

The Australian Bahá'í

February 2022 · Mulk 178 BE



Preparing for the Nine Year Plan

GOOD NEWS! GOOD NEWS! The doors of the Kingdom of God are open!
GOOD NEWS! GOOD NEWS! Armies of Angels are descending from Heaven!
GOOD NEWS! GOOD NEWS! The Sun of Truth is rising!
GOOD NEWS! GOOD NEWS! Heavenly food is being sent from above!
GOOD NEWS! GOOD NEWS! The Trumpet is sounding!
GOOD NEWS! GOOD NEWS! The Banner of the Great Peace is floating far and wide!
GOOD NEWS! GOOD NEWS! The Light of the Lamp of the Oneness of Humanity is shining bright!
GOOD NEWS! GOOD NEWS! The fire of the Love of God is blazing!
GOOD NEWS! GOOD NEWS! The Holy Spirit is being outpoured!
GOOD NEWS! GOOD NEWS! For Everlasting Life is here!

O ye that sleep, Awake! O ye heedless ones, Learn wisdom! O Blind, receive your sight!
O Deaf, Hear! O Dumb, Speak! O Dead, Arise!

Be Happy!

Be Happy!

Be full of Joy!

This is the day of the Proclamation of the Báb!

It is the Festival of the Forerunner of the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh).

It is the day of the dawning of the Morning of Guidance.

'Good News!' is a message from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the London Bahá'ís for the Day of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and specially given to Mrs Enthoven. The visitors to the Bahá'í World Centre for the Commemoration of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in November 2021 heard a recording of 'Abdu'l-Bahá chanting these words in Persian.



The printed copy of this issue included a special insert containing the message of the Universal House of Justice to the conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors on 30th December 2021. This message highlights the priorities before the worldwide Bahá'í community in its efforts to foster social transformation and provides insights for the community's future development over the course of the Nine Year Plan. The Nine Year Plan will begin in 2022 at Ridván.

In recognition of the momentous nature of the upcoming plan, the National Spiritual Assembly has chosen the theme of 'Preparing for the Nine Year Plan' for this issue.



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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware that this magazine contains images and names of people who have passed away.

*With their hearts and thoughts turned toward 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the representatives have arrived in the Holy Land from every corner of the world to honour Him in the very land where He passed away.
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Reflections on the Centenary of the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Dr Janet Khan served on the National Spiritual Assembly between 1977 and 1983 and served in the Research Department at the Bahá’í World Centre from 1983 to 2010. Drawing on the three messages of the Universal House of Justice released at the end of November and 1st December, as well as her experiences attending the commemorations for the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at the Bahá’í World Centre, Dr Khan reflects on the power of the Covenant and the call from the Universal House of Justice to rededicate ourselves to serving the Cause of God.

In a message addressed to the Bahá’ís of the world at the conclusion of the momentous events commemorating the centenary of the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the Holy Land, the Universal House of Justice expressed a “sense of wonderment at the exalted character of what transpired” and its deep gratitude to Bahá’u’lláh that, “despite current circumstances in the world and the many restrictions on travel, nearly six hundred representatives of the vast majority of National Spiritual Assemblies and Regional Bahá’í Councils were able to be present at the Bahá’í World Centre for this historic occasion.”

The Universal House of Justice, in its message of 25th November, highlighted that this remarkable gathering coincided with several landmark events in the history of the Bahá’í Faith:

...the close of one hundred years since the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, one hundred years since the inception of the Formative Age of the Bahá’í Dispensation, and one hundred years since the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh was entrusted to His Administrative Order.



*Participants at the commemoration for the Centenary of the Passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá circumambulating the Shrine of the Báb.
Copyright © Bahá’í International Community*

The spiritual heart of the centenary gathering was the solemn commemoration held on the night of the anniversary of the Ascension of the beloved Master in the forecourt of the Pilgrim House and the Gardens on Mount Carmel. In addition to the soul-stirring devotional programme, the ceremony comprised the reading of the Universal House of Justice’s moving Tribute to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, followed by the circumambulation by the assembled friends of the Shrines of the Báb and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Overall, the centenary gathering was a celebration of the power of the Covenant. It provided a unique opportunity for prayerful reflection on the life of the beloved Master, “a Figure Whose very being was the embodiment of the Covenant, that pivotal centre of unity for all humankind, binding together the multitudinous peoples of the earth.” It afforded opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of the significance of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Will and Testament and the Tablets of the Divine Plan to the unfoldment of the Administrative Order, and provided insights into the increasing

importance of the Faith’s administrative system to a world in which “[t]he accelerating decline of the current social order, and the growing need for constructive processes that will lead to the emergence of a new world society, are daily more evident.” In addition, the event assessed the extraordinary advancements made by the Bahá’í community in recent years and the extent to which this has prepared the believers everywhere to meet the demands and fulfil the requirements of the next stage of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Divine Plan.

The program had formal and informal elements. It included extended periods of individual prayer in the Sacred Shrines, visits to Bahá’í Holy Places associated with the life and work of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and pertinent to the Covenant, the reading of two messages of the Universal House of Justice, informative presentations by members of the International Teaching Centre, an exhibition highlighting the contribution of the Master to various aspects of community-building, social action and engagement in the discourses of society,



Left to right: *Former member of the Universal House of Justice Kiser Barnes, Janet Khan and Manijeh Reyhani in the House of ‘Abbúd.*

the viewing of the new film, *Exemplar*, and of a video describing the construction of the Shrine of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as well

as a tour of the construction site of the Master's Shrine.

Privilege and Responsibility

The representatives of the world's National Spiritual Assemblies and Regional Bahá'í Councils, and other guests invited by the Universal House of Justice to participate in the events in the Holy Land had the great blessing and privilege of paying homage to the Master on behalf of their communities in the very spots where He laboured tirelessly for the promotion of the Cause and the betterment of the world. In perusing the House of Justice's Tribute, read during the ceremony for the Master's Ascension, it is clear that the Supreme Body had high expectations of its invited guests—and beyond them of the members of the wider Bahá'í community: "Dearest co-workers," it wrote on 27th November:

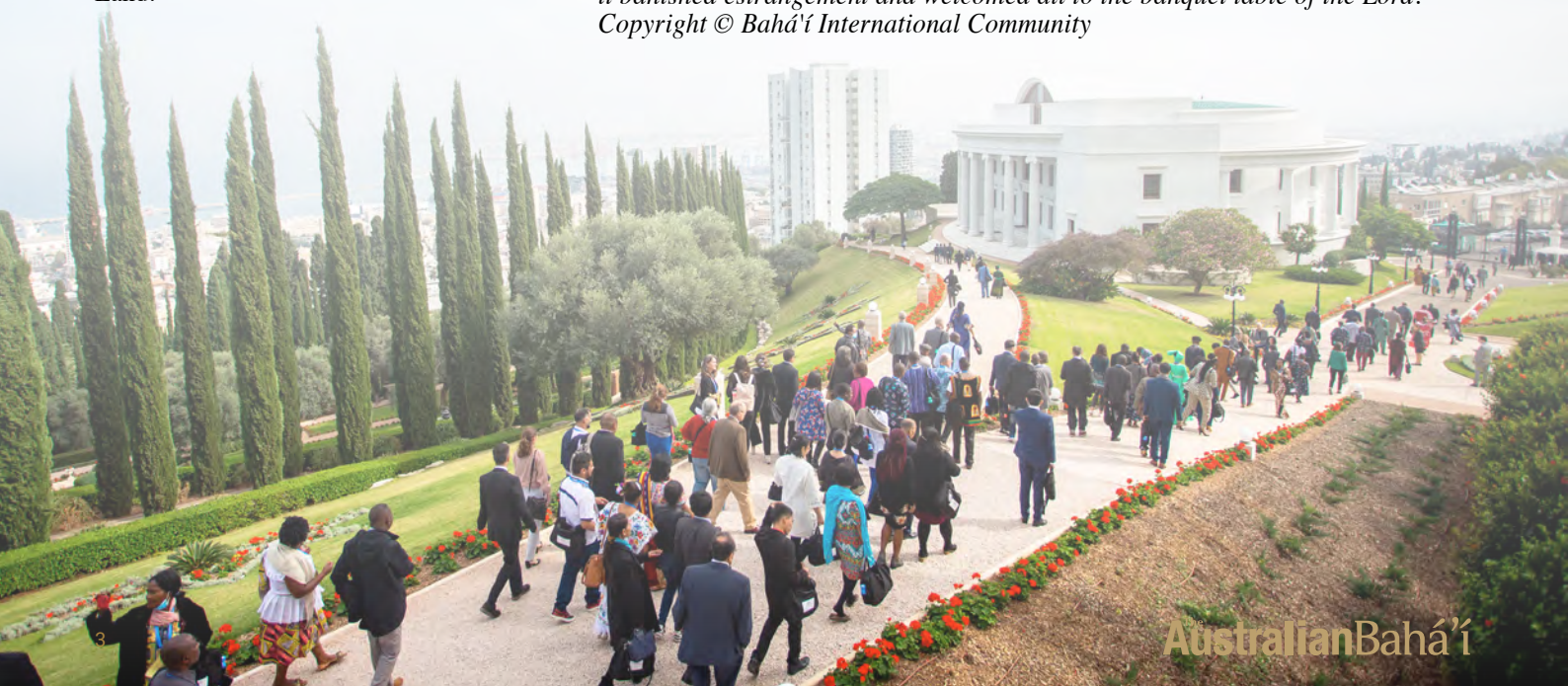
We summoned you here not only to honour the memory of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and to recall His trials and triumphs, but also, with us, to rededicate yourselves and the communities you represent to earnestly serving the Cause to which He devoted His very existence.

