

*He moana pukepuke e ekengia e te waka.  
A choppy sea can be navigated by a waka.*

Tēnā Koutou e Te Whare Mana Tika ō te Ao, to our beloved Universal House of Justice,

How blessed, immeasurably blessed are we in Aotearoa to gather in person at National Convention to sail our waka together into the sixth epoch of this Formative Age at the start of the Nine Year Plan. We celebrated universal participation in the election of our cherished National Spiritual Assembly despite pandemic restrictions preventing almost 30% of the delegates from being with us. At the same time, the first of the wave of conferences that will surge throughout Aotearoa began.

How blessed, immeasurably blessed are we that our dear Counsellor Tessa Scrine is present with us in person, ably assisted by six Auxiliary Board members, as our international borders opened just prior to Convention.

How blessed, immeasurably blessed are we to have lodestars to lead us: the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the ongoing guidance and love of the Universal House of Justice.

Through the energising winds of the consultations unfolding at the Convention, there has been a sense of national, united movement in the Plan. We have explored the means of unlocking the society-building power of the Cause in ever-greater measures. We are learning how to touch the hearts of tangata whenua, noting an increase in the use of te reo me ona tikanga Māori in our deliberations. We are learning about raising vibrant outward-looking communities bringing about spiritual and material progress, and contributing to discourses in society. We are excited by the projections of the Regional Bahá'í Councils that each of our 25 clusters will be part of the 5,000 passing the third milestone by 2031.

We are mindful that this goal will take a colossal effort over the course of the Nine Year Plan; mindful of the need for youth to be at the forefront of our efforts; mindful of the enormous capacity of the training institute; mindful of the need to raise and support pioneers on the homefront and internationally; mindful of your guidance that *“the greater the friends' efforts to promote the Word of God, the stronger the countervailing forces they will encounter.”*

We take solace that *“whatever storms lie ahead, the ark of the Cause is equal to them all.”* Within our waka we have everything we need to win these victories, and everything in our waka is needed. The power of the Covenant strengthens our waka and the gusts of the Almighty will propel us onward, onward.

With abiding love and gratitude,

The 65th National Convention of the Bahá'ís of Aotearoa New Zealand, 25 April 2022

waka – sea-faring vessel

tangata whenua – people of the land

te reo me ona tikanga Māori – Māori language and protocol