

Dear Meher Center Family and Friends,

Greetings in Meher Baba's love and service. Meher Center's board of directors is happy to announce that the Center will be open to overnight pilgrims starting on October 1, 2021. Reservations from October 1, 2021, to January 2, 2022, will be handled through the same application (lottery) system we utilize for the New Year's holidays.

As the drawing for reservations will take place during the first week of September, please submit the registration form accompanying this letter as soon as possible. The deadline is Wednesday, September 1. The Gateway staff is committed to seeing that as many people as possible who want a reservation will be accommodated, although perhaps not at the specific time requested.

During the pandemic, the Board's process has been to follow the advice of the CDC and their science-based approach. Throughout, we've considered benchmarks and metrics that point to the ever-changing condition of the pandemic both nationally and locally when making decisions about how to open for day visitors and when to open for overnight guests.

When vaccines became more readily available in the US earlier this year, it appeared as if the pandemic was beginning to evolve toward some tolerable measure of resolution, and that the Center could open with lower risk to guests and staff by the end of summer. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Given the number of people who chose not to receive the vaccine, or who could not receive it due to medical conditions, and the unfortunate proliferation of the more dangerous Delta variant, the nation is again confronting a resurgence of this significant health crisis.

Considering the potential long-term nature of the pandemic and the importance of the Center to the Meher Baba family, the board has modified its previous approach to thinking about management of the Center during the COVID contagion, in an effort to create ways for the retreat to be available for overnight guests. This new approach will represent a transfer of risk to both visitors and to Center staff and will require a willingness of staff and guests to work together to provide a safe environment when at Baba's home.

There is a growing sense in the US that many businesses and institutions are moving toward requiring vaccinations for employees and patrons. Other organizations are requiring that employees and others who interact with the organization show proof of either a vaccination or a recent negative test. In an effort to include children and those who are medically advised to avoid the shot, the Center has decided to follow this latter standard, for now, and are requiring that all overnight guests submit a negative PCR test done within 72 hours of coming to the Center. That said, in recognition of the overwhelmingly positive outcomes from vaccine use, we encourage all who wish to visit the Center to consider getting the vaccine as a safeguard for oneself and others.

This decision to include unvaccinated people means that we will have to adjust how we do things when we open the cabins and kitchens, including: highlighting the use of masking and social distancing; not having inside gatherings or meetings at first; and limiting the

number of guests using communal kitchens. Family cabins will be fully utilized as will some individual cabins. As you can see, we are planning a gradual and more nuanced reopening. This way we can monitor both our internal processes and the unfolding dynamics of the pandemic and make adjustments as needed.

As a reminder, should the progression of the pandemic change for the worse, we may have to adjust our approach both to the accessibility of the Center and to the necessity of vaccinations.

Additionally, we are as yet uncertain about plans for how we will be celebrating the Thanksgiving and the Christmas/New Year's holidays at the Center. We will keep you informed as time passes.

In closing, we want to share this quote from Baba, the theme from this year's Youth Sahavas that carried so much meaning for those gathered here for the first time in nearly a year and a half:

*All this world confusion and chaos was inevitable and no one is to blame. What had to happen has happened; and what has to happen will happen. There was and is no way out except through my coming in your midst. I had to come, and I have come. I am the Ancient One.**

It is a joyful relief to once again anticipate having overnight pilgrims at Meher Baba's Center. We hope to see you here soon. What follows is an information sheet about the reopening as well as the reservation application form.

In Meher Baba's love,

Buz Connor
for Meher Spiritual Center, Inc. Board of Directors and Staff

* *The God-Man*, pp. 343-344