

MEHER SPIRITUAL CENTER



BOARD GOVERNANCE POLICY MANUAL

Approved April 16, 2014

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INTRODUCTION

Avatar Meher Baba designated Meher Spiritual Center as His "Home in the West," and He gave its corporate Charter His approval. This Charter provides for non-profit corporate "governance," with a Board of Directors acting as steward. In an effort to develop an optimal structure for fulfilling the purposes of the Charter, the current Board of Directors has reviewed the workings of the Center, and the original Board Governance Document established in 2000. The result is the following revised Governance Policy Manual that summarizes the responsibilities of the Board, the Administrator and the staff of the Center, and the processes by which the Center is to be governed.

The original document and this revision begin with an agreement that the MSC Board provides policy and direction, and that the implementation of that policy is carried out by an Administrator who is accountable to the Board for the fulfillment of its policies and directives.

The Board's primary role is to act as steward of Meher Spiritual Center and the Meher Spiritual Center Corporation. The Board's purpose is to ensure that the purposes of both are fulfilled in a manner befitting the Avatar. The Board must always keep in mind Meher Baba's wish that the Center retreat be kept as a place for rest and for renewal of the spiritual life. The Board must act in accordance with His statement that the Meher Spiritual Center is "for those who love and follow Me and for those who know of Me and want to know more."

Ultimately, this document should be judged by the results it brings about, that is, the degree to which Baba's wishes, as expressed in the Center's Charter and other statements and directives, are fulfilled. May His Grace shine upon these efforts, and upon the efforts of all those who attempt to serve the Beloved through whatever involvement they may have in the care of His Home in the West.

Board of Directors
Meher Spiritual Center, Inc.
January 18, 2012

Vision, Values & Mission

Vision:

Meher Spiritual Center, Meher Baba's Home in the West, where all who come can experience His love.

Values and Value Statements:

These values are the foundation that keeps us focused on the vision of Avatar Meher Baba's Home in the West. For the vision to be realized, efforts of the Board, staff and volunteers are guided by the following values:

Focus on Meher Baba: Avatar Meher Baba, His teachings and His Life of Love and Service underlie all we do to uphold His wish that the Meher Spiritual Center remain a place for rest and for renewal of the spiritual life.

Welcoming: Our responsibility toward all who come to Avatar Meher Baba's Home in the West is to be genuine, loving and receptive in all our interactions.

Shared Stewardship: As stewards of Avatar Meher Baba's Home in the West, we carefully and responsibly engage in a cooperative effort to ensure that the Center flourishes for all time.

Harmony: We embrace our individual and shared responsibilities, putting ourselves aside in service to Avatar Meher Baba and His Home in the West.

Attentiveness: We remain alert and responsive to any condition, action or inaction that may enhance or detract from the unique atmosphere of the Center.

Integrity: We align our behaviors with our vision, values and mission. Our conscious intent is to be honest, sincere and loving in all our actions and interactions.

Mission Statement

The Meher Spiritual Center, Avatar Meher Baba's Home in the West, is a place of pilgrimage for all who love and follow Him and for those who know of Him and want to know more. In a spirit of love and service and in alignment with the Center's vision and values, the Board, staff and volunteers are committed to:

- Maintaining the intimate and unique atmosphere of Meher Baba's Home: a place of retreat, rest, contemplation and renewal of the spiritual life;
- Providing a safe and welcoming experience for all;
- Offering information about the Avatar's teachings and His life of love and service without supplanting anyone's religious convictions or beliefs;
- Creating the shared stewardship opportunities that best serve the purposes of the Center;
- Ensuring the preservation and maintenance of the Center: all of its grounds, buildings, archival treasures and its natural environment;
- Developing the physical, human and fiscal resources in ways that best serve the purposes of the Center, and
- Developing or supporting programs based on Avatar Meher Baba's example of love and service to those in need.

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MEHER SPIRITUAL CENTER POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The following policies and practices flow from Meher Spiritual Center's (to be referred to throughout this document as the Center) vision, values, and mission. They are Board generated operational standards that guide the actions of those who serve the Center, its guests and the larger community. These policies and guidelines are not in concrete and should be reviewed regularly and adapted when appropriate.

SECTION 1.0: CORPORATION'S LINKAGE TO FOUNDER AND BENEFICIARIES

- 1.0.1 Avatar Meher Baba is the Founder of the Center and His teachings guide the Corporation. His guests who visit the Center are the primary beneficiaries.
- 1.0.2 The Board Administrator, staff and volunteers serve as stewards for fulfilling Avatar Meher Baba's declared purposes as given through His Charter and related statements. The Center will be governed by its vision, values, mission and governance policies inspired and aligned with the teachings and living example of the Founder.
- 1.0.3 The Board maintains a wide-range of diverse strategies for gathering input and feedback from those whom the Center serves or wishes to serve.

SECTION 2.0: GOVERNANCE PROCESS

2.1 BOARD JOB DESCRIPTION: In service to Avatar Meher Baba, the duty and responsibility of the Center Board of Directors, acting as the stewards of Avatar Meher Baba's Home in the West, is to ensure excellence in governance by:

- 2.1.1 Creating and monitoring policy guidelines that ensure operational alignment to the Center's vision, values and mission.
- 2.1.2 Working in partnership with the Center Administrator to ensure that Center operates in alignment with the vision and values. In doing this, the Board is responsible for:
 - 2.1.2.a. Selecting the Center Administrator
 - 2.1.2.b. Determining the Center Administrator's responsibilities and relating them to the most current mission.
 - 2.1.2.c. Providing the moral and professional support the Administrator needs to further the goals of the organization.
 - 2.1.2.d. Monitoring the performance of the Center Administrator
 - 2.1.2.e. Ensuring that dynamic links exist between short-term operational planning and long-term growth and sustainability planning.
- 2.1.3 Building a competent Board by articulating the criteria for candidates, recruiting and orienting new members, and periodically and comprehensively evaluating its own performance.
- 2.1.4 Enhancing the public's understanding and perception of the Center by creating and maintaining a proactive public interface process.
- 2.1.5 Ensuring that sufficient financial resources exist and are effectively managed for the organization to fulfill its vision and mission.
- 2.1.6 Ensuring that a significant number and variety of opportunities exist for communications between the Meher Baba family and the Center's leadership at all levels.

