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National Committees and Departments

Office of Public Information

DEAR BAHÁ'Í FRIENDS,

We are very happy to share with you the news that an article has been published about the Bahá'í Faith in "Hearsay", the staff magazine of the Lord Chancellor's Department.

The article was written by European Bahá'í Youth Council member and British Bahá'í, Dion Azordegan, and is the fifth in the magazine's series about the various religions that are practised within the Lord Chancellor's Department, in which Dion works.

The starting point for this threequarter page article was the forthcoming commemoration of the Birthday of the Báb on October 20 and featured two beautiful images of the Shrine of the Báb.

Dion was able to give a brief history of the Faith and a description of the activities of Bahá'ís, focusing on their work of breaking down barriers in society and promoting key Bahá'í principles. It also looked at the work of the Institute for Social Cohesion, an initiative undertaken by the Bahá'í community in the UK.

The article was beautifully written and well presented in a magazine that has a wide readership. We congratulate Dion on utilising such an opportunity and for presenting our Faith to such a distinguished readership.

OPI Web of Faith Project

How is your Website doing?

SINCE THE launch of the Web of Faith project the number of Bahá'í Websites in the UK has increased dramatically. This is excellent progress and a tribute to the many believers who have worked to bring it about. But there are still communities that have not completed a Website, despite its importance and the amount of help that is available.

We also heard from some when we asked how things were going "Oh, we gave that job to X, he knows about these things, and, well, to be honest, we didn't think about it after that." If you are in that situation, now might be the time to ask X how things are coming along...

If anyone, for any reason, needs a set (or another set) of the Information Sheets about websites and how to go about them, please get in touch with us.

Don't let it grow cobwebs!

To those who have a website, we say "Don't let it grow cobwebs". Maintenance is important. Please keep it up to date, and add to it from time to time: people like to see changes and new information, and this will help your site get noticed.

Bahá'í Heritage Website

The picture gallery at the UK Bahá'í Heritage Website, with its range of historic people and places, has been re-designed, with some new photographs and others re-scanned for better quality.

The site is part of the OPI Webpace, which can be visited at www.bahai.org.uk/opi/intro.htm

Bahá'í International Community issues new statement

EARLIER this year the Bahá'í International Community issued a statement entitled:

“Overcoming Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity in Public Institutions: A Bahá’í Perspective”.

It is available from the [BIC statement archive](#) on the Web but in order to further promote and facilitate its use, it will be valuable to share with contacts and like-minded organisations in a whole range of situations – the Office of Public Information in the United Kingdom has prepared a European formatted (A4) version.

To obtain a copy electronically in plain text or PDF format (please specify which) contact opi@bahai.org.uk. Alternatively, a hard copy (i.e. on paper) is available on request from OPI at the address below.

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Committee for International Pioneering and Travel Teaching

THE EXCESSES of the seasonal saturnalia are behind us for yet another year! Every year the buildup to it seems to get just a bit more tacky and tasteless. This year especially, against a background of impending or actual war, famine, fanatical acts of death and destruction and a general air of unease about personal safety, there was more than a hint of desperation about attempts to “have a good time”.

Despite this rather downbeat assessment of the wider world, we can meet the new year with boundless confidence in the clarity of our role in relation to a troubled humanity, twisting and turning in the death throes of its tottering civilization. Never has it been more urgent to rededicate our time and resources to administering the remedies of the Divine Physician to our fellow human beings.

The continuing international travel teaching response over the summer and autumn periods has been commendable but please, please do not let the momentum drop in the dark heart of the cycle of the year. More especially, search your hearts for that inspiration to arise and pioneer overseas to bring aid and assistance to beleaguered and long suffering communities around the globe.

Time and again we receive reports from individuals who have made tentative steps, taken a degree of risk and set forth on the path of service with seemingly small resources and a lack of confidence in their abilities and skills, only to find that doors of opportunity have opened and that the often small band of their fellow believers in their chosen area is enormously sustained, developed and energised by the spiritual energies released by the mere act of those individuals having arisen to serve their Lord.

Remember you can qualify as a pioneer with as little as a three month stay in your pioneer post. The enormous privilege of being counted amongst the illustrious company of “... They who have forsaken their country in the path of God...”^[1] is within your grasp.

We know, in your excitement to get overseas, you won’t neglect the Philip Hainsworth Campaign Five Year Plan Goals in Europe: Bosnia & Herzegovina; Corsica; Croatia; Cyprus (Southern); Faroe Islands; Macedonia; Malta; Slovenia; Kosovo; Montenegro; Serbia; Vojvodina.

Travel teaching numbers are flowing quite well but we are well behind in the target flow of pioneers to these countries. We urge you to look at the CIPTT website for information on the needs of each place. The website is at www.bahai.org.uk/pioneers/. The user name and password are confidential to Bahá’ís and can be obtained by emailing CIPPT or the Bahá’í Journal.

Here are a couple of country extracts to whet your appetite:

Montenegro has been divided into six clusters, five of which are not yet opened to the Faith and one that contains a few isolated localities and groups. Pioneers are needed to assist with the task of opening new cities to the Faith and helping to develop the Institute process. Capital city: Podgorica. Climate: Mediterranean conditions. Languages: Serbo-Croatian, Albanian.

Bosnia & Herzegovina is situated in south east Europe on the Balkan Peninsula. The country has been divided into 17 clusters; four areas that contain a few isolated localities and groups, and 13 areas not yet opened to the Faith. A small number of Ruhi study circles are operating. Pioneers and travel teachers are urgently needed to support local believers. Study circle facilitators would be a great asset. Employment with the UN or international aid agencies is possible. Goal towns include Tuzla, Zenica, Sanski Most, and Srebrenica. Students can study at one of the Universities. Capital city: Sarajevo. Winters can be very cold with lots of snow. Summers are warm and comfortable. A hilly country with some mountains. Green forests cover almost 40% of the land. Languages: Bosnian (Serbo-Croatian), and German.

Up to the end of February, please send any emails for the CIPTT to pbellamy999@hotmail.com.

1. Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986, no. 121.5a. [[Back](#)]

YOS Desk UK

Tierra Santa Home for Abandoned Children – an accidental visitor

“YOU CAN’T be serious” was my reply to the Honduran travel agent who had just informed me that she did not have my return ticket (I only had a copy of the return ticket and not the original), and she could not book me a flight. She then happily advised me to “have a nice day”, seemingly unaware she had destroyed my week.

I was just returning from eight months of Service in Costa Rica and, although by that time very happy with Latin America, quite looking forward to getting home. However, resigned to the two weeks it required to re-issue my ticket, I decided to visit the Tierra Santa Home, a home primarily focused towards girls situated in the sleepy little town of Villa de San Antonio in a lovely verdant valley surrounded on all sides by the imposing Honduran mountains.

This was not my first visit to the Tierra Santa Home; a few years previously I had also been there when visiting my brother while he was doing his Year of Service and for this reason my first approach was with some deal of trepidation. I could still remember the tidal wave of small children who descended on us last time, screaming and shouting as they would push, shove and grapple to be the first to ask you your name, gleefully tell you theirs and then two minutes later (after thirty other such introductions had reduced you to a fixed grinning wreck) would with small hopeful faces ask if you could remember their names.

It was with these thoughts in mind that I donned my riot gear, took a deep breath and entered the Home. Far from encountering a boiling sea of eager little faces, however, I was quietly approached by a handful of children who were warm, inquisitive and polite. The development of this side of the Home is really quite amazing. Before every child would call for your attention, whereas this time the children seemed to be far more emotionally stable, they appreciated any love shown to them and were extremely affectionate in return, but in a much more mature and less demanding way.

This was true for the whole structure of the Home. In the past it had been quite reliant on volunteers, but now it could quite easily run itself with older girls taking responsibility for the younger ones, and difficult situations, such as the drinking water running out, were overcome with almost no trouble.

The self-sufficiency of the Home was such that in fact I hardly got given any work to do for the entire time I was there. Don Santiago, the Director, had intended for me to use his

tractor to clear some land for new buildings. My father, who had had some first-hand experience of my driving abilities when trying to teach me to drive last summer, soon put this plan on hold with a hastily written email. After this, everyone assumed that I was therefore incapable of any kind of work and so I had a very pleasant couple of weeks spent mainly playing with the children.

The nearest thing to work I did in those glorious two weeks was to take the boys to visit the local fair. The most stressful occasion being when the fireworks were let off and five boys scattered screaming and wailing into the crowds while our dog tried to start biting people. The older boys took me to the lagoon and tried to teach me how to fish, the younger children taught me to dance a little Salsa, the older girls took me to a local dance where I stood perplexed as about a hundred Latinos danced in a very un-English manner and the toddlers taught me to be a very adept climbing frame.

I cannot recommend Tierra Santa enough as a place to do volunteer work. Even though for the most part self-sufficient, volunteers can offer so much extra to the children just through their presence and attention and can make invaluable contributions through teaching or pastoral care. The cost of living is very low, the Home provides accommodation and three meals a day for free. The town is small, typical and safe, and is surrounded by mountains providing an awe-inspiring view from any street. It is also the best place to learn Spanish since children are the easiest people to talk to, the most likely to correct you and the most patient in giving explanations, plus there will always be one very close at hand.



William Richards with a group of Guyami children in Costa Rica

William Richards