How then do we consciously and systematically draw upon the example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a means of firming our Bahá'í identity and rededicating ourselves and our communities to life-long devoted service to the Cause so beloved by the Master?

Answers to such questions obviously require study and reflection and engagement in community building activities over a long period of time. Nevertheless, I offer the following observations derived from participation in the centenary gathering in the Holy Land.



A tribute written by the Universal House of Justice for the occasion was read by one of its members, Mr. Stephen Hall. The tribute states, in part: "The universality of His love produced a community that, even at that time, could justly claim to be a cross-section of society. His love revived, nurtured, inspired; it banished estrangement and welcomed all to the banquet table of the Lord."
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The Power of the Covenant

The diversity of the gathering of the members of National Spiritual Assemblies and Regional Bahá'í Councils from all parts of the globe was a vivid demonstration of the oneness of the human family and, in countless ways, illustrated the fruits of the life-long services of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Indeed, even the creative and often heroic ways in which these friends sought to overcome the many challenges associated with travelling to the Holy Land in the time of COVID-19 calls to mind the example of the Master—Who with faith and determination, pressed on, “Serene, confident, and resolute, ... unperturbed by setbacks, welcoming hardship and adversity in the path of God.”

The spirit of the gathering, the quality of the loving interactions between the participants, their realistic optimism towards the future, the learnings and community building experiences they shared, and the maturity of functioning of the evolving administrative institutions all provided tangible examples of how, in the words of the Universal House of Justice, “the Covenant orients each believer towards a common mission, maintaining a dynamic unity that cultivates a constantly growing community of the faithful.”

From its earliest days, individual believers, animated by the desire to serve the Divine Plan have played a critical role in the development of the worldwide Bahá'í community and its embryonic administrative institutions, and in service to the common good. A perusal of the photographs that adorn the walls of the Mansion of Bahjí bears witness to this fact! Gazing at the faces of these servants of Bahá and the pictures of early Spiritual Assemblies, dating to the ministries of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, images that are mostly unidentified and faces unknown to the present generation, one is struck by the realization that, animated by a desire to serve the Divine Plan, these dear friends arose, one and all, at critical times in the development of the Faith in response to the priority needs of the time. And it is this same priceless privilege that is offered to every believer in the upcoming Nine Year Plan.

Pledge of Rededication

In its Tribute to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Universal House of Justice pledges on behalf of itself and the members of the

Bahá'í institutions, and the communities they represent, a renewed dedication to serve the Faith, to be redeemed by the Bahá'í community making “steadfast, strenuous exertions ... to fulfil the mission entrusted to it at this time.” Encouraging us in this enterprise, the House of Justice in its 27th November message, cites the words of the Master to firm our resolve:

... O ye faithful friends, it behoveth you all to join 'Abdu'l-Bahá in self-sacrifice and in service to the Cause of God and thralldom to His divine Threshold. If ye be aided to attain unto such a supreme bounty, the whole world shall ere long be made the recipient of the effulgent splendours of God, and the longed-for oneness of humanity shall be revealed in the utmost beauty and charm in the midmost heart of the world. This is the dearest wish of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! This is the greatest yearning of them that are faithful! The Glory of Glories rest upon you.

The summons of the House of Justice to renewed dedication in serving the Cause is an invitation to reflect deeply on our true purpose in life, on the goals we set and how we spend our time. It confronts each of us with a choice and brings to the fore the broader question of what constitutes a well-lived life.

In choosing to rededicate ourselves to the Divine Plan, we have the opportunity and spiritual responsibility to promote

the vision of Bahá'u'lláh, to strive to become aware of the needs and opportunities of the day, to understand the current guidance, to draw inspiration in times of testing from the untiring example of the Master, and to uphold the authority of the institutions and agencies of an organically unfolding Administrative Order. This unique Order, fashioned by its Architect, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, “to perpetuate the Covenant and channel the spiritual powers of the Cause”, embodies “the very pattern of that divine civilization which the almighty Law of Bahá'u'lláh is designed to establish on earth”.

Our challenge is to be steadfast in our efforts until the very end of our life. In all humility we draw on the words of the beloved Master and beseech Him for His assistance:

O Lord! Grant ... that the end of my days may be distinguished above their beginning, and the close of my life may open the portals to Thy manifold blessings. May Thy loving-kindness and bounty descend upon me at every moment, and Thy forgiveness and mercy be vouchsafed with every breath, until, beneath the sheltering shadow of Thine upraised Standard, I may at last repair to the Kingdom of the All-Praised. Thou art the Bestower and the Ever-Loving, and Thou art, verily, the Lord of grace and bounty.

'Abdu'l-Bahá



Participants assembled on the steps of the Seat of the Universal House of Justice prior to entering the concourse for the start of the program. Copyright © Bahá'í International Community



Australian Representatives Share Spirit of Bahá'í World Centre

The Australian representatives who attended the commemorations for the centenary of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the Bahá'í World Centre reflect on a spiritually momentous occasion for the Bahá'í World.

Together, the Australian representatives entered the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. Each read the Tablet of Ahmad and prayed for the progress of the Australian Bahá'í community. Copyright © Bahá'í International Community

The gathering of representatives of National Spiritual Assemblies and Regional Bahá'í Councils of the Centenary of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the Bahá'í World Centre was a profound, spiritual occasion. On their return the Australian representatives reflected on the love and hospitality of the Universal House of Justice, the power of the Covenant which the commemorations demonstrated and the opportunities they had to pray for the Australian Bahá'í Community at the Sacred Threshold.

"The highlight was the profoundly moving devotional programme for the Commemoration headed by a tribute to 'Abdu'l-Bahá followed by our circumambulation at about 2.00am of The Shrine of The Báb and the resting place of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", said National Spiritual Assembly member, Chris Heggie. "Other highlights were praying in the Holy Shrines and residences of

Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá as well as visiting the Ascension Room of the Master for private prayer on the evening leading up to the Commemoration itself."

"The Universal House of Justice just showered us with its love which created a sense of sacredness and momentousness", said Ryan Torabi, member of the Regional Bahá'í Council for Western and Central Australia. "It was the closest thing I could imagine to the hospitality of the Báb when He met with Mullá Husayn. They did everything for us."

