

Meher Spiritual Center, Inc.  
10200 North Kings Highway  
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, 29572

## WINTER NEWSLETTER 2018

Dear Center Family and Friends,

Jai Baba! As always, this Winter Newsletter comes with much love and with important news from the board and staff at the Center. In keeping with Center tradition, we want to open with words from the Center's founder, Elizabeth Patterson, that seem so relevant to the Center at this time.

In comments made to Nolan (Joe) Harmon and Charles Haynes in 1980, Elizabeth said, "As to the future of the Center, the future will unfold for itself. But decisions as to any change in the activity of the Center should be made only after a good deal of deliberation. It's always best to sleep on it." Always both visionary and practical, Elizabeth's example and guidance have kept the Center and especially the board in good stead over many years and her guidance is especially apropos at this moment in which the Center is experiencing significant change. So on to the news...

### CENTER CHARTER:

As has been shared in newsletters and at public gatherings, the Center's board of directors has for the past few years been extensively deliberating on how best to fully address all areas of the Center's original charter:

*([www.mehercenter.org/pastandpresent/Charter\\_MSC.pdf](http://www.mehercenter.org/pastandpresent/Charter_MSC.pdf)).*

In this effort, the Board has been especially focused on three areas: 1) service, 2) dissemination of Meher Baba's life and message, and 3) strengthening our relationship with other Meher Baba groups especially in the United States. In addition, we are committed to enhancing our relationship with the larger community external to the Center, especially in Myrtle Beach. The exact nature of this expansion has yet to be determined and will be the subject for upcoming board retreats. We will keep you informed as plans unfold in these areas.

We want to assure you that our primary focus is and will always remain on maintaining the Center as a welcoming retreat and pilgrimage site for the many thousands who come here to experience the unique love and atmosphere that Meher Baba left for His lovers to imbibe. The board believes these additional roles are also essential roles that Meher Baba wanted the Center to fulfill, especially given that this is the place that He called His Home in the West. Up to now, the Center's dedicated and able staff has been consumed with the focus on the retreat itself.

## INTRODUCING THE CENTER'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Expanding into these new realms will naturally require greater assistance and a different focus. To provide this, the board decided two years ago to prepare for and then hire someone to help guide the Center into this new era. We are very happy to report that after a thorough and thoughtful effort by the search committee and the board, we have done so.

We are delighted to introduce Buz Connor as the new (and first) Executive Director of the Center. He comes to this position with many years of experience not only as a follower of Meher Baba but also with a deep understanding of and involvement with the Center. Buz has been an articulate and well received spokesperson for the Center in the media, as well as at Meher Baba gatherings around the world. He brings extensive experience through his intimate involvement with the Youth Sahavas for the past 25 years, and extensive experience on board committees, especially those dealing with finance and investments. For the past year, Buz was also a board member, a role in which he will continue (though as a non-voting member). When next you come to Dilruba, you may see Buz in his office there.

We are also happy to report that Barbara Plews, our Center's administrator for the past 23 years, will continue to provide the primary operational management of the Center's retreat as Buz focuses on both retreat needs and the expanding roles of the Center.

## CHANGES ON THE BOARD:

By policy, board members are limited to serving two four-year terms (with a possible third term after being off the board for a period of four years). This year, Ann Edelman completed serving her full eight year term, the last two of which she was Presiding Officer. The board honored her hard work, both as Presiding Officer and Board Secretary, the office she was elected to at her *very first board meeting*, and then continued to serve in over the next six years.

In November of 2017, the board also elected two new members, one to replace Ann and the other to replace Buz. We are excited to welcome Andy Lesnik and Annie Fahy Lawn onto the board. Andy is a long time supporter and member of the Center community; and Annie returns to serve her second four-year term.

We also elected our new board officers who are: Daniel Stone- Presiding Officer; Bruce Felknor- Treasurer; Anna Lena Phillips- Secretary; and Linda Hansen- member at large. Together, along with our new Executive Director, these officers form the executive committee of the board.

With our new members and newly elected officers, the board is now fully composed and ready to face the challenges and opportunities of this coming year.

## COMMUNICATIONS:

This may well be the last time you hold in your hand a copy of the Center's newsletter in this Word format. In this new era of communications, the board is in the process of shifting our manner of communicating with our Center family to formats that are more current, accessible, and engaging. The first evidence you will see will be the unveiling of a new Center website, which was carefully and beautifully designed for us by Keith Sheridan. The website will go live by the spring and will contain many new features including videos and a whole new look.

The way we approach our communications will also expand into other new avenues and formats that will hopefully help you stay even better connected to the life of the Center, whether you are close or afar.

## FINANCIAL HEALTH OF THE CENTER:

Along with the board, our dedicated staff has made enormous efforts to operate, even with rising costs, by paying careful attention to always finding the most efficient response to the myriad and interesting challenges that are faced here at the Avatar's home. At the same time, the reality is that the Center is facing significant future expenses. Some of these are unavoidable—our infrastructure needs upgrading, the environment needs attention, security systems need enhancement, and we are increasingly addressing the challenges of aging cabins and facilities.

