

2015 DELEGATE REPORT
NATIONAL BAHÁ'Í' CONVENTION

The National Convention was held from April 30-May 2 at the Temple in Wilmette, Illinois. 171 delegates were elected and 166 were in attendance representing their units across the United States.

The two-fold purpose of the convention is for the delegates to elect the nine members of the National Assembly and to consult on topics to inform the National Assembly members of activities and status from Baha'í's nationwide.

The delegates consulted first in an orientation session for three hours on the Ridvan Message of 2015 and the January 5 letter from the Universal House of Justice. Two of the Continental Board of Counselors led the orientations and guided the delegates. Delegates grouped at tables of eight or nine members to discuss the highlights and messages from the two letters. Some highlights: "Love is the secret" to creating a divine civilization; message is for Baha'í's around the world; every continent to create 5,000 programs of growth by 2016; follow the guidance from the Universal House; stay on the path; it will get difficult at times; as we climb higher and higher it is like going up a steep path on a mountain; air is thinner; hard to breath; but we can make it and do it; key is focusing on mission; keep hope; develop increased capacity; solve problems; consult; need intensity; this is humanity's movement; always have gaze on the goal; use instruments and messages of the Plan; more focus on youth; List of purposes and service:

1. Ask the Friends to contribute
2. Identify opportunities to serve
3. Make room for new members
4. Give positive feedback
5. Suggestions for growth
6. Be sure to follow through
7. Keep commitments
8. Focus on spiritual qualities, core activities and new initiatives
9. Look for inspirations
10. Focus on what is happening not what isn't

Three weapons from 1938: Advent of Divine Justice: Rectitude of conduct; Chastity; Freedom from Racial Prejudice; Absence of rectitude, conduct, and chastity leads to lack of racial unity.

Secretary's message from Kenneth Bowers: Highlights:

1. Growth of clusters in last 5 years: will make the 5,000 goal by 2016
2. Need 600 by 2016 in US: first 5 clusters with more than 100 core activities capable of serving 1,000 or more people
3. Youth are the growing influence; now seeing youth who have progressed through Junior Youth classes, Children's classes and Basic Institution courses;
4. Simple system of study classes are releasing spiritual energy of Children through Adults shared with Friends in neighborhoods, Baha'i' and non-Baha'i'.
5. Youth can now have new level of conversations
6. New regional training institutes outlined in January 5 letter
7. Increased role of seasonal and regular Baha'i' schools; more capacity for teaching faith
8. National Assembly increasing use of National Website; new communications
9. Paid tribute to Friends in Iran; example for all of us
10. Stay focused on "Love of Baha'u'llah

Treasurer's report: Juana Conrad: Highlights

1. Surpassed goal of \$32 million with over \$33 million in donations; a record
2. New goal of \$34 million for 2016
3. Funds allowed for support of hundreds of programs of growth around country
4. Support for Regional Councils is 25% of national assembly budget
5. Supports 200 youth working in key clusters in US.
6. 64% of funds received online
7. 60% from individual Baha'i's an increase of 16% from last year
8. 515 LSA's, over half, now enrolled online
9. Mobile app giving greatly increased by 540% since 2011
10. \$2.7 million to International temples fund
11. \$18.3 million to Chilean Temple Fund
12. Planned giving increased by 122%
13. Moved more funds to reserves to get through difficult times or to purchase land such as property across street from Temple
14. More fund empowerment workshops given around country
15. All for Universal redemption of Mankind

Highlights of delegate consultation:

1. Racial harmony and outreach to other groups
2. Outreach to disadvantaged youth in schools: for college application assistance 82 of 84 in California

3. Race Amity initiative in Mass. Baha'i partnership
4. NABI in Arizona: native site for youth training also trained local teachers using Baha'i principles
5. Consistent use of firesides, devotionals, children's classes, Jr. Youth classes, Youth initiatives, institute process with study circles, service in community
6. Outreach to many non-Baha'i friends and allies to spread word and cause
7. Success in neighborhood teaching: Tennessee rural area with 60 in Junior Youth classes
8. Home visits increased community building
9. Teaching every day at places of work; casual meetings;
10. More advertising of events;
11. More conscious of service opportunities for all in community but youth in particular
12. Inter-faith partnerships
13. Not giving up: using ATC's, Regional councils, and calling for assistance when needed; increased strength of clusters "strands of love"

Opening of Visitor's Center: were able to tour it day before if we could not stay. Photos are on National Center Website of opening with many guests in attendance.

Last speaker was former member of the Universal House of Justice, Dr. Farham Arbab. Highlights:

1. "What are we willing to sacrifice for peace?"
2. America is destined: how will we share pain of the oppressed among us?
3. For 19 years of the Plans: Continuity and Change in Faith
4. Each plan builds on previous one
5. Plans have progressed greatly by focusing on Children's classes, Jr. Youth classes, and Youth training
6. All the while God's Plan was and is progressing
7. The very forces tearing society apart are creating receptivity to Faith
8. For us it helps to understand the nature of the Path: develop volition, skills, and abilities qualities and attitudes.
9. We have to walk the path in the company of others; therefore see strengths not weaknesses in others
10. Balance certitude in Faith with learning: but not relativism
11. Youth are now poised to lead more of the way
12. We have to do more accompaniment of Youth and others in our neighborhoods and communities
13. "Breakthrough will come when we build capacity to see the world through the eyes of those who have suffered but are ready to arise and change the world"

14. "That is what it means to sacrifice and accept pain"

On May 2 the delegates cast all 171 votes in the election process. No votes were disqualified. Eight current members of the National Assembly were re-elected and one new member, Kevin Trotter, was elected. Kenneth Bowers: Secretary; Juana Conrad: Treasurer; Muin Afnani: Chair

Much sharing was done during breaks, meals and on the busses to and from the Temple. I met delegates from South Carolina, California, Washington, Baltimore, Oregon, Texas, Florida, and many guest attended as well: a record number. Suggestions were made by delegates to have more time to get know each other in future; more time for reflection; more individual time for prayer and more orientation time on writing delegate reports.