



*five*  
YEAR PLAN  
2001-2006

*South  
Epoch*



# Five Year Plan

2001–2006

## Vision

---

*With humble hearts and heads bowed in gratitude to Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God, we offer this Plan as a testament of our commitment to advance His Sacred Cause of universal love and salvation.*

The Bahá'í Teachings proclaim that God has given the United States a spiritual destiny to help reshape the world. The American nation will evolve, we are told, through purifying tests and trials to become a land of spiritual distinction and leadership, a champion of justice and unity among all peoples and nations, and a powerful servant of the Cause of everlasting peace.

### MISSION OF THE AMERICAN BAHÁ'ÍS

American Bahá'ís have a “parallel mission” to assist the completion of the successive stages of the Divine Plan, which is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s grand design for the spiritual conquest of the planet. Our mission calls for us to transform our souls and our ways of life and to spread the Divine Fragrance of Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings among all people, thus inspiring a closer relationship to God. We are asked to build institutions that will nurture the emergence of a new kind of community life, a life that requires unity, love and service. Our aims are to banish the darkness of ignorant prejudice, to help souls overcome misery and pain and to invite all people to a universal fellowship of service and love. Day by day

we must strive to carry out in our lives the noble ideals of our Faith and in so doing to advance the spiritual missions of our nation and our community.

Over the past five years, our research has shown that tens of millions of Americans are searching for spiritual truth. Hundreds of thousands are investigating the Bahá'í Faith and many more will follow. They want what we want, a sense of spiritual purpose and encouragement, a happy and joyful community life, support for our families, spiritual education for our children, and freedom from prejudice, inequality and injustice. As Shoghi Effendi explained, "people crave love, not an imitation but the embodiment of a bright and shining ideal."

RECEPTIVITY  
TO THE  
FAITH

The purpose of the Five Year Plan is to build a system to meet these needs and in so doing to expand our capacity as individual believers, communities and institutions to love, serve, teach and embrace all souls who are searching for spiritual truth.

PURPOSE  
OF THE  
PLAN

The Bahá'í Writings promise that if we are "truly united" and promote the "essential purpose" of our Faith with an "all-unifying love" that "so great a light will shine forth from your faces as to reach the highest heavens, . . . your aims and purposes will exert their influence upon the great and mighty nations . . . and ye will discover yourselves to be . . . marshals of the army of peace, and princes of the forces of light, and stars shining from the horizon of perfection, and brilliant lamps shedding their radiance upon men."

UNITY  
KEY TO  
SUCCESS

Some may feel this task is too great. But our Teachings confirm that we are not alone. Bahá'u'lláh has pledged the assistance of divine forces, if we but call upon them. Foremost among these are the spiritual powers of unity and love, without which we are paralyzed. To assure our success, every believer must foster "a greater realization of the power of Bahá'u'lláh to reinforce the efforts of those who serve Him, of His promise to do so, and of the impotence of all our deeds without this divine assistance." Any assessment of our prospects is "entirely misleading if it does not take this supreme power into consideration." Constant reliance upon Bahá'u'lláh will enable us to formulate audacious plans and carry them out with confidence no matter how great the obstacles.

### *Our Spiritual Mission in The Five Year Plan*

The January 9, 2001 letter of the Universal House of Justice gives us the vision and framework of the Five Year Plan. Advancing the process of entry by troops through the systematic efforts of individual believers, Bahá'í communities, and Bahá'í institutions is the Plan's central aim. Racial unity and gender equality remain essential themes of our work.

In preparing the Plan, the National Spiritual Assembly enjoyed the benefit of a series of meetings with the Continental Counselors, including one with their Auxiliary Boards. We are deeply grateful for their wise advice and loving encouragement. We are also indebted to the Regional Bahá'í Councils whose tireless efforts to carry out

the National Plan in the regions were indispensable to our progress and learning. Their analyses of regional conditions and their recommendations for the Five Year Plan offered new and invaluable insights. We salute the National Teaching Committee for their tireless labors, their expert study and strategic advice on the patterns and process of religious growth throughout the United States and within the Bahá'í community and for their innovative thinking about advancing the process of systematic growth.

We are profoundly grateful for the priceless opportunity to meet in plenum with all of these distinguished institutions and agencies, to listen and learn from each other, strengthen our unity and increase our capacity to bring Bahá'u'lláh's Healing Message to millions who are searching for spiritual truth.

The Five Year Plan calls for us to begin a process of goal setting, action, evaluation and learning. The goals set should be evaluated at least once every six months in consultations of Local Spiritual Assemblies with the believers in their communities. Such practice will help us learn from our efforts and continuously refine them. In areas without Local Assemblies, the friends should follow the same pattern in consultation with one another. In areas where clusters of inter-community partnerships are working on growth programs, arrangements should be made for evaluation no less than once every six months. Auxiliary Board members and their assistants are eager to assist Assemblies and groups in carrying out the requirements of the Plan. We encourage you to call upon them.