In addition, individual Board members will:

- 2.1.7 Commit to participate in at least one of the Board committees.
- 2.1.8 Commit to be present, whether in person, by phone or other digital process, at a minimum of 75% of the regularly scheduled and specially called Board meetings and any Board committee on which they serve.

2.2 CRITERIA FOR BOARD MEMBERSHIP: The Board will ensure a membership of individuals who possess the commitment and attributes required to provide effective

governance for the Corporation, who act in alignment to the Center's vision, values and mission and who have a relationship with Avatar Meher Baba and a commitment to the Center, its vision, values and mission.

When identifying, recruiting and selecting potential Board members, the Board will consider those who most closely demonstrate the following attributes:

- 2.2.1 Board members agree to honor and work to fulfill the duties and responsibilities identified in the Board Job Description, to act in alignment with the norms established by the Board for its meetings and to uphold the ideals identified in this governance document.
- 2.2.2 Board members have the leadership capabilities needed to effectively fulfill their role, including:
 - 2.2.2.a. Takes responsibility for decisions and assigned work.
 - 2.2.2.b. Follows through on tasks in a timely manner.
 - 2.2.2.c. Is willing to try new things. Seek out the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be successful and to learn from mistakes.
 - 2.2.2.d. Has the ability to think conceptually: sees implications of direction, strategy and sets of facts and has a sense of the big picture.
 - 2.2.2.e. Possesses basic group skills including: participates in discussion without dominating, can assume leadership if the need arises and is able to adhere to the agreed upon norms and willing to confront others who operate outside these norms.
 - 2.2.2.f. Demonstrates the ability to build, influence and sustain relationships vital to the vision of the Center.
 - 2.2.2.g. Has the ability to communicate and collaborate successfully with other Board members, the Administrator, staff and the Center family.
- 2.2.3 Board members must be at least eighteen (18) years of age.
- 2.2.4 Board members possess enough fluency with English to allow them to carry out all of the duties outlined in this governance policy manual.
- 2.2.5 Board members, when possible, engage in the life of the Center.
- 2.2.6 Board members have, or will be provided, the technology to allow for their participation in Board communications and meetings.
- 2.2.7 Board members are not familiarly (ties of blood, marriage, or adoption or has consented to an arrangement similar to ties of blood or marriage) related to any current member of the Corporate Board.
- 2.2.8 Board members are not paid employees of the Center.

2.2.9 Board composition also attempts to reflect the demographics of those that the Center directly serves, provided the above criteria can also be met.

2.3 CODE OF CONDUCT: The Board commits itself and its members to practice ethical, businesslike, and lawful conduct, including proper use of authority and appropriate decorum when acting as Board members. A Board member is subject to immediate removal by the Board if a member is found to be in violation of the code of conduct.

2.3.1 Members must represent non-conflicted loyalty to the interests of the Center. This accountability must supersede any conflicting loyalty such as advocacy to, or interest in, other groups or membership on other Boards or staffs. It also must supersede any Board member's possible personal gains or self interests that may occur either as a consumer of the Center's or other organizations' services.

2.3.2 Members must avoid any conflict of interest, or the appearance of a conflict of interest, with respect to their responsibilities, fiduciary or otherwise.

2.3.2.a. There must be no self-dealing or any conduct of private business or personal services between any Board member and the organization except as procedurally controlled to assure openness, competitive opportunity, and equal access to inside information.

2.3.2.b. When the Board is to decide upon an issue about which a member has an unavoidable conflict of interest, that member shall absent herself or himself without comment from not only the vote, but also from the deliberation.

2.3.2.c. Board members must not use their positions to obtain Center employment for themselves, family members, or close associates. Should a member desire to become an employee of the Center, he or she must first resign.

2.3.2.d. Board members shall disclose their involvement with other organizations, with vendors, or any other associations that might represent a conflict of interest.

2.3.3 Board members may not attempt to exercise individual authority over the organization except as explicitly set forth in Board policies.

2.3.3.a. Members individually have no inherent authority over the Administrator except when explicitly delegated by the Board.

2.3.3.b. Members cannot speak on behalf of the Board when interacting with the public, press, or other entities, except when duly authorized or to state Board decisions.

2.3.3.c. Members will not undermine the roles of the Administrator, staff or other Board members through the expression of individual judgments or behaviors.

2.3.4 When Board members interact they will commit to the following behaviors and

hold one another accountable to them:

- 2.3.4.a. Adhering to a set of normative behaviors that drives its functioning while in regularly or specially scheduled meetings. These agreed upon meeting norms define agreeable meeting decorum and should be revisited prior to all meetings and reviewed periodically to ensure they still correctly identify the Board's desired behaviors.
 - 2.3.4.b. Being fully prepared for meetings.
 - 2.3.4.c. Dealing directly with one another with the intent of finding an accord concerning conflicts.
 - 2.3.4.d. Following through on commitments in a timely manner; being accountable to the group.
 - 2.3.4.e. Striving for consensus, but when unattainable, supporting the majority vote.
 - 2.3.4.f. Honoring confidences.
 - 2.3.4.g. Providing members a reasonable amount of time to explore, honor and openly express differences.
 - 2.3.4.h. Honoring agreed upon methods to keep each Board member and the Administrator, when appropriate, informed on all significant matters of immediate or potential impact related to the Center and its beneficiaries.
 - 2.3.4.i. Voting only by voice vote unless the Presiding Officer determines it necessary to have an email vote and then only after ground rules that include the voting procedure have been created and distributed to all. Voting by email is generally discouraged and will only be permitted when required by the circumstances as determined by a majority of the Board.
- 2.3.5 When the Board has formally taken a position or made a decision, members will always speak with a single voice when addressing the public, press, or other entities.
- 2.3.6 Board members must remain aware that their individual behavior outside of their work for the Board may also negatively impact the perception people have of the Center and/or the Board's ability to govern. The Board will, on a case-by-case basis, address any member's real or perceived actions that may negatively impact the Center and its ability to govern effectively.

2.4 GOVERNANCE STYLE: The Board will govern with an emphasis on:

- 2.4.1 Its vision, values and mission
 - 2.4.1.a. The Board will direct, control, and inspire the organization primarily through the careful establishment of written Board policies reflecting the Board's vision, values and perspectives about the mission.
 - 2.4.1.b. The Board will continuously use the vision, values and mission as guidelines for decision-making.

- 2.4.1.c The Board will create a set of normative behaviors that will drive its functioning while in its regularly or specially scheduled meetings. These agreed upon norms will define agreeable meeting decorum and should be revisited prior to all meetings and reviewed periodically to ensure they still correctly identify the desired behaviors of the Board.
- 2.4.2 Encouraging diversity in viewpoints
 - 2.4.2.a. The Board, in its efforts to govern effectively, will strive to create opportunities to obtain viewpoints and feedback from the Administrator, staff, guests and members of the Meher Baba community.
 - 2.4.2.b. The Board will utilize individuals and groups with talents and insights that extend the effectiveness and efficiency of the Board's decision-making.
- 2.4.3 Strategic leadership
 - 2.4.3.a. The Board will acquire the information, skills, disciplines and attitudes needed for maintaining excellence in governing.
 - 2.4.3.b. The Board will lead with a focus on the vision more than the mission and strategically more than administratively.
 - 2.4.3.c. The Board will determine which issues are under the Board or Administrator's jurisdiction and then proceed accordingly.
 - 2.4.3.d. The Board will be the proactive initiator of policy.
 - 2.4.3.e. The Board will annually monitor its own development, process and performance and take the corrective actions indicated in a timely manner.
- 2.4.4 A clear distinction of Board and Administrator roles
 - 2.4.4.a. The Board will focus on creating policies that guide the implementation of the overall mission of the Center and the Corporation.
 - 2.4.4.b. The Board will rely on the Administrator to implement the strategies needed to successfully achieve the Center's vision and mission.
 - 2.4.4.c. The Board will monitor Administrator performance to ensure that the mission of the Center is being fulfilled.
- 2.4.5 Making collective decisions in a timely manner
 - 2.4.5.a. The Board, upon reaching a decision, will act with a single voice in all external actions and interactions.
 - 2.4.5.b. The Board will not allow any officer, individual, or committee of the Board to hinder or be an excuse for not fulfilling Board commitments.
 - 2.4.5.c. The Board will address in a timely and decisive manner, such governance issues as attendance, preparation, and the adherence to governing principles.

- 2.4.5.d. The Board will use the expertise of individual Board members to enhance its ability to work as a team.
 - 2.4.5.e. All decision making will be entered into with a focus on finding the best collective answer.
 - 2.4.5.f. The Board will cultivate a commitment to group responsibility.
 - 2.4.5.g. The Board will create realistic timelines for the completion of its tasks.
- 2.4.6 An eye to the future
- 2.4.6.a. The Board, when making decisions, will begin with a review of historic documents and precedence, an assessment of the current realities, and, most importantly, the potential impact any decision will have on the long-term sustainability of the Center and achievability of the vision.
 - 2.4.6.b. The Board will intentionally set aside the time to forecast and analyze international, national and local factors that may impact the Center or the Corporation.

2.5 BOARD OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: The Board, at the annual meeting, will select individuals, using a majority vote, to serve in leadership positions that will enhance its ability to govern. These leadership positions are Presiding Officer, Secretary and Treasurer. These individuals will also serve as members of the Executive Committee along with one voting, non-officer, Board member and the Center Administrator as a non-voting ex officio member.

- 2.5.1 The Board Standing Nominating Committee will provide the Board with nominations for Presiding Officer, Secretary, Treasurer, and non-officer Board member a month before the annual meeting. At the annual meeting, the nominations will be introduced, discussed and voted on.
- 2.5.2 Presiding Officer: The Presiding Officer assures the integrity of the Board's process, serves on the Executive Committee and will, with direction from the Board, represent the Board to outside parties.
 - 2.5.2.a. The Presiding Officer ensures that the business of the Board is conducted in a manner that consistently aligns with the Center's vision, values and mission, and adheres to its policies and practices and those restrictions and responsibilities legitimately imposed upon it from outside the organization.
 - 2.5.2.b. The Presiding Officer:
 - i. Serves as the chair at all meetings of the full Board and Executive Committee, with all the commonly accepted power of that position.
 - ii. May represent the Board to outside parties in announcing Board-stated positions.
 - iii. Will, prior to a meeting in which he or she will be unable to attend, identify and notify an interim Presiding Officer.

- 2.5.3 Secretary: The Secretary is responsible for recording what occurs during all Board and Executive Committee meetings. The Secretary:
- 2.5.3.a. Is responsible for finalizing and printing meeting minutes and storing them in a retrievable and safe location.
 - 2.5.3.b. Is responsible for disseminating the minutes, in a timely manner, to the entire Board as well as the Administrator.
 - 2.5.3.c. Is charged with notifying Board members and any guests scheduled to attend about the date, time, duration and location of the upcoming meetings.
 - 2.5.3.d. Will distribute the agenda to all those who should be in attendance at least one (1) week prior to all regularly scheduled and specially called Board meetings.
 - 2.5.3.e. Will, prior to a meeting in which he or she will be unable to attend, identify and notify an interim Secretary.
- 2.5.3 Treasurer: The Treasurer shall oversee the financial dealings of the Corporation and Center. These dealings shall include the Corporation's alignment to all laws and financial regulations, fiduciary dealings, and the appropriate and timely use of restricted donations or grants. In addition the Treasurer shall:
- 2.5.3.a. Serve on the Executive Committee and on all Board committees dealing with financial matters. The Treasurer will be part of all financial reporting generated by these committees to the Board.
 - 2.5.3.b. Oversee and ensure the accuracy of all financial accounts of the Corporation.
 - 2.5.3.c. Oversee annual internal audits of Corporation books under the guidance and direction of the Board.
 - 2.5.3.d. Work with the Administrator and Financial Officer, if one exists, to ensure that appropriate financial reports are made available to the Board.
 - 2.5.3.e. Together with the Administrator and Financial Officer, if one exists, present the annual budget to the Board for approval.
 - 2.5.3.f. Be bonded, along with all other signatories, at a rate established by the Board.
- 2.5.4 Non-Officer Board Member: Each year at the annual meeting, the Board will select a non-officer Board member to serve on the Executive Committee.
- 2.5.5 Center Administrator: The Center Administrator will serve on the Executive Committee as an ex officio non-voting member.
- 2.5.6 Executive Committee: The function of the Executive Committee is to support the Board, Board committees and the Administrator in the implementation of the policies established by the Board.
- 2.5.6.a. The Presiding Officer will be responsible for facilitating the

- meetings of the Executive Committee.
- 2.5.6.b. At least a majority of the members of this committee must live in the Myrtle Beach area (within 50 miles).
 - 2.5.6.c. All of the general and committee specific criteria for the operation of the Executive Committee will be followed. (See the Executive Committee's most recently approved Terms of Reference)

2.6 BOARD COMMITTEES: Board committees work at the pleasure of the Board and are created or dissolved at the Board's discretion. They do not act independently of the Board or help or advise the Administrator, staff or volunteers. These policies do not apply to committees formed under the authority of the Administrator. The Board may utilize three basic types of Board committees: ad hoc, standing and executive.

