Regional Bahá’í Council of the Atlantic States

*Delaware · District of Columbia · Kentucky · Maryland · North Carolina*

*Tennessee · Virginia · West Virginia*

October 3, 2013

To every lover of Bahá’u’lláh in the Atlantic Region:

Dearly loved Co-workers,

In its Ridvan 1996 message, our beloved Universal House of Justice set the worldwide Bahá’í community on an extraordinary new course in our sacred mission to help bring into being that Divine Civilization envisioned by the Blessed Beauty They wrote:

***“The next four years will represent an extraordinary period in the history of our Faith, a turning point of epochal magnitude. What the friends throughout the world are now being asked to do is to commit themselves, their material resources, their abilities and their time to the development of a network of training institutes on a scale never before attempted. These centres of Bahá'í learning will have as their goal one very practical outcome, namely, the raising up of large numbers of believers who are trained to foster and facilitate the process of entry by troops with efficiency and love.***

***"Centre your energies in the propagation of the Faith of God," Bahá'u'lláh thus instructs His servants, adding, "Whoso is worthy of so high a calling, let him arise and promote it. Whoso is unable, it is his duty to appoint him who will, in his stead, proclaim this Revelation...." Just as one deputizes another to teach in one's stead by covering the expenses of a pioneer or travelling teacher, one can deputize a teacher serving an institute, who is, of course, a teacher of teachers.”***

As is so often the case, we only begin to grasp the significance of the guidance from the Universal House of Justice over time as we learn through experience and endeavor to the best of our ability to obey the supreme institution and implement its plans. Since that “turning point” in Bahá’í History, a remarkable “framework for action” has been erected across the globe. For many Bahá’ís who witnessed this transformation over the past two decades, it is hard to recognize the Faith they knew before. For young Bahá’ís and those who have come within the shelter of the Faith since then, they know no other reality than this framework, a decentralized system of “learning in action” at the grassroots. Under the guidance of the Universal House of Justice, the Bahá’í community is building an educational system of children’s classes, junior youth groups and study circles which is allowing populations of individuals to take charge of their own destiny and step on to individual and collective paths of service to build a new civilization neighborhood by neighborhood and village by village. In the Atlantic Region, this process has reached a new and exciting stage.

In February of this year, noting the decisive contribution made by youth in building this system, the Universal House of Justice, in vibrant tones, summoned the youth of the world to the service of a desperate humanity: ***“To every generation of young believers comes an opportunity to make a contribution to the fortunes of humanity, unique to their time of life. For the present generation, the moment has come to reflect, to commit, to steel themselves for a life of service from which blessing will flow in abundance.”***  The House went on to call for Youth Conferences around the world in order ***“to spur on this mighty enterprise and to summon***

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***today's youth to fully assume the responsibilities they must discharge.”*** We were blessed to have two of these conferences in our region in Durham, North Carolina and Washington, DC.

Dear friends, the response of our youth to the summons of the Supreme Institution has been overwhelming. As they prepared for the conferences, many youth took stock of their own priorities and began, with the help of their families, to reorient their lives to the call of the Universal House of Justice. Two dozen youth took part in an intensive five-week training in North Carolina in July and August called “The Surge of the Atlantic”. In conditions that called forth the spirit of sacrifice, they spent half of their time in study of the Institute materials and half their time in neighborhoods engaging their youthful peers and their families in meaningful conversation around participating in this mighty enterprise. The impact, both on the lives of the participants as well as the neighborhoods visited, has been inspiring. As a result of over 300 conversations and much follow up, 32 youth who had encountered the Bahá’í Faith for the first time, are now regular participants in the first course of the Institute, “Reflections on the Life of the Spirit”, with an aim to becoming junior youth animators or children’s class teachers.

The participants themselves commented on the life-changing aspects of the training: "[This was] an opportunity to learn, in a way that I never have before, how to strive by day and by night to follow in the footsteps of the beloved Master, 'Abdu'l-Bahá.  [It was a] chance to see the world in a new and spiritual lens, to increase reliance on God, shed the rust from the hearts, and to develop the many skills and attitudes needed to lend a hand in the Cause of God and to support the Plan in the field of service and our individual lives.” A parent of one of the participants wrote: "I witnessed and felt so much unalloyed love of Baha'u'llah yesterday [when I picked up my son] that, indeed, I know what Heaven on Earth looks like. I have glimpsed it and touched it before, and little did I know that it was but a particle of what I would see and feel yesterday...With tears of joy flowing freely, from someone who has just experienced a new dimension of love." With the remarkable success of this intensive training, the Regional Training Institute Board plans on having many more throughout the region over the coming months and throughout the remainder of the Five Year Plan. A participant of this training made a video that can be accessed with this link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZEuMyccceU&feature=youtu.be>

The combined attendance at the two conferences in our region was over 1,000 youth between the ages of 15 and 30.The inspiration and vision gained by the participating Bahá’í youth and their like-minded peers is already being manifested in dedicated action. Scores of youth have arisen to dedicate a year or more of full time service both in their home communities as well pioneering to emerging clusters in the region. These youth will serve in a variety of ways but primarily by engaging their peers in working together to build the new civilization of love and justice envisioned by Bahá’u’lláh through the development of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program and the other core activities in neighborhood by neighborhood and in cluster after cluster. These youth are now at the forefront of the Army of Light and are being deployed on a scale never before witnessed in the history of our beloved Faith. They deserve our whole-hearted support as they valiantly engage an ailing society with their high-minded ideals and indefatigable spirits.

Our beloved Universal House of Justice has called for a goal of 5,000 programs of growth to be established by the end of the Five Year Plan. The Atlantic Region has a commitment to contribute 112 programs of growth towards that goal. Currently, we need an additional 65 programs of growth to be raised in the region. The contributions the youth will make towards achieving this goal are significant.

This unprecedented movement of our youth into the field of action in these emerging clusters offers the rest of us an equally unprecedented opportunity to take an active part in this mighty enterprise through a corresponding outpouring of our material resources in support. Bahá’u’lláh gives each and every one of us the privilege and duty of Deputization.

The Regional Bahá’í Council of the Atlantic States invites you to participate in this great campaign by both increasing your contribution to the National Bahá’í Fund to offset the $3 million cost of the 13 conferences held in the United States as well to contribute or consider increasing your contribution to the Regional Deputization Fund to support our youth in full-time service. This can be done by sending a check to the National Bahá’í Fund in the enclosed envelope and stating that it is earmarked for the Atlantic Regional Deputization Fund. You can also contribute online: http://MyBahaiFund.us. If you have not done so, you can register your online account. You are then able to make a one-time or recurring contribution to one or a number of funds. To specifically help offset the cost of the Youth Conferences, designate that fund. To support the work in the Atlantic Region please choose “Regional Council Atlantic States”. We also invite your thoughts, comments or questions at rbcat.treasurer@gmail.com.

Dear friends, this truly is an opportunity, given to us by Bahá’u’lláh, to come together in a spirit of unity and sacrifice to transform the Atlantic Region and this nation. The power of our united effort will reverberate throughout the land. Writing to us at the end of His earthly life, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá declares:

***“O ye friends of God! Exert ye with heart and soul, so that association, love, unity and agreement be obtained between the hearts, all the aims may be merged into one aim, all the songs become one song and the power of the Holy Spirit may become so overwhelmingly victorious as to overcome all the forces of the world of nature. Exert yourselves; your mission is unspeakably glorious. Should success crown your enterprise, America will assuredly evolve into a center from which waves of spiritual power will emanate, and the throne of the Kingdom of God will, in the plentitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established.”***

With all humility and in a spirit of fellowship and love, we invite your participation in the support of this sacred undertaking.

**With loving appreciation,**

**Regional Bahá’í Council of the Atlantic States**

**cc: Counsellor Anita Williams**

 **National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States**