

## 1 PREPARATION FOR THE DEMANDS OF THE DECADES TO COME

2 Bahá'u'lláh has drawn the circle of unity, He has made a design for the uniting of  
3 all the peoples, and for the gathering of them all under the shelter of the tent of  
4 universal unity. This is the work of the Divine Bounty, and we must all strive with  
5 heart and soul until we have the reality of unity in our midst, and as we work, so  
6 will strength be given unto us. Leave all thought of self, and strive only to be  
7 obedient and submissive to the Will of God. In this way only shall we become  
8 citizens of the Kingdom of God, and attain unto life everlasting.

9 *'Abdul-Bahá', Paris Talks-Beauty and Harmony in Diversity*

### 10 11 ***Strengthening the pattern of action***

12 Before long, there forms a nucleus of friends in a cluster who are working and  
13 consulting together and arranging activities. For the process of growth to advance  
14 further, the number of people sharing this commitment must rise, and their  
15 capacity for undertaking systematic action within the framework of the Plan must  
16 correspondingly increase. And similar to the development of a living organism,  
17 growth can occur quickly when the right conditions are in place.

18 Foremost among these conditions is an institute process gaining in strength,  
19 given its centrality to fostering the movement of populations. The friends who  
20 have begun studying institute materials, and are also investing their energies in  
21 organizing children's classes, junior youth groups, gatherings for collective  
22 worship, or other related activities, are being assisted to proceed further through  
23 the sequence of courses, while the number of those starting their study continues  
24 to rise. With the flow of participants through institute courses and into the field of  
25 action being maintained, the company of those who are sustaining the growth  
26 process expands. Progress relies to a large extent on the quality of the efforts of  
27 those serving as tutors.

28 At this early stage, most of them might still be drawn from other clusters, but at  
29 the same time, a few local friends are being raised up who, as their capacity for  
30 action increases, begin to help others study the materials of the institute. Efforts  
31 to usher in the first cadre of tutors from the cluster should steer a path between  
32 two undesirable outcomes.

- 33 1. If individuals proceed through the courses of the institute too hastily, the  
34 capacity to serve is not sufficiently developed; conversely,

36 2. if study is **overly prolonged**, the process is robbed of the dynamism  
37 **essential to its advancement.**

38 In differing circumstances, creative solutions have been used to achieve the  
39 necessary balance, ensuring that, within a reasonable period, some among those  
40 residing in a cluster are enabled to serve as tutors. Of course, **it is not the**  
41 **provision of training by itself that brings about progress.**

42 Efforts to build capacity fall short if arrangements are not swiftly made to  
43 accompany individuals into the arena of service. **An adequate level of support**  
44 **extends far beyond encouraging words.** When preparing to take on an unfamiliar  
45 task, working alongside a person with some experience increases consciousness of  
46 what is possible. An assurance of practical help can give a tentative venturer the  
47 courage to initiate an activity for the first time. Souls then advance their  
48 understanding together, humbly sharing the insights each possesses at a given  
49 moment and eagerly seeking to learn from fellow wayfarers on the path of  
50 service. Hesitation recedes and capacity develops to the point where an individual  
51 can carry out activities independently and, in turn, accompany others on the same  
52 path.

53 Where the institute is concerned, the flow of participants through its courses  
54 creates a growing need for them to be systematically supported as they begin  
55 serving as teachers of children, as animators, and as tutors. Opportunities  
56 naturally arise for those among the core of believers who have already gained a  
57 measure of experience in the educational activities to assist those who are newer  
58 to them.

59 An individual's readiness to help others move forward in their efforts to serve  
60 might lead to specific responsibilities being assigned to him or her. In this manner,  
61 coordinators of each of the three stages of the educational process gradually  
62 emerge as needs demand.

63 **Their actions are always motivated by**

- 64 1. **a desire to see capacity develop in others and**
- 65 2. **to foster friendships founded on cooperation and reciprocity.**

66 Clearly, the institute process raises capacity for a broad range of undertakings;  
67 from the earliest courses, participants are encouraged to visit their friends at their  
68 homes and study a prayer together or share with them a theme from the Bahá'í  
69 teachings. Arrangements for supporting the friends in these endeavours, which

70 may have been largely informal, eventually prove inadequate, signalling the need  
71 for an Area Teaching Committee to appear.

72 Its principal focus is the mobilization of individuals, often through the formation of  
73 teams, for the continued spread of the pattern of activity in a cluster. Its members  
74 come to see everyone as a potential collaborator in a collective enterprise, and  
75 they appreciate their own part in nurturing a spirit of common purpose in the  
76 community. With a Committee in place, the efforts already under way to convene  
77 gatherings for worship, to carry out home visits, and to teach the Faith can now  
78 expand considerably.

79 *Universal House of Justice, 29 December 2015*

80

81 **The Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, described by 'Abdu'l-Baha as "one of the most vital**  
82 **institutions of the world", weds two essential, inseparable aspects of Baha'i life:**  
83 **worship and service.** The union of these two is also reflected in the coherence  
84 that exists among the community-building features of the Plan, particularly the  
85 burgeoning of a devotional spirit that finds expression in gatherings for prayer and  
86 an educational process that builds capacity for service to humanity. The  
87 correlation of worship and service is especially pronounced in those clusters  
88 around the world where Baha'i communities have significantly grown in size and  
89 vitality, and where engagement in social action is apparent.

90 *Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2012*

91

92 Only three years remain of a quarter-century effort that began in 1996 focused on  
93 a single goal: a significant advance in the process of entry by troops. **At Ridván**  
94 **2021, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh will embark on a Plan lasting a single year.**  
95 **Brief, but pregnant with portent, this one-year endeavour will begin a new wave**  
96 **of Plans bearing the ark of the Cause into the third century of the Bahá'í Era.**

97 During the course of this auspicious twelvemonth, the Bahá'í world's  
98 commemoration of the centenary of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá will include a  
99 special gathering at the Bahá'í World Centre to which representatives of every  
100 National Spiritual Assembly and every Regional Bahá'í Council will be invited. This,  
101 however, is to be but the first in a sequence of events that will prepare the  
102 believers for the demands of the decades to come.

103 The following January, the elapse of one hundred years since the first public  
104 reading of the Master's Will and Testament will be the occasion for a conference

105 in the Holy Land bringing together the Continental Boards of Counsellors and all  
 106 members of the Auxiliary Boards for Protection and Propagation. The spiritual  
 107 energy released at these two historic gatherings must then be carried to all the  
 108 friends of God in every land in which they reside. For this purpose, a series of  
 109 conferences will be convened worldwide in the months that follow, a catalyst to  
 110 the multi-year endeavour that shall succeed the coming One Year Plan.

111 ***Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2018***

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113 Racism is a profound deviation from the standard of true morality. It deprives a  
 114 portion of humanity of the opportunity to cultivate and express the full range of  
 115 their capability and to live a meaningful and flourishing life, while blighting the  
 116 progress of the rest of humankind. It cannot be rooted out by contest and conflict.  
 117 It must be supplanted by the establishment of just relationships among  
 118 individuals, communities, and institutions of society that will uplift all and will not  
 119 designate anyone as “other”.

120 The change required is not merely social and economic, but above all moral and  
 121 spiritual. Within the context of the framework governing your activities, it is  
 122 necessary to carefully examine the forces unfolding around you to determine  
 123 where your energies might reinforce the most promising initiatives, what you  
 124 should avoid, and how you might lend a distinctive contribution.

125 It is not possible for you to effect the transformation envisioned by Bahá’u’lláh  
 126 merely by adopting the perspectives, practices, concepts, criticisms, and language  
 127 of contemporary society. Your approach, instead, will be distinguished by

- 128 • *maintaining* a humble posture of learning,
- 129 • *weighing alternatives* in the light of His teachings,
- 130 • *consulting* to harmonize differing views and shape collective action, and
- 131 • *marching forward* with unbreakable unity in serried lines.

132 ***Universal House of Justice, 22 July 2020 to the Bahá’is of the United States***

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135 ***All the highlighting, numbers, bullets, and extra paragraphs have been added for***  
 136 ***virtual study, but no words have been added.***