

Ijtimā' 1-1-1-1—A Manifestation of the Power of Prayers

From 13 attendees at national Ijtimā' of Majlis Anṣārullāh, USA in 1982 to 1000+ in 2014 was a landmark achievement which many people thought was good enough, but with the efforts of our relentless Helpers of Allāh—whose faith in the bounties of Allāh and the blessings of Khilāfat through the power of prayers knows no bounds—the Majlis continued to set higher goal for the next Ijtimā'.

While thanking Allāh for the blessings, the Majlis did not stop there; knowing that Allāh's blessings has no bounds; it is infinite so why must we limit it to a number that has potential to grow. It is all a matter of Tawakkal (trust in Allāh)—the core belief that if you beseech Allāh He will accept your prayers. The Majlis announced a new, seemingly impossible, target of 1111 attendees for 2015. Lo and behold! Almighty Allāh blessed the 2015 gathering with 1161.

The 34th National Ijtimā' of Majlis Anṣārullāh, USA was held at Baitur-Raḥmān Mosque, Silver Spring, MD, on Friday, September 18 to Sunday, September 20, 2015. As is customary, the 23rd Majlis Shūrā of Majlis Anṣārullāh, USA was also held during this time.

The Ijtimā' sessions were held in a marquee at the outside grounds of the mosque as well as in men's Prayer hall. The Shūrā sessions were held in Anṣārullāh Hall. The meals were served in a separate marquee, next to the main marquee. The men's Prayer hall was used for Prayers and women's Prayer hall was used for accommodation. Over 100 rooms at two nearby hotels were also reserved for Anṣār to stay on their own expense. Special arrangement for Tahajjud, congregational Fajr Prayer, and Dars were made at the hotels. The indoor sports activities took place in the basement area of the mosque while the outdoor sports activities were held at the outside grounds of the mosque.

The central theme of Ijtimā' 1-1-1-1 was "Our Children," a very real topic, very complicated and sensitive, but one that every Nāṣir has to deal with on a daily basis, either as a father or a grandfather.

This year, Majlis Shūrā started on Friday morning at 9:30 A.M., continued through several marathon sessions, and ended by 7:30 P.M. the same day allowing Shūrā delegates to fully participate in and enjoy the Ijtimā'. Simultaneously, the Ijtimā' registration was in progress and continued throughout the day.

Among the highlights of the Ijtimā' were congregational Prayers including Tahajjud, Dars, opening and closing sessions, educational and sports competitions, interactive workshops, service oriented booths, and a grand BBQ lunch on Saturday. A special blessing this year was the live address by Haḍrat Khalīfatul Masīḥ V (may Allāh be his helper) to the simultaneous concluding sessions of national Ijtimā'āt of UK and USA that was shown live via a video link. Following are some of the highlights of the various Ijtimā' activities.

The opening session of the Ijtimā' was presided over by respected Amīr Jamā'at, USA, Dr. Ahsanullah Zafar. The session started at 3:30 P.M. with the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān. Ṣadr Majlis Anṣārullāh, Faheem Younus Qureshi, led Anṣār in recitation of the Anṣār pledge. This was followed by an Urdu poem recitation. In his welcome address, introducing the theme of the Ijtimā', Ṣadr Majlis talked about challenges of raising children in this society where the environment is very hostile not only for their moral training but also to instill true belief and love of Almighty Allāh. He quoted the Promised Messiah (may peace be on him) who also said that raising children in this society is like growing roses in a desert. He shared three principles or best practices with fathers. First principle: how to always show children by example about the right priorities and how to give precedence to faith over worldly affairs. Second principle: we as fathers do not talk ill about Khilāfat and the system of the Jamā'at even if we have genuine grievances with some of the Jamā'at members or officeholders. We should keep our children's hearts and minds pure so they can grow as roses in this desert. Third principle: we find good and positive things in the system of the Jamā'at and talk to our children about that on a regular basis. Ṣadr Majlis said that by following these three principles, Almighty Allāh will help us to protect their morals and beliefs in this harsh environment. He then mentioned the hard work that went into planning the event. He also explained the logic behind the different interactive sessions that have been planned, in some cases being held simultaneously, and also explained the changes made this year to ensure that Anṣār actively participate in all the sessions and also enjoy the sumptuous food while socializing to enhance brotherhood and love for each other.

