

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

October 22, 2022

To all those gathered for the 50th anniversary of the
establishment of the Louis G. Gregory Bahá'í Institute

Dearly loved Friends,

As we commemorate the founding—in October 1972—of the Louis G. Gregory Bahá'í Institute and celebrate the five decades of growth and development that have since passed, we are delighted you have come to this special place to share our joy. As we reflect together on these first 50 years of the Institute's life, we must begin by pausing to remember with admiration and gratitude the contributions made down the years by a veritable legion of devoted souls—teachers, administrators, and others too numerous to mention by name—who have given and continue to give their talents wholeheartedly to its advancement. Nor can we forget that the vital mission of the Louis G. Gregory Bahá'í Institute attracted the wise and loving ministrations of outstanding members of the Faith's senior institutions—among them, several Hands of the Cause of God. To adequately recount the half-century of the Institute's history would require space and time far beyond the modest scope of a letter. But casting our minds back over those eventful years, we can see that they testify to the strength of the Bahá'í community's commitment to providing an effective center of Bahá'í learning especially for the people of the American Deep South and particularly for the people of the historic Pee Dee region. In this light, it is both useful and inspiring to remind ourselves of how the enterprise began: with meaningful conversations animated by what the Universal House of Justice has aptly termed “a simple strand of love.”

In the late 1960s, a great receptivity to the Bahá'í message was discovered among the people of the Deep South, starting with highly successful teaching efforts in South Carolina. Before long, stories of these victories circulated throughout the country, and young believers by the carload were excitedly making their way to this center of activity. As these Bahá'í teachers walked the back roads of the region's rural hamlets, they were amazed by the warmth of the reception they received from their inhabitants, who were overwhelmingly people of African descent. When they spoke of the recent appearance in the world of a Promised One and told of His teaching of the oneness of the human family, their listeners smiled knowingly; for being well schooled in the promises of the Gospel, they were firmly convinced of the imminence of such a divine message. So much so, they affirmed their belief with thousands of declarations of Faith. It was an experience unprecedented in the decades-long efforts of Bahá'ís to promulgate the teachings of their Faith in America, and as the numbers of new believers multiplied, so did scenes of Black and White brothers and sisters joined arm in arm, as with joyous hearts they sang such anthems of the time as “Can't You See the New Day?” They were witnessing the first glimpses of a new vision of the destiny of the Deep South and its citizens—a vision of hope, justice, and equality tirelessly championed just a few years earlier by the incomparable believer and South Carolina native after whom the Institute is named.

Today, as we strive to marshal the “society-building powers” latent in the Bahá'í Revelation—which will increasingly manifest themselves in the years ahead through the framework of the current Nine Year Plan—the vision that lighted the way to the establishment of the Louis G.

Gregory Bahá'í Institute and has since shone forth in its manifold programs is alive and luminous, beckoning us ever forward toward the day of its full realization. Let us arise unitedly to serve the current Plan, confident that through the instrument of this divinely inspired call to action, we can hasten the arrival of that glorious "New Day," which will, without question or doubt, assuredly come.

With joy and deepest love,

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF
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Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary