

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

March 29, 2012

To the American Bahá'í community

Dear Bahá'í friends,

In its Ridván 2010 message to the Bahá'ís of the world, the Universal House of Justice observed that as the Faith continues to progress at the level of the cluster, the friends will find themselves drawn further into the life of society, resulting in greater involvement in social action and participation in the prevalent discourses of society. The Supreme Body stated:

At the level of the cluster, involvement in public discourse can range from an act as simple as introducing Bahá'í ideas into everyday conversation to more formal activities such as the preparation of articles and attendance at gatherings, dedicated to themes of social concern—climate change and the environment, governance and human rights, to mention a few.

We would like to take this opportunity to share with you three examples of ways in which the Bahá'í community, in the United States and elsewhere, has been engaging in social discourses, specifically in the area of climate change.

- Last fall, the Canadian Bahá'í Community joined dozens of other faith communities and leaders in calling for new approaches to address the challenge of climate change. The “Canadian Interfaith Call for Leadership and Action on Climate Change” noted that “the growing crisis of climate change needs to be met by solutions that draw upon the moral and spiritual resources of the world’s religious traditions.” The declaration calls for “a cultural transformation that brings the values of sustainability to the forefront of public consciousness – and into more responsible practices.”
- In December, the Australian Bahá'í community hosted the 15th annual conference of the International Environmental Forum (a Bahá'í-inspired organization) on the theme of “Ethical Responses to Climate Change: Individual, Community, Institutions.” Attended by more than one hundred Bahá'ís and colleagues, the conference included presentations by a member of the Continental Board of Counselors and a member of the Australian National Spiritual Assembly. The conference statement notes that, “Climate change should not be viewed...as a partisan political issue, but rather as a summons for humanity to unite.”
- Most recently, the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States joined others in endorsing, “*A Call for Interfaith Actions on Climate Change April 21-27 in Washington, DC and Nationwide during Earth Week 2012*”. The call expresses the urgency of addressing the climate issue now and calls for action based upon three widely held moral principles: to prevent human suffering and death; to promote equity and justice; and, to

exercise stewardship of God's creation. It concludes by suggesting participation in activities in support of the call during this year's Earth Week, from April 21 to 27.

In response to this latest item, we invite you to consider ways in which you may engage with others in acts of service related to themes of environmental stewardship and justice during Earth Week, April 21–27. This could involve participating in activities already planned by organizations in your locality, or initiating an activity in collaboration with others. The links at the end of this letter provide some useful background information. Engaging in discourses and working side-by-side to improve conditions within our communities during Earth Week will also provide opportunities to establish and deepen friendships and help to strengthen the fabric of life in our neighborhoods and in the wider community.

The following passage by the Universal House of Justice provides perspective on the times in which we are living:

We are told by Shoghi Effendi that two great processes are at work in the world: the great Plan of God, tumultuous in its progress, working through mankind as a whole, tearing down barriers to world unity and forging humankind into a unified body in the fires of suffering and experience. This process will produce, in God's due time, the Lesser Peace, the political unification of the world. Mankind at that time can be likened to a body that is unified but without life. The second process, the task of breathing life into this unified body—of creating true unity and spirituality culminating in the Most Great Peace—is that of the Bahá'ís, who are labouring consciously, with detailed instructions and continuing Divine guidance, to erect the fabric of the Kingdom of God on earth, into which they call their fellow men, thus conferring upon them eternal life.

We wish you every success as you labor in the fields of service in your communities and strive, with faith and devotion, to bring about the betterment of the world.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary

Selected Bahá'í-related resources on climate change:

- Australian Bahá'í community-hosted conference, report: [“Ethical Responses to Climate Change: Individual, Community, and Institutions”](#)
- [Canadian Interfaith Call For Leadership and Action on Climate Change](#)
- [A \[U.S.\] Call for Interfaith Action on Climate Change April 21-27](#)
- Bahá'í International Community resource paper, [“Seizing the Opportunity: Redefining the Challenge of Climate Change”](#)

Other resources of interest:

- [Earth Stewardship Resources for People of Faith | Earth Day Network](#)
- [Interfaith Power and Light - a religious response to global warming](#)
- [Earth: the Operator's Manual](#) online version of a one-hour PBS special on climate change and sustainable energy