

Regional Bahá'í Council of the Atlantic States

Delaware · District of Columbia · Kentucky · Maryland · North Carolina
Tennessee · Virginia · West Virginia

February 26, 2015

Dearly loved Friends,

The Regional Council sends you its warmest greetings and wishes for a joyous Ayyám-i-Há. How blessed we are as we begin this special time of the year and have another opportunity to praise God and thank Him for all He has provided to us. In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas Bahá'u'lláh states:

It behooveth the people of Bahá, throughout these days, to provide good cheer for themselves, their kindred and, beyond them, the poor and needy, and with joy and exultation to hail and glorify their Lord, to sing His praise and magnify His Name.

The Council wanted to share with the friends in the region some areas where we see advances in learning and growth. We are very encouraged by the consistent dedication of the friends in their services.

We see a recurring theme where friends who live in clusters at all levels of development are building their capacity for learning “within a common framework” which “fosters progress along the path of development”. It is a source of true joy as they realize that they can make meaningful contributions to the “spiritual enterprise” we are undertaking in response to the Five Year Plan.

Cluster movement

The Atlantic Region has pledged 105 programs of growth to help fulfill the 5,000 programs of growth goal set by the Universal House of Justice. We are delighted to share that currently we have 71 programs of growth, which is 68% of our goal! Since the beginning of the Five Year Plan our region has gone from 25 programs of growth to 71 – nearly a three-fold increase!

The Council's beloved collaborators, the Auxiliary Board members and the RTI coordinators, have carefully examined the reality of the remaining 34 emerging goal clusters and have made plans so that they establish a program of growth by Ridvan 2016. For nine of these clusters this will be possible if we have homefront pioneers in place. We highly encourage each of you to prayerfully consider your personal circumstances and reflect on the possibility of your service as a pioneer. You can access the goal cluster information through this link: [Goal clusters needing homefront pioneers](#). If you have any questions please send them to the Council's secretariat at rbcatssecretariat@gmail.com.

The Council's recent publication, [Building capacities for learning in the Atlantic Region](#), illustrates the stories of two homefront pioneer families and one individual. If you have not already read it we lovingly encourage you to do so. The pioneers' stories are uplifting and inspiring.

Regional Training Institute

At the onset of the Five Year Plan in 2011 the region had one Regional Training Institute coordinator serving the entire region! How fortunate we are to now have four Regional Training Institute coordinators serving the region – one coordinator each for DC-Virginia-West Virginia, Delaware-Maryland, Kentucky-Tennessee, and North Carolina.

In the table below we see the significant influence of the institute courses. We are delighted to see a strong increase in the participation of the friends of the Faith since the beginning of the Plan. It is also very encouraging to see a sizeable increase in the number of Bahá'ís who are engaged in the core activities and contributing to their community and cluster growth. In reflecting on this development we call to mind this passage from the Ridvan 2014 message: *Everyone has a share in this enterprise; the contribution of each serves to enrich the whole.* How fortunate we are to have your sincere and pure-hearted services enriching all our efforts.

Core activity data	Ridvan 2011	February 2015	Percent increase
No. core activities	708	735	3.80%
No. seeker participants	1,464	2,040	39%
Total no. participants	3,759	4,597	22%

Learning site

In its November 14, 2012 message the Universal House of Justice stated *the number of learning sites in North America should rise to seven.* Our region has been so fortunate to have a learning site dedicated to learning about the expansion of the junior youth spiritual empowerment program for the past six years in the Triangle, North Carolina cluster.

Currently there are six clusters networked to the learning site. These include Washington DC, Baltimore Area MD, Charlotte Area NC, Fairfax Co. VA, Loudoun Co. VA, and NoVA East VA. We anticipate that four additional clusters will be networked to the site by Ridvan 2016.

The implications of having up to 10 networked clusters in our region holds much promise for building capacities for learning. We know that when there is an ongoing, consistent effort to multiply *vibrant youth groups* a community learns *how to raise up and deploy capable human resources, how capacity for service is raised within cohorts of individuals; how an expanding program can be effectively coordinated; and how initiating one activity can, quite naturally, lead to the emergence of others.*

Learning about two essential, inseparable aspects of Bahá'í life: worship and service

Since Ridvan 2012 the Universal House of Justice has sent several letters to the Bahá'ís of the world that include the theme of the relationship between devotional meetings and service. Everyone who has read these messages has been touched in some way, and, in a growing number of clusters we see plans underway to learn how to raise different capacities for the multiplication of devotional meetings and inviting the participation of increasing numbers of Bahá'ís and their friends. More and more friends are deeply touched by these gatherings for prayer and reflect the spirit of this passage from the Ridvan 2010 message: *Responding to the inmost longing of every heart to commune with its Maker, they carry out acts of collective worship in diverse settings, uniting with others in prayer, awakening spiritual susceptibilities, and shaping a pattern of life distinguished for its devotional character.*

In the Washington DC, Triangle NC and other clusters we see a rising number of devotional meetings and participants. Some beautiful stories have been shared how these gatherings for prayer spiritually influence the participants, the hosts and their families. One devotional meeting host shares:

Our intention in hosting a devotional was to offer our home in service to others--but what I was present to was how much of a gift tonight was to our family. Specifically, to have our children growing up experiencing the quality and nature of prayers and fellowship that was here tonight. We felt how loved they felt, and how each prayer planted a seed of love for the Faith in their hearts.

The Council prays that you continue to be uplifted and energized by your services to your community and cluster. You are ever in our thoughts and hearts as we move into the final year of this blessed Five Year Plan.

With loving regards,

Corinne Perry
Secretary