Roya Shahgholi who represented the Regional Bahá'í Council for South-Eastern Australia remarked on how different this occasion was to pilgrimage. "I did not have personal prayers, I carried everyone in my heart there. I think that is because of the Covenant, because we were there as representatives of the Institutions.

The relationship of our soul with the Covenant evolves as we strive to nourish it through selfless service, prayer for steadfastness, unity and fellowship", she reflected.

The love and hospitality the Universal House of Justice showered on the representatives of the Bahá'í world was reflected back to them through the deep love and respect the guests showed to the Supreme Body. "In addition to the immediate demands of the Plan,

This was the very first of the gatherings of this epoch to launch the Divine Plan into a new stage and to prepare individuals, communities and institutions for the demands of the decades to come.

– Ryan Torabi



The joy on the faces of Ryan Torabi, Roya Shahgholi and Natalie Mobini capture the spirit of the commemorations in the Holy Land.



A new pillar of the Universal House of Justice was raised last Ridván when the National Spiritual Assembly of Timor-Leste was first elected. Roya Shahgholi is pictured with one of the representatives of the National Spiritual Assembly for Timor-Leste, Madalena Maria Barros.



Australian representatives in the Holy Land: Ryan Torabi (Regional Bahá'í Council for Western and Central Australia), Natalie Mobini (National Spiritual Assembly), Karen Barnett (Regional Bahá'í Council for Queensland), Roya Shahgholi (Regional Bahá'í Council for South-East Australia) Chris Heggie (National Spiritual Assembly), Manijeh Reyhani (specially invited guest).

member of the International Teaching Centre, Counsellor Rachel Ndegwa, noted that we had a special mission, through the spirit of this event, to help our communities grow closer to the Head of the Faith", said the Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly, Natalie Mobini. "At this point all participants expressed their profound love for the House of Justice in a standing ovation."

She also noted that over the three days of the formal program, the MCs and keynote speakers were all female members of the International Teaching Centre. "The male members did not once address the gathered friends", she observed. "How remarkable that a world governing body should, in its own words, 'summon' its institution members from across the world, then cede the floor almost entirely to others."

The participants were not limited to the representatives of National Spiritual Assemblies and Regional Bahá'í Councils who had been selected by ballot. A number of believers had been invited by name due to their services to the Faith. Natalie Mobini explained that these Bahá'ís "were the former members of the Universal House of Justice and the International Teaching Centre, and their spouses, a representative of each Continental Board of Counsellors, members of the International Board of Trustees of Huqúqu'lláh and, tracing a remarkable thread back to the beloved Guardian, Iran Muhajir, the widow of the Hand of the Cause of God Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir. Reflecting on their participation, Natalie Mobini said, "these luminaries added gravitas and lustre to the proceedings befitting those who had rendered such sacrificial services to the Cause over many decades."

The love of the Universal House of Justice continued to flow every day. "The analogy was shared in one of the talks of the blood being drawn to the heart, purified and sent back out again to nourish and fortify our communities", said member of the Regional Bahá'í Council for Queensland, Karen Barnett. "This image was strengthened day by day as we experienced the profound hospitality and warmth shed on us by the House of Justice".

"There was a great sense that we had all been summoned to the World Centre", she said. "The doors opened so that we could travel to the Holy Land and then they closed again as we left."

We all entered His home and heard His melodious voice chanting these words in Persian. As a participant, one could see and hear the reality of these words during these blessed spiritually charged days. The impression of hearing 'Abdu'l-Bahá chanting will stay in our soul for ever.

– Manijeh Reyhani

A small window in the global COVID-19 pandemic had opened that allowed the guests to visit the Holy Land. Then as the guests were leaving, news of the new Omicron variant spread around the world and the fragile international borders began to tighten.

However, this historic gathering at the Bahá'í World Centre marked the start of preparations for a new cycle of plans. Karen Barnett reflected on the example of the Master.

"Abdu'l-Bahá set Himself major mandates to accomplish", she noted. "He was completely focused on His objectives. Nothing disturbed Him or caused Him to deviate from the course He set. This example stayed with me as a habit or a posture that the institution I serve can strengthen."

The Spirit of Bahá has been charged and will now pulsate around the globe through the upcoming conferences to launch the new Nine Year Plan. The spirit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá will always be with those who strive and persevere. It is now up to us to carry out the dearest wishes of the Perfect Exemplar:

Friends, the time is coming when I shall be no longer with you. I have done all that could be done. I have served the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh to the utmost of my ability. I have labored night and day all the years of my life.

Oh, how I long to see the believers shouldering the responsibilities of the Cause! Now is the time to proclaim the Kingdom of Abhá (i.e. The Most Glorious!). Now is the hour of union and concord! Now is the day of the spiritual harmony of the friends of God!

We are Guests of the Universal House of Justice

The spirit from the Holy Land is pulsating around the world. During the commemorations for the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Universal House of Justice released a powerful spiritual surge that is quickening the spirit of the global Bahá’í community. This spiritual force has been released through the power of the Covenant that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá laid out through the Administrative Order.

National Spiritual Assemblies, Regional Bahá’í Councils, Local Spiritual Assemblies and other institutions and agencies of the Bahá’í Administrative Order are making preparations for the upcoming global conferences called for by the Universal House of Justice. The learned arm of the Bahá’í Administrative Order, the Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members, are also intimately involved, guiding and supporting the planning process. The power of the Covenant — so evident in the collaboration of the institutions — is channelling the spirit from the Holy Land through the preparations, ready to burst forth at every conference around the world.

The excitement in the voice of a member of the Regional Bahá’í Council for Queensland, Karen Barnett, was

palpable. She had just returned from a meeting with Local Spiritual Assembly members, Auxiliary Board members and the Area Teaching Committee in Ipswich to plan one of the upcoming conferences. She was inspired and uplifted from this meeting. “What excited me was the love that members serving the regional, cluster and community institutions have for each other”, she said. “We consulted about how to elevate these conferences above the regular, as one site in a global series of conferences. The institutions recognise that the Universal House of Justice has called for these global conferences and we are trusted to bring them into reality.”

The goal of these conferences is simple, yet profound. “The conferences will aim at carrying to the friends in every land the spiritual energy released by the gatherings in the Holy Land, as the community prepares for a dynamic thrust forward with the launch of the Nine Year Plan”, the Universal House of Justice said in a message to all the National Spiritual Assemblies in September last year. In the heightened spiritual environment of the conferences, participants will gain a greater understanding of the Nine Year Plan:

National Website for Conferences

For the latest information on the upcoming conferences in Australia go to www.conferences.bahai.org.au.

These conferences, then, will give the participants an opportunity to gain greater insight into the nature of the spiritual enterprise in which they are engaged, a sense of the distance traversed thus far, and a deeper understanding of the exigencies of the current stage in the unfoldment of the Divine Plan. They will strive to enhance appreciation of the privilege of being part of a community that has set its gaze upon the spiritual and material transformation of society, and of the bounty of being connected by bonds of love and camaraderie with brothers and sisters in a global effort, each one labouring within the same framework for action, all united under the sheltering shadow of the Covenant.

— The Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 15th September 2021

Reflecting on this message, Ryan Torabi from the Bahá’í Council for Western and Central Australia noted the momentous nature of the conferences. “These conferences are preparing the believers for the decades to come”, he said.

Mehran Granfar, the secretary of the Bahá’í Council for South-East Australia, also highlighted the extraordinary nature of the upcoming conferences. “These are not just any regular conferences”, he said. “We are hosting these conferences on behalf of the Universal House of Justice.”

The experience of participation will be very different to other conferences. After her meeting in Ipswich, Karen Barnett explained, “in the consultation, we reflected on what we experience when we are guests of the Universal House of Justice. The spiritual qualities of love and hospitality are ones that will ensure that the spirit of the conferences in the Holy Land infuses these global conferences.”

These conferences are not going to be ordinary conferences. We are all invited as guests of the Universal House of Justice.



