



National Youth Convention

THE WEEKEND started with a scene from “Braveheart” showing crisis and victory – progressed to the functioning toaster which is the Training Institute – and reached its climax with the cooking pasta analogy of entry by troops. Confused? Well you should have been there . . .

The aim of the youth programme, wonderfully prepared by Marco Milone for the few youth present at the National Convention in Llandudno, was for us all to gain a greater understanding of the Five Year Plan, its processes and activities, and by spending time looking at both the history of the Faith and what is currently happening across the Bahá'í world. It certainly gave us fresh insights and a new determination to be a central part of it.

On Saturday afternoon we watched a video about the Hands of the Cause, and then saw a PowerPoint presentation about the development of the Faith from the 60's onwards. What was so significant was the processes of crisis and victory apparent throughout, especially in the 60's and 70's when the community experienced large scale expansion with tens of thousands of people enrolling in the Faith. Unfortunately, these victories weren't consolidated as the new believers were not deepened or trained and so became inactive, leading to a huge process of experimentation all over the world to try and find a way of managing the growth of the Faith. The fruit of this is the training institute process which has been proven to be effective and is now at the heart of the Five Year Plan.

On Saturday evening we joined the rest of the convention to watch a fantastic video about how the three core activities are being implemented across the world and how communities are progressing and expanding as a result. I can't recommend it enough. Everyone should get to their delegate's report from convention to see this video “Building Momentum” – it shows so clearly how the Training Institute process DOES WORK, not only in Africa and South America, but also in the developed world. We need to make it happen here!

On Saturday we studied the January 17, 2003 letter from the Universal House of Justice, and also this year's Ridván message. One of the main points coming out from this was that the suffering in the world which is particularly intense at the moment has the effect of increasing the receptivity of people, especially youth, to Bahá'u'lláh's message. Delegates representing the main convention came to speak to us to convey the depth of their love, encouragement and confidence in the youth. Three representatives from the National Assembly also came to talk to us and answer questions, one of whom, John Parris, showed us a PowerPoint presentation about the development of the Five Year Plan here in the UK.

On the last morning, the youth were invited to address the convention, informing the delegates about what we had been up to that weekend, and making suggestions to the community (such as not just regarding youth as the ones who do all the arts stuff!) – we should be not only involved, but in the driving seat of all the community's teaching activities.

Overall the convention was an amazingly inspiring and exciting event – we know where the Bahá'í community is going and how it is getting there. I only wish this article could convey that excitement and vision – instead go and watch the video “Building Momentum” and

take an hour to read the latest messages from the House. Maybe then it will give a true picture of what the youth convention was like.

Michael Jay



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