

Canadian Christian Meditation Community

NEWSNOTES SUMMER 2006 VOL. 15 NO. 2 THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

Thy Kingdom Come: Christian Meditation and the Way of Love



The Christian Meditation Community of British Columbia held a Day of Reflection on April 29 with presenter Michael Hryniuk, Ph.D. The theme, *Thy Kingdom Come: Christian Meditation and the Way of Love*, was based on scripture and the teaching of Dom John Main. As host, Art Missler of St. Joseph the Worker in Richmond warmly welcomed us and gave a brief summary of John Main's life – focusing especially on the beginning of meditation in Canada.

Theologian, writer and teacher in Christian spirituality and contemplative formation, Michael began by telling us that the Kingdom of God that Jesus spoke about was not a place but an experience – a loving community. Love is what forms this spiritual communion. At His baptism the voice of the Father was heard, “This is my beloved son.” At our baptism we were also called ‘beloved’. Meditation leads to a way of love and we come to know ourselves as beloved. Meditation awakens us to the voice of love and in that love we are given the capacity to reveal the love and beauty in another.

The Church's main function is to awaken in us the fact that we are loved – otherwise the Church is just a club. God is a

community; the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and we, as a community, share in that love. The purpose of the Church is to remind us of who we are, our core identity, that we are beloved sons and daughters of God. We are then nurtured and loved by a community of faith.

Meditation is a way, a path, into relationship and leads us into community and to a just society. Meditation creates faith for the Spirit to anoint us and so makes us aware that we are beloved. The truth of this self-awareness, that we are loved, sets us free. Society was as distressing in Jesus' day as it is today, but Jesus urged his followers to believe and to trust that the kingdom is at hand. Injustice can be defeated if even a few meditate and together form a conspiracy of silence and love. Archbishop Tutu urged people to meditate and the small number who did helped to defeat apartheid without violence. Meditation is most important in sending healing and a cascade of love into the world. This love is power.

– Lester Roberge, White Rock, B.C.



IN THIS ISSUE

The School: Sharing the Gift of Meditation.....	C2	Community Notes.....	C8
On the Path.....	C3	Calendar of Events.....	C9
Practicalities of Practice	C3	Sheelah Treflé Hidden Visits Toronto	C10
Book Review: Where God Happens	C4	Canadian Friends of WCCM Donation Form	C11
News from Far and Near	C5	Book order form.....	C12

THE SCHOOL: SHARING THE GIFT OF MEDITATION

“There has been in the last thirty years or so a revolutionary rediscovery of the tradition of Christian contemplation, not just for the cloistered few but also for ordinary men and women. This is not a merely academic discovery. The practice of meditation has awakened a new awareness that the contemplative dimension of prayer is open to each of us and invites everyone... It is a privilege of grace given by the Spirit to all.”

– Laurence Freeman OSB, *A Pearl of Great Price: Sharing the Gift of Meditation by Starting a Group*

The last of the snow had just melted, revealing the Labyrinth etched in stones in the grass. I felt a surge of joy as I walked it with new and old friends on the second day of the School, held March 30 to April 2 at Providence Spirituality Centre in Kingston, Ontario. The Labyrinth for me has always represented the spiritual journey, the curves symbolizing periods of change or inner shifts. At this halfway point of the weekend, I welcomed them and consciously followed their turns, feeling very much that this teacher training denoted a new direction and richness in my life.

The School provides practical training to help present meditation to strangers and facilitate groups. Led by Rev. Glenda Meakin and Michel Legault, we seven were the smallest group of students to date. Yet, on the first evening, as we shared our stories of how we came to meditation, it was impossible to ignore the commonalities and seeming coincidences. Some of us had learned from the same spiritual director. Some had turned to meditation, as we often turn to God, from pain and grief. A sense of closeness began to grow that night, and blossomed throughout the weekend.

