

PIONEERING

1938. Pioneer Status Clarified: Who is a Pioneer

Any believer who arises and leaves his home to journey to another country for the purpose of teaching the Cause is a pioneer.

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly dated 30 March 1971)

1966. Pioneers Should Work in Close Harmony with Local Believers

... all National Spiritual Assemblies receiving pioneer support should devise ways and means for the pioneers and local believers to work together in close harmony, thus taking full advantage to the help and support that pioneers are anxious to offer, often at great sacrifice, to the teaching or deepening work of the community to which they have gone, and demonstrating to a sceptical world the undivided solidarity and exemplary unity of the followers of the Most Great Name.

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies dated 6 July 1969)

1947. The Native Believers should be Encouraged to Become the Pivot of the Teaching Activities

The House of Justice noted your comments about how heavily certain of your communities rely on resident pioneers; that in fact the pioneers have become the pivot of the teaching activities of the Faith in these communities. Your comment underscores how important it is to encourage the believers native to the community themselves to seek out friends and neighbours to investigate the Faith. The House of Justice understands that it is not easy for the believers who have always relied on ministers or priests, to now be responsible for their own spiritual development. The very act of teaching the Cause will help them realize their own worth and enable them to fulfil their individual spiritual responsibilities.

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahamas dated 20 April 1986)

1952. The Purpose of Dispersal

By dispersal the Guardian means the friends should get away entirely from the large centres of population and, leaving a nucleus of about 15 Bahá'ís to maintain the Local Assembly, go settle, live and teach in new towns, cities and even villages. Naturally, it is no service to the Cause to disperse if it breaks up an existing assembly. The purpose of dispersal is to create more assemblies over a wider area. Until a given assembly can spare some of its local Community to go out and settle, they should by all means at least do extension teaching.

In the instance you cited about a friend who with independent means was willing to go out and sell her home and move to a new area, he feels she would have done better to go. You had more than 9 members in your Community; you could have found another place to meet. This just the type of pioneering the Guardian is urging. Those who can go should go. Others will arise locally to take their places.

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer dated 19 June 1955)

Advice to Bahá'í Youth Concerning Pioneering and Education

9 October 1968

To the Bahá'í Youth in Every Land

Many of them offered to pioneer, but one perplexing question recurred: Shall I continue my education, or should I pioneer now? Undoubtedly this same question is in the mind of every young Bahá'í wishing to dedicate his life to the advancement of the Faith.

There is no stock answer which applies to all situations; the beloved Guardian gave different answers to different individuals on this question. Obviously circumstances vary with each individual case. Each individual must decide how he can best serve the Cause. In making this decision, it will be helpful to weigh the following factors:

- Upon becoming a Bahá'í one's whole life is, or should become devoted to the progress of the Cause of God, and every talent or faculty he possesses is ultimately committed to this overriding life objective. Within this framework he must consider, among other things, whether by continuing his education now he can be a more effective pioneer later, or alternatively whether the urgent need for pioneers, while possibilities for teaching are still open, outweighs an anticipated increase in effectiveness. This is not an easy decision, since oftentimes the spirit which prompts the pioneering offer is more important than one's academic attainments.

- One's liability for military service may be a factor in timing the offer of pioneer service.

- One may have outstanding obligations to others, including those who may be dependent on him for support.

- It may be possible to combine a pioneer project with a continuing educational program. Consideration may also be given to the possibility that a pioneering experience, even though it interrupts the formal educational program, may prove beneficial in the long run in that studies would later be resumed with a more mature outlook.

- The urgency of a particular goal which one is especially qualified to fill and for which there are no other offers.

- The fact that the need for pioneers will undoubtedly be with us for many generations to come, and that therefore there will be many calls in future for pioneering service.

- The principle of consultation also applies. One may have the obligation to consult others, such as one's parents, one's Local and National Assemblies, and the pioneering committees.

- Finally, bearing in mind the principle of sacrificial service and the unfailing promises Bahá'u'lláh ordained for those who arise to serve His Cause, one should pray and meditate on what his course of action will be. Indeed, it often happens that the answer will be found in no other way.

We assure the youth that we are mindful of the many important decisions they must make as they tread the path of service to Bahá'u'lláh. We will offer our ardent supplications at the Holy Threshold that all will be divinely guided and that they will attract the blessings of the All-Merciful.

(Messages from the Universal House of Justice -- 1968-1973, Page: 18)