- 2.6.1 **General Board committee policies:** All Board committees are required to adhere to a set of general Board committee policies. These are:
 - 2.6.1.a. Board committees may not speak or act for the Board except when formally given such authority for specific and time-limited purposes. Expectations and authority will be carefully stated in order to not conflict with authority delegated to the Administrator.
 - 2.6.1.b. Staff may be asked to serve on a Board committee. A staff member asked to serve on a Board committee may not have his or her job adversely impacted by a refusal to serve, an opinion they have or a decision to remove himself or herself from a Board committee.
 - 2.6.1.c. The Board's Standing Nominating Committee will approach all nominees regarding their nominations for all Board-level committees.
 - 2.6.1.d. Creation of Board committees, selecting committee chairs and the appointments of committee members, both Board and non-Board, must be approved by a majority of the full Board.
 - 2.6.1.e. The Board will determine the number of individuals needed to successfully accomplish the committee's assigned tasks and responsibilities. Committees that, through their efforts, determine a need to adjust the number of members must make this request to the Board for approval.
 - 2.6.1.f. Board committees, regardless of type, will only be formed to address a specific responsibility or set of tasks. The Board is responsible for establishing the specific guidelines within which a Board committee must operate. These guidelines are a Board committee's written Terms of Reference (TOR) and will be completed prior to the Board forming a committee.
 - 2.6.1.g. Terms of Reference are the Board's written instructions to guide the committees' actions and goals. TOR, at a minimum, indicate:
 - i. Desired outcomes for that committee
 - ii. Timelines for accomplishing specific tasks,
 - iii. Types and frequency of reporting, and
 - iv. Allocated operational resources.

- 2.6.1.h. TOR will be comprehensive enough to be clear about what the Board desires. Within the TOR the Board will allow for reasonable and appropriate flexibility as well as creative thinking and action.
- 2.6.1.i. Board committee members agree to honor and work to fulfill the duties and responsibilities identified in the Board committee's TOR. A failure to do so can result in a committee member being removed. Such a removal requires a majority vote of the full Board.
- 2.6.1.j. Board members may be assigned to Ad Hoc Committees; two Board members are required to serve on each Standing Committee. Assigned Board members on any committee are to participate fully in the committee's proceedings with the following norms as guidelines:
 - i. Offer information and perspective based on Board policies.
 - ii. Offer skills and expertise relevant to the committee's tasks.
 - iii. Assist the committee chair with communication to the Board (see 2.6.3.d), following the types and frequency detailed in the committee's TOR.
 - iiii. Remain sensitive, in the spirit of shared stewardship, to not use Board status to influence or over-ride the contributions of other committee members.
- 2.6.1.k. The Board will ensure that all South Carolina statutes governing Board committees are adhered to. Based on SC Code 1976 § 33-31-801 Board committees operating in South Carolina may not:
 - i. Authorize distributions,
 - ii. Approve dissolution, merger, or the sale, pledge, or transfer of all, or substantially all, of the Corporation's assets,
 - iii. Select, appoint or remove Board members or fill vacancies on the Board or on any of its committees, or
 - iv. Adopt, amend, or repeal the charter, articles of incorporation, by-laws or any policy approved by the Board.

South Carolina Code 1976 § 33-31-820 through 824 states that ongoing (standing and executive) Board committees must also adhere to the policies that govern the full Board regarding:

 - i. Governance of meetings,
 - ii. Action without meetings,
 - iii. Notice and waiver of notice of meetings, and
 - iv. Voting and quorum procedures and requirements.
- 2.6.1.l. The Board commits to investing in the development of its own governance capacity by ensuring that those serving on Board committees have the skills, methods, and supports needed to assure it can operate with excellence. All individuals appointed to a Board committee for the first time will receive an orientation to allow them to excel.
- 2.6.1.m. The appointed chair of a Board committee is responsible for facilitating the committee's meetings, ensuring that committee

logistics are satisfactorily addressed and that all reporting, as identified in the committee's TOR, is made in a timely manner.

- 2.6.1.n. The Board will establish and implement a Board committee communication system that ensures that both the Board and the Board committees are receiving the information they need in a timely and appropriate manner. This system will be shared as part of the committee member's orientation and will be stated in the committee's TOR.
- 2.6.1.o. Policies that address conflict of interest and familiarity for the Corporate Board will be applied when making standing Board committee appointments. These policies are found in the Criteria for Board Membership section 2.2.7 and in the Code of Conduct section 2.3.2.
- 2.6.1.p. At least each quarter, every Board committee will make a report to the Board using the report form provided by the Board; each committee or Chair will choose a Vice Chair/Secretary who will take minutes and will convene the committee when the Chair is unavailable; minutes will be taken at each meeting of Board committees, attached to the quarterly reports and distributed by the Board Secretary with the next Board meeting agenda.
- 2.6.1.q. When creating the Board meeting agenda the Presiding Officer will include committee reports within the consent agenda unless the Board or the Board committee chair has requested a more formal presentation or if the report requires an immediate action or vote on the part of the Board.

2.6.2 **Ad hoc Board committee policies:** All ad hoc Board committees, with the exception of those that are designed to only meet once for a very specific task, are expected to adhere to the general policies listed above (a-p) as well as those that address ad hoc committees specifically. These are:

- 2.6.2.a. Ad hoc Board committees help the Board accomplish a specific short-term goal and once the goal is achieved the Board terminates its operations. These Board committee policies apply to any ad hoc group that is formed by Board action, regardless of whether it is called a committee and regardless of whether the group includes Board members. Examples of groups the Board may convene include:
 - i. Focus groups - a demographically diverse group of people assembled to participate in a guided discussion about a particular topic or issue prior to the Board making a decision or taking action.
 - ii. Study groups - a group of people selected by the Board based on their expertise, that meet to study an issue or topic with the goal of reporting their findings or recommendations to the Board.
 - iii. Planning and action group – a group of people selected to plan

an event or activity or to take action based on a decision made by the Board.

- 2.6.2.b. An ad hoc committee may be dissolved prior to it completing its tasks, based on a majority vote of the Board.
 - 2.6.2.c. The Executive Committee monitors the progress and addresses the needs of the Board's ad hoc committees. The Executive Committee will keep the full Board informed of their actions regarding ad hoc committees.
 - 2.6.2.d. Using the TOR and committee reports to determine effectiveness, the Executive Committee will ensure that each ad hoc committee is operating effectively in alignment with the TOR. When this is not the case the Board may at any time choose to revise the TOR, dissolve the committee or make changes in the committee's membership or chairmanship.
- 2.6.3 **Standing Board committee policies:** Standing Board committees address issues that are ongoing. Standing committees, therefore, remain in operation year round and from year to year. Standing committees are required to include appointed Board members. All standing Board committees are expected to adhere to the general policies listed above (a-p) and those that address standing committees specifically. These are:
- 2.6.3.a. Each standing Board committee is required to have two Board members serving on that committee.
 - 2.6.3.b. When the Board creates a standing Board committee it also assigns the Board members to serve on that committee and selects a non-Board member to serve as chair of the committee.
 - 2.6.3.c. To reach a quorum for a meeting at least one appointed Board member must be present.
 - 2.6.3.d. The chair and the appointed Board members on a standing committee will be responsible for making formal, in person, reports to the Board whenever requested.
 - 2.6.3.e. Once a year, at either the annual or mid-year meeting, the Board will assess the work of each of its standing Board committees. The Board will use the TOR and the committee's reports to determine effectiveness. Standing Board committees that are not meeting the Board's expectations may be:
 - i. Given revised terms of reference that will address needed changes or improvements,
 - ii. Subject to changes in the committee's membership, or
 - iii. Dissolved.
 - 2.6.3.f. Each year at its annual meeting the Board will inform still active standing committees of their TOR for the upcoming year. Dissolving a standing Board committee requires a two-thirds vote of the Board. Dissolution of a standing Board committee will be discussed and voted on; it must be announced to all Board members at least two weeks prior to a meeting where action will be

taken.

- 2.6.3.g. Standing Board committee members may be nominated by the members of the committee, reported through the chair, or by Board members, and must be approved by a majority vote of the existing Board.
- 2.6.3.h. If standing Board committee members are approved they are agreeing to serve for a term of four (4) consecutive years with the opportunity to serve a second four (4) year term. At the end of two consecutive terms a standing Board committee member must step down for at least four (4) years.
- 2.6.3.i. The Board may fill any standing Board committee vacancy, regardless of reason, for the duration of the unexpired term. The four (4) year term begins after the new committee member has completed any remaining days left from the vacated position before the next annual meeting.

2.6.4 **Executive Committee policies:** The Executive Committee is expected to adhere to the general policies listed above (a-p) as well as those that address the Executive Committee specifically. The Executive Committee will:

- 2.6.4.a. Not act in a way that circumvents the responsibilities of the full Board.
- 2.6.4.b. Be responsible for overseeing ongoing operations of the Board and act on behalf of the Board during on-demand activities that occur between meetings, notifying the Board immediately of the action needed and taken.
- 2.6.4.c. Is comprised of five Board members: Presiding Officer, Secretary and Treasurer, plus one non-officer Board member appointed annually and the Center Administrator who serves as a non-voting, ex officio member.
- 2.6.4.d. Along with its powers, must be identified in the Corporation bylaws.
- 2.6.4.e. Act in alignment with its Board-approved TOR.
- 2.6.4.f. Be assessed by the full Board twice a year, at the annual and mid-year meetings. The Board will use the TOR and Executive Committee's reports to determine effectiveness. If the Executive Committee is not meeting the Board's expectations it may:
 - i. Be given revised Terms of Reference that will address needed changes or improvements,
 - ii. Be dissolved, or
 - iii. Choose to make changes in the committee's membership.

The Board will at this time inform the Executive Committee of its TOR for the upcoming year.

2.7 BOARD MEMBER SELECTION, REJUVENATION AND DEVELOPMENT

- 2.7.1 To ensure that the Center's Board operates at the most effective level possible, the Board will select and rejuvenate itself using the following procedures:
- 2.7.1.a. The Board will be self-perpetuating.
 - 2.7.1.b. The Board may change the number of directors at any time. Although South Carolina law mandates a minimum of three members of a Board, the policy of the Board is that there shall not be less than seven (7) nor more than eleven (11) members.
 - 2.7.1.c. New Board members will be voted on at the November special election meeting, and will begin their first four (4) year term at the following January meeting.
 - 2.7.1.d. Each elected Board member will serve a four (4) year term and will have the opportunity to be reelected for a second four (4) year term immediately after the completion of the first four (4) year term; thus, having the potential of serving for eight (8) consecutive years.
 - 2.7.1.e. Any Board member up for re-election will notify the Board in writing of their interest in serving a second four (4) year term by the July regular meeting, and will be voted on at the November special election meeting.
 - 2.7.1.f. After the completion of two four (4) year terms, the Board member is required to wait at least four years before the possibility of reelection for a single additional four (4) year term.
 - 2.7.1.g. Directors will be appointed or reappointed for the ensuing year at the annual meeting except when a director dies, resigns or is removed. This vacated director's position will be filled as soon as practical following the position opening. If the vacated position's unexpired term is two years or less, the person selected to finish that term may be selected to serve an additional two four-year terms. If the vacated position's unexpired term is more than two years, the selected person may only be selected for one additional four-year term.
 - 2.7.1.h. New and reappointed directors must be approved by at least a two-thirds vote of the full Board.
 - 2.7.1.i. While off the Corporate Board, former Board members may serve the Center as committee members, as other volunteers or as part- or full-time staff.
 - 2.7.1.j. When sufficient cause exists for the removal of a director from the Board, said director may be removed by a two-thirds vote of the directors then in office. The basis for removal will be determined by the directors then in office on a case-by-case basis. Removal of a Director will be in accordance with the laws of the state of South Carolina. Any proposal to remove a Director shall be stated in the notice of the meeting serving this purpose.