The “class” included some already leading meditation groups and others wanting to explore that possibility after gaining insights from attendance at the School. There was caring and tenderness as we critiqued one another’s presentation techniques, lending suggestions and support. For one participant, being able to give practice talks and get constructive feedback was a highlight of the weekend. Others said they would carry with them a new appreciation of how meditation can inform our understanding of the Bible – this after Glenda interpreted a Scripture story using images of the meditation journey. Still another felt she had received a loving initiation into the family of the World Community.

Although jam-packed and quite intense, our time together left me with a sense of possibility. The inspiration I gained carried through to the following Sunday: talking about the weekend with the group I co-lead at my church, spreading my enthusiasm about the wonderful gift of meditation. Most of all, I felt love - for those with me that Sunday morning, and for God, in blessing me with the opportunity to share this gift.

– Cathy Nobleman, Ottawa.

From the Coordinator of Schools in Canada Sharing the Gift

A few years ago, Fr. Laurence wrote in one of his columns about a meditator who regularly attended John Main’s teaching and meditation sessions in Montreal. Then her work took her away from Montreal for a year and when she returned she resumed coming to the weekly group. She remarked how relieved she was to find “There is nothing new! It’s the same.” She had faithfully meditated during the year away and her return to “the same” was affirmation of her commitment to the essential teaching and practice.

As teachers of meditation, we too have meditators seeking affirmation of their commitment to the daily practice. Lately, one way that search is being expressed to me is in questions such as “What do you think of *The Da Vinci Code*?” or “Have you read *The Pagan Christ*? Is it true?” These questions seem to be natural responses to the hype and claims of the many books about Jesus that are currently on the market. Their popularity speaks of the great hunger in our society for spiritual nourishment.

As teachers, I believe we affirm meditators in their commitment by encouraging them to stay faithful to the simplicity of the mantra and to their daily practice. For it is in the silence of our own hearts that what is “true” is revealed. In the silence of our hearts we learn to be open to the truth revealed in the ordinary of life. In the experience of God’s love, we are drawn to know the truth of ourselves and of Jesus. We are drawn once again to the gospels and the testimony of those whose lives were transformed by the presence and love of Jesus. We see the ways our daily practice draws us into his presence and how our lives are being transformed by his love. Rooted in the silence and in the gospels, we then have some measurement for assessing the many popular ideas that come before us. We also have the humility to say, like the blind man in the gospel of John, “All I know is Jesus came... and now I see.” We are aware of how little we know and yet it is enough. It is the same. It does not change.

– Rev. Glenda Meakin

From the National Coordinator On The Path

There is a special joy in seeing nature evolve through the seasons in Canada. Many of us are lucky enough to have trees on our lot or near where we live and we pay attention to their changes at different times of the year. From winter when the maples have no leaves at all, we see the emergence of spring, manifested first by burgundy buds that rapidly transform themselves into light green leaflets and then full blown deep green leaves. By the fall, yellows, oranges and reds enter the dance of colours. The life cycle of seasons is full of life continuously transforming itself. During the meditation journey we also move through stages, experiencing a divine presence that is at the same time constantly the same and also always very different.

That reality became clearer to me last week as I was walking toward Lusk Lake in the Gatineau Park. It's a winding trail that goes up regularly for a couple of kilometres, until it reaches a plateau from which we enjoy a quiet lake in the middle of a forest of firs, pines and poplars. The only sign of civilization is the refuge that is used both in winter for skiers or snowshoers and in the summer for walkers and cyclists.

This year-round, two kilometre path, crosses the same stream a few times. It's the stream that caught my attention more than before. I could see water cascading rapidly in it and, mainly, I could hear it: a pleasant, powerful, regular sound. In the middle of winter, at that same spot, the stream is totally covered with ice and snow. Unless you stop and pay careful attention, you might not even notice that water is flowing underneath its white cover. Yet, it continues to cascade intensely, full of life even if it is not obvious.

