, Nabil himself was imprisoned in Alexandria. The year was 1868. There he came into contact with Faris Effendi, a Christian physician and clergyman who was also a prisoner. Nabil taught him the Faith, and he became a deep and devoted believer, probably the first Christian to do so. As a result of Nabil's teaching work inspired by his detachment from this world, and aided by a profound understanding of the message of Bahá'u'lláh, Faris became assured of the truth of the Cause. The fire of faith began to burn fiercely in his heart and the love of Bahá'u'lláh possessed his whole being.

While Nabil languished in prison, one night in a dream Bahá'u'lláh appeared to him and assured him that after eighty-one days the hardship of prison life would end. That day fell on the 27th of August 1868, and it was on that day the significance of Nabil's dream came to light. Around the time of sunset Nabil went to the roof of the prison to watch people passing by. To his amazement Nabil saw Aqa Muhammad Ibrahim-Nazir among the passers-by. He called out to Aqa Muhammad and he persuaded the guard to let him into the prison where he could hold a conversation with him. There he informed him of the fate of Bahá'u'lláh and His companions and pointed to their ship anchored in the bay. This amazing incident caused tremendous excitement in the heart of Nabil, for he found himself so close to his Lord and yet so far.

That night neither of the friends could sleep and they both decided to write a letter to Bahá'u'lláh. The next morning they made arrangements with a Christian youth named Constantine, a watchmaker in the city, to deliver the letter to Bahá'u'lláh on board the ship. They both stood on the roof of the prison to watch the ship, turned their hearts to Bahá'u'lláh and communed with His spirit. After a while they were heart-broken to see the ship steaming away before Constantine could reach the exiles. But amazingly the ship slowed down and Constantine climbed on board. He handed the letter to one of the attendants who took it to Bahá'u'lláh. This short encounter left an abiding impression on Constantine having come face to face with the Supreme Manifestation of God, and seen a glimpse of His glory. He left the ship overwhelmed and awestruck. When he came to deliver the parcel to Nabil and Faris Effendi he was in such a state of excitement he was

heard shouting aloud ‘ By God, I have seen the face of the Heavenly Father’.

Faris embraced him and kissed his eyes which had gazed upon the countenance of his Lord. The Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh was in the form of Revelation Writing and in the handwriting of His amanuensis and imparted a great and new spirit of love, dedication to Faris; it fanned into flame the fire of faith which had been ignited in his heart by Nabil in that gloomy prison. The news of the whereabouts of Nabil, and especially the letter of Faris, which was read aloud by Bahá'u'lláh to those who were in His presence, created tremendous excitement:

*“O Thou the Glory of the Most -Glorious and the Exalted of the Most Exalted! I write this letter and present it to the One who has been subjected to the same sufferings as Jesus Christ.... It is incumbent upon us to offer praise and thanksgiving to God, the All-Glorious, the All- Bountiful. And now I beseech Thee to grant me and my kindred a portion of the ocean of Thy bounty, O Thou who art the Ever-Living, the Self-subsisting and the Wellspring of Purity and Sanctity.*

*I entreat Thee by the mystery of Thy most joyful Being, by Thy Prophet who conversed with Thee (Moses) , by Thy Son (Jesus) , by Thy Friend (Muhammad) , by Thy Herald (The Báb) who for love of Thee offered up His life in Thy path, not to deprive me and my family, these poor ones, from beholding the glory of Thy countenance.*

*O Thou who hast endured for our sake sufferings and tribulations. Strengthen our faith, choose us for Thy service and accept us as martyrs in Thy path so that our blood may be shed for the love of Thee. We are weak and ignorant, confer upon us Thy glory so that we may not be among the losers. Grant us the distinction of love and faith, and cleanse our*

*hearts from whatsoever runs counter to Thy good pleasure. Aid us to forget our own selves so that we may seek no rest in Thy service except by Thy leave and pleasure.*

*“O Thou who knowest the secrets of the hearts! Art Thou sailing in an ark made of wood? O how I long to be a part of that vessel, for it is blessed to be a carrier of the Lord. O the surging sea! Is thy restlessness because of the fear of the glorious Lord? O Alexandria! Art thou grief-stricken because He who is the Ever-Living, the All - Wise is leaving thy shores? O the desolate city of Akka ! Thou art clapping thy hands in fervent joy and art in a state of rapture and ecstasy, for the Lord in His great glory will bless thy land with His footsteps....”*

As promised by Bahá'u'lláh, Faris was released from prison three days later. After his release he arose in propagation of the Faith among his people. Nabil was freed soon after and then proceeded to the Holy Land in pursuit of his Lord.

In more than one tablet Bahá'u'lláh Himself described the episode of Faris in Alexandria as a token of the power of God. In a Tablet addressed to Rad'ar Ruh, a devoted follower from Manshad who died a martyr, Bahá'u'lláh relates the story of His banishment from Adrianople, and the outpouring of the Word of God in the course of that journey; He relates that the breezes of the revelation of the words revealed in that period were wafted over the entire planet. He describes in majestic language His boarding the ship and sailing on the sea; every drop of its waters was exhilarated and from it could be heard that which no one is capable of hearing.

Some time later Nabil was able to leave Egypt and traveled to the Holy Land. He came to the gate of Akka in disguise, but the enemies reported him to the

authorities, who expelled him from the city. After that he lived in a cave on Mt. Carmel. He spent his days in prayer and supplication, longing for the time when he could enter the presence of his Lord again. At last his prayers were answered, the doors of the prison were flung open to the

believers, and Nabil entered the presence of Bahá'u'lláh with tremendous joy. That was the moment of victory for him as he spent the rest of his days in Akka and afterwards had the privilege of attaining Bahá'u'lláh's presence almost every day.

## OBITUARY

### **Fire on the Hill: Remembering Peter Kay**

By Seán Ó hAnnracháin

Peter always struck me as a most sensitive and creative soul, whose heart was ablaze with the love of Bahá'u'lláh. This is reflected most particularly in his beautifully lyrical and insightful play called 'The Olive Tree'. The story I'm going to relate of the fire on the hill also illustrates these qualities.

In 1997, Peter had a conversation with a group of friends in Dublin about his discovery concerning the prominence of the number 40 in the Bible and in the history of the Faith. Some of the examples he cited were: the 40 years the Israelites spent in the desert; the 40 days Christ spent in meditation; the 40 days of Lent; that Bahá'u'lláh was in His forties when He declared His mission; that 'Abdu'l-Bahá spent over 40 years in prison and that George Townshend had been a Bahá'í for 40 years.

At that time – in 1997 – he suggested we should commemorate the fortieth anniversary of George Townshend's passing which was forty years ago that coming March by doing something creative and

memorable. Whether or not it was Peter who suggested lighting a fire on the Hill of Slane I can't recall, but that was what we decided to do. Having been in the Boy Scouts, I was the one chosen to arrange the fire and a group of nine people were invited, including Peter Kay and Pat Boyle both from Dublin, and Dawn and Larry Staudt living in nearby Kellystown – Dawn went, but Larry was ill on the night.

George Townshend had passed away on 25th March 1957 at about 11pm, so on the fortieth anniversary we all met at that time on the Hill of Slane, overlooking the village on a cold, dark, overcast and drizzly night. Atop of the hill is the ruin of an old church and we lit the fire on the slope just below the ruins looking westward. I had a sheet of galvanise and nine logs for the fire and in no time we had a nice blaze going. We had decided that all the prayers and poems should mention fire in them so we recited various prayers like; 'I know not, O my God what the Fire is which Thou didst kindle in Thy land' and 'The Fire Tablet', along with poems specially written by Pat and Peter for the occasion.

For those of you not familiar with the legend of the Hill of Slane, let me briefly recount it. It is told that when St. Patrick was on his way to call on the High King in Tara some miles away, he camped on



a hill above Slane. It happened to be the night when traditionally all the fires in Ireland were extinguished, to be relit from the King's own fire. Then a King's advisor seeing in the distance St. Patrick's flame is said to have uttered the immortal word "If this fire is not put out this night it shall never be put out." The King sent soldiers to investigate and St. Patrick was brought before the King. Through wise and kindly words Patrick gained his permission to teach the Christian message. So it was that the flame of Christianity was lit within the hearts of the Irish.

It seem a fitting memorial to George to light a fire in this special place. Being a clergyman, he himself would have loved that sense of history repeating itself.

But back to our gathering: thankfully

the drizzle had blown away and the breath of the Holy Spirit seemed to lift our spirits as we recited our communens. We were in full flow when the next moment there was a strong beam of light shining in our faces and a deep voice saying "Hello, what's going on here?" We turned around to see two Gardaí enter our circle around the fire.

"Hello Guard," I answered, "we are commemorating the passing of a well known Bahá'í, George Townshend who died this night 40 years ago."

"I see," was his reply, "and what is Bahá'í?"

"It is a religion that strives to unite the peoples of the world," said I.

"And where are you from?" asked the Garda.

"Naas" I replied. And shining the flashlamp in another's face he asked "And where are you from?"

"Dublin," came the reply.

"And you?" he asked.

"Dublin".

"And who is the local here?"

"I am" said Dawn in her beautiful Vermont accent.

"And who are you?"

"I'm Dawn Staudt from Kellystown." He paused for a few seconds and said "I know of you." Then he looked down at our fire and saw we were doing no damage to the Hill as the fire was on a sheet of metal. I assured him we would leave no traces after us. He looked up and said; "That's alright, you can carry on. Goodnight to ye so," and he headed off with his colleague.

We finished our prayers and as we headed down to our cars Peter expressed his disappointment that there was only seven of us instead of nine, but he was delighted when I reminded him that there had been nine because he was forgetting

the two Gardaí.

Discussing the events of the evening on our homeward journey, a realisation struck us that the two Gardaí were to us exactly as the soldiers were to St Patrick. They represented the King's law in the same way that the Gardaí represent our country's law. History was repeating itself. It was a most memorable occasion.

Peter's creativity was much in evidence at his beautiful funeral in Ennis in January, with the recitation of many of his poems. His passing surely will bring spiritual bounties to this nether world.

One of Peter's long standing

dreams was to sail around the island teaching the Faith as he went, so in his memory a trip is planned for this summer. He'll be with us, no doubt.



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