

## Dear Baltimore Shambhala Community,

Over the past several years, we have learned how to function without a permanent center. In some ways, that has been good for us. We have little fixed overhead. We have been able to offer programs without tying them to money, rely more on donations, and work with a more integral sense of community membership than simply paying dues. That has been a healthy development.

At the same time, there are real limits to operating only through hourly rentals and borrowed space. Hourly rental is unstable. It makes scheduling uncertain. It requires repeated setup and breakdown. It limits what kinds of programs we can offer and how naturally we can gather. Even for recent programs, we have had to adjust plans because the space we expected to use was not available when we needed it. This is workable, but it is not ideal.

For that reason, the Baltimore Shambhala Community Coordinator Team would like to invite the community to a two-hour meeting on **Saturday, May 30, from 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM**, to begin a shared conversation about whether Baltimore Shambhala should explore acquiring a permanent rented space. The meeting will take place in Hart Hall at The Church of the Nativity and Holy Comforter at 6112 York Road and on Zoom.

The purpose of this meeting is not to announce a decision or launch a fundraising campaign. Rather, we want to place the question before the community clearly: ***Is there enough interest, aspiration, and commitment among us to begin exploring permanent rented space in a serious way?***

A permanent rented space would solve many logistical problems. It also would make possible a different kind of community life. In the past, our spaces were able to hold regular sittings, open houses, visiting teachers, celebrations, end-of-life practices, and the many small and large moments by which a community becomes real to itself. Over time, a space takes on the quality of the practice done there. The sacredness seeps into the walls and is reflected back. In that sense, the space becomes one body of the community.

Even when the Baltimore community was much smaller than it was just before the pandemic, it still had permanent space. The locations changed over the years, but each one received the blessings of practice and returned those blessings when people entered. The question before us now is not whether permanent space is theoretically desirable. The real question is whether enough of us want it strongly enough to support it.

Establishing a permanent space is an exercise in commitment. It is a concrete way of saying that we belong in this community, that this community matters in our lives, and that the Baltimore Shambhala community matters for the city of Baltimore.

At the May 30 meeting, we hope to reflect together on our present situation, the limits of our current rental arrangements, the kind of community life we may want to cultivate, and the

financial realities that would come with any move toward permanent space. We also want to hear from you: your thoughts, your level of interest, your hopes or concerns, and whether you might be willing to help support such a step if the community chooses to move in that direction.

One of the gifts of the past six years is that we have changed our relationship with money in a healthier direction. If we move toward permanent space, it would need to be done in a way that reflects what we have learned: generosity, simplicity, and alignment with the teachings.

It may be that this is the next turning of the wheel for our community. It may also be that we are not ready. But we believe it is time to ask the question clearly and hear from one another honestly.

We hope you will join us on **May 30 from 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM** for this important community conversation.

**With appreciation,**

Chris Kreeger, Ed Hargadon, Gail Spiva, Paul Benson, and Melanie Pefinis

**Baltimore Shambhala Community Coordinator Team**

▶▶ Please help us plan for the meeting by registering in advance [here](#), noting in the comments section whether you expect to attend in person or on Zoom.

▶▶ Please contact [info@baltimoresambhala.org](mailto:info@baltimoresambhala.org) with any questions