At times, when we meditate, we sense a deep connection with the Spirit: we sense and hear that presence as a loud and intense cascade in our soul. At other times however, what we are mostly aware of is silence, divine as it may be. It is hard then to remember that under this layer of frost, the abundance of life continues to flow. Yet, we need to remember that just because we don't hear it doesn't mean that the cascade of Life has disappeared. It is crucial that we continue, faithfully, in the depth of powerful silence.

– Michel Legault

Practicalities of Practice

Q. I'M HAVING TROUBLE MEDITATING REGULARLY. IS IT WORTHWHILE DOING IT AT ALL?

A. Many people have difficulty keeping to a regular schedule of meditating twice a day, every day. This is certainly the recommended practice, but we should not be discouraged from meditating if we are not able to keep to this discipline. Each time that we do manage to set aside the time it is beneficial to us. We are offering ourselves to God, and God responds with love and presence. Clearly, if we are able to do this more often then we will enjoy the benefits of being intentionally in God's presence and God's work of transformation within us can continue.

Sometimes with renewed effort we are able to meditate more frequently for a while, but then find that we are back

to our old sporadic ways. We can deal with this in the same way that we deal with distractions in our meditation time. Simply return to the mantra – simply return to a more regular, disciplined practice. There is no judgement when we have distractions. We learn to be forgiving of ourselves, quietly, gently returning to our word. The same is true when we are distracted from a regular practice by the daily events of life. Be gentle with ourselves and build our meditation time back into our day. I am always encouraged by John Main's observation that the first twenty-five years of meditating are the most difficult!

– Phil Barnett

Canadian Christian Meditation Community National Resource Centre

(5964 ave. Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Suite 208
corner ave. Royal)
P.O. Box 552, Station NDG
Montreal, Quebec H4A 3P9
514-485-7928
christianmeditation@bellnet.ca
www.meditatio.ca

Editorial Team

Phil Barnett, Nancy Carson, Joy Gordon, Michel Legault
and Mark Schofield.

Send submissions to Nancy, NewsNotes Coordinator.

E-mail: newsnotes@bellnet.ca

Mailing address: 404-88 Tollgate Rd., Brantford, ON N3R 7R5
Telephone 519-753-4444

Échos du silence, a newsletter for French-speaking meditators, is available. Send inquiries to Fr. Michel Boyer, editor, 526-7400 boulevard Saint-Laurent, Montreal, QC H2R 2Y1 or e-mail <lagrottefranciscains@sympatico.ca>.

Page design: www.khatvanga.com

BOOK REVIEW

Rowan Williams *Where God Happens: Discovering Christ in One Another*

Foreword by Desmond Tutu, introduction by Laurence Freeman

Boston: New Seeds, 2005

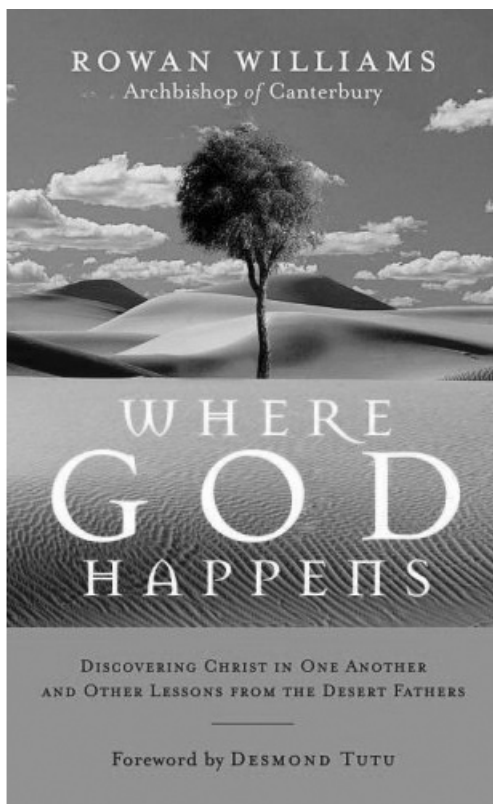
“I love humanity. It’s people I can’t stand.” There are few of us who haven’t at some time or another agreed with this famous line from the comic strip *Peanuts*. Perhaps for Christian meditators, the saying could be revised to “I love community. It’s people I can’t stand.”

