

Summer 2017

Dear Meher Center Family and Friends,

We gratefully send warm greetings and love to each one of you. Your support, your stewardship and your devoted interest in what Meher Baba called His Home in the West is profound. It is *His* Hand, through you, that holds the Center so gently, so delicately infused with His presence, which remains here as He promised. We hope the photo on the cover, taken by Doug Frank more than 40 years ago, brings you that delicate and simple sense of sweet space, calm and joy---Meher Baba's Love. Here are highlights of some of the Center's goings-on and progress in areas of special interest to all.

## FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Executive Director Search:** Daniel Stone, board chair of Search Committee. There has been a great deal of interest expressed throughout the Meher Baba community about the search for an executive director for the Meher Spiritual Center, Inc. Because this represents a significant new position of leadership for the Center, we want to keep you well informed about this process. Earlier this year the board established a search committee to assist with its recruitment efforts. The committee was charged with providing the board with up to 3 highly qualified candidates for the board's consideration. Members of the committee are Charlotte Fahy, Linda Hansen, Elizabeth Leiter, Andy Lesnik, and Daniel Stone. Together they represent a diverse range of ages and experience with the Center, and all have significant experience in the recruitment of personnel. Their assignment included preparing the announcement of the position, collecting applications, arranging and conducting initial screenings, and recommending final candidates to the board.

The announcement was sent out on March 17 and it closed on May 15. A total of 23 applications were received from throughout the United States, as well as some from overseas. The search committee completed an initial screening process based on the submitted materials and identified a small group of candidates for further screening, which involves interviews with the search committee, and with the Center administrator and staff. Once that is done, the search committee will review the candidates and recommend final candidates to the board. The board will conduct its own interviews with the final candidates during its October 21-22 retreat, make its decision in November, and be in touch with the Baba family about it soon thereafter. Given the importance of this decision, we are attempting to make the process as thoughtful and transparent as possible while observing the required level of confidentiality that it deserves. We are grateful for all of the responses we received from so many dedicated and talented people, whose willingness and desire to serve Meher Baba and His Center is profound.

**Environmental Management Committee:** Arsenio Rodriguez, committee chair. This committee met in May, and will meet again this month. Its focus is to address two specific priorities assigned by the board: to determine the most effective and sustainable way to address excess nutrients in Long Lake and maintain its on-going health; and to determine the best resources for a fire risk assessment and amelioration plan, as well as an ecological assessment to evaluate the Center's forest and wildlife ecosystem. We have contracted again with the Eastern Carolina University research team to continue studies concerning reduction of nutrients in the lake, and committee members are focused on the search for the best resources to assist with forest and fire risk assessments, as well as waste management alternatives and expertise to help with formulation of an overall environmental management plan for the Center.

**Center Finances:** Buz Connor, board chair of Investment Committee and budget sub-committee. Major attention is being given to develop more effective communication with the Meher Baba family about the Center's current operational needs and its future financial stability. As is clear from the projects and vital areas of work described in this newsletter, the Center's protection, preservation, staffing and development are in a critical transitional phase. Careful planning, budgeting and effectively raising the awareness of the Center's financial needs is at the top of the Board's priority list. Additionally, given the increased financial costs associated with these vital areas of work, the Center is operating at about a \$200,000 deficit this year - the first time since the serious financial downturn of 2008-2009. Any contributions to help meet these additional costs are greatly appreciated.

**Security Committee:** Bruce Felknor, board chair. After a thorough review by the board's Security Committee (formed after the Barn incident in early 2016) of the Center's current security profile, and that committee's subsequent report to the board, the board decided to engage a prominent security company to come to the Center for a two day site assessment. A full report from that assessment has been recently sent to us, and will be reviewed by the committee, board and staff to determine what further security measures are needed, now and in the future.