The pandemic may be surging but this cannot quash the spirit from the commemorations in the Holy Land. In Ipswich, local and regional organisers for one of the upcoming conferences called for by the Universal House of Justice consulted with a representative of the Regional Bahá’í Council for Queensland, Karen Barnett, in a joyous meeting.

The Guardian called for four intercontinental conferences which launched the Ten Year Crusade in 1953.

Pictured right: Madge Featherstone, Hand of the Cause of God Clara Dunn, and Ethel Dawe, who was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand, were filled with joy as they set off on their travels to the intercontinental conference in New Delhi, India. The Bahá'í World 1950–1954 reported that 74 pioneers arose from this conference and 25 were able to leave immediately for their pioneering posts. Significant donations were raised for the purchase of land in three countries for the Faith, including the land for the Bahá'í Temple in Sydney. Funds were also raised to purchase Holy Places in Iran and Iraq as well as to support pioneers.



The Plan that will shortly commence—the first major undertaking in a sacred twenty-five-year venture, generational in its scope and significance—will make demands of the individual believer, the community, and the institutions reminiscent of the demands that the Guardian made of the Bahá'í world at the outset of the Ten Year Crusade. If, by the grace of Almighty God, the friends should succeed in reaching the heights of heroism to which they are now summoned, history will assuredly pay tribute to their actions in terms no less glowing than those with which it honours the glorious deeds that decorate the annals of the first century of the Formative Age.

Universal House of Justice to the Conference of the Continental Board of Counsellors, 30th December, 2021



The Guardian called for another set of intercontinental conferences to take place in 1958, half-way through the Ten Year Crusade. His unexpected passing on 4th November 1957 shook the Bahá'í World. However, through the power of the Covenant, the Bahá'ís overcame their grief and arose to continue to follow the instructions the Guardian had left them.

In 1958 Bahá'ís gathered at the National Ḥaṣíratu'l-Quds in Sydney at 2 Lang Road, Paddington for one of the five intercontinental conferences. The participants at the Sydney conference

are **pictured above** including Hands of the Cause of God Collis Featherstone, Mason Remey and Agnes Alexander who are holding the Greatest Name, Clara Dunn and Dhikru'lláh Khádem.

Many of the goals of the Ten Year Crusade, including the establishment of the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand in 1957, had been achieved before the Sydney conference, but there was still more to do. Held in March 1958, the foundation ceremony for the new Australian Bahá'í Temple took place during the conference with the

interment of the sacred earth from the resting place of Bahá'u'lláh and plaster from the Báb's prison cell at Máh-Kú by Hands of the Cause of God Mason Remey and Clara Dunn. Funds for the building of the Temple were raised and pioneers arose for more goals in the Pacific.

The Bahá'í World 1954–1963 quoted a report received after the conference which said, “the spiritual atmosphere of that Conference was charged with such love and devotion ... that it was an unforgettable experience”.

Creative Outpouring to Honour ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Australia

Australian commemorations to mark the centenary of the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá were distinguished by creativity and service to others. Another feature of many commemorations was the participation of the wider community.

Here is a sample of some of the imaginative tributes shared by Bahá’í communities and individuals around Australia.



Several services for the Centenary were held at the Bahá’í House of Worship in Sydney. Arts and crafts activities on the topic of ‘Service’ were held on the grounds during the weekend’s commemorations. Copyright © Bahá’í International Community

The Centenary of the Passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was observed with creativity and devotion throughout the entire continent of Australia. A sample of the commemorations held in honour of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá shows that Australia hummed with the spirit of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during 178BE.

The communities of **Armadale in Perth** and **Wollongong in New South Wales** held festivals for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The two-week Festival for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Armadale emphasised the importance of universal participation of all the members of the community. It was launched with the annual musical by children and youth. Over 200 attended and with their gold coin donation and the sale of mugs by youth, a sizable donation was made to a local charity. Fifty from the wider community attended the play. Groups of families that included both Bahá’ís and friends of the Faith held multiple commemorations for the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the middle of the night which nine people from the wider community attended. Those who could not attend were visited during the fortnight for devotions, children’s classes or screenings of *Exemplar*. The festival closed with a picnic for children’s class families, a small bushwalk and prayers for the youth.

Universal participation was also evident in a video tribute organised by the Bahá’ís of the **Hills Shire in Sydney**. People in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra were emerging from severe lockdowns due to the pandemic which meant the plans for their commemorations needed to be flexible and take into consideration the need for appropriate physical distancing and other regulations. The Assembly of the Hills Shire collected the tributes of a large number of Bahá’ís from the community. The Bahá’ís spoke on video about their feelings about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, recalling the quotes that moved them and how His example had influenced their lives.

The Ballarat community in Victoria commemorated the Centenary throughout the year through junior youth activities, children’s class activities, devotional programs and picnics. On the evening of the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Bahá’ís had an extensive program which started at the Ballarat Observatory and then reconvened at the home of a local believer for supper, prayers and the observance of the time of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Ascension while children enjoyed a sleepout. The following evening there was an online story night which included people from the wider community who presented some elements of the program.

Over thirty Bahá’ís and their friends also gathered for a sleepout in the **Darwin area of the Northern Territory** on the lands of the Larrakia peoples. The community hosted an outdoor movie night with fairy lights and marshmallows by the fire while sharing stories. Despite a brief thunderous rainstorm which extinguished the fire earlier, the gathered people marked the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with prayers and singing. In the morning they enjoyed a breakfast together followed by devotions and songs.

During the weekend of the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá a number of devotional services and elevated conversations took place at the Bahá’í Centre of Learning in central **Hobart, Tasmania**. The program for the Ascension started at 8pm with live music, audio-visual presentations, storytelling and the screening of the film, *Exemplar*. Throughout the evening there were devotional segments ending with the reading of the Tablet of Visitation at 2am. The weekend included one of the monthly ‘Sacred Conversations’ events hosted by an interfaith group at the Centre. Hobart Bahá’í Angela Bryan sang, and Ann Stark gave a presentation about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. There was lively discussion afterwards about the Faith. The following day the monthly ‘Soul Food’ devotional program was dedicated



Musicians perform during the commemorations at the Tasmanian Bahá'í Centre of Learning in Hobart. Copyright © Bahá'í International Community



Banyule community in Melbourne held a play about 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris' at an outdoor amphitheatre on the Yarra River.



The Armadale community in Western Australia launched their two-week 'Festival of 'Abdu'l-Bahá' with a musical featuring children and youth.

to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and was well attended by people from the wider community as well as the Bahá'ís.

A number of other communities held theatrical productions. The communities in the **Atherton Tablelands of Far North Queensland** performed eight vignettes from a variety of sources including Annamarie K Honnold's book, *Vignettes from the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*. Around thirty from the wider community attended. **The Harvey and Bunbury communities in Western Australia** put on a play about the knighthood 'Abdu'l-Bahá received from the British government and His actions that saved people in the Haifa area from starvation. Bahá'í youth from the two communities performed to an audience, half of whom were from the wider community. **The Banyule community in Melbourne** put on a play in an outdoor amphitheatre about two people reflecting on their memories of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to Paris. A group of Greek dancers had hoped to perform a dance at the same time but had not booked the venue. The Bahá'ís invited them to perform and appreciated the unexpected delight of sharing a moment with another cultural group. This also gave the Bahá'ís an impromptu opportunity to share the Faith.

Other communities commemorated 'Abdu'l-Bahá by holding exhibitions. 'Peace' was the theme of the exhibition organised by the Bahá'ís in **Albany, Western Australia** in the local library.. Held to coincide with the International Day of Peace in September, the exhibition featured the 'Peace' Tree—a large hand-drawn tree where visitors could write their ideas of how they could bring unity and peace to their family and to those around them. In the **Lockyer Valley of Queensland**, the Bahá'ís exhibited an Aboriginal perspective of the Bahá'í Faith, drawing on Philip Obah's book, *The Bahá'í Faith: An Aboriginal Perspective*. The small community of **Serpentine Jarrahdale in Perth, Western Australia** held a photographic exhibition that told the story of the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It was held at the local Café Dôme in Byford. For the first time a local junior youth group had formed in Byford and they,

as well as the children's class, put on a musical performance. The community took great care to engage the wider community in the project through choosing the welcoming venue of a café to hold the exhibition and rostering community members to serve as interactive hosts throughout the six days of the exhibition.

