



Bahá'í' Breezes

Newsletter of the Bahá'ís of Rochester, Minnesota

June 2009

Allah-u-Abha, everyone!

Calendar

Day	Date St	Date End	Time St	Description	Where
Thu	06/04/09		7:00 PM	Feast of Nur	Brad Burch's home
Sun	06/07/09		morning	Fireside with Marc Henson (The World Religions: Friends or Foes) Details to follow	
Thu	06/11/09		7:00 PM	LSA meeting	Rich Klann's home
Fri	06/12/09		5:00 PM	Dorothy Day service project	Dorothy Day House (Call Marty Klann if you want to help)
Thu	06/18/09		6:30 PM	National Convention Report with Bill Harley, 6:30 pm potluck supper, 7:00 report	Nancy Baker's home
Sat	06/20/09		6:30 PM	FBT Heritage Days Parade Volkswagen Firetruck: Extinguish the Flame of Prejudice of Race, Religion, Gender & National Origin	Faribault
Tue	06/23/09		7:00 PM	Feast of Rahmat	Bonnie Donelan-Dunlap & Jim Dunlap's home
Thu	06/25/09			Email--request info for Breezes	
9 days	06/30/09	07/01/09		Intensive Program of Growth, SW Suburbs	Oakdale MN
Wed	07/01/09			Email--PDF Breezes newsletter	
Sun	07/05/09		9:30 AM	Commemoration of the one year anniversary of the imprisonment of the Friends in Iran	United Way Bldg
Thu	07/09/09		12:00 PM	Holy Day--07/09 Martyrdom of the Bab 1850, about noon	Work suspended
9 days	07/10/09	07/19/09		Intensive Program of Growth, SE Suburbs	Oakdale MN
Mon	07/13/09			Feast of Kalimat (Words) Day of	
Tue-Sun	07/14/09	07/19/09		Rice County Fair Booth	Faribault
9 days	07/17/09	07/26/09		Intensive Program of Growth, Mpls	Mpls Baha'l Center
Sat	07/25/09			Email--request info for Breezes	
Sat	08/01/09			Feast of Kamal (Perfections) Day of	
9 days	07/31/09	08/09/09		Intensive Program of Growth, St Paul	St Paul MN
Sat	08/01/09			Email--PDF Breezes newsletter	
TFSS	08/13/09	08/16/09		ABS Conf environments, Marriott Wardman Park Hotel	Washington DC Marriott
Thu	08/20/09			Feast of Asma (Names) Day of	
Tue	08/25/09			Email--request info for Breezes	
FSS	08/28/09	08/30/09		Green Lake Conference	Green Lake WI
Tue	09/01/09			Email--PDF Breezes newsletter	
Tue	09/08/09			Feast of 'Izzat (Might) Day of	
Fri	09/25/09			Email--request info for Breezes	

Attendance at Nineteen Day Feasts is not obligatory but very important, and every believer should consider it a duty and privilege to be present on such occasions. (Shoghi Effendi) (Compilations, Principles of Bahai Administration, p. 53)

FEAST LETTER FROM NSA

June 4, 2009

To the American Bahá'í community
for the Feast of Núr

Dearly loved Friends,

In its Ridván message for this year, the Universal House of Justice noted with profound appreciation "the emergence on the historical scene of an individual believer supremely confident in the efficacy of the Plan's methods and instruments and remarkably deft at wielding them." The Supreme Institution continued, referring to those who had attended the worldwide series of regional conferences, "Each and every soul of this mighty sea stood as testimony to the transforming potency of the Faith. Each and every one was evidence of Bahá'u'lláh's promise to assist all those who arise with detachment and sincerity to serve Him."

The countless reports we have received since the six regional conferences were held in this country leave no doubt that we are indeed becoming a new community-one more confident, more ready to engage in teaching and other forms of service, and more capable of helping each other realize our full spiritual potential. Nothing brings us greater happiness than to hear about individuals whose engagement with the Plan has caused profound transformation in their hearts, and who are now striving to help others experience the same joys and blessings.