**Master Planning:** Over the past months, the board has spent significant time in its retreats working with the materials created by its Master Plan Committee and the feedback provided by the Meher Baba family when those materials were widely shared in the fall of 2015. The board's effort is to finalize the basic structure of a master plan to guide the Center's development in the years to come. The master plan is critical for the future of the Center. It is also challenging given the significance of the principles upon which such a plan must be based, and the wide range of assumptions about the future that must be considered. We are making progress!

## OTHER NEWS

We have enjoyed **many special speakers** since the beginning of this year, who shared (some a number of times!) with such love and joy their experiences with Meher Baba: Tom Riley, Wendy Connor, Bill LePage, Allan Cohen, Digambar Gadekar, Ross and Jenny Keating, Ginny Sadowsky and Ella Marks.

In June, 67 teenage participants and 56 young adult staff arrived at the Center for the 27<sup>th</sup> annual Youth Sahavas. The theme this year was Meher Baba's promise, "I am always with you and I am not away from you". There was a variety of activities, workshops, evening programs, Baba stories from Wendy, Bill LePage and Baba's nephews, Rustom and Sohrab. And, of course, there was the experience of being together at the Center surrounded by Baba's Love.

August 26<sup>th</sup> is the Center's annual community picnic, remembering Kitty Davy's birthday, a time when she would organize a gathering on the "lawn" in front of the Original Kitchen. There will be cake and lemonade. Bring your picnic lunch, and your blanket!

**\*\*\*SPECIAL NOTE\*\*\*** **October 13, 14, 15: A program on "The Divine Theme as Core Narrative from Meher Baba", presented by Ward Parks.** *The "Divine Theme" is the name Avatar Meher Baba gave to the journey of the soul. This account of the "soul's biography" stands at the core of Meher Baba's message as a genuinely new Avataric revelation to humanity. Ward's three-day program will explore the Divine Theme both as a coherent and articulated narrative in itself, and as an idea that gradually unfolded through the course of Meher Baba's discourses from the 1920s through the 1960s. There will be two 2-hour sessions each day (10am-12; 2pm-4) in the Meeting Place. If you stay on Center that weekend, you are welcome to attend. If you live nearby and wish to participate, please contact the Dilruba office at 843-272-8793 to reserve your space!*

Our **annual lottery for holiday reservations** is coming up again soon. If you would like reservations any time from December 15, 2017, to January 3, 2018, send the form included with this newsletter to the Gateway by post, fax or email. An explanation of the process is on the form. If you want to be included in the lottery drawing, **we must receive your form by Friday, September 15!!**

**A reminder about fire safety:** Please, please be aware of the threat of fire in all ways possible at the Center-- -leaving a stove unattended, draping a towel over a heater, and most especially when smoking. The Center directive is very clear: no smoking out of doors anywhere except where seats next to clay pots are obvious. Indoor smoking is only allowed on some cabin porches. Where there is no ashtray or clay pot, no one should smoke. **Using incense, candles, fireworks or any kind of flame producer is prohibited at the Center.**

REMEMBER: Meher Spiritual Center provides "**Meher Center Messages,**" e-mailed communications from the Center. Topics include the weekly program schedule, newsletters (including monthly mini-newsletters), and special announcements. To sign up, go to the Center's website, [www.mehercenter.org](http://www.mehercenter.org), click on "Past, Present & Future," then click on "Staying in Touch." JOIN UP!!

We hope that your life with Meher Baba is filled with a deep sense of His abiding presence, and that we see you at the Center again soon. Baba's words, chosen as the Youth Sahavas theme, are so reassuring: "I am always with you and I am not away from you".

In His Embracing Love,



Ann Edelman, Presiding Officer

Meher Center Board of Directors: Bruce Felknor-Treasurer, Anna Lena Phillips Bell- Secretary, Daniel Stone-Board member at large on Executive Committee, Adi Blum, Linda Hansen, Michael Tych, Buz Connor, Meherwan Irani, Annie Hall, and Jo Taylor