Some of the future financial needs however will be more a function of the choices the board will be making —such as the implementation of a new master plan and the expansion of the Center's roles (as referred to in the earlier section).

In order to begin to address these needs, we are informing our overnight visitors that cabin rates for adults will increase by \$5/night starting this April. The current cabin rates have not risen in fifteen years while the Center's expenses have nearly doubled in that same time period.

We are enclosing with this newsletter the annual Donation Pledge Form and the Membership Form. If you don't have changes or corrections to the information we have, no need to send those in again. There is a self-addressed envelope for your convenience, and we've included the Center's *Support and Planned Giving* pamphlet for information about other opportunities to support the Center.

The board is also considering other ways to create a greater sense of shared stewardship of the Center among the Baba family, and you will be hearing more about this in the next few months, including a financial update. We are grateful that so many in the Baba family already contribute to the Center in countless ways, both seen and unseen, through voluntarism as well as financial support. We feel that every contribution given is a reflection of God's love.

## PROGRAM NEWS:

**Ward Parks** will give a presentation at the Center on the weekend of October 12-14. Below is his description.

*An Early Dispensation: Meher Baba's Message to Humanity During the First Flowering of Meherabad in the 1920s:* After the inauguration of His silence in July of 1925, Meher Baba began giving discourses and messages as never before. Most important among these was "The Book," a 300-page manuscript in Baba's own handwriting that He never allowed anyone to read and whose whereabouts still remains a mystery. During the same period Baba dictated a major treatise known as *Infinite Intelligence*, gave scores of talks to the mandali (recently published as *Tiffin Lectures*), and gave talks to the Meher Ashram school boys. All of this material adds up to a major dispensation from the Avatar that has gradually been getting published over the last fifteen years. These discourses considerably expand the vision and range of Meher Baba's message to humanity. In this three-day program we will review this body of material, as well as the history of the early Meherabad Ashram out of which it arose.

We're also happy to announce that during the first week in May, **Michael Siegell**, a well-known sitarist and performer in the Baba world, and one of the long-time leaders of the Boston Meher Baba group, will be an 'Artist in Residence' at the Center. The 'Artist in Residence' program is a new idea the Center is working on, in which an established artist in our community is invited to share their creative gifts and love for Meher Baba, at the Center over a number of days, with the focus on Baba's life and message. Beginning next month, you can check the Future Programs page on the Center's website for details about Michael Siegell's visit in May.

The annual gathering of volunteer caretakers and gatekeepers, who take care of the Center in the evenings and overnight, is scheduled for March 17 and 18. It is a special time for these men and women to share their work, their experience and their concerns, with each other and with Center staff. They also hopefully get a bit of "rest and renewal". That's the idea...

Meher Baba's Birthday is being celebrated February 24 and 25 with two performances of a play and a tower of cupcakes. The play is entitled *The Heartbreak Hotel*. Written and directed by Joe DiSabatino, it is "a surrealistic play about divine love vs human love. An out-of-this-world story unfolds in a bar/café in Portofino, Italy, in 1933, where Meher Baba and Eruch are having afternoon tea." We are looking forward to a lovely celebration in Meher Baba's Love.

FROM THE GATEWAY:

As mentioned earlier, the cost per night for staying at the Center will go up April 1 from \$20 to \$25 (with tax, \$28) for adults. Rates for children will stay the same: \$7 per night (\$7.84 with tax) for ages seven through seventeen, and no charge for children under seven. There are now restrictions for Hermitage reservations, because it is such a beloved cabin. Guests are permitted to stay only seven nights per year in the Hermitage. Call the Gateway with any questions about this new policy.

CLOSING:

As you can see, this is a very busy time for the Center; and it is also a time of change. Any careful study of His life shows us that change was no stranger to Baba's life, nor has it been to the life of the Center. Whatever change ultimately happens will, of course, be what He wants to happen; for as He made clear, this is His Center. Once, when Kitty and the others were in the ashram with Baba, having a heated discussion about a particular decision, Baba refocused their attention by telling them that He had already made the decision long ago and there was no need to worry, but rather to simply keep their focus on Him.

All on the board and staff want to especially thank you for your continuing support for the Center; it is always heartwarming to know how central the Center is in the lives and hearts of His lovers throughout the world.

For the Board of Directors,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel Stone', written in a cursive style.

Daniel Stone, Presiding Officer, and the Meher Center Board of Directors

Bruce Felknor-Treasurer, Anna Lena Phillips Bell-Secretary, Linda Hansen-Member at large on Executive Committee, Adi Blum, Annie Hall, Meherwan Irani, Michael Tych, Andy Lesnik, Annie Lawn, Jo Taylor, Buz Connor-Executive Director

Please visit our website, [www.mehercenter.org](http://www.mehercenter.org), for information regarding Meher Baba ~ History of the Center ~ Visitor Information ~ Current Programs  
*Your comments and suggestions are always welcome.*