## *Central Features of The Five Year Plan*

---

- Advancing the process of entry by troops
  - a. Collaboration of the institutions in systematic programs of growth
  - b. Carrying out the National Teaching Plan including:
    - i. Maturation of training institutes
    - ii. Formation of clusters by local communities
    - iii. Initiation of area growth programs where conditions are favorable
  - c. Enhancing seeker follow-up
  - d. Doubling the core of active believers
  
- Integrate and nurture children in the life of the Cause
  - a. Advance education and training for Bahá'í children, junior youth, and youth
  - b. Engage children, junior youth, and youth in consultation with their Assemblies about their cares, hopes, and plans
  - c. Enhance the range and quality of activities for children and youth
  - d. Register Bahá'í children on the National Membership Rolls
  
- Cultivate individual initiative
  - a. Promote home front and international pioneering and traveling teaching
  - b. Include the arts in community activities
  - c. Train institutions in nurturing individual initiative
  - d. Encourage universal participation in the Bahá'í Funds

- e. Complete the goals of the Kingdom project
- Promote the spiritual transformation of individual believers, Bahá'í communities, and Bahá'í institutions
    - a. Hold devotional gatherings
    - b. Enhance the spiritual and social vitality of the Nineteen Day Feast
    - c. Encourage daily prayer and daily study of the Bahá'í Writings and regular service to the Cause
    - d. Strive to achieve compliance with Bahá'í standards of conduct
    - e. Refine the art of consultation
  - Influence the course of human affairs
    - a. Expand local community external affairs efforts
    - b. Promote racial unity and gender equality
    - c. Establish projects of social and economic development
    - d. Pursue promotion of social justice

## *Spiritual Mission for Individual Bahá'ís*

*“If ye will follow earnestly the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, ye shall indeed become the light of the world, the soul of the body of the world, the comfort and help for humanity, and the sources of salvation for the whole universe.”*

—Abdu'l-Bahá

A marked increase in the activity and development of the Plan's three participants—the individual believer, the Bahá'í community, and its institutions—is needed for the Plan to succeed.

## Children

You are the most precious treasures of our community. We want you to grow strong and be happy. We ask you to:

- Pray every day
- Learn about Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and their Teachings
- Be a friend to all people and help them
- Share the Bahá'í Teachings with others
- Contribute to the Bahá'í Funds and the Kingdom Project

## Junior Youth

You are preparing for the age of spiritual maturity (15). We ask you to study and practice the requirements of spiritual maturity in your life, including to:

- Pray daily and read at least one verse of the Bahá'í Writings every day
- Study the Life and Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the Covenant
- Learn the importance of the Bahá'í Obligatory Prayers and Fasting
- Commit to memory at least one of the Obligatory Prayers
- Be of service to your families, your communities, your peers and others
- Help children see themselves as noble beings and become strong and confident and happy
- Share the Bahá'í Teachings
- Contribute to the Bahá'í Funds and the Kingdom Project

## Youth

You have reached the age of spiritual maturity and now must strive to become leaders and sources of strength to your families and your communities. Many of those now investigating the Faith are young people whom you must embrace and teach. Bearing these things in mind, we ask you to:

- Develop a plan, in consultation with your family, for your spiritual and social growth based on a careful assessment of your spirit and character and your aims in life and the needs of the Faith, including provisions for:
  - ~ Strengthening the disciplines of daily prayer and study of the Sacred Writings, especially the Life and Station of Bahá'u'lláh and His Covenant
  - ~ Cultivating the habit of service to all people
  - ~ Learning how to share effectively the Bahá'í Teachings with others
  - ~ Planning for your education, career development and a year of service
  - ~ Developing moral and spiritual discipline
- Join in a study circle and consider being trained as a study circle facilitator
- Participate in teaching and service projects
- Mentor children and junior youth and establish relationships with older community members
- Champion racial unity and the equality of women and men
- Take a leading role in improving the spiritual and social quality of Bahá'í community life
- Contribute to the Bahá'í Funds and the Kingdom Project

## Adult Bahá'ís

You are the strength of the Bahá'í community, its most able and experienced members. The development and growth of the community rests largely in your hands. At this turning point in the growth of our Faith, we ask each of you to consider prayerfully Shoghi Effendi's admonition, "Without the spirit of real love for Bahá'u'lláh, for His Faith and its Institutions, and the believers for each other, the Cause can never really bring in large numbers of people. For it is not preaching and rules the world wants, but love and action."

—Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

- Develop a spiritual transformation plan for yourself, your marriage, your family
- Foster patterns of loving encouragement to all people and to the Bahá'í Institutions
- Study the Life and Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and His Covenant
- Support the development of training institutes, study circles and extension courses
- Make a personal teaching plan
- Assist in seeker follow-up efforts
- Consider homefront and/or international pioneering and traveling teaching
- Mentor and encourage children and youth
- Increase awareness of issues facing the larger community and champion racial unity, gender equality, and social justice
- Contribute to the Bahá'í Funds and the Kingdom Project

Learning to act collectively is a distinguishing feature of Bahá'í communities. "Most important of all is that love and unity should prevail in the Bahá'í Community, as this is what people are most longing for in the present dark state of the world. Words without the living example will never be sufficient to breathe hope into the hearts of a disillusioned and often cynical generation." —Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

- Spare no effort to bring love, joy and happiness to your community
- Foster the spirit of loving encouragement and support to Bahá'í families; celebrate the efforts of children, youth, and adult Bahá'ís
- Strive to create an atmosphere of wholehearted acceptance of all members to unify the diversity of the community
- Refine the practice of consultation in all matters
- Strengthen the arts and music
- Embrace seekers and new believers and lovingly encourage disaffected Bahá'ís
- Expand programs of service and partnership with the larger community
- Increase awareness of issues facing the larger community and champion racial unity, gender equality, and social justice

### **Spiritual Assemblies**

You are the focal centers of Bahá'í activity. More than any other institution you face the challenge of making real the promises of our Faith and regulating the affairs of your local communities. Your mission is to exercise spiritual leadership, functioning as "instruments of the spirit of the Faith" and "loving shepherds of the multitudes." We ask you to:

- Assess the strengths and challenges of your community in consultation with its children, youth, and adult members
- Set goals for community development and growth and evaluate them at least once every six months in consultation with community members
- Seek the advice of Auxiliary Boards and their assistants
- Strengthen and define clusters (inter-community partnerships) in collaboration with the Regional Bahá'í Council and the Auxiliary Board members
- Improve the spiritual and social vitality of the Nineteen Day Feast
- Establish study circles in consultation with Regional Training Institutes
- Promote service and social development efforts in the larger community

- Double the active core of the Bahá'í community
- Promote an intimate sense of responsibility to meet the needs of the Funds and the Kingdom Project
- Contribute regularly to the Bahá'í Funds and the Kingdom Project
- Increase awareness of issues facing the larger community and champion racial unity, gender equality, and social justice
- Strengthen unity and love among Assembly members
- Enhance the sacredness of Bahá'í elections

## **Regional Bahá'í Councils**

Your indispensable mission is to advance the process of systematic growth by assisting the friends in your region to carry out the National Plan and create strong Local Spiritual Assemblies. Your mode of operation is to work with and through Local Spiritual Assemblies. You are also responsible to oversee the operations of Regional Training Institutes. With the advice of the Continental Counselors and under the direction of the National Spiritual Assembly you should:

- Assess the strengths, potentialities, and challenges of the region for programs of systematic growth, particularly through inter-community partnerships
- Facilitate and support clusters (inter-community partnerships) to advance the process of systematic growth

- Devise a regional plan for systematic growth
- Facilitate Spiritual Assembly establishment and development
- Supervise Regional Training Institutes
- Communicate and consult with the friends about the progress of the Faith in the region
- Promote full operation of Regional Training Institutes
- Facilitate the integration of Persian American Bahá'ís
- Promote regional youth activities
- Promote teaching and consolidation of special populations including those of African, American Indian, Asian, Latin American and Persian descent

### **Regional Training Institutes**

Training institutes are the engines of systematic growth. They are central to the development of the human resources needed to accomplish the goals of the Plan. Your mission is to devise systematic sequences of training on the fundamental verities of the Bahá'í Faith and the skills of teaching and administering the Faith with efficiency and love.

- Consult frequently with Spiritual Assemblies to determine their needs and develop training responses
- Employ a wide diversity of sequenced training curricula
- Evaluate and improve the effects of your training
- Improve outreach to increase participation in classes

*Dear friends, bearing in mind the dramatic advances of the process of systematic growth in the Bahá'í community over the past five years, we feel that conditions are right for large-scale growth and development of the Bahá'í community. The Universal House of Justice told our community that what is required now is "a thrust of action fit for champions." With the wise advice and loving encouragement of the Continental Counselors and their auxiliaries, we are completely confident that the long-awaited breakthrough in the process of entry by troops can be achieved in the Five Year Plan.*

*Our love and prayers are with you always,  
Your servants,*

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