One wonderful example is this excerpt from a recent email written by a cluster institute coordinator to the friends in her area:

"When I first joined a study circle 3 years ago I did it out of obedience, but what I got was so much more. I developed a confidence in carrying out the 5 year plan I never would have believed myself capable of. I found connections with other study circle members that have become some of the closest and dearest friendships of my life. I experienced a sense of mindfulness of, and closeness to God and Baha'u'llah that I had only seen brief glimpses of in the past. This has been a life transforming process for me and I hope to be able to share it with each of you.

"To those of you who are ready to open your hearts to this awesome process, we have a contingent of new tutors who are anxious to get started. I would dearly love to connect them with you! To those of you who have concerns that have held you back, let's consult about them. There is great flexibility in this process and the experience is too amazing to miss! To those of you who are already involved in this process, let's keep the momentum going! Please contact me with your requests, study circle reports, children's class reports, and Jr. youth group reports and let me know how I can serve you. Also be looking for upcoming tutor gatherings with a new focus. . . .

"I look forward to working with all of you to find your "part to play" that brings you as much joy as my study circle has brought to me. I pray that each of you will receive the blessings available from the institute process."

We salute this dear believer and all those who, with heart and soul, are walking- and joyfully sharing the journey with others-the path of service to this glorious Cause.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary-General

FROM THE NSA regarding the Baha'is in Iran

May 13, 2009

To all Local Spiritual Assemblies

Dearly loved Friends,

Tomorrow, May 14, 2009, will mark the one-year anniversary of the arrest and imprisonment of six of the seven members of the "Friends in Iran." Their situation remains precarious. Recently their families were informed of a new and fourth accusation lodged against them by the government, that of "spreading corruption on earth." This charge carries the threat of death under the penal code of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The other accusations are "espionage for Israel, insulting religious sanctities and propaganda against the Islamic Republic." These dearly loved friends and coworkers in the Cause of God will no doubt be uppermost in our prayers at our Feasts, devotionals, and special gatherings, as well as in our private communion with the Abhá Beauty.

We have been asked to convey a request from the Universal House of Justice to Local Spiritual Assemblies in the United States in connection with this first anniversary of the imprisonment of the Friends in Iran. The House of Justice has asked that Assemblies make efforts to secure publicity in the local press about the situation and to contact congressional officials for their support.

The National Spiritual Assembly encourages your community to soon hold a public event to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the imprisonment and to use the occasion to obtain local publicity about the situation facing the Bahá'ís in Iran. For guidance on local media outreach, we encourage you to regularly visit the Public Information Officer Network at www.bahaipio.net.

As you know, there are two resolutions-H. Res. 175 and S. Res. 71-currently before both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate calling for the release of the Iranian Bahá'í leaders and other Bahá'í prisoners. We ask you to check whether your congressional representative and two senators have cosponsored either of these resolutions. You can learn whether your congressional official is a cosponsor of either resolution by clicking the "Action Alert" buttons on the site <http://iran.bahai.us>.

Should your representative or one or both of your senators not yet be a cosponsor of these resolutions, the Bahá'ís of your community should-even if they have written to them before-contact them again, urging them to cosponsor. We particularly encourage you to contact your senators, as currently only seven senators are cosponsors of S. Res. 71.

We hope that all U.S. Bahá'ís will write to their members of Congress informing them that the seven Bahá'í leaders have now spent a year imprisoned without formal court charges and without any access to their lawyer. Urge your representative and senators to make statements condemning the persecution of the Iranian Bahá'ís and the lack of human rights for so many of Iran's citizens. Background on the situation of the Iranian Bahá'ís may be found at <http://iran.bahai.us>.

Local Assemblies should encourage and assist every member of their communities to participate in these efforts and should provide assistance to those who may need help in writing to their senators and representatives. Please encourage the believers to reach out to their friends for their support in increasing the number of cosponsors and attending the events you may host.

