

NORTH ISLAND REGIONAL BAHÁ'Í COUNCIL

Te Kaunihera Bahá'í ā-Rohe o Te Ika-a-Māui



12 Jalál (Glory) 180 B.E. / Thursday, 20 April 2023

To: All Local Spiritual Assemblies and groups in the North Island

South Waikato/Taupō Cluster Passes the Second Milestone of Growth

Dearly loved friends, tēnā koutou katoa, Alláh'u'Abhá!

It is with great joy that the North Island Regional Bahá'í Council shares with you the following news about the South Waikato/Taupō cluster.

At the cluster reflection gathering on Sunday, 9 April 2023, the friends studied the elements of a cluster that has passed the second milestone along the continuum of growth, in concert with examining the growth of their cluster over the past several years. Through consultation assisted by Auxiliary Board member Leyla Neilsen and Council member Erica Zemke-Smith, the friends arrived at the unified understanding that the South Waikato/Taupō cluster has passed the second milestone.

In its 28 December 2010 message to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, the Universal House of Justice described some indicators of a cluster traversing this milestone, the realities of which—along with the growth in the numbers of activities and participants—are reflected in South Waikato/Taupō:

Whether activities are scattered across the cluster or concentrated in one village or neighbourhood, a sense of common purpose characterizes the endeavours of the friends.

Through various measures, greater structure is lent to activity, and initiative, shaped largely by individual volition before, is now given collective expression.

Out of the occasional meetings of a few believers emerge the regular deliberations of an expanding core group of friends concerned with channelling into the field of service an increasing store of energy.

In South Waikato/Taupō, the friends are enthused by sustained study of the words of the Universal House of Justice, and individuals are aided to read the reality of the community and to work collectively towards “learning how to raise up vibrant, outward-looking communities”. The friends are “widening the circle of participation in their activities by engaging with the networks to which they belong—networks created through a place of work or study, a local school, or a community hub of another kind—and by accompanying others who arise to serve alongside them.” With their hearts and outreach turned towards the members of the wider community, and

with the strength of their unity in diversity and the knowledge that “it is by strengthening their dynamic relationships with one another that their powers are combined and multiplied”, the friends are engaged in a regular tempo of direct teaching, study, action, and reflection.

The multiplication of activities is accompanied by a burgeoning capacity of flexibility in this cluster, whether it is holding several study circles at the same time as children’s classes and the junior youth programme, travelling to isolated believers, holding hybrid Zoom/in-person events, or sharing facilitation amongst tutors. Logistical interruptions and obstacles are felt and overcome with forbearance, long-suffering, humour, and reliance on God. Karakia and waiata adorn every gathering, and all who gather are embraced within the wide-open doors of the friends. A proliferation of devotions across the cluster are opportunities for the friends to build bonds of eagerly sought fellowship and joy, and there is a nascent stream of interested people entering the courses of the institute. Those who participate are developing a growing and deepening understanding of the Plan’s vision to build capacity for service within communities “by enabling ever-increasing numbers of individuals to benefit from the institute process”.

With devoted love for Bahá’u’lláh, the House of Justice, and humanity, the friends are learning to understand the strengths of their reality and to work with those strengths. It is a vision that is leading to emerging efforts “being made by the generality of the believers living across the cluster—in other words, a rising spirit of universal participation in the work of community building.” The friends of the Faith join the work of community building as “protagonists of their own development”, seeing with eyes of vision and understanding, and, “inspired by the teachings of the Faith”, improving the “spiritual character and social conditions of the wider community to which they belong”.

As a sign of its maturation and capacity to discern growth, and with the assistance of the arm of the learned, the South Waikato community is currently engaged in writing its own narrative.

The South Waikato and Taupō Assemblies are in regular communication with each other regarding collective events: “As participation in the work of the Plan in all its forms increases, many opportunities emerge for the friends to learn from each other’s experience and to kindle within one another the joy of teaching.”

This victory won for the beloved House of Justice as a goal of the past year has been cultivated through the prayers of the friends everywhere and the guidance of the institutions to assist the nascent footsteps of this community on the path of growth. “Such advances are the more visible signs of a much finer development: the gradual spread, within a population, of a pattern of community life based on Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings.”

Arohanui,
Erica Zemke-Smith, secretary
The North Island Regional Bahá’í Council
Te Kaunihera Bahá’í ā-Rohe o Te Ika-a-Māui