



Letters to the Editor

A Remarkable Man

Bill Hellaby was a remarkable man. When I heard of his departure to the Abhá Kingdom, one memory immediately dissipated my sorrow.

In 1981, I was living in Shrewsbury busy with life's daily load and with teaching the Faith. Shrewsbury at that time was a dynamic community strengthened by the Ta'eed family's commitment to the area. On one occasion, the Bahá'í community was invited to run a programme in the Shrewsbury Unitarian Church in honour of Human Rights Day, on Sunday, September 27, 1981. As Bill Hellaby was once a Unitarian Minister who left the church to embrace Bahá'u'lláh's Cause, he was asked to participate in the service.

At that time, Bill was recovering from major heart surgery but he instantly agreed. Thus the programme for the service was planned with Bahá'í prayers and readings and the church notice board gave advance notice to its congregation.

When Bill arrived, he was introduced to the Unitarian Minister, a kindly and thoughtful person, who was amazed to realise that he and Bill had trained for the ministry together and were old friends. Naturally, they had much to reminisce about and took full advantage of their short time together dining at my house and chatting for a couple of hours.

The Unitarian church had a moderately sized congregation on the Sunday and I was pleased to note the attendance for this historic meeting. The church architecture was plain with a raised pulpit of dark oak enhanced by a stained glass window as a backdrop. The day was somewhat overcast but the church buzzed with excited Bahá'ís and puzzled Unitarians before we all settled quietly to enjoy the prayers and readings which preceded Bill's address.

When Bill walked to the pulpit in his dignified manner, wearing a dark suit, a strong beam of sunlight hit the stained glass and illuminated the spot where he stood. He radiated light at that moment, the sun and his innately spiritual presence combining to give the clear impression of an otherworldly being. I clearly remember thinking that Bill looked like an Old Testament prophet with his white hair, glowing face and upright stature. His speech enhanced the impression. His voice was clear and beautifully modulated and his words inspiring. Bill's address could have lasted for one minute or twenty-five, it would not have mattered because the whole episode served to remind everyone in attendance of the glorious heights to which we can aspire when our inner reality is attuned to the Concourse on High.

I feel so privileged to have witnessed an event, which, on the surface, might appear ordinary but I know in my heart it was not. It was a truly spiritual experience as well as a historic event. Thank you Bill Hellaby, for bringing to Shrewsbury in September, 1981, when you were barely recovered from your wounds, a precious memory of an enlightened soul.

Rosalee Bennett

Dear Editor,

This summer my children, Rayyan and Mai, and I had the great privilege of spending four and a half weeks visiting my parents at their home “The Cottage” next to the Mother Temple of Africa in Kampala. Some of the friends will remember my parents, Mr and Mrs Sabet-Sharghi, from the time when they lived in Bristol before moving abroad. In 1997 they were asked to be the managers and caretakers of the House of Worship and have served there ever since.

What a beautiful place it is! It was an unexpected surprise to us all when we realised what we had missed by not visiting before.

The visit was made even more exciting by the fact that the fiftieth anniversary of the Faith in Uganda was celebrated while we were there. There were Bahá'ís from all over the world and many notable and important speakers including Mr and Mrs Nakhjavani from the Bahá'í World Centre.

Mitra Sabet (back, right) and family at the Temple

A visit to the House of Worship is highly recommended. There are many ways to serve the Cause in Kampala and we certainly aim to return.

Mitra Sabet

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