We deeply appreciate your immediate response to these requests from our beloved Universal House of Justice. The Supreme Body has asked us to assure you of its prayers at the Sacred Threshold that the Blessed Beauty may bountifully confirm your devoted efforts to assist your long-suffering brothers and sisters in the Cradle of the Faith.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES
Kenneth E. Bowers, Secretary-General

NSA Publication *Guidelines for Local Spiritual Assemblies*

May 11, 2009

To all Local Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The National Spiritual Assembly is pleased to announce the completion of a new manual for Local Spiritual Assemblies. The manual, *Guidelines for Local Spiritual Assemblies: Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, is based on the previous manual with similar name, but it has been changed to such an extent that all previous versions are out-of-date and should be disposed of immediately. In addition to updating content to reflect new guidance, the manual has been revised for easier use and shortened to prevent duplication, as outlined below. We trust this manual will be used to facilitate your consultations, confident that it will enhance your ability to apply spiritual and administrative principles to the many and varied situations that come before you.

The exponential increase in the need for updates to the manual in recent years reflects the rapid evolution and progress of the Bahá'í community through successive Plans, which has created new dynamics that affect Local Assembly functioning. As well, new guidance emerges on a regular basis from the Bahá'í World Center. Given this acceleration of change, it has been decided that, to ensure that the Guidelines are always as current as possible, the manual will be available in electronic form only. This "greener" approach also represents a cost savings for both users and the National Fund. The new manual and other resources are available for free download from the Administrative Web Site at http://www.usbnc.org/dept/oad_guidance.asp.

Those sections that have been changing most frequently, and for which other more direct sources are available, have been eliminated from the manual. Other sections that replicate existing resources have also been removed. For instance, the teaching chapter was removed so that those looking for the most up-to-date information on evolving Five Year Plan learnings are instead directed to Regional Bahá'í Councils and cluster agencies who have a specialized role in this regard. In response to input from users, the manual has also been restructured for easier use and now has improved and expanded navigation tools. Content has been streamlined and reorganized for enhanced flow and updates have been made in areas such as: the registration process for new Bahá'ís; Feast guidelines; marriage information; funding for pioneers; use of Assembly contact information; and inviting Muslim Iranians to study circles, among other changes.

The National Spiritual Assembly strongly encourages all Local Spiritual Assemblies to ensure that each of its members has access to the new manual to use in preparation for and during Assembly meetings. If an Assembly does not have a computer available during meetings, it may want to print out sections before the meeting which relate to topics on the agenda. Printing out the whole manual is discouraged as copies will become out-of-date as soon as updates are made, and update pages will no longer be created. If possible, the Assembly may want to take steps to ensure that there is a computer available so that unanticipated research can be done during meetings. Any costs that might be incurred would be a legitimate expenditure of the Assembly. If a copy is downloaded to a computer, the Administrative Web Site should be checked periodically for updates.

The National Assembly trusts that Local Spiritual Assemblies will find this revised manual useful in the vital work they are doing for their communities. Should any questions arise related to the manual, please feel free to contact the Office of Assembly Development directly by email at oad@usbnc.org or by telephone at 847-733-3490.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
Juana C. Conrad
Deputy Secretary-General

cc: Continental Counselors residing in the United States
Regional Baha'i Councils

Study Examines Choice of Religion

Spiritual Attitudes, Not Church Policy, Cited as Reasons

By Jacqueline L. Salmon, Washington Post Staff Writer
Tuesday, April 28, 2009

More Americans have given up their faith or changed religions because of a gradual spiritual drift than because of disillusionment over their churches' policies, according to a study released yesterday that illustrates how personal spiritual attitudes are taking precedence over denominational traditions.

The survey, by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, is the first large-scale study of the reasons Americans switch religious affiliations. Researchers found that more than half of people have done so at least once.

Almost three-quarters of Catholics and Protestants who are now unaffiliated with a religion said they had "just gradually drifted away" from their faith. And more than three-quarters of Catholics and half of Protestants currently unassociated with a faith said that over time, they stopped believing in their religion's teachings.