Sooner or later, spiritual practice is forced to engage with the difficult and often messy lives of actual people in actual communities. Rowan Williams, the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury, addresses this reality in his book *Where God Happens*, based on his talks to the John Main Seminar 2001 in Sydney, Australia. (A version of the book was published in the UK under the title *Silence and Honeycakes: the Wisdom of the Desert*.)

Unlikely though it may seem, Archbishop Rowan finds in the examples of the desert fathers and mothers great riches of wisdom for life in community. He declares that his is a “modest contribution to the discovery of a church renewed in contemplation, across the cultural frontiers of our world.” (p. xi).

As with his extraordinary early book, *The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to St. John of the Cross* (published in 1979 when he was only 29), Williams does not so much set out to say something new, as to re-present ancient wisdom in a fresh and compelling way. His is the witness of a Christian who has clearly taken to heart for himself the rigours and fruits of spiritual practice.

Williams maintains that the desert fathers and mothers offer a profound vision of what the Church truly is. That is, “they wanted to find out what humanity really was when it was in touch with God through Jesus Christ... they report back from the ‘laboratory of the Spirit’ not only about how prayer is to be experienced but also about how humanity is to be understood – about life, death, and neighbours” (pp. 12-13). Or in the words of John the Dwarf: “The foundation is our neighbour whom we must win. The neighbour is where we



must start. Every commandment of Christ depends on this.” (p. 15).

Among the fruits of meditation is the growing ability to attend fully and without illusion to the other. Meditation is genuine when it helps us to see clearly what is truly there in front of us. This, of course, requires a dying to self, an overcoming of our own self-obsession and self-satisfaction. The very failures that we often try to hide from one another, in a hopeless attempt to shore up our own ego, can become means to life for oneself and one’s neighbour for sins freely acknowledged show “that it is possible to live in the truth and to go forward in hope” (p. 23). This bespeaks a spiritual formation that comes about through solidarity with others, a solidarity embraced even by those who apparently “fled” human society.

This kind of spirituality, far from rejecting other people, sees the neighbour as sacramental, a means of grace, a vehicle of revelation. This is a Christianity that loosens the anxious grips of settled methods of spiritual formation, and learns to see our self in the other. Both the truth about ourselves and the truths we disclose to the other are love’s surprising means of conforming us more closely to the image of God.

“What is to be learned in the desert is clearly not some individual technique for communing with the divine but the business of becoming a means of reconciliation and healing for the neighbour. You ‘flee’ to the desert not to escape neighbours but to grasp more fully what the neighbour is – the way to life for you, to the degree that you put yourself at their disposal in connecting them with God.” (p.33).

The book is complemented by a foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and a selection of sayings from the desert tradition with commentary by Laurence Freeman. The relevance of that tradition for spiritual pilgrims seeking a genuinely life-giving practice today is the great gift of this book.

– Kevin Flynn, Saint Paul University, Ottawa

NEWS FROM FAR AND NEAR



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

PRAYING WITH HEART, BODY AND SOUL MEDITATION AND YOGA

The Chinese proverb, “Learning is a treasure which will follow its owner everywhere,” will hopefully prove true to those of us who attended the *Prayer of the Heart, Body and Soul: Christian Meditation with Yoga* retreat at Belcourt Centre, South Rustico in early April.

As the first flowers and signs of spring unfolded in that charming rural community, we were introduced to an inspiring weekend experience uniting Christian meditation and yoga. The retreat was the brainchild of Teri Hall who sensed the connection in her personal practice of both disciplines. She put the idea to Sr. Kathleen at Mt. St. Mary’s Spirituality Centre, and together they planned the retreat.

Lucie Legault of Quebec and Barbara Dick of Newfoundland, two Christian mediators who are also yoga instructors, facilitated the weekend. From Friday evening to Sunday noon we shared many experiences of heart, body and soul united in prayer. Presentations and discussions, along with yoga sessions and meditation, instructed us in connecting the breath, opening the heart, and coming to an awareness of unity of mind, body and soul.

As the weekend concluded and we bid our farewells, it was obvious how inspired and grateful we all were for our individual and shared experiences. A weekend of learning, connection, prayer and joy.

– Gertie Purdy

NOVA SCOTIA

SEEDS FOR SOWING

Seeds of wisdom and encouragement were gently sown into Silence during the recent retreat sponsored by the Halifax-Dartmouth Meditation Community on Saturday May 6 at

Christ Church (Anglican) in Dartmouth. Rev. Frances Drolet-Smith and several workshop facilitators led the retreat, presenting the theme *Seeds for Sowing: Sharing the Fruits of Christian Meditation* to the 42 meditators in attendance. The day began with prayers and an introduction to Christian meditation, followed by a period of meditation.

Frances used the analogy of the journey to the center of the Labyrinth and the Christian meditation practice of going to that still, quiet place “within” that is God. She further compared a seed silently growing in soil, totally unrecognizable until its fruits appear, to the experience of meditation where we are only required to “show up” in silence to be with the Lord. [As in silence the seed erupts into fruit, so does silence yield the fruits of the Spirit to the meditator who shows up on a daily basis.]

Workshops during the day included:

BEGINNING TO MEDITATE (Terry Wigle):

Terry shared her story of how meditation has kept her whole through life’s trials and equipped her with many “fruits of the Spirit.” She emphasized the importance of “stepping back to refresh oneself” and encouraged meditators not to judge the correctness or progress of their practice, but to stay with it and become comfortable with silence and self in recognition that God loves us “just as we are.”

LISTENING TO THE DESERT: WISDOM FROM THE PAST FOR TODAY (Frances Drolet-Smith):

Frances highlighted stories from the Desert Fathers and Mothers, quoted various spiritual authorities on meditative prayer, and provided excellent resources for further reflection. Frances emphasized the importance of stilling ourselves (planting seeds) in order that we might hear the voice of God, and receive the fruits of the Spirit. By our staying in community through the twice-daily practice and weekly group meetings of meditation, we come to know God intimately, rather than just knowing about God.

TALKING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT MEDITATION (Michael Tutton):

Michael Tutton, a Grade 5 and 6 Sunday School teacher, has started teaching children and youth to meditate. While they meditate for shorter periods of time, often beginning with just four or five minutes, the benefits are similar to those enjoyed by adults. Michael explained, “Through meditation, the young also learn that Church is about more than a once-a-week experience. It offers a discipline that shows them that God’s presence is within and opens them to learning Jesus’ central teachings on selflessness. Like adults, children can discover that prayer is about opening yourself to God, rather than uncovering a complicated formula.”

Continued on next page

News from Far and Near *continued*

COMPANIONS ON THE WAY: MEDITATING WITH THE DYING (Rev. Canon Peter MacDonald):

Peter emphasized the need for caregivers to treat the spiritual well-being of the patient, along with the needs of the body. He gave helpful suggestions for building relationships, developing listening skills, and for assisting in providing closure for the dying. While it is often not possible to draw the patient into practicing meditation, our personal meditative practice enables us to be more compassionate, caring and comfortable with silence. We are therefore better equipped to “companion” the dying through “listening” and “being there.”

VIDEO/DISCUSSION (facilitated by Irene Reid):

The video *Coming Home: an Introduction to Christian Meditation and the Community it Creates* and the discussion following was instructive in the practice of Christian meditation, and emphasized the importance of not assessing whether one is correctly meditating or making progress.

The day was an experience of journeying with the Holy Spirit: a journey of stillness, learning, fellowship, love and community. Retreatants were encouraged to remain faithful in “sowing seeds within” so that we might open ourselves to the fruