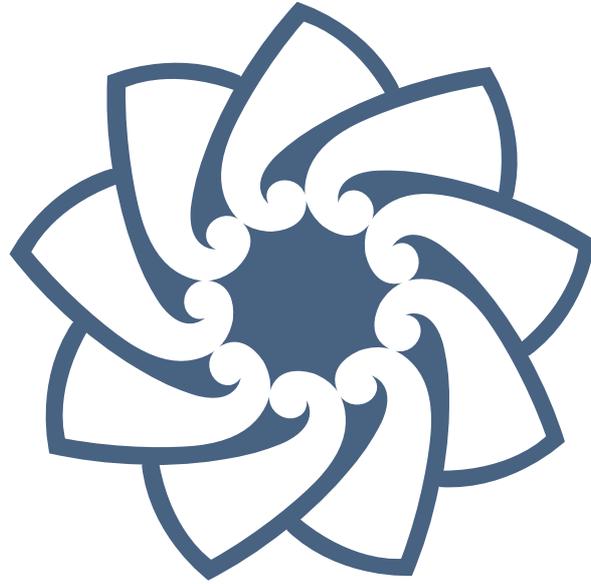


**63<sup>rd</sup> National Bahá'í Convention**

**176 B.E.**

**Aotearoa New Zealand**





**The National Spiritual Assembly  
of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand  
warmly welcomes  
Delegates  
Counsellor Tessa Scrine  
Auxiliary Board members  
Regional Bahá'í Councils  
and  
Friends  
to the  
63<sup>rd</sup> National Bahá'í Convention  
of Aotearoa New Zealand  
176 B.E.**

# National Bahá'í Convention

*Friday 18 Jalál 176 / 26 April 2019*

12:00 pm	Light Lunch and Registration		
01:30 pm	<b>Session 1</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Devotions  <input type="checkbox"/> Welcome and opening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Announcement of Messages Committee</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Apologies</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Introduction of Tellers</li></ul> <input type="checkbox"/> Introduction of delegates <input type="checkbox"/> Election of Chair and Secretary <input type="checkbox"/> Reading of the Ridván message <input type="checkbox"/> Remarks by the Representative of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Australasia on the Ridván message <input type="checkbox"/> Announcement of Chair and Secretary (if available)	
03:00 pm	Break		
03:30 pm	<b>Session 2</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Seating of Chair and Secretary <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation and reflection on the Ridván message <input type="checkbox"/> Approval of Convention programme  Possible viewing of some of the extra features of “A Widening Embrace”	
05:30 pm	Dinner		
07:00 pm	<b>Session 3</b> <a href="#">Overview of the state of the National Bahá'í community</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> Reports from the National Spiritual Assembly <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation on the reports <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation by Regional Bahá'í Councils	
08:30 pm	End of day one	Closing Devotions/Music	

08:30 am	<p><b>Session 4</b> Teaching. Devotional gatherings. Nurturing “endeavours undertaken by believers across the cluster as their circumstances permit” and at the same time fostering “community-building efforts in small settings of heightened receptivity”</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Devotions</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What are we learning about having conversations which connect hearts to Bahá'u'lláh?</li> <li>-What experience and learning are we gaining about believers and their friends carrying out community building activities across the cluster?</li> <li>-What experience and learning are we gaining about believers and their friends carrying out community building activities in smaller settings of heightened receptivity (i.e. neighbourhoods)?</li> <li>-What are we learning about expanding the reach of devotional meetings?</li> </ul>	
10:30 am	Break		
11:00 am	<p><b>Session 5</b> Strengthening and expanding the educational processes - children’s classes, junior youth spiritual empowerment programme, institute courses. Releasing the potential of youth.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What are we learning about raising up a cadre of local tutors in every cluster and neighbourhood?</li> <li>-What role are youth playing in the strengthening of the institute process and the movement of clusters?</li> <li>-What are we learning about establishing and expanding junior youth groups so that every cluster is able to engage 50-100 junior youth in the programme for their spiritual empowerment? [300 junior youth for clusters at or beyond the third milestone]</li> <li>-What are we learning about the formalisation of the training institute?</li> <li>-What are we learning about offering all grades of the children’s class curriculum as part of a system for the spiritual education of children?</li> </ul>	
01:00 pm	Lunch		

02:00 pm	<b>Session 6</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduction of Tellers <input type="checkbox"/> Devotions <input type="checkbox"/> Election of National Spiritual Assembly	
03:30 pm	Break		
04:00 pm	<b>Session 7</b> Material needs of the Faith and coherent material/spiritual lives*	<input type="checkbox"/> Treasurer's Financial Report <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation <input type="checkbox"/> Announcement of the results of the election 5:30pm	<p>-How can we ensure that the material needs of the Faith are sufficient to meet the needs of expansion and consolidation?</p> <p>-What are we learning about having a deeper understanding of living a life where our material and spiritual lives are coherent?</p> <p>-How can we create a culture of joyful giving?</p>
05:45 pm	Convention photographs		
06:00 pm	Dinner		
07.30 pm	Special devotional programme	– The Mystery of God	
08.00 pm	<b>Session 8</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Presentation by Regional Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh <input type="checkbox"/> General consultation	
09:00 pm	End of day two	Closing Devotions/Music	

\* "As institutions and agencies seek to accelerate the processes of expansion and consolidation in every land, the question of financial resources will surely claim increased attention. Indeed, an important aspect of enhancing institutional capacity over the coming years will be the ongoing development of local and national Funds. For this to occur, the generality of the friends must be invited to consider afresh the responsibility of all believers to support the work of the Faith through their own means and, further, to manage their financial affairs in the light of the teachings.

"The future civilization envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh is a prosperous one, in which the vast resources of the world will be directed towards humanity's elevation and regeneration, not its debasement and destruction. The act of contributing to the Fund, then, is imbued with profound meaning: it is a practical way of hastening the advent of that civilization, and a necessary one, for as Bahá'u'lláh Himself has explained, 'He Who is the Eternal Truth—exalted be His glory—hath made the fulfilment of every undertaking on earth dependent on material means.' Bahá'ís conduct their lives in the midst of a society acutely disordered in its material affairs. The process of community building they are advancing in their clusters cultivates a set of attitudes towards wealth and possessions very different from those holding sway in the world. The habit of regularly giving to the Funds of the Faith—including in-kind contributions particularly in certain places—arises from and reinforces a sense of personal concern for the welfare of the community and the progress of the Cause. The duty to contribute, just like the duty to teach, is a fundamental aspect of Bahá'í identity which strengthens faith. The sacrificial and generous contributions of the individual believer, the collective consciousness promoted by the community of the needs of the Fund, and the careful stewardship of financial resources exercised by the institutions of the Faith can be regarded as expressions of the love that binds these three actors more closely together. And ultimately, voluntary giving fosters an awareness that managing one's financial affairs in accordance with spiritual principles is an indispensable dimension of a life lived coherently. It is a matter of conscience, a way in which commitment to the betterment of the world is translated into practice." Letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, 29 December 2015

08:30 am	<p>Devotions</p> <p><b>Session 9</b></p> <p>Bicentenary of the Birth of The Báb.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-How do we use the coming two cycles to raise the consciousness of the friends so that the spirit described in the letter of 1 June 2018 will orient their efforts to invite large numbers to participate in celebrations that befittingly honour the Báb and the Cause?</li> <li>-What plans are emerging to widen the circles of friends who will not only participate in celebrating the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb but become protagonists in the long term process of spiritual and material transformation?</li> <li>- How can more friends be inspired to invite large numbers to participate in the community-building activities <i>ahead</i> of the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb?</li> <li>-What is our learning about weaving arts into bicentenary celebrations?</li> <li>-How are the stories of the Báb and His followers being used as inspiration leading up to the bicentenary?</li> </ul>
10:30 am	Break	
11:00 am	<p><b>Session 10</b></p> <p>Fostering the spiritual health of our community</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Devotions /In memoriam</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reading of draft message to the Universal House of Justice</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Brief remarks by the Counsellor</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What are we learning about developing the capacity of Local Spiritual Assemblies to enhance the spiritual health of their community?</li> <li>-What are we learning about the collaboration between Local Spiritual Assemblies and Auxiliary Board members and their assistants in enhancing the spiritual health of local communities?</li> <li>-What can individuals, teaching teams, neighbourhoods, sectors do to enhance the spiritual health of their community?</li> </ul>
12:30 pm	Lunch	

01:30 pm **Session 11**  
 Achieving the goals of the Plan.

