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National Spiritual Assembly

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Rebalancing, reorientation and reprioritisation of the precious financial resources of the Faith

January 16, 2003

BELOVED FRIENDS

As you well know, the National Bahá'í Fund has been in a critical condition for a prolonged period of time. Income continues to remain lower than that budgeted and expenditure, although well within budget, continues to run ahead of income. This state of affairs has already prompted the National Spiritual Assembly to take certain expenditure-reducing actions such as a 60% cutback on the operating budgets of all the agencies of the Faith in the United Kingdom, an action which was effected last April and continues to remain in place. Further, concerted efforts to significantly increase the level of contributions to the Fund have not so far borne the fruit that had been expected.

Conscious of its responsibility for the health of the sacred institution of the National Fund, the "Lifeblood of the Cause" itself, the National Assembly has been anxiously considering the ways in which it can bring its expenditure into alignment with its income. Indeed, the Assembly has seized this moment of crisis to conduct a fundamental review of the work of the Cause in these islands and to realign its work with two objectives in mind: one, to have a more realistic pattern of expenditure, and two, to ensure that the progress of the work of the Cause and the emerging culture of growth is enhanced by the changes that now need to be made.

The need for this rebalancing, reorientation and reprioritisation of the precious financial resources of the Faith, placed at the disposal of the National Spiritual Assembly through the generosity and sacrifice of the believers in this country, has also been underlined in the recent guidance of the Universal House of Justice to the Assembly and has been the subject of intensive consultations with Counsellor Shahriar Razavi.

One of the most significant developments in the United Kingdom Bahá'í community in recent years has been the decentralisation of the Bahá'í administration. The Bahá'í Councils have amply demonstrated their capacity to foster the growth of the Faith in the parts of the country they serve. We have also witnessed during this relatively short period of time the galvanic effects of the training institutes, the engines of growth, whose early results have been most impressive and which augur well for the future.

Dear Friends: it is the National Spiritual Assembly's firm conviction that we now have in our hands the means to bring about a surge forward in the fortunes of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in these islands unlike at any time in the past. It is therefore incumbent upon the National Assembly to provide the resources necessary to ensure that this historic opportunity is not lost.

In order to effect the release of the requisite financial resources to the Councils and Training Institutes, the National Spiritual Assembly has, after earnest and detailed consultation, taken the decision to release with immediate effect three members of its own staff and to reduce the working hours of one of its external affairs staff to half-time.

Clearly, these changes will have an impact on the work of the various offices and departments of the National Assembly and every effort will be made to ensure that the process of adaptation to the new working arrangements will be as smooth as possible. Further, the National Spiritual Assembly will shortly be establishing a volunteer recruitment and training programme so as to ensure that its various offices have at their disposal the human resources they need to carry out their work. Details of this programme will be shared with the friends in due course.

The National Spiritual Assembly believes that the steps being taken are necessary not only for the preservation of the Lifeblood of the Cause, but also for the uninterrupted, onward growth and development of the Faith of God in this country. May the abundant confirmations of the Ancient Beauty continue to surround His devoted servants in these islands as they strive hard to effect His Plan for the redemption of mankind.

Bahá'í cited in New Year's Honours List

January 16, 2003

December 31, 2002

DAVID LAMBERT, long-term British pioneer with his wife, Lois, in Mongolia, has been awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours list for his services to the development of English language studies in Mongolia.

As Director of Studies at the English for Special Purposes Foundation, founded by UNDP and now run by a Mongolian NGO, David devised an in-service course which trains teachers of English to use modern participatory educational methods in their work. The Mongolian government has now adopted the course for use nationwide.

The National Spiritual Assembly warmly congratulates David on this well-deserved recognition of his professional work, informed as it is by his dedication as a Bahá'í.

"Ordinary Heroes" Video

November 11, 2002

"ORDINARY HEROES" is a video – or rather three short videos in one – professionally produced under the auspices of the National Spiritual Assembly. It gives Bahá'ís from all over the country their chance to explain what the Faith, and various aspects of it, means to them. Believers from a wide variety of backgrounds are featured, showing the diversity of our UK Bahá'í community. The video lends itself to use in a number of ways and the National Assembly certainly hopes that the Friends will make good use of it.

The three sections – dealing with the Individual, the Community, and the Institutions – can be shown as self-contained items, which will make for short presentations, or the whole set can be shown. Some possibilities are:

- Showing a section as part of a fireside, which will give enquirers a feel for the wider Bahá'í community, create a good atmosphere, and generate questions
- Show a section at a Nineteen-Day Feast, which will help remind the local Bahá'ís of the wider community and reassure and reinforce them in their commitment
- Show the relevant section at a deepening which relates to one of the three key areas (above)
- Show the video to Bahá'ís and to family for the information it imparts and the sense it conveys of our wider Bahá'í community
- Give it as a gift to others
- And no doubt many more.

The video is available for £11.99 (including postage and packing) from:
The Finance Department, Bahá'í National Sub-Office,
Third Floor, Bridge House, 97-101 High Street, Tonbridge, TN9 1DR.

Please make cheques out to: "NSA of the Bahá'ís of the UK"

The National Spiritual Assembly is grateful to the many Friends who contributed in one way or another to the production of this video, and especially to Lou Armitt, Jedda Bradley and Sean Hinton.

Petitions circulating on the Internet

January 16, 2003

DEARLY LOVED FRIENDS

It has come to the attention of the National Spiritual Assembly that some of the friends have been circulating and signing petitions on the Internet concerning the current world situation and events in the Middle East. The National Assembly kindly requests that the friends do not do this, for the following reasons:

- Shoghi Effendi made it abundantly clear that the Bahá'ís must refrain from involvement in partisan political activity and not become identified or associated with partisan political positions, whether these be for or against government policies. Assuming such political "positions" serves only to undermine the good name of the Faith and the unity within the Bahá'í community itself.
- The National Spiritual Assembly is constantly working, under the direction of the Universal House of Justice, for the defence and protection of the Bahá'ís in Iran and other Middle Eastern countries. If the friends sign and circulate the petitions currently appearing on the Internet, this may undermine this highly sensitive and vital area of work.
- The petitions currently being circulated by email and on the Internet often do not originate from their purported source and do not reach the people at whom they are targeted. The United Nations, for example, does not send such things out, nor does it pay any attention to them, no matter how many people sign. We do not know what uses may be made of such petitions and who sees them. It is therefore best to avoid any involvement with them.

The National Spiritual Assembly is confident that the friends will understand and respect the guidance that is being shared with them at this time.

Special Presentation on the Message to Religious Leaders

THE FRIENDS at the National Festival in Scarborough last November were moved by the special PowerPoint presentation on the Universal House of Justice's "Message to the World's Religious Leaders". It was informative and inspiring and conveyed something of the nature and impact of this important statement.

The National Spiritual Assembly is making the presentation available to the friends to further help their understanding and appreciation of the message. It is in Microsoft PowerPoint in a choice of format so that it can be run on Windows 95, 98, Me, 2000, or XP.

The presentation is accompanied by its own sound track and set up as a "slide show" to run through automatically.

A CD containing all the files (so there is no need to specify which version of Windows you need) can be obtained by contacting the National Spiritual Assembly. The Assembly is sure the Friends will find the presentation a great help not just understanding and appreciating but also to using the Message to Religious Leaders.

January 16, 2003

DEARLY LOVED FRIENDS

Please note that with immediate effect the National Spiritual Assembly will no longer be processing applications and requests for pilgrimage and three-day visits to the Holy Land. All such requests should be directed to the Bahá'í World Centre instead in the following way:

• Pilgrimage applications should be sent to pilgrimage@bahai.org or by mail to the

- pilgrimage – by sending an email to pilgrimage@bwc.org, or by writing to the Office of Pilgrimage, Bahá'í World Centre, PO Box 155, 31001 Haifa, Israel
- Three-day visits – by sending an email to secretariat@bwc.org; or by writing to The Universal House of Justice, Bahá'í World Centre, PO Box 155, 31001 Haifa, Israel

The National Spiritual Assembly wishes to express its warm and loving appreciation to Mrs Shiva Ashrafi-Cooper who for over ten years handled pilgrimage and three-day visit requests on behalf of scores of believers in the United Kingdom. Many, many friends commented on the love, care and attention with which Shiva rendered this valuable service to the Cause.

December 16, 2002

DEARLY LOVED FRIENDS

From time to time, the National Spiritual Assembly receives disturbing reports that Bahá'ís in various parts of the country are being specifically and systematically approached with appeals for money.

The National Assembly advises the friends to exercise the utmost caution and wisdom in dealing with such requests since these usually turn out to be fraudulent attempts to exploit the goodwill and sincerity of the believers. Any such requests should be immediately reported to the National Spiritual Assembly.

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