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Bahá'í Council for Wales

Bahá'í Council for England

The First Area Meetings in England - History In The Making



*The Council members are: Back row (left to right) - Dr Babak Javid, Mr Inder Manocha, Mr Robert Weinberg, Dr Vafa Ram. Front row (left to right) - Mr Adam Thorne, Dr Tiffani Razavi, Miss Kay Hughes, Mrs Mitra Murray, Dr Naghmeh Adab
(Since this photo was received, Rob Weinberg has been elected to serve on the National Spiritual Assembly)*

THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF ENGLAND made history in the opening months of 2002 when we achieved a first major goal of the Five Year Plan: holding area (cluster) meetings throughout the length and breadth of the land. The Plan is only one year old and already areas have been created at the request of the Universal House of Justice - we have 78 of them in England - and the believers in these areas have met to understand the Plan and its goals. By the end of March, more than 80 percent of areas had held their meetings - a remarkable achievement.

During the Ten Year Crusade (1953-1963), Shoghi Effendi took 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets of the Divine Plan and created a list of countries and territories which needed to be systematically opened to the Faith. The courageous souls who arose to open these territories were given the title Knights of Bahá'u'lláh and their exploits and achievements are legendary.

The Universal House of Justice has now taken the Guardian's thinking to a new stage. There are Bahá'ís in every country of the world. So it is time to break every country down into smaller areas based on an interesting range of criteria (transport systems, socio-economic factors, language and culture.) Now our global goal is to strive to open every area in the world to the Faith. And there are thousands of them!

England's Current Condition

We have only one area which is unopened to the Faith in England - the Scilly Isles. We would love to open this area during the Five Year Plan and form an Assembly. Pioneers are required to rise in the same spirit of consecration that the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh did and establish the Faith in this important area. It would be helpful if those pioneers were already study circle tutors or have experience of organising devotional meetings and children's classes. However, our Plan goes beyond the opening of areas to the Faith. The Council is ready to assist all areas in England to develop during the course of the Plan. Some areas are made up of isolated believers and groups. The Council believes it is possible that by the end of the Plan every area in England can have at least one Local Spiritual Assembly. The Council will shortly be publishing a list of homefront pioneering goals selected by those areas without any Assemblies. At the same time, individuals and communities in these areas need to make sure they are engaged in the three basic activities of the Plan: children's classes, devotional meetings and study circles - each open to all.

The majority of areas in England have at least one Local Spiritual Assembly. Again, individuals, communities and institutions need to concentrate on local community development, following the three basic activities of the Plan. When there is sufficient local strength across a number of communities in an area, it may be possible to launch a systematic programme of growth in that area and learn much about how to initiate and sustain growth in our communities and transform the wider society we serve. The Council's goal is to have at least one or two areas in England by the end of the Five Year Plan ready for such programmes.

While the Council believes that energies should currently be focused on local community development, it is possible for there to be some basic activity at the level of the area. Some areas have started newsletters or email groups so that each community is aware of the activities happening in other communities. Joint Holy Day celebrations have been held as well as the giving of support for one another's events, such as devotional meetings.

The Council for England is happy to answer any enquiries about the development of areas and all aspects of the Five Year Plan.