Ṣadr Majlis then invited respected Amīr Jamā'at, USA, Dr. Ahsanullah Zafar, for the inaugural address. In his address, respected Amīr welcomed all Anṣār and talked about the attributes of Allāh and how that creates humility in us. He also said that the Promised Messiah used to say "if you understand my 'claim,' then you have achieved what I am here to bring to you". Respected Amīr said that among various

things, his claim is to be Messiah and Mahdī of the time and once we understand that and accept his status, then we all become united. He later mentioned that that was the reason we had taken time to gather under one roof. He highlighted the reasons for holding such events on a regular basis and how this year's theme was so relevant to the needs of the Jamā'at. He also emphasized the need for Anṣār to be more active and to remember that they are the role model for the generations that follow them thus any weakness on their part not only is bad for them but will also affect the future leaders of the Jamā'at. He wished all Anṣār a successful and blessed Ijtimā' before leading in silent prayers.

After the opening session, the first interactive session titled "A safety net for our children" was conducted by Iqbal Rana. This revolved around training of the children, praying for them, having them involved in the Jamā'at, giving them the identity that they can be proud of, shielding them for the harmful effects of the modern westernized culture that surrounds them, round the clock. The effect of social media and peer pressure is tremendous and overwhelming for most children and they need to be able to openly communicate within their families without fear of reprisals or shame. If that openness is not developed, these children will talk to somebody and that somebody may not be a desirable person.

Next, there was a presentation and Q&A by Dawood Munir, National Auditor of Majlis Anṣārullāh, USA, about the importance of Living Will, the intricacies of Medicare and Social Security, and how these could be used as an effective tool to improve our life by maximizing the gains and avoiding the pitfalls. Many Anṣār took active part in asking questions to clear their concepts and this proved to be a very informative and useful session by any standard.

After Maghrib and 'Ishā' Prayers, a very interesting panel discussion was held, the first of its kind, with former Ṣadrān of Majlis Anṣārullāh, USA. The following Ṣadrān participated: Dr. Masoud Ahmad Malik, Dr. Karimullah Zirvi, Nāṣir Mahmood Malik, Dr. Wajeeh Bajwa. This was a very informative, and occasionally a hilarious, session as the former Ṣadrān shared their experiences, achievements, frustrations, and challenges for the benefit of the organization. They also answered questions from the attendees of the session.

As always, the next day started with Tahajjud, Fajr Prayer, and Dars. This was followed by various sports competitions. For those not competing or bucking up their teams, this was an opportunity to catch up on sleep. A lavish breakfast was then served with a variety of options to choose from.

The morning session was all about educational competitions that included individual competitions of Recitation of the Holy Qur'ān and Impromptu Speech whilst the General Knowledge was a team competition between groups made up from different regions.

This was followed by a Health Talk session coordinated by Dr. Lutfur Rahman, Qā'id Dhahānat wa Ṣiḥat Jismānī (Intellect and Physical Health). A panel of Anṣār doctors answered questions from the audience. Different aspects of health were emphasized.

After lunch, the proverbial group photo was organized. This year there were two redeeming features. One, a drone camera was used to take snapshots and video. Two, each Nāṣir was provided a framed copy of the photo before the end of the Ijtimā'.

After Zuhr and 'Aṣr Prayers, there were two simultaneous interactive discussions, one led by Dr. Wajeeh Bajwa titled "Helping our children with marriage" and the other "Practical tips about raising our children" by Yasin Sharif, Qā'id Tarbiyat.

The moderators emphasized that these topics were critically intertwined and both had reached a point where they could not be sidelined. The facts had to be admitted to, ground realities had to be accepted, and solutions had to be found for solving these issues within the ambit of the Jamā'at.

Next, the outdoor sports competitions were held that included volleyball, 100-meter race, horseshoe toss. Simultaneously, a team of doctors provided basic assessment of health including BP, BMI, and acupuncture for those interested in getting a checkup.

A lively and enjoyable BBQ then followed. Food was in abundance and the variety was a feast for the eye and the appetite.

After Maghrib and 'Ishā' Prayers, Rehan Amir narrated his interesting journey to Aḥmadiyyat which was followed by the annual report presented by Ṣadr Majlis.

On the final day of the Ijtimā', in his closing address, Ṣadr Majlis mentioned about how we can improve the standards of our prayers for our children. First is to strengthen our belief in Allāh with such a conviction that we know for sure that He will protect our children and their morals no matter how harsh the environment is around them. Second, he mentioned that we should remain steadfast and continue to pray for our children no matter how long we have to wait. Giving up is not a choice. Third, he said that the Promised Messiah (may peace be on him) has given us the recipe that we should pray for each other and

each others' children. By doing so, Almighty Allāh will bring us closer together and promote love and harmony in us.

The most salient feature of the Ijtimā' was the historic address by Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīḥ V (may Allāh be his helper) to the simultaneous concluding sessions of national Ijtimā'āt of UK and USA that was shown live via a video link.