Pew Forum senior fellow John C. Green said that result surprised researchers, who had expected policy disputes or disillusionment over internal scandals -- such as the clergy sex-abuse crisis in the Catholic Church -- to play more of a role in people's decision to leave a faith. Among former Catholics who became Protestants, one in five cited the sex-abuse scandal as one of several reasons why they had left the church. But only a small percentage -- 2 to 3 percent -- cited it as the lone reason.

"It suggests that what leads people to leave their faith is that, somehow for some reason, it isn't meeting their needs . . . religion becomes less plausible to the person," Green said.

The study is a follow-up to a Pew report on religious identity released last year that was one of the largest polls of its kind. Researchers recontacted 2,800 of the 35,000 adults they previously interviewed for that study for in-depth interviews on how many times, and why, they had changed religious affiliations.

Researchers interviewed non-Christians but focused their analysis on Christians, which provided them with large enough groups to permit close scrutiny, said Pew research fellow Gregory A. Smith.

Researchers discovered that the "churn" among the faithful and formerly faithful was higher than first estimated. In this second round of interviews, they found that some people who currently belong to the religion in which they were brought up had tried a different faith at some point, causing researchers to raise their estimate of the people who have changed faith at some point in their lives from 44 percent to 56 percent.

They also found that up to one-third of people who have left their childhood faith have jumped around among three or more other faiths.

The results are a "big indictment" of organized religion, said Michael Lindsay, assistant professor of sociology at Rice University and author of a book on evangelical leaders. "There is a huge, wide-open back door at most churches. Churches around the country may be able to attract people, but they can't keep them."

At the same time, the large and growing number of people who report having no religious affiliation are surprisingly open to religion, researchers said. Unlike the popular perception that many have embraced secularism, a significant percentage appeared simply to have put their religiosity on pause -- having worshiped as part of at least one faith already, about three in 10 said they have just not yet found the right religion.

"We tend to think that when people leave [religion] they leave," said Stephen Prothero, chairman of the religion department at Boston University. "But a lot of these unaffiliated are unaffiliated for now. . . . It's not a one-way street. It's not like after you've left a religious affiliation, you can't get back in."

<http://www.pewtrusts.org/>

House of worship email newsletter

The Visitor Center and Bookstore re-opened to the public on May 8, 2009 after being closed for one year. Inside, welcome banners, photos with quotes from the Baha'i writings, and new display panels, greet visitors. One of the impressive new developments on the grounds of the House of Worship is a new "welcome wall" and beautiful reflecting pool. With spring flowers and trees in full bloom, the Temple is certainly a beautiful sight to behold. Restoration work on the terrace steps, gardens and circular fountains are continuing on the western side of the House of Worship. Construction of a new Welcome Center on the southwest corner of the Temple property (where the small white buildings next to the



Welcome banners at the newly re-opened visitor center

parking lot are currently located) will begin soon. The new Welcome Center is expected to be completed and open to the public in the fall of 2011.



New displays at the visitor center



New reflecting pool at entrance to the visitor center

HOLY LANDS VISIT information from the Universal House of Justice

May 1, 2009

To all Local Spiritual Assemblies
and Registered Bahá'í Groups

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The National Spiritual Assembly has been asked to remind the friends that it is necessary to obtain consent from the Universal House of Justice prior to visiting Israel for any purpose.

The friends seeking the House of Justice's permission for such visits are to send their requests to the World Center—either through their own Local Spiritual Assemblies or by post, fax (at 972-4-8358280), or email

(at visit@bwc.org)—stating their full names, Bahá'í identification numbers, addresses, passport information, and the dates of their proposed visits. It is suggested that their requests be sent approximately one month before their intended visits.

For further information regarding brief visits to Israel, the friends may contact the World Center's Department of Pilgrimage (at 972-4-8358438) or visit its Website (at <https://bahai.bwc.org/pilgrimage/main/visit.asp>).

We trust the friends will understand the need for these precautions when planning a trip to so sensitive a point on the map as the Holy Land.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
Juana C. Conrad
Deputy Secretary-General