- 2.7.1.k. The terms of office will be staggered in an attempt to reduce the likelihood that more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the Board will be replaced in any year.
- 2.7.2 The Board commits to investing in the development of its own governance capacity.
 - 2.7.2.a. Efforts will be made to ensure the existing members of the Board of Directors and those serving on standing Board committees have the skills, methods, and support needed to assure they can effectively govern.
 - 2.7.2.b. New Board and standing Board committee members will receive orientation.
 - 2.7.2.c. The Board will maintain a standing Board committee identified as the Nominating Committee. The committee will identify, contact, recruit, nominate and orient new Board and Standing Board committee members. This committee will monitor the training needs and opportunities for Board and standing Board Committee members.

2.8 AGENDA PLANNING:

- 2.8.1 To fulfill its role with a governance style consistent with Board policies, the Board will:
 - 2.8.1.a. Create and follow an annual agenda from which subsequent meeting agendas are developed,
 - 2.8.1.b. Review and revise the annual agenda, if needed, at midyear,
 - 2.8.1.c. Ensure that all Board generated meetings follow an agreed upon protocol that allows for enriched input and deliberation while honoring the importance of time management,
 - 2.8.1.d. Assist Board created committees in their efforts to successfully complete their instructions in a timely and effective manner, and
 - 2.8.1.e. Assess the Board, staff and volunteers' success with regards to the mission.
- 2.8.2 **Annual Meeting:** The Center's annual Board meeting will be conducted in January of each year, unless circumstances do not permit this to occur. If the meeting needs to be postponed it will be rescheduled as close to the beginning of the calendar year as possible.
 - 2.8.2.a. The annual meeting will be, at a minimum, a two-day event.
 - 2.8.2.b. The annual, midyear and regularly scheduled Board meeting cycle will allow planning and budgeting to be based on accomplishing a one year segment of the Board's most recent statements of long term goals as identified in the mission statement and the strategic plan.

- 2.8.2.c. All information to be covered at the annual retreat must be received by Board members at least **one (1) week** prior to the date of the meeting.
- 2.8.3 While the content of the annual meeting will change from year to year, the elements to be addressed should remain the same. At a minimum, these elements are:
- 2.8.3.a. Conduct year-end assessments
 - i. Board
 - ii. Administrator (to include salary adjustments if appropriate; the Administrator will not be present during his or her evaluation)
 - iii. Consultants (if appropriate and to determined if contracts should be renewed)
 - 2.8.3.b. Elect officers for the upcoming year – Presiding Officer, Secretary, Treasurer, and non-officer to serve on the Executive Committee.
 - 2.8.3.c. Formally appoint and welcome to the Board any new members. New members are not able to vote regarding assessments or during the election of officers.
 - 2.8.3.d. Present budget for upcoming year. (Approved prior to end of the previous calendar year).
 - 2.8.3.e. Receive year-end reports of the Administrator, Executive Committee, all standing committees and those ad hoc committees with final report dates in January.
 - 2.8.3.f. Review and revise, when needed, Terms of Reference including committee chairmanships and members, for all active committees
 - i. Executive
 - ii. Standing
 - iii. Ad Hoc
 - 2.8.3.g. Reaffirm or revise mission statement.
 - 2.8.3.h. Determine the Board’s meeting calendar for the upcoming year.
- Other elements of the annual meeting may include:
- 2.8.3.i. Board development determined to be needed.
 - 2.8.3.j. A “town hall” type meeting to gather beneficiary input.
 - 2.8.3.k. A Board event designed to thank or celebrate a group, committee or effort that excelled in the previous year.
- 2.8.4 **Midyear Retreat:** The Center’s midyear Board meeting will be conducted in June of each year, unless circumstances do not permit this to occur. If the meeting needs to be postponed it should be rescheduled as close to the middle of the calendar year as possible.
- 2.8.4.a. All information to be covered at the midyear retreat must be received by Board members at least one (1) week prior to the date of the meeting.
 - 2.8.4.b. The midyear meeting will be at a minimum a two day event.

- 2.8.5 While the content of the midyear meeting will change from year to year, the elements to be addressed should remain the same. These elements are:
- 2.8.5.a. Review the status of the priorities set at the annual meeting and revise if deemed appropriate.
 - 2.8.5.b. Address policy or planning issues or concerns that have surfaced since the annual meeting.
 - 2.8.5.c. Revisit the analysis of the mission statement done at the annual meeting.
 - 2.8.5.d. Begin the nomination process when new members will need to be appointed at the next annual meeting.

Other elements of the annual meeting may include:

- 2.8.5.e. Board development determined to be needed.
- 2.8.5.f. A Board event designed to gather information relevant to the strategic plan.

2.8.6 **Regularly Scheduled Board Meetings:** In addition to the annual and midyear meeting retreats, the Board will meet a minimum of four (4) times a year as determined by the schedule adopted at the annual meeting. There will be no additional regular Board meeting in the months of the annual and midyear retreat meetings.

- 2.8.6.a. The Board will use the Center's charter, corporate bylaws, the governance policy manual and the agreed upon meeting norms as operational guidelines for these meetings.
- 2.8.6.b. These regularly scheduled Board meetings serve only as opportunities for the Board to discuss and make decisions on those issues that, according to Board policy, clearly belong to the Board to decide.
- 2.8.6.c. Deliberation will be fair, open, and thorough, but also timely, orderly, and kept to the point.
- 2.8.6.d. All information to be covered at a regularly scheduled meeting must be received by Board members at least one (1) week prior to the date of the meeting.
- 2.8.6.e. The Presiding Officer, or his or her designee, will serve as the meeting facilitator. Using the following agenda format, the regularly scheduled meeting agendas will be created by the Board's Executive Committee with each item numbered and clearly marked if a vote is being requested:
 - i. Remembering Meher Baba
 - ii. Recognition of a quorum
 - iii. Reach agreement to follow the meeting norms
 - iv. Consent Agenda
 - a. Approval of agenda
 - b. Approval of minutes
 - c. Administrator's report (those not needing a vote)
 - d. Committee reports (those not needing a vote)

- e. Informational materials
 - f. Routine correspondence
 - v. Guest presentations by individuals/groups invited by the Board to make short presentations on issues or topics (Optional)
 - vi. Consideration of any urgent business
 - vii. Pending business requiring a decision
 - viii. New business for consideration
 - ix. Summary of decisions, assignments and timelines made
 - x. Remembering Meher Baba and adjournment
- 2.8.6.f. A quorum to conduct business at any meeting of the Center's Board of Directors will be a majority of the number of Board members serving at the time of the vote. Exceptions to this policy are the following that require a two-thirds majority:
- i. Requests to revise the articles of incorporation
 - ii. Requests to amend the bylaws
 - iii. Mergers
 - iv. Sales of assets other than in the regular course of business
 - v. Removal of a director
- 2.8.6.g. A consent agenda is a bundle of items that is voted on, without discussion, as a package. Consent agenda items are routine, procedural decisions, and decisions that are likely to be noncontroversial. The following is the consent agenda procedure:
- i. When preparing the meeting agenda, the Executive Committee determines whether an item belongs on the consent agenda and prepares a numbered list of these items as part of, or as an attachment to, the meeting agenda.
 - ii. The list, along with any supporting documents, is included in the Board's agenda package in sufficient time to be read by all members prior to the meeting.
 - iii. To begin the consent agenda portion of the meeting the Presiding Officer will ask members what items, if any, they wish to be removed from the consent agenda to be discussed individually.
 - iv. If any member requests that an item be removed from the consent agenda, it must be removed. Members may request that an item be removed for any reason. They may wish, for example, to discuss the item, to query the item, or to register a vote against the item.
 - v. Once it has been removed, the Presiding Officer can decide whether to take up the matter immediately following the vote on the consent agenda, place it elsewhere on the regular meeting agenda or move it to a future meeting agenda.
 - vi. When there are no more items to be removed, the Presiding Officer reads out the numbers of the remaining consent items. Then the Presiding Officer states: "If there is no objection, these items will be adopted." After pausing for any objections, the

Presiding Officer states, "As there are no objections, these items are adopted." It is not necessary to ask for a show of hands.

- vii. When preparing the minutes, the Secretary includes the full text of the resolutions, reports or recommendations that were adopted as part of the consent agenda.

2.8.7 **Specially Called Board Meetings:** The Executive Committee, or any Board member, can request that an additional meeting be called to deal with an emergency issue or an issue that should not be held until the next regularly scheduled meeting. When such a request is made, the Presiding Officer will poll Board members to determine if a majority of the Board supports such an action. If so the meeting will be called with an agenda that is limited to only the issue for which the meeting was called.

SECTION 3.0: BOARD - ADMINISTRATOR LINKAGE

3.1 BOARD ADMINISTRATOR - RELATIONSHIP: The relationship between the Board's policy-making and the Administrator's policy-execution is critically important to the success of the Center and the Corporation. It is vitally important that they work together harmoniously to fulfill Center vision, values and mission.

- 3.1.1 The Administrator serves as a non-voting ex officio member of the Board of Directors and its Executive Committee. Whenever the Board or the Executive Committee meets, the Administrator will be in attendance. If the Administrator is unable to attend, he or she will send a designated Board-approved representative in his or her place. During these meetings the Administrator will be governed by all the policies and procedures of a Board member, excluding the policies regarding voting and when the Board is dealing with personnel issues. The administrator does not count toward the fulfillment of a quorum.
- 3.1.2 The Administrator shall act in a prudent, ethical, legal and reasonable manner in fulfilling Center vision, values and mission.
- 3.1.3. The Board creates the Center's vision, values and mission and specific administrative responsibilities. The Administrator is assigned by the Board the responsibility of ensuring that the vision and values are honored and that the mission is successfully realized. The Board limits the latitude the Administrator may exercise in practices, methods, conduct, and other means by establishing Board policies.
- 3.1.4. As long as the Administrator uses any reasonable interpretation of Center vision, values and mission, administrative responsibilities, and Board policies, the Administrator is authorized to establish administrative procedures, make all decisions, take all actions, establish all practices, and develop all activities needed to successfully accomplish the mission. However, the final interpretation of the vision, values and mission, administrative responsibilities, and Board policies is reserved to the Board of Directors, and they must be achieved and observed by the Administrator to the satisfaction of the Board.
- 3.1.5. The Board may change the Center vision, values and mission, administrative responsibilities and Board policies, thereby shifting the boundary between Board and Administrator domains. The Board and its members will respect and support the Administrator's decisions based on the most current governance model.
- 3.1.6. Only decisions of the Board and Executive Committee are binding upon the Administrator. Decisions, requests or instructions of individual Board members, officers, or Board committees are not binding, except in rare

instances where the Board gives specific authorization and informs the Administrator. The Administrator, on a case-by-case basis, may receive an unofficial request for information by a Board member.

3.2 ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE ADMINISTRATOR: All authority and accountability of staff, as far as the Board is concerned, is considered the authority and accountability of the Administrator.

- 3.2.1. The Board and its members will refrain from giving binding orders to persons who report directly or indirectly to the Administrator. The only exceptions are emergency situations where no other source of authority is readily available, or in cases of clear violation of Board policy.
- 3.2.2. The Board will evaluate the Administrator and will view Administrator performance as identical to organizational performance, so that organizational accomplishment of Center vision, values, mission and policies, including approved plans, will be viewed as successful Administrator performance.
- 3.2.3. The Administrator will ensure that Board-approved administrative procedures exist and are followed. These procedures will provide a clear and transparent structure for dealing with difficulties that may arise as part of the working relationship from either the employer's or employee's perspective. Employees include those who are paid full or part-time staff or those who are formally volunteering for the Center.

3.3 ADMINISTRATOR SELECTION AND DEVELOPMENT: An Administrator will be selected based on his or her ability to ensure the effective and responsible implementation of Board policy. When additional knowledge and skills are needed to adequately perform the job, the Board will ensure that the knowledge and skills are made available.

- 3.3.1. The Administrator will be selected by the Board using a similar process as the Board uses to fill Board vacancies. While other criteria may be added based on current operating realities, the standard criteria must include:
 - 3.3.1.a. Commitment to, knowledge about, and familiarity with Meher Baba, His ways and teachings, and His specific mission for the Corporation and the Center.
 - 3.3.1.b. Commitment to uphold the Meher Center's vision, values and mission.
 - 3.3.1.c. Experience and skill in leadership techniques, including team building, creating organizational structures, supervision and management of workers, setting priorities and delegating tasks.
 - 3.3.1.d. Experience and skill in group facilitation, conflict resolution, and crisis management.

- 3.3.1.e. Ability to recognize, encourage and make use of resources in all potential Center workers and supporters.
 - 3.3.1.f. Experience and skill in all areas of communication--verbal and written, internal and external situations.
 - 3.3.1.g. A high level of responsibility, reliability, integrity, discretion, diplomacy, flexibility, resilience.
 - 3.3.1.h. Fundamental knowledge and skills in administering a nonprofit corporation.
- 3.3.2 The Board is responsible for determining compensation, assessing and monitoring Administrator performance, and taking corrective action, including termination, when necessary.
- 3.3.3. The Board is fully committed to supporting the ongoing development of the Administrator through:
- 3.3.3.a. Performance assessments and feedback.
 - 3.3.3.b. Relevant job-related training.
 - 3.3.3.c. Access to information and consultation that can enhance Administrator abilities.
- 3.3.4. The Board will appoint an interim Administrator should the Administrator be no longer able to fulfill his or her administrative duties.

3.4 MONITORING ADMINISTRATOR PERFORMANCE: Monitoring Administrator performance is synonymous with monitoring organizational performance against Center vision, values, mission, plans and administrative responsibilities. Any assessment of the Administrator's performance may be derived only from these monitoring data:

- 3.4.1. The purpose of monitoring is to determine the degree to which the Center's vision, values, mission and plans are being fulfilled and the level to which the Administrator has fulfilled his or her responsibilities. It is also to determine if additional skill building is needed and, if there is a need, to revise the Board/Administrator relationship. Monitoring will include only what is needed to determine the above.
- 3.4.2. Administrator performance may be monitored in one or more of three ways:
- 3.4.2.a. Internal report: The Board will identify the types and periodicity of reports needed for any meetings, reviews, discussions etc. and will request those from the Administrator, allowing ample time for preparation. An appropriate number of reports will be requested with the broadest of explanations needed to show trends and compliance. All reporting should:

- i. Reflect appropriate input from relevant staff, committees, volunteers and others.
 - ii. Meet the Board's informational needs.
 - iii. Be presented in a manner that allows this information to be digested as efficiently as possible.
 - 3.4.2.b. External report: Discovery of compliance information by an independent external auditor, inspector, or individual who is selected by and reports directly to the Board. Such reports must assess Administrator performance only against the vision, values, mission, plans, Board policies, and Administrator responsibilities.
 - 3.4.2.c. Direct Board discovery: From any source to be reported to and reviewed by the full Board.
- 3.4.3. At each annual meeting, or at such other times annually as the Board designates, the Board will formally assess the administrator. This review will be a comprehensive assessment of the administrator's performance relative to organizational accomplishment of Center Vision, Values, Mission plans and fulfillment of administrative responsibilities.

SECTION 4.0: ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Administrative responsibilities identify the overall expectations that the Board places on the Administrator. The Administrator can fulfill Center vision, values and mission and Administrator responsibilities in any reasonable manner as long as Board policies are observed. Administrative responsibilities are based on the most current mission that is periodically reviewed and adjusted by the Board as needed. The Administrator will:

4.1 ACT FROM THE CENTER'S VISION AND VALUES

- 4.1.1 Align all decisions and actions with the Center's vision.
- 4.1.2 Ensure that all staff and volunteers know the Center's values and are acting accordingly.

4.2 MAINTAIN THE CENTER'S INTIMATE AND UNIQUE ATMOSPHERE

- 4.2.1 Provide conditions that are conducive to a retreat atmosphere dedicated to Meher Baba, and consistent with the way Meher Baba would want His guests cared for.
- 4.2.2 Maintain a system for obtaining and utilizing meaningful feedback from Center visitors.
- 4.2.3 Provide programs and activities that contribute to and enhance the retreat atmosphere, and that are appropriate for the facilities and resources.

4.3 PROVIDE SAFE AND WELCOMING EXPERIENCES

- 4.3.1 Ensure that all visitors are treated in a fair, dignified and loving manner.
- 4.3.2 Provide for the safety, comfort and protection of all visitors using appropriate professional assistance when needed.

4.4 OFFER INFORMATION ABOUT AVATAR MEHER BABA

- 4.4.1 Provide information about Meher Baba, His life and teachings, and about the Center to those who seek it.
- 4.4.2 Ensure robust and dynamic programming at the Center dedicated to Meher Baba and appropriate for the Center.
- 4.4.3 Ensure that all public relations activities are supportive of the Center and that all information used is accurate.

4.5 CREATE SHARED STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- 4.5.1 Ensure continual administrative coverage of Center operations.
- 4.5.2 Develop and maintain an adequate and well-performing team of staff and volunteers, in fulfillment of the Center's mission.
- 4.5.3 Maintain positive and proactive relations with groups and individuals that may influence the wellbeing of the Center.
- 4.5.4 Inform or counsel the Board, in a timely manner, regarding issues that, if the Board left unaddressed, would negatively impact the fulfillment of Center vision, values and mission, or that would violate an externally imposed law or regulation.

4.6 ENSURE THE PRESERVATION, CONSERVATION, AND MAINTENANCE OF THE CENTER

- 4.6.1 Using the Board Preservation Policy and the Environmental Management Policy, maintain the natural systems, property and possessions related to the Center in a state that promotes ecological integrity, usefulness and ensures longevity.
- 4.6.2 Restrict outside influences from negatively impacting the operation of the Center or the enjoyment of its beneficiaries.
- 4.6.3 To the extent that it is possible, ensure that physical development adheres to Board policies, maintains the Center's aesthetic continuity and pristine quality, remains inside the parameters of a Board approved land use master plan, and complies with all laws, codes and ordinances of all agencies and jurisdictions that have regulating authority.

4.7 DEVELOP THE CENTER'S PHYSICAL, HUMAN AND FISCAL RESOURCES

- 4.7.1 Ensure that all actions are in alignment with the existing fiscal and strategic policies of the Board and in support of the financial strength and integrity of the Center.
- 4.7.2 Develop opportunities, for those willing and able, to contribute to the fulfillment of Center Vision, Values and Mission.
- 4.7.3 Provide all workers (volunteer and staff) with opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills needed to contribute to the fulfillment of Center Vision, Values, and Mission.

4.8 DEVELOP OR SUPPORT PROGRAMS BASED ON AVATAR MEHER BABA'S EXAMPLE OF LOVE AND SERVICE TO THOSE IN NEED (in development)