

REGIONAL BAHÁ'Í COUNCIL
MIDWESTERN STATES
INDIANA, MICHIGAN AND OHIO

27 March 2020/ 8 Bahá, 177 B.E.

To: The Beloved of the Merciful in the Midwestern Region

Subject: Region-wide devotional meeting April 4

Dearly loved Friends,

The Regional Council joyfully awaits your participation in the region-wide on-line devotional meeting *Prayers and Reflections for Protection and Strength* that we have scheduled for *Saturday, April 4, at 2 p.m. EST*. This letter is a follow-up to our message of March 23 with more information about why and how you might participate in this historic on-line gathering of friends from three states.

First, an important point: Since each of our states is now under state-mandated provision to “Stay at Home,” you should gather only with the present members of your household in order to participate in this on-line program. This will help ensure your safety and that of your family, as well as that of the larger community. All Bahá'ís and their friends are invited to watch and listen to the live audio-visual program by following the link www.midwestbahai.org. You can also listen to the program by calling any one of these numbers: +1 646 558 8656 or +1 312 626 6799 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 669 900 6833 or +1 253 215 8782. The Webinar ID is: 147 531 783. (*NOTE—Content will not be available by phone or web link until 2:00 p.m. EST on April 4. Please dial in or call 15 minutes before the program to ensure access.*) Access via web link will require two clicks, first click to enter the website. Once you are on the website click on the video link. The web access makes it unnecessary to use a Zoom link, Facebook or YouTube.

These extraordinary times in which we are now living call to mind, even if faintly, the letters that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi sent during World Wars I and II. As noted in wartime by Shoghi Effendi: “Each Bahá'í . . . should constantly bear in mind the great blessings God has bestowed upon him by enabling him to accept His Cause in this day. Everything else is transient; our difficulties will pass away, and our lives too eventually, but this eternal gift of Faith in Bahá'u'lláh will never pass away and will be the source of our everlasting happiness.” (Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Englewood, N.J. community, May 3, 1943.) We might keep in mind as well the heroic friends in Iran who have suffered many difficulties in past years but have shown remarkable resilience in the face of hardships, drawing praise from the Universal House of Justice: “Bahá'ís in Iran have remained forward-looking, dynamic, vibrant, and committed to serving Iranian society. They have refused to allow apprehension and anxiety to take hold or let any calamity perturb their hearts. They have drawn on the highest reservoirs of solidarity and collaboration and responded to oppression with constructive resilience, eschewing despair, surrender, resentment, and hate and transcending mere survival . . .” (Universal House of Justice, letter to an individual, February 4, 2018.)

One of the new capacities that we need today, as part of “constructive resilience” and solidarity at a time of hardship, is to build bonds of community and connectivity among ourselves and with others even in a time of social disconnection. For example, it is becoming necessary to move many of the activities of the Faith in our region to electronic means of communication and collaboration. Prior to

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the April 4 on-line devotional, we must strive to ensure that as many of us as possible are able to move into this new era of communication, by computer or smartphone.

Participating in this gathering will give the region new strength and vision as we pray together for the people of the world and for the progress of the Faith. The selection of inspirational readings and music that we will broadcast should cheer hearts and uplift spirits. In addition, we are particularly pleased that Mr. Kenneth Bowers, Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly, has consented to address this regional gathering of the friends. His talks to the U.S. National Convention have always inspired and invigorated our national community, and we look forward to his sharing with our region his insights into the challenges and opportunities facing us in this day.

Included below are a few resources that can assist with participation in the April 4 event and future on-line experiences. First, is a list of names of people in our region who have agreed to serve as technical advisers specifically for communities or individuals that need help preparing to create or log into videoconferences. The planners for the April 4 program have made access to the program as simple as going to a website or dialing a phone number, so assistance will probably not be necessary. We hope that most of you will be able to experience the program with no technical challenges, however this team of people stands ready to assist if necessary. In addition, we have also asked Local Spiritual Assemblies and Area Teaching Committees to provide such help if needed. Next is a list of links to on-line tutorials offered by the Wilmette Institute, links that we have noted previously but send again for your consideration as a tool to help you stay actively connected in the coming weeks and months through internet connections. We are also including devotional readings for those friends who are unable to join the on-line program on April 4 at 2 p.m. EST. Finally, if you have not done so already, the Council encourages you to begin using creative means of online study of important messages from the World Center, the National Spiritual Assembly and Regional Council. Copies of two important letters and web links are included below, along with a list of people who have volunteered to assist with setting up or using Zoom teleconferences.

Dear ones, may this gathering strengthen the love in our hearts for our beautiful, sacred, House of Worship. This occasion reminds us of the priceless treasure in the midst of our continent and how precious it will be again to be able to walk into this extraordinary building, blessed at its dedication by the beloved Master and built over many years through loving, sacrificial efforts. Perhaps we took for granted our ability to gather there whenever we wanted, since travel to access this magnificent structure was relatively easy. We could gaze on its dazzling white splendor and experience the Divine in this sacred space. Now we will gather on April 4, online, for joint inspiration and prayer, but also as a show of resilience, as proof of our ability to draw on “the highest reservoirs of solidarity and collaboration.”

With warmest regards,

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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical Resource Assistants

1. Michigan: Liz Herth herth@gmail.com 847-751-9995
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3. Indiana: Bill Baker bill@orangecrayon.com 217-402 4436

LINKS for Wilmette Institute, “Community Tech to Cope with Social Distancing,” all on YouTube. Please note that the first part is particularly helpful those new to Zoom who would like to sign on April 4, but the other parts are helpful for additional on-line community activities:

1. Part 1--Spiritual principles of community and interaction. Online tools, minimum internet requirements, and suggested ground rules as well as best practices. An introduction to Zoom videoconferencing with step-by-step instructions.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODwStCiV6dU&feature=youtu.be>
2. Part 2—Spiritual principles especially of collaboration and cohesion. Coordinating meeting times through Doodle polls; writing collaboratively with Google Docs, such as for minutes; how to use Zoom Rooms to break a larger on-line group into smaller discussion groups. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jTsLfIMrd8&feature=youtu.be>
3. Part 3—Spiritual principles of basic human communication and applicability in a world of social media. Short Message Service (SMS) and applications such as WhatsApp or chat, plus how to live stream your own events onto Facebook or YouTube, and the advantages of each. Equipment possibilities for advanced use of streaming, and a review of internet capacity requirements for best use of Zoom.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVLyX6Q4qig>

Zoom Teleconference Assistants

Kim Douglas kim.health@gmail.com 616-581-7554
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Brian Wittman brian.wittman9@gmail.com 317-405 7414
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[Supreme Body Addresses Bahá’í World at Naw-Rúz \(English\) \(PDF\)](#)
[National Spiritual Assembly Stresses Safe Conduct of Local Activities in Light of COVID-19 Virus Outbreak](#)

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