Consultation:

- How will New Zealand's 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> milestone cluster goals be realised?
- How can pioneering needs be met?
- What are we learning about people giving more time at this point in history to serve in different contexts?

03:00 pm Break

03:30 pm **Session 12**

General Consultation

Closing:

- o Approval of message to the Universal House of Justice
- o Remarks by the representative of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Australasia
- o Closing address by the National Spiritual Assembly

05:00 pm Refreshments

05:30 pm End of Convention

## Suggested Reading for National Convention

### Links to resources

- 2019 Ridván message of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World  
[universalhouseofjustice.bahai.org/ridvan-messages/](http://universalhouseofjustice.bahai.org/ridvan-messages/)
- Letter from the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World regarding world peace, 18 January 2019  
[bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/20190118\\_001/1#276724432](http://bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/20190118_001/1#276724432)
- Letter from the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World regarding the establishment of the Bahá'í International Development organization, 9 November 2018  
[bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/20181109\\_001/1#820534023](http://bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/20181109_001/1#820534023)
- Letter from the Universal House of Justice following the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, 31 October 2017  
[bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/20171031\\_001/20171031\\_001.pdf](http://bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/20171031_001/20171031_001.pdf)
- Letter from the Universal House of Justice marking the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, October 2017  
[universalhouseofjustice.bahai.org/activities-bahai-community/20171001\\_001](http://universalhouseofjustice.bahai.org/activities-bahai-community/20171001_001)
- "The Institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár". A statement and compilation prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, September 2017  
[bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/compilations/institution-mashriqul-adhkar/](http://bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/compilations/institution-mashriqul-adhkar/)
- Letter from the Universal House of Justice regarding economic life, 1 March 2017  
[universalhouseofjustice.bahai.org/activities-bahai-community/20170301\\_001](http://universalhouseofjustice.bahai.org/activities-bahai-community/20170301_001)
- Letter from the Universal House of Justice to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors providing details of the next Five Year Plan, 29 December 2015  
[universalhouseofjustice.bahai.org/activities-bahai-community/20151229\\_001](http://universalhouseofjustice.bahai.org/activities-bahai-community/20151229_001)
- Letter from the Universal House of Justice regarding the question of individual rights and freedoms, 29 December 1988  
[bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/19881229\\_001/19881229\\_001.pdf](http://bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/the-universal-house-of-justice/messages/19881229_001/19881229_001.pdf)
- Bahá'í Aotearoa Newsletter [bahaiatoteoroa.bahai.org.nz](http://bahaiatoteoroa.bahai.org.nz)

### Other resources

- Letters from the Universal House of Justice regarding the bicentenaries of the Birth of the Báb and the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, 1 June 2018 and 18 May 2016
- "Training Institutes: Attaining a Higher Level of Functioning". A document prepared by the International Teaching Centre, January 2017
- Letters from the Universal House of Justice regarding election dated 25 March 2007 and 16 May 2013
- National Convention Compilation prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice
- Annual Report 175 B.E. (2018-2019)

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1 June 2018

Transmitted by email

To all National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The tremendous stimulus given to the work of the Five Year Plan by the celebration of the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh is apparent in all parts of the world. Thoughts are naturally turning to the two hundredth anniversary of the Birth of the Báb and what must be accomplished before this second bicentenary, so that “every seed so lovingly sown at the first” may be “nurtured patiently towards fruition”. The Universal House of Justice has requested that we convey to you a number of points to assist your deliberations on this theme. You are welcome to share the contents of this letter with the friends in your communities in any manner you deem appropriate.

