



**National Spiritual Assembly
of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand**

Te Rūnanga Wairua Tapu o nga Bahá'í o Aotearoa

16 February 2020
10 Mulk 176

To the believers gathered at 14 Unit Conventions around Aotearoa

Dearly loved friends,

Tēnā koutou katoa

The National Spiritual Assembly greets you with the utmost affection at this annual occasion. As you engage in the twofold purpose of the Unit Convention — namely to elect delegates to the National Convention from your Unit, and consult as a Unit on matters of import relating to the progress of the Faith — we send our loving best wishes for these significant elements of the Unit Convention.

The National Assembly also takes this opportunity to praise the community for the tireless efforts being made in the expansion and consolidation sphere around the country, both in smaller settings with intensive activity and more broadly by believers and their friends across clusters. Friends are learning to sustain these community building activities which are drawing in more and more people, because they have built, among other capacities, the capacity to establish relationships with friends from the wider community and to invite them to serve shoulder to shoulder with us in building a new kind of community, anchored in spiritual principles.

The gains being made, particularly in the season of heightened activity surrounding the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb, have been very heartening. The energy that has been generated and fruits that have emerged since the bicentenary and during this summer period are praiseworthy. Pioneers have arisen to assist goals clusters and are already contributing in meaningful ways to serving these communities. Believers everywhere, alongside others, are drawing inspiration and benefitting from the knowledge and wisdom contained in the Sacred Writings of our Faith, and from the guidance of our beloved Supreme Institution, and learning to apply them in a systematic process of learning.

While there is much cause for jubilation in seeing the onward march of the Cause during these turbulent times in the history of mankind, yet there are very concrete actions that need to be taken if New Zealand's contribution to a triumphant end to the Five Year Plan at Ridván 2021 is to be significant. In five cycles, 9 of our 25 clusters (7 in the North Island and 2 in the South Island) must reach the second milestone of growth, and a second-milestone cluster in each of the regions should have reached the third milestone, through a rich and widening tapestry of community life that connects worship and service in meaningful ways. More pioneers are needed for these goal clusters. Every cluster at whatever level is on a continuum of development that is ongoing, and at the heart of this is always the training institute, which provides the engine of growth for a multiplication of core activities with enhancing quality, which is a key objective for every cluster at whatever stage. The bicentenary generated much interest and allegiance to the conceptual framework of the Plan and its



associated activities, and this momentum must now be picked up, particularly if there has been a lapse in core activities over the holiday period, which so often can happen. If a regular devotional meeting, children's class, junior youth group or study circle was suspended, it is important now to resume with even greater vigour this important contribution to the work of the Faith.

To fuel the material means for all of this to occur, a significant increase in contributions to the National Fund will be required in 177 B.E. "The act of contributing to the Fund... is imbued with profound meaning: it is a practical way of hastening the advent of that [future] civilisation." (Universal House of Justice, 29 December 2015). Everyone can play a part with sacrifice of time, energy, and resources to win a mighty victory for the Cause in the coming 14 months.

"The troubling conditions facing the world's peoples and the persistent problems caused by disunity within and between nations have, as you know, been a prominent theme in the messages of the Universal House of Justice. Bahá'ís, of course, are ever mindful of the state of the world. The well-being of humanity and its peace and tranquillity are the constant desire of all those who have taken to heart Bahá'u'lláh's exhortation to 'be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in'[C]onsciousness of the hardships afflicting so many strengthens a commitment to fundamental social change.....[which] must arise from the spiritual transformation of society." (Letter dated 1 December 2019 to all National Spiritual Assemblies on behalf of the Universal House of Justice from the Department of the Secretariat).

What more sincere thanks could we offer our beloved Master, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, at the close of the first century of the Formative Age of the Faith and the centenary of His passing in November 2021, than to arise with unity of purpose, with complete devotion to the Divine Plan, and with unwavering loyalty to the guidance of the Universal House of Justice? What could give the Master greater happiness than to see Aotearoa achieve significant advances in clusters across the land, from those just setting out on the continuum of growth to those that have reached its third milestone

Our loving prayers are offered for joyful, productive Unit Conventions everywhere as you deliberate on ways and means to meet the needs of the Cause at the local, regional and/or national levels.

Arohanui,

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY