

Regional Bahá'í Council of the Midwestern States
Region-wide Devotional Gathering, online
April 4, 2020

Program

Welcome and opening remarks
Jason Combs, member of the
Auxiliary Board

Music 1

Young Reader
Young Reader
Reader 1
Reader 2

Music 2

Reader 3

Music 3

Reader 4

Music 4

Reader 5
Reader 6

Music 5

Reader 7
Reader 8

Music 6

Reader 9
Reader 10
Reader 11
Reader 12 - Young Reader
Reader 13 - Young Reader

Music 7

Address by Kenneth Bowers,
Secretary of the National
Spiritual Assembly

Music 8

Closing remarks - Meghan McCullough,
Vice Chairperson of the Regional Bahá'í Council

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WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

MUSIC - 1

READER 1

This is the Day in which God's most excellent favors have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things. It is incumbent upon all the peoples of the world to reconcile their differences, and, with perfect unity and peace, abide beneath the shadow of the Tree of His care and loving-kindness. It behoveth them to cleave to whatsoever will, in this Day, be conducive to the exaltation of their stations, and to the promotion of their best interests. Happy are those whom the all-glorious Pen was moved to remember, and blessed are those men whose names, by virtue of Our inscrutable decree, We have preferred to conceal.

Beseech ye the one true God to grant that all men may be graciously assisted to fulfil that which is acceptable in Our sight. Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead. Verily, thy Lord speaketh the truth, and is the Knower of things unseen.

(Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah)

READER 2

O ye beloved of the Lord! This day is the day of union, the day of the ingathering of all mankind. 'Verily God loveth those who, as though they were a solid wall, do battle for His Cause in serried lines!' Note that He saith 'in serried lines'— meaning crowded and pressed together, one locked to the next, each supporting his fellows. To do battle, as stated in the sacred verse, doth not, in this greatest of all dispensations, mean to go forth with sword and spear, with lance and piercing arrow—but rather weaponed with pure intent, with righteous motives, with counsels helpful and effective, with godly attributes, with deeds pleasing to the Almighty, with the qualities of heaven. It signifieth education for all mankind, guidance for all men, the spreading far and wide of the sweet savours of the

spirit, the promulgation of God's proofs, the setting forth of arguments conclusive and divine, the doing of charitable deeds.

Whensoever holy souls, drawing on the powers of heaven, shall arise with such qualities of the spirit, and march in unison, rank on rank, every one of those souls will be even as one thousand, and the surging waves of that mighty ocean will be even as the battalions of the Concourse on high. What a blessing that will be—when all shall come together, even as once separate torrents, rivers and streams, running brooks and single drops, when collected together in one place will form a mighty sea. And to such a degree will the inherent unity of all prevail, that the traditions, rules, customs and distinctions in the fanciful life of these populations will be effaced and vanish away like isolated drops, once the great sea of oneness doth leap and surge and roll.

(Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha*)

MUSIC - 2

READER 3

This is a beautiful city; the climate is pleasant; the views are charming. All the cities of America seem to be large and beautiful, and the people appear prosperous. The American continent gives signs and evidences of very great advancement; its future is even more promising, for its influence and illumination are far-reaching, and it will lead all nations spiritually. The flag of freedom and banner of liberty have been unfurled here, but the prosperity and advancement of a city, the happiness and greatness of a country depend upon its hearing and obeying the call of God. The light of reality must shine therein and divine civilization be founded; then the radiance of the Kingdom will be diffused and heavenly influences surround. Material civilization is likened to the body, whereas divine civilization is the spirit in that body. A body not manifesting the spirit is dead; a fruitless tree is worthless. Jesus declares that there is spiritual capacity in some people, for all are not submerged in the sea of materialism. They seek the Divine Spirit; they turn to God; they long for the Kingdom. It is my hope that these revered people present may attain both material and spiritual progress. As they have advanced wonderfully in material degrees, so may they, likewise, advance in spiritual development until the body shall become refined and beautiful through the wealth of spiritual potentiality and efficiency.

(Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*)

MUSIC - 3

READER 4

O ye old believers and intimate friends:

God says in the great Qur'án: "He specializes for His Mercy whomsoever He willeth."

These twelve Central States of the United States are like unto the heart of America, and the heart is connected with all the organs and parts of man. If the heart is strengthened, all the organs of the body are reinforced, and if the heart is weak all the physical elements are subjected to feebleness....

O ye friends of God! Exert ye with heart and soul, so that association, love, unity and agreement be obtained between the hearts, all the aims may be merged into one aim, all the songs become one song and the power of the Holy Spirit may become so overwhelmingly victorious as to overcome all the forces of the world of nature. Exert yourselves; your mission is unspeakably glorious. Should success crown your enterprise, America will assuredly evolve into a center from which waves of spiritual power will emanate, and the throne of the Kingdom of God will, in the plentitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established.

This phenomenal world will not remain in an unchanging condition even for a short while. Second after second it undergoes change and transformation. Every foundation will finally become collapsed; every glory and splendor will at last vanish and disappear, but the Kingdom of God is eternal and the heavenly sovereignty and majesty will stand firm, everlasting. Hence in the estimation of a wise man the mat in the Kingdom of God is preferable to the throne of the government of the world.

Continually my ear and eye are turned toward the Central States; perchance a melody from some blessed souls may reach my ears — souls who are the dawning-places of the love of God, the stars of the horizon of sanctification and holiness — souls who will illumine this dark universe and quicken to life this dead world. The joy of 'Abdu'l-Bahá depends upon this! I hope that you may become confirmed therein.

Consequently, those souls who are in a condition of the utmost severance, purified from the defects of the world of nature, sanctified from attachment to this earth, vivified with the breaths of eternal life — with luminous hearts, with heavenly spirit, with attraction of consciousness, with celestial magnanimity, with eloquent tongues and with clear explanations — such souls must hasten and travel through all parts of the Central States. In every city and village they must occupy themselves with the diffusion of the divine exhortations and advices,

guide the souls and promote the oneness of the world of humanity. They must play the melody of international conciliation with such power that every deaf one may attain hearing, every extinct person may be set aglow, every dead one may obtain new life and every indifferent soul may find ecstasy. It is certain that such will be the consummation.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*)

MUSIC - 4

READER 5

The body of the human world is sick. Its remedy and healing will be the oneness of the kingdom of humanity. Its life is the Most Great Peace. Its illumination and quickening is love. Its happiness is the attainment of spiritual perfections. It is my wish and hope that in the bounties and favors of the Blessed Perfection we may find a new life, acquire a new power and attain to a wonderful and supreme source of energy so that the Most Great Peace of divine intention shall be established upon the foundations of the unity of the world of men with God. May the love of God be spread from this city, from this meeting to all the surrounding countries. Nay, may America become the distributing center of spiritual enlightenment, and all the world receive this heavenly blessing! For America has developed powers and capacities greater and more wonderful than other nations. While it is true that its people have attained a marvelous material civilization, I hope that spiritual forces may animate this great body and a corresponding spiritual civilization be established. May the inhabitants of this country become like angels of heaven with faces turned continually toward God. May all of them become the servants of the Omnipotent One. May they rise from present material attainments to such a height that heavenly illumination may stream from this center to all the peoples of the world.

(Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*)

READER 6

The consummate wisdom of God, however, is manifold and not every soul is apprised of its mysteries. Indeed, His all-encompassing mercy and His all-embracing wisdom entail certain exigencies that transcend the ken of human mind. Sorrow not, then, if trials, tribulations and adversities wax ever more severe, for the grace and bestowals of God are likewise unceasing. How often doth man flee from one thing, fixing all his hopes upon another, yet in the end it becometh apparent that the object of desire is harmful and deleterious, whereas the thing despised is the source of advantage and benefit!

Tread, therefore, the path of acquiescence and resignation. Let no hardship sadden thy heart, nor set thy hope upon any worldly gifts. Be happy and content

with whatsoever God hath willed, that thy heart and soul may find tranquillity and thine inner being and conscience may experience true joy. Ere long shall this hardship and tribulation pass away and inner peace and joy be attained.

(Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet translated from the Persian)

MUSIC - 5

READER 7

O thou whose eyes are fixed upon the Abhá Kingdom! In this grievous day, when dire adversities have shaken the pillars of the earth, and the tests and trials sent by God have rocked the foundations of the world, remain thou firm and staunch in His Cause through the power of the Kingdom and the confirmations from on high. Be thou as steadfast as an immovable mountain, an impregnable stronghold, a solid bulwark, and an impenetrable barrier. Be not perturbed by the winds of tribulations or dismayed by grievous calamities. The splendours of divine assistance are shed abroad from the Kingdom of God, and the hosts of heavenly confirmation are continually descending from the throne of the Most High. Rest thou assured and be thou confident.

(Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet translated from the Persian)

READER 8

In all these countries, like unto the morning stars shine ye forth from the horizon of guidance. Thus far ye have been untiring in your labors. Let your exertions henceforth increase a thousandfold. Summon the people in these countries, capitals, islands, assemblies and churches to enter the Abhá Kingdom. The scope of your exertions must needs be extended. The wider its range, the more striking will be the evidence of divine assistance.

You have observed that while 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in the utmost bodily weakness and feebleness, while he was indisposed, and had not the power to move — notwithstanding this physical state he traveled through many countries, in Europe and America, and in churches, meetings and conventions was occupied with the promotion of the divine principles and summoned the people to the manifestation of the Kingdom of Abhá. You have also observed how the confirmations of the Blessed Perfection encompassed all. What result is forthcoming from material rest, tranquillity, luxury and attachment to this corporeal world? It is evident that the man who pursues these things will in the end become afflicted with regret and loss.

Consequently, one must close his eyes wholly to these thoughts, long for eternal life, the sublimity of the world of humanity, the celestial developments, the Holy Spirit, the promotion of the Word of God, the guidance of the inhabitants of the

globe, the promulgation of universal peace and the proclamation of the oneness of the world of humanity! This is the work! Otherwise like unto other animals and birds one must occupy himself with the requirements of this physical life, the satisfaction of which is the highest aspiration of the animal kingdom, and one must stalk across the earth like unto the quadrupeds.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*)

MUSIC - 6

READER 9

O ye believers of God! Be not concerned with the smallness of your numbers, neither be oppressed by the multitude of an unbelieving world. Five grains of wheat will be endued with heavenly blessing, whereas a thousand tons of tares will yield no results or effect. One fruitful tree will be conducive to the life of society, whereas a thousand forests of wild trees offer no fruits. The plain is covered with pebbles, but precious stones are rare. One pearl is better than a thousand wildernesses of sand, especially this pearl of great price, which is endowed with divine blessing. Erelong thousands of other pearls will be born from it. When that pearl associates and becomes the intimate of the pebbles, they also all change into pearls.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*)

READER 10

Let the spreaders of the fragrances of God recite this prayer every morning:

O LORD, my God! Praise and thanksgiving be unto Thee for Thou hast guided me to the highway of the kingdom, suffered me to walk in this straight and far-stretching path, illumined my eye by beholding the splendors of Thy light, inclined my ear to the melodies of the birds of holiness from the kingdom of mysteries and attracted my heart with Thy love among the righteous.

O Lord! Confirm me with the Holy Spirit, so that I may call in Thy Name amongst the nations, and give the glad tidings of the manifestation of Thy kingdom amongst mankind.

O Lord! I am weak, strengthen me with Thy power and potency. My tongue falters, suffer me to utter Thy commemoration and praise. I am lowly, honor me through admitting me into Thy kingdom. I am remote, cause me to approach the threshold of Thy mercifulness. O Lord! Make me a brilliant lamp, a shining star and a blessed tree, adorned with fruit, its branches overshadowing all these regions. Verily, Thou art the Mighty, the Powerful and Unconstrained.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*)

READER 11

May you all become united and assured. May you serve the Cause of God as one single, united force. I give you the glad tidings that the confirmations of God will descend upon you. Be ye assured of this. Ye will become illumined. Ye will become conquerors.

(Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace)

READER 12 - CHILD

READER 13 - CHILD

MUSIC - 7

ADDRESS BY MR. KENNETH BOWERS,

National Spiritual Assembly Secretary

MUSIC - 8

CLOSING REMARKS