A number of regional Bahá'í communities received media coverage about their commemorations. The *CQToday* newspaper in **Rockhampton, Queensland** devoted a full page to the local Bahá'í community's commemorations. In **Victor Harbor, South Australia**, the local Bahá'ís host a weekly radio program each Sunday evening on Fleurieu FM. Several broadcasts were devoted to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and explaining the Bahá'í Covenant.

Other communities engaged in craft activities. On the **north shore of Sydney**, a community created origami hearts as a reminder of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's love for humanity. In **Mackay, Queensland** Bahá'ís, created paper sunflowers with nine petals. This represented the love of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and how He always turned towards Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings. On the **Sunshine Coast of Queensland**, some Bahá'ís made biscuits and attached a hand-written note with a quote from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to each package of biscuits.

The **Bahá'í National Office** is a community of workers. Several weekly staff meetings were dedicated to the Centenary, including sharing stories about 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a devotional gathering at the House of Worship and a session to write poetry in honour of Him. This poetry was published as an e-book.

Creativity on Australian 'Abdu'l-Bahá Website

Read more about some of the creative commemorations mentioned here as well as some wonderful artistic expressions from individuals on the national website for the Centenary of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at www.abdul-baha.bahai.org.au. Listen to beautiful music and appreciate highly-skilled calligraphy and other visual art on this website. Music, calligraphy and poetry are in both Persian and English.

Wollongong, New South Wales



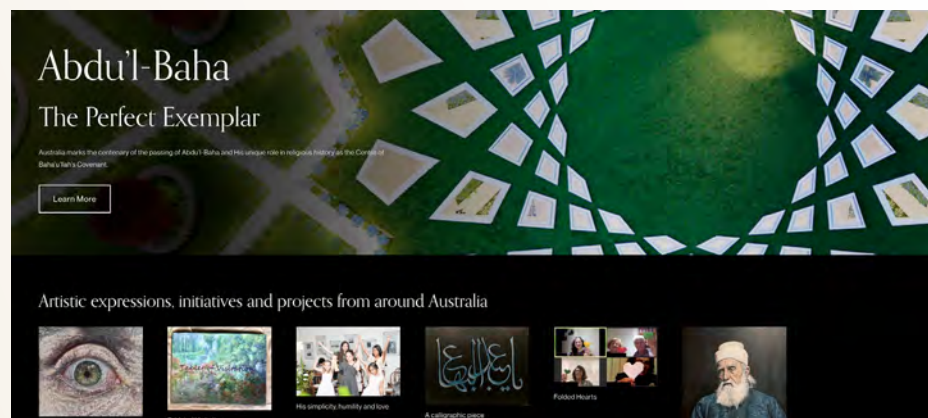
The junior youth in Wollongong collected 1,000 bottles and cans to earn a refund so they could donate to the Treak Community Centre in Cambodia.

The Wollongong Community arranged a Festival of Service to honour the centenary of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá by performing acts of service in His name. Families, friends and neighbours joined forces over the weekend following the Commemoration of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to collect and donate items and funds to four charities, hold morning prayers, and perform a working bee at the local Bahá'í Centre.

The community's youngest members found their own ways to honour 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Throughout the month of November the children engaged in a 'Walking in His Footsteps' project, which involved finding opportunities for kindness, expressed by helping out with service around the home.



Friends enjoyed the working bee at the local Bahá'í centre in Wollongong, NSW.



Explore how creatively Australians commemorated the Centenary of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá by visiting www.abdul-baha.bahai.org.au.

Children Make Significant Contributions to Commemorations



Group artwork by children from **Bull Creek Primary School, Western Australia**. The quote from Bahá'u'lláh in the artwork reads, "That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race."



A group of children in **Ballarat** create special cards to give to the Soup Bus charity as a service project for the Centenary.



The contributions that children have made to commemorate 'Abdu'l-Bahá during the Centenary of His Ascension are noteworthy. With the encouragement and support of their children's class teachers and parents, children have enthusiastically and creatively shared what they have learned about 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

But it was not just the adults who assisted the children in their activities. The junior youth in the **Monash community of Melbourne** helped children put on a live online puppet show for their community. The children told a story about generosity and another about Lua Getsinger looking after someone who was ill. In the interlude the children sang.

Three children in **Baulkham Hills in Sydney** also created a puppet show. They shared a story told by 'Abdu'l-Bahá about King Solomon which highlights the importance of truthfulness.

Children were centre-stage in the annual musical held by the Bahá'í community of **Armadale, Western Australia**, both singing and acting in the performance. In **South Australia**, children composed a song at a children's camp and performed it. Other children created 'care bags' of essential items for those in need for a local charity.

Children attending classes in the **City of Sydney Bahá'í Community** heard stories about the impact that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had on those who met Him. They then were asked to write about how they would feel meeting the Master and what they would say to Him.

In **Ballarat, Victoria**, each child in the children's classes chose a quote or prayer from 'Abdu'l-Bahá and drew a picture about it. These were compiled into a book which was given to each child as an end-of-year gift. Of the 28 contributors, nearly half were from the wider community.

Children in **Logan, Brisbane** made origami coats in their children's class after hearing the story about how 'Abdu'l-Bahá wanted His old coat, not the fine, new coat bought for Him by His wife. Image from www.abdul-baha.bahai.org.au, Copyright © 2021 Australian Bahá'í Community.

Commemorations Embedded in Community Development Process

The Universal House of Justice in a message to all National Spiritual Assemblies on 18th May 2016 set a vision for the focus of the bicentenaries of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb to be celebrated. *“... the most distinguishing feature of these bicentenaries will be a tremendous flourishing of activity by Bahá'ís and their friends in local communities”,* the Universal House of Justice said. It envisaged *“myriad artistic and cultural expressions”, “widespread celebrations that are both uplifting and reverent”*.

However, the real transformative power of the Faith is likely to be perceived more readily still if people experience how worship and meaningful service are being woven into the fabric of the lives of Bahá'ís everywhere.

Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 18 May 2016

The efforts highlighted in this article, and the efforts of many others around Australia, show that Bahá'ís are focussed on the process of expansion and consolidation and have seamlessly incorporated the Commemorations for 'Abdu'l-Bahá into the community building process.



The commemorations of the Centenary of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Australia reflected the guidance of the Universal House of Justice from 2016 and other guidance from the Supreme Body that continues to encourage Bahá'ís to reach out to the wider community in their local neighbourhoods and other contexts.

During 178 BE, there was a flourishing of commemorations for the Centenary of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that were entwined with the community-building process in neighbourhoods all around Australia. These commemorations were part of an ongoing process of sharing the Faith, involving the wider community in the core activities and the work of the Faith. In these contexts, the commemorations for 'Abdu'l-Bahá fitted in the natural rhythm of the community-building



*One neighbourhood in **Perth** held a concert at home and raised funds for charity to honour 'Abdu'l-Bahá.*



Around sixty friends of the Faith attended a commemoration for 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a park in the Adelaide suburb of Elizabeth.

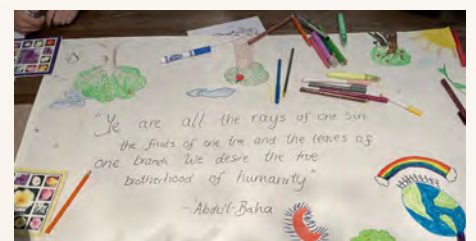
process that was already emerging or established.

Youth in the **Adelaide suburb of Elizabeth** had natural conversations with other youth and junior youth who were already participating in core activities or were part of the circle of friendship. They invited these participants to come to a park with their whole families to commemorate the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This goal was achieved when around seventy people turned up including entire families. The team are now building on this to encourage entire families to attend other Bahá'í activities together.

