



## Narrower Boundaries – Wider Horizons

### How one group of believers grew to embrace the boundary changes

Bahá'u'lláh tells us in His Tablets (p.126) that "the heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion." It was with regard to both of these principles that the communities of Unit E41, comprising one Assembly newly formed as a result of the boundary changes and representatives from three former groups, gathered together at a venue in Hazlemere, Buckinghamshire, to share their concerns, their fears, their hopes and aspirations now that their administrative world had received such an unprecedented upheaval.

In the presence of Auxiliary Board Member, Viv Craig, who generously gave of her time, energy and expertise, the friends now representing a number of isolated believers and groups were able to find, through these two great principles, the encouragement, the balm and the direction they so badly needed.

### a new spirit of cooperation and revival was born

Consultation consisted of sharing the fear of change, of unexpected independence, but also of excitement at the new possibilities offered by a more local approach. Compassion was asked for and expressed for those who have lost long established anchors, who feel cut off from the friends with whom they have worked for many years. Gradually a new spirit of cooperation and revival was born. Friends began to realise that boundaries did not entail division.

On The one hand, Nineteen Day Feast experiences could still be shared by visiting neighbouring communities, possibly using the larger groups as a focus. On the other hand, each individual had now been given the wonderful privilege of being a pioneer in their own home, keeping the beacon burning, even in isolation, through remembrance of their own Feasts and Holy Days, through prayer, through personal initiative and teaching activity. Telephone numbers were exchanged, support through physical presence and prayer was offered. We no longer felt we were alone. Viv was able to outline other strategies for us which could help us cross our boundaries, particularly through study circles and Training Institutes. We began a new journey together.

### the wonderful privilege of being a pioneer

To all those who at this time feel bewildered and lost we offer this example. Our Units are there as a vehicle of cohesion. Our Auxiliary Board is there for us with information and support.

We need each other as never before and we also need the sympathy and support of those whose communities remain unchanged. Do not underestimate our needs. The United Kingdom is still a country with large areas of rural habitation, while our Assemblies now lie largely in the towns. Remember those beautiful and sometimes barren lanes and hillsides where the Faith has still to penetrate. Join us in the vanguard of our onward march as we labour in the untouched areas of our land.

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## Citizenship Schools and the Bahá'í Community

The national curriculum in citizenship is potentially the most important education reform introduced by this Government, yet it is coming in almost unnoticed. It takes effect from September 2002, but few schools have started to prepare. However, citizenship has much more flexibility than all other subjects. There is an outline of skills and knowledge that must be learnt, but it can be taught through any other subject, as well a community projects and pupil involvement in decision-making of the school itself. Citizenship is, above all, a subject that is learnt through the experience of discussion, taking decisions, making choices and collective self-government.

The new curriculum also offers community organisations, like the Baha'is, new opportunities to work with schools. The annual World Citizenship competition, for example, run jointly with Westminster United Nations Association (UNA) in London, could be part of the curriculum all schools must teach.

But its potential will only be realised if all those involved with schools use the opportunity to change the way things are done. The Campaign for Learning and UNICEF UK has launched a handbook for "Citizenship Schools", which shows how some schools are already involving pupils, staff, parents and local communities at all levels of the school community.

School citizenship could help to create a new learning constitution in which democratic participation is as widespread as shopping. But schools will need active support from parents, the community and professionals involved in education to help realise the potential of this exciting new subject.

Titus Alexander, Author of "Citizenship Schools" and Chair of Westminster UNA

"Citizenship Schools" is available for £14.95 plus £1.50 pp from Southgate,  
The Square, Sandford, Crediton, Devon, EX17 4LW, tel: 01363 776888