The broad framework for understanding the Bahá'í world's approach to both bicentenaries has already been set out in the letter to you dated 18 May 2016, written on behalf of the House of Justice. This letter indicated, in particular, that the locus of activity was to be at the local level. It also described the eight cycles between the two anniversaries as the period during which the greatest share of the effort needed to fulfil the objectives of the Five Year Plan would be required. This, therefore, must be the main focus of the believers in their clusters. It is a season of intensive activity that is well under way, and less than a year and a half remains. Included in this precious period are the Twin Holy Days this year, due to be observed in only a few months' time. On these occasions, the friends will have a valuable opportunity to draw on the rich experience they gained last year by bringing people together in local celebrations that uplift hearts and kindle spirits.

Preparations for the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb should be undertaken with a recognition that the festivities marking this anniversary have a special context. They will occur just two years after the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, and the Báb was of course the Herald of Bahá'u'lláh. Before and after the first bicentenary, the believers engaged family, friends, and acquaintances of all kinds in conversations about the life and teachings of the Blessed Beauty, and the conversations which occur in connection with the upcoming anniversary will in many ways be an extension of these, centring on both of the Faith's Twin Founders. For the greatness of this Day, this “matchless Day” extolled by Bahá'u'lláh, is evident from the fact that its advent was announced by two divine Manifestations, Whose Birthdays are “accounted as one in the sight of God”. In Himself, and in the break from the prevailing order which His Revelation brought about, the sacred figure of the Báb was an answer to the prayers and entreaties of the generations that awaited the One foretold by all the Holy Scriptures. With His coming, the eternal Faith of God was renewed and revitalized with extraordinary swiftness. Yet, in the very title He chose for Himself, He signalled that He was the portal to a superior Revelation of which, in the words of Shoghi Effendi, “He considered Himself to be the humble Precursor.” The endeavours of the Bahá'ís throughout the world to

labour for the promotion of the Cause call to mind the exhortation of the Báb explicitly set down in the Bayan: “Well is it with him who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá’u’lláh, and rendereth thanks unto his Lord.”

As plans for the next bicentenary take shape, there will doubtless begin to emerge many examples of artistic expression arising from a profound reflection on the appearance above the horizon of the world, in quick succession, of two Manifestations of God, and the implications for the life of humanity. You will find it helpful to know that the House of Justice intends once again to commission both a film and a dedicated website for the occasion. It also anticipates preparing a special letter to mark the two-hundred-year anniversary. More details about these will become available in due course.

A notable feature of the last bicentenary was the number of tributes to Bahá’u’lláh and messages of congratulation issued by dignitaries and prominent members of society, often in response to invitations they had received to offer thoughtful sentiments. However, the character of this occasion does not lend itself to attempts to seek public statements of this kind. Nevertheless, efforts to help such persons become more familiar with the teachings and fundamentals of the Faith, as well as the endeavours of the community, would, of course, continue in a natural manner.

In this year’s Riḍván message, the House of Justice referred to the heroism of the Báb and His followers, the stirring accounts of whose lives are sure to be revisited and retold in the coming months. In keeping with the overall approach to this bicentenary, it will be important to reflect on the purpose of calling to mind these remarkable narratives, which possess a merit far beyond an exploration of history. They enable the friends, who are occupied with responding to the needs of the Cause in this day, to draw inspiration and courage from the sacrifices of the dawn-breakers. They assist the company of believers to realize that, by consecrating themselves to the acts of service required in this age, they are emulating the noble qualities of their spiritual forebears.

The heights to which the Bahá’í community so recently soared, in its longing to befittingly honour “a Being peerless in creation”, are still vivid in the memory. The possibilities created by the celebration of this second bicentenary, following so closely upon the first and building upon what was learned then, appear boundless. Be assured of the prayers of the House of Justice in the Holy Shrines for all the friends of God, supplicating that heavenly bestowals may surround them at every stage of their deliberations and in every action they take for His sake.

With loving Bahá’í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat

cc: International Teaching Centre  
Boards of Counsellors  
Counsellors

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

18 May 2016

Transmitted by email

To all National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

In its message dated 29 December 2015 to the Counsellors' Conference, the Universal House of Justice drew attention to the two bicentenaries that are approaching, marking the elapse of two hundred years respectively since the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh and the Birth of the Báb. The House of Justice feels it would now be timely to explore further the manner in which these highly significant Festivals are to be celebrated so that preparations can begin to be made. As indicated in the 29 December message, these Holy Days should be viewed as special opportunities for the friends to reach out to the widest possible cross-section of society and to all those with whom they share a connection—whether through a family tie or common interest, an occupation or field of study, neighbourly relations or merely chance acquaintance—so that all may rejoice in the appearance, exactly two hundred years before, of One Who was to be the Bearer of a new Message for humankind.

The locus of activity for the bicentenaries is to be at the local level. The House of Justice anticipates that in countless places across the world, both rural settings and urban centres, the friends will find creative ways to honour the Twin Manifestations Whose lives and sacred missions will be recalled on Their anniversaries. There might also be an opportunity for initiatives at the national level, which could include a gathering to which dignitaries and prominent individuals who have a relationship with the Faith could be invited. But the most distinguishing feature of these bicentenaries will be a tremendous flourishing of activity by Bahá'ís and their friends in local communities. It should be noted that, although each anniversary is associated primarily with just one of the Manifestations, in each case the celebrations ought to encompass both of the Twin Birthdays, and events may be spread out across the full length of the two days. Naturally, these Holy Days will also be marked at the Bahá'í World Centre by those pilgrims, visitors, and staff who are in the Holy Land at the time.

At the heart of these festivities must be a concerted effort to convey a sense of what it means for humanity that these two Luminaries rose successively above the horizon of the world. Of course, this will take different forms in different contexts, extending to a myriad artistic and cultural expressions, including songs, audio-visual presentations, publications and books. Such initiatives, coupled with widespread celebrations that are both uplifting and reverent, are also sure to spark the curiosity and wonder of many who may as yet be unfamiliar with the names of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. However, the real transformative power of the Faith is likely to be perceived more readily still if people experience how worship and

meaningful service are being woven into the fabric of the lives of Bahá'ís everywhere. Indeed, from the community-building activities of the Five Year Plan emerges a pattern of collective life within which anyone can discern the vivifying influence of the divine teachings brought by God's Manifestations. Each bicentenary will doubtless kindle a spirit of faithful endeavour that will permeate all the noble undertakings of the friends.

As suggested in this year's Ridván message, the six cycles leading up to the first of the special anniversaries can be viewed as an initial period over which progress toward the overall goal of the Five Year Plan can be measured. The steps taken during these months, and the achievements that come as a result, will constitute an offering of ardent love, yielded collectively to Him Who is the Unifier of the world on the bicentenary of His Birth. The spiritual forces that are sure to be released on that most auspicious occasion will do much to spur the friends into action as they commence the eight cycles that lie between the two bicentenaries, during which the greatest share of the effort needed to fulfil the goal of the Plan will be required. Similarly, events surrounding the two-hundredth anniversary of the Birth of the Báb will lend an infusion of energy to the global spiritual enterprise as it enters its final six cycles leading up to Ridván 2021. There is, therefore, every reason to expect that the emphasis given to commemorating these Holy Days will have a considerable and cumulative impact on the work of raising vibrant communities—not least on the enrichment of devotional life.

This letter is being sent now so that there is ample time for you to impress upon your respective communities the significance of the coming Festivals and encourage preparations to begin. An important aspect of what must occur is the sense of shared experience and global solidarity arising from so many gatherings being held in a concentrated span of time, and in an enormous variety of places, bringing together souls who have glimpsed the timeless splendour of those divine Figures Who set in motion an irresistible process of individual and social change. Arrangements will be put in place to enable communities to submit reports on their activities so that these can rapidly be made available to the widest possible audience. More information about these arrangements will be provided at a later date.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat

cc: International Teaching Centre  
Boards of Counsellors  
Counsellors