During the Bicentenaries over the past few years some Bahá'ís initiated a yoga class in the **Melbourne suburb of Dandenong North**. This small service project started to attract others and develop close friendships amongst the

participants. The classes continued online during the long lockdowns due to the pandemic. The classes finished with an elevated conversation or a prayer. When the conversation turned to the commemoration of the Centenary of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a Malaysian Buddhist woman offered to host the commemoration at her place to celebrate the friendship of the group and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Stories of 'Abdu'l-Bahá were shared amongst the ten people present. The commemoration was a team effort with everyone in the multicultural group contributing in some way to the event.

In Perth, Western Australia, one family held an exhibition about the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to which they invited their neighbours. Over the course of the twelve days of the exhibition, neighbours and friends gathered for



Junior youth in the Adelaide suburb of Dover Gardens commemorated 'Abdu'l-Bahá by reading stories about Him, sharing prayers and doing some artwork together.

prayers at different times and shared stories about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life. The film, *Exemplar* was also shown to visitors.

Children, junior youth and youth in the **Brisbane suburb of Inala** contributed to a video about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. In response to the question, “How do you try to be like ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?” thirteen year-old Esther said, “I share my stuff with people that need it more than I do”. Sharika, who is ten years old, said, “I give love to my mum and everyone around me”. Eight year-old Daniel gave a simple, yet profound response. “I just try to take a deep breath”, he said.

Further north, in the **hinterland of Queensland’s Sunshine Coast**, a group of neighbours had been coming together all year. They discussed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Writings on suffering. Over the course of the year they created clay lamps and discussed the symbolism behind the clay being shaped and fired in the kiln to become a vessel of light. They gathered on the night of the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with their clay lamps as a source of light and shared a shadow puppet show about how unity can be developed in the neighbourhood.

Like many neighbourhood teams around Australia, the Bahá’ís in the **Melbourne suburb of Alphington** put on a children’s festival to honour ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and to further the development of neighbourhood children’s classes that had been in process over the last eighteen months. Twenty-one children attended with their parents. The festival began with an introduction about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Holy Days commemorated as part of neighbourhood initiatives may not seem to be significant because they are often done in people’s homes. The first steps can be small but have a profound impact on others. A family in **Fremantle, Western Australia** used paper with seeds embedded in them and attached their favourite quotes from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to share with their neighbours. In the **Alice Springs locality of Hidden Valley**, the teaching team shared USB drives storing the *Exemplar* film. Most people don’t have access to the internet in this locality. This simple act allowed many people to see the film.



Angela Bryan speaking at a neighbourhood performance for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in South Hobart.

South Hobart, Tasmania

Around fifteen people including six friends of the Faith gathered in the lounge room of Hobart Bahá’í, Angela Bryan, to listen to the reading of a play titled, *Drama of the Kingdom*. The outline of the play was composed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself and given by Him to an English playwright in 1913. This playwright did not write up the play but Mary, the daughter of early Bahá’í, Lady Blomfield, developed the play and it was published in 1933.

The people attending the play have been involved in the neighbourhood development initiatives of three households in South Hobart. One of these key initiators is a woman who participated in study circles facilitated by Angela Bryan about ten years ago.

In a systematic reflection about the evening, Angela said, “The short excerpt from the play and minimal acting required meant the friends with little experience felt confident to participate. Home visits to readers for rehearsals built confidence”, she observed. Time allocated at the end of the play reading for questions and reflections lead to some uplifting conversation.

Angela was not only excited by the response to the play, but the possibilities for the future. She is negotiating the use of another space in the neighbourhood for a repeat event, but she also has a wider vision for the future in the neighbourhood through other core activities.

Broome, Western Australia

The Bahá’ís in Broome have been holding children’s classes at a local park. Most of the Bahá’ís do not come from Broome, but Elaine Wiggan is a local and has been instrumental in connecting other locals to the Faith. The children’s classes now attract around twenty children.

As a service project to honour ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Broome Bahá’ís cooked damper and put it in paper bags which were covered with a quote from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and drawings from the children. The bags of damper were delivered to as many neighbours as possible. The children and the junior youth were the ones who knocked on the doors and had conversations with the households as they gave the damper away.

“I am really proud of it and really happy”, said Elaine, but she does not dwell on past achievements as she has a clear vision of the next steps in the process. “Next year should be better than this year. I’m heading to Perth for summer school, then I will talk to parents and get them involved in Ruhi books.” Aside from expanding the reach of the Faith into the lives of Broome locals, Elaine enjoys sharing her culture with the Broome Bahá’ís, most of whom are pioneers. “I take the Broome Bahá’ís out of Broome and do a Ruhi book, make damper, johnny cakes, go fishing and share culture”, said Elaine.



Local Broome Bahá’í Elaine Wiggan cooked damper to distribute to families in a Broome neighbourhood.



Neighbours came together to commemorate 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Melbourne suburb of Croydon Hills.

Croydon Hills, Melbourne

Prior to the pandemic and throughout the on and off lockdowns experienced since, Elizabeth Wilson has been conscientiously getting to know her neighbours and reaching out to them in her efforts to build up neighbourly bonds of friendship.

In between lockdowns, the children, living either side next door to 'Betty' (as she is fondly called) asked if they could come over to knit or cook or just come and hang out. This opened a space for the parents to have a much-needed break.

To commemorate the Centenary of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Elizabeth opened up her front yard earlier in the year, inviting the children to help her create a garden in which they could all

come and contribute. She purchased each child a little planter box which they could tend. She also added a central little space for them to share so they could grow fresh herbs which they can pick for use in their cooking.

Later in the year, Elizabeth created a space in the carport where the children can play and parents can meet and have a chat. This has paved the way for dialogue about the Bahá'í Faith, the spiritual teachings and the efforts Bahá'ís make to constructively apply the principles of the Faith in their daily lives.

Elizabeth invited all the residents in the court to attend a sausage sizzle to help celebrate her 'Children's Garden of Kindness' on Sunday 28th November

2021, honouring of the Centenary of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Elizabeth shared with her neighbours the inspiring service and loving kindness that His example continues to have in the world today. It was a warm and well attended event which brought together the neighbours in the street and further aided in building their bonds of friendship.

The decorated cupcakes on the table were part of the initiative to have the children assist Elizabeth and contribute to the celebration. Lasting over five hours and with many uplifting conversations, this event has opened a path to introduce further unifying activities to this neighbourhood.



Mount Gambier, South Australia

Inspired by the example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the junior youth in Mount Gambier, South Australia have worked with the management of the Valley Lake Conservation Park during the year to raise funds for plants for an indigenous garden as well as mulching, weeding, planting and installing plant guards in other areas of the park. The project involved the community, friends and neighbours.

Read more about this story by searching for 'Mount Gambier' at www.abdul-baha.bahai.org.au.

A Life Connecting Ancient Lores with Bahá'u'lláh

Wagan Guburu, also known as Philip Obah, was the Senior Lore Man of the Wadja People of Central Queensland. Wagan was on a spiritual journey and quest on behalf of his ancestors to revive his people's lore and culture, to address justice and achieve human rights. Along his journey, Wagan became a Lore Man through his wife's people, the Walmajarri and Ngarti tribal groups from the southeast Kimberley, learning the ancient traditional lores and principles.

Wagan was also introduced to the Bahá'í Faith in 1996 while spending time with Colin "Duck" Daisy. They were watching a video of the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel, and Wagan said, "I'd like to go there one day". Duck replied, "You can't go there, you not a Bahá'í", in a joking way, and Wagan asked, "How do you become a Bahá'í?", and Duck said, "You have to sign a declaration card", and on the spot, Wagan became a Bahá'í. Wagan used to ask himself if he was standing at the right gate to enter heaven, however, on the video they were watching, there was a gate, and Duck said, "There now, that's that physical gate". Then and there, Wagan knew in his heart, that he was at the right one.

Wagan was a highly respected elder and Senior Lore Man, known for his leadership, cultural and spiritual knowledge, and wisdom. He wholly committed himself to the social and spiritual development of the wider Australian community, including the Bahá'í communities like Rockhampton QLD, Woorabinda (Wadja) QLD, the Kimberley region W.A., Townsville region QLD, and all the places he travelled.

He had the opportunity to serve on the National Spiritual Assembly and became a member of the Tjukurrpa Advisory Group to the National Assembly. His works in the Bahá'í community included linking the ancient lores with the new laws of Bahá'u'lláh, conducting deepenings on indigenous teachings and how they link and intersect with the Bahá'í Faith, explaining how Indigenous Lore has been renewed by the vibrant energies of Bahá'u'lláh, as well as addressing

justice and human rights for his people through social and spiritual principles, which is a human rights issue, rather than a political issue.

In order to bring together the unity of the ancient lores with the new laws of Bahá'u'lláh, it was necessary to welcome the Bahá'í Faith to country. This allows the whole tribe to recognise Bahá'u'lláh as the new Manifestation for today. This has been done for the Wadja, Warraburra, Biria, Manburra and Yuru peoples. Wagan's vision was to do this welcoming all over this land mass, allowing for the spiritual energies to heal and unite the peoples, and to register the tribes under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh's New World Order. Now that he has progressed to the Abhá Kingdom, it is extremely important to continue his vision as this is the key to connecting and engaging with the Indigenous peoples, both socially and spiritually to rejuvenate this whole country.

He devoted his life to building the unity of the human race and the upliftment of the Aboriginal people. He will be greatly missed.

— *Kugaman Banbari (Phillip Jnr)*

Wagan Guburu's book, *Bahá'í Faith: An Australian Aboriginal Perspective*, is available from *Bahá'í Books Australia*.



Wagan Guburu served as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly 2000–2003. Photo supplied and published with permission of his son, Kugaman Banbari.

A Humble Life of Service

My husband Robert Mannell was born on 18 March, 1952 in Sydney, Australia. He grew up in Bankstown with his mother Jean, his father Hedley and his brothers, Ross and Phillip. Robert was the oldest of three brothers.

After spending his formative years in Bankstown, attending school and being a Scout, where Robert had many adventures with his boyhood friend Phillip, Robert attended the University of New South Wales. In the summer of 1975 when he was attending the University's open day Robert found himself at the Bahá'í Society information table. He listened with great interest to hear about the Bahá'í Faith and asked to become a member of the Bahá'í Faith straight away; it was what

he had been searching for. Within a very short time Robert was on his way to Papua New Guinea with a travel teaching team to bring the Bahá'í Faith to many villagers who opened their hearts when they heard about the Bahá'í Faith. He was to travel teach to Papua New Guinea on a second trip one year later.

Robert returned home to Sydney invigorated by the success of the travel teaching in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. He then went on to become a member of various committees and Local Spiritual Assemblies in Sydney and in Queensland. Robert had a lovely singing voice and became a member of the Sydney Bahá'í Temple Choir for many years. Robert was also on the

Archives Committee and spent many years in the basement of the Temple keeping order with his fellow archivists, Allan Waters and Colin Brest, amongst others.

For over twenty years Robert was a Lecturer in Speech and Hearing at Macquarie University and was involved with the Bahá'í Society there.

Our lovely Robert touched so many lives; people loved him very much and he loved everyone back very much. My

wonderful husband and I were married for 39 years. I was so lucky to have been married to such a bright, funny and kind man, who was also my best friend. Our son Reuben William Jonas Mannell and I miss him very much. Robert also leaves behind a grandson Leon, whom he was lucky to meet before he passed away due to complications with early onset Alzheimer's on Monday 5th July, 2021.

—Hailey Mannell

Remembering Our Friend

Peter Warner's sudden passing in a boating accident in April 2021 made headline news in Australia as had, indeed, several incidents of his life. Keen sailors remembered Peter as a three-time line-honours winner of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race—considered to be one of the most difficult yacht races in the world. However, it was Peter's profound relationship with Tonga for which he is most remembered.

Peter Warner caught the world's attention in 1966 when he rescued six teenage Tongan boys who had been marooned for months on an uninhabited Tongan island. In his 30 years in Tonga, Peter gained the love and respect of Tongan royalty and commoner alike.

Peter became a Bahá'í later in life and instigated the establishment of Tonga's first Bahá'í school which opened in 1996. This school is now the renowned Ocean of Light International School. After consultation with the country's National Spiritual Assembly, Peter was asked to work with the Tongan government to facilitate the application to open the school. Peter was heavily involved in many aspects of establishing the school: working with the Tongan Bahá'ís to recruit the first principal and teachers; finding a suitable building and fitting it out; as well as helping to deal with all manner of bumps and hurdles that are encountered when founding a school. Two years after it was opened, Peter returned to Australia, but he continued his support for the school from afar.

"[The school] remains the pride and joy of the Bahá'í Community of Tonga, offering a high standard of moral and academic education to more than 350 students (in 2015) from diverse backgrounds", Peter wrote in his autobiography, *Ocean of Light*, years

later. "It is an institution where students develop a desire to learn and acquire the capacity to serve their community."

Peter Warner's contribution to Tonga was evident from the eulogies delivered during his memorial service. Louise Waterhouse, Honorary Consul General of the Kingdom of Tonga, spoke on behalf of the royal family of Tonga about the special relationship that developed between Peter and the Tongan people. Ms Waterhouse said that, in portraying the six youth he rescued over fifty years ago, Peter "shone a light on Tongan values" of being "humble by nature and one with nature", emphasising how much their Tongan heritage had helped them "not only to survive but to thrive" on their uninhabited island. Ms Waterhouse also read out a letter of condolence from the High Commissioner of Tonga to Australia, Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Angelika Lātūfuipeka, written on behalf of her father King Tupou VI.

The most moving eulogy came from one of the rescued youth, Sione Filipe Totau, known as Mano, who spoke with deep emotion of his life-long friendship with Peter Raymond Warner. Peter had not only rescued the Tongan teenagers, but he took an active interest in them thereafter. Mano talked about how Peter had sent them to Australia to further their education. Peter also set up a seamanship-training institute for Tongan youth to crew his own fleet of ships, at the same time ensuring for them future careers as captains, ships officers, and harbourmasters. The world had opened up for Mano as he went "from ship to ship" on Peter's fleet of freighters "from Australia to America, from Australia to Europe, from Australia to—everywhere!" Just last year, Mano asked Peter about the name "Ocean of Light". In answer, Peter described "the beauty, clear and

When a soul has in it the life of the spirit, then does it bring forth good fruit and become a Divine tree.

—'Abdu'l-Bahá



For many years Peter Warner lived in Tonga and helped to establish its first Bahá'í school, now known as the Ocean of Light International School.

marvellous, in everything of the ocean", words that obviously spoke straight to Mano's heart.

Dariusz Forghani first met Peter Warner in 1985 before Peter had become a Bahá'í. "Whilst dressed like a distinguished executive, he had a warmth and openness that instantly earned him my admiration and respect", Dariusz recalled. Several years later he was surprised to meet Peter again at a Bahá'í function in Tahmoor, near Yerrinbool, NSW. "He said to me with great enthusiasm, 'I am a Bahá'í now'. I embraced him with much wonderment, joy and warmth."

Peter also served on the Board of the Yerrinbool Bahá'í Centre of Learning during the late 1990s. Fazel Naghdy reflected on working with Peter while serving on the Board. "My recollection is that Peter had a very gentle and agreeable manner. He would express his views with extreme consideration and courtesy, ensuring that no one was offended."

Peter Warner died whilst sailing in northern New South Wales. He was ninety years old. His legacy will live on in both Tonga and Australia due to his work in education and sailing, the friendships he made and the many lives he touched.

—Yvonne Ingrid Woźniak

“... he inspired countless hearts and minds”

Well-known Australian Bahá'í actor and broadcaster, Phillip Hinton passed away at home in Wollongong, shortly after being diagnosed with mesothelioma.

He was surrounded by love in his final days, with wife Ann and close family by his side, and the rest of the Hinton family, interstate and overseas, linked through daily prayer sessions on Zoom. An extraordinary outpouring of loving messages, prayers, and stories from hundreds of his friends around the world were received—a reminder of the extraordinary life that Phillip led, and the countless people he touched and inspired during his life. The family's deep sorrow was tempered by witnessing his unwavering faith in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Fittingly, the last time his distinctive, rich voice was heard was a few days before his passing, when the family gathered (in-person and online) to pray. To everyone's surprise, given his condition at that time, he sat upright and declaimed loudly, and from memory, his favourite prayer of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's, which begins, “O Thou incomparable God! O Thou Lord of the Kingdom!” and asks God to assist those gathered, saying, “... Be Thou their supporter and their helper, and in the wilderness, the mountain, the valley, the forests, the prairies and the seas, be Thou their confidant...”

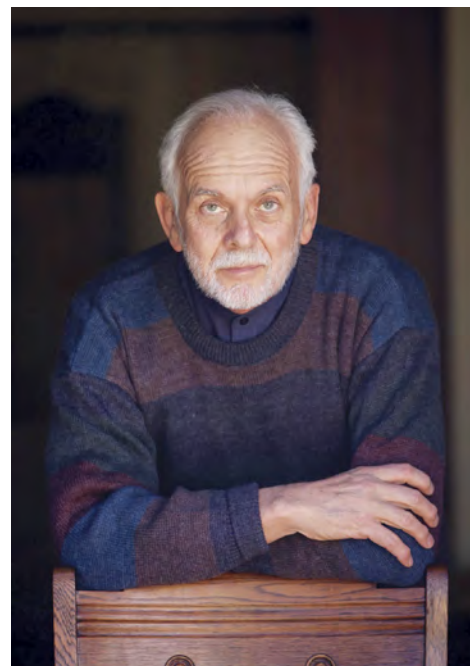
Phillip led a rich and adventurous life, filled with love, humour and service. Professionally, he forged a successful career as an actor in theatre, film, television and radio, in both the United Kingdom and in Australia after his young family immigrated in 1975. His career was distinguished for its extraordinary diversity, highlighted by years spent as a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company, in many successful productions in London's West End, and in countless well-known television shows and films in the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. In the 1980s and 1990s he became one of the most successful voice-over artists in Australia, his distinctive voice ever-present on television and radio across the country.

But it was in combining his career as an artist with his life as a Bahá'í that led to both his most satisfying artistic experiences, and a distinctive and powerful path of service. It was often observed by those inspired by his artistic work and Bahá'í service, that he managed to never compromise his artistic standards when serving as a Bahá'í, nor compromise his beliefs as a Bahá'í when working professionally as an actor.

His journey as both an actor and a Bahá'í began in the turmoil of Apartheid-era South Africa, where he grew up. His first professional acting job aged 14 was in radio drama, and it was working in radio that led to his meeting the extraordinary American Bahá'í pioneer Lowell Johnson. In a recent letter, the National Assembly of Australia recounted:

Phillip's uncompromising commitment to the fundamental tenet of unity in diversity was born in the crucible of injustice as he witnessed the pernicious effects of racial prejudice when a child in Apartheid-ravaged South Africa. Propelled by a yearning for social justice, the idealistic youth came across the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh through an American Bahá'í who masterfully met his needs for answers to the myriad questions in his heart and welcomed him into the warm embrace of the multicultural and diverse Bahá'í community. Phillip found a home in this community that lived by the light of Bahá'u'lláh's injunction to love one another, a light that shone warm and bright in the darkness of division prevalent in 1960s South Africa.

Inspired by the loving advice of two treasured friends, Hands of the Cause of God Abu'l-Qasim Faizi and William Sears, Phillip dedicated his life to telling the stories of the heroes of his beloved Faith on the stage. Shoghi Effendi wrote, “The day will come when the Cause will spread like wildfire when its spirit and teachings will be presented on the stage or in art and literature as a whole.” Phillip lived his truth and honed his craft to awaken noble sentiments among the mass of the people, touching



“... he inspired countless hearts and minds”, wrote the Universal House of Justice after the passing of Phillip Hinton

many around the globe by his portrayal of Howard McNutt in the drama *Heralds of the Covenant* and Howard Colby Ives in his play *Portals to Freedom*.

Phillip never forgot the love and unity he first experienced in the Bahá'í community of Cape Town, and over the decades, each family home that he and Ann established, whether in Epsom in the United Kingdom, in Sydney, or later in Wollongong, was filled with joyous gatherings of new and old friends, and frequently housed those in need, some of whom stayed for months on end.

The Universal House of Justice wrote recently of Phillip, “The Universal House of Justice was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of much-loved Phillip Hinton, devoted follower of Bahá'u'lláh. His manifold services to the Cause of God, rendered over decades, are recalled with great admiration. As an avid teacher of the Faith and by drawing on his artistic talents he inspired countless hearts and minds.”

Phillip is buried at Helensburgh Cemetery near Wollongong. A Bahá'í for more than sixty years, he leaves behind a living testimony to his life's dedication to abolish prejudice – seven (soon to be eight) multi-racial grandchildren of English, Botswanan, Iranian, Sri Lankan and Chinese descent.

– Simon Hinton on behalf of the Hinton family

“For the love of Thy beauty”



Helen Gordon expressed her faith and shared it with others through her art such as this piece she created a couple of years ago.

Helen Gordon, née Mitchell, departed this world on 3 July 2021, after a vibrant life of 75 years.

Helen asked “For the love of Thy beauty” to be inscribed on her gravestone. This phrase was revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the context of those leaving their homelands to travel to teach the Faith. Helen pioneered to many parts of Western Australia—the Kimberleys, Pilbara, Great Southern and desert areas.

She was inspired by the beauty she saw all around her—in Bahá’u’lláh, the arts and in Aboriginal communities.

She brought these together in service with disadvantaged women and children through art and craft activities.

Helen wrote, “I believe the artistic process is essential to the development of the human spirit. It can give birth to new thoughts and ideas, new ways of looking at the world, new perceptions; heal the wounded soul; be a channel for the creative mind; and, when directed towards a common purpose, become a strong force for the uniting of diverse peoples”. She equipped herself for this by undertaking training in occupational therapy and art therapy.

Her life was full of highlights. She grew up in Perth and embraced the Faith in 1970. This was in the early days of the Faith in WA and Helen served on the first Local Spiritual Assembly in Perth. She married Don Gordon when they were both on working holidays in Scotland.

On returning to Western Australia, Helen was alongside her husband in his social work in Laverton, Derby and Kununurra. Helen also spent three months in Micronesia to assist in the election of the National Spiritual Assembly.

Then Helen and Don lived for two decades in Narrogin, WA, where her three children grew up, followed by three years in the remote WA Aboriginal community of Blackstone and a decade in the mining town of Tom Price in the Pilbara. Her final decade has been in Kelmscott, Perth where, for the first time, she was part of a large Bahá’í community rather than an isolated believer.

Helen promoted the Faith wherever she lived. She did this by tutoring Ruhí books and Bahá’í activities, but mostly by the example of her life. She encouraged other isolated believers by visiting many in small country towns, by telephone link-ups and newsletters—firstly “Bush Eagle” and then “Bush Honey” through the Outback Project. She brought people together and enhanced personal growth by running activity groups, teaching in TAFE, setting up art centres and arranging community arts projects. This included murals and spinifex paper.

She also developed her own artwork. She explored ways of expressing complex concepts in a visual form, in how the arts can facilitate spiritual understanding and growth.

Her greatest joy was seeing beautiful developments in the lives of her eight grandchildren and children Joseph, Ben and Ruth. All are active in the Faith.

An exhibition of Helen’s arts and crafts will be held in Narrogin in July.

More information about Helen’s life, service and Bahá’í activities may be found by writing to don.gordon1@hotmail.com

— Don Gordon



The Australian Bahá'í

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An aerial view of participants arriving at
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'Abdu'l-Bahá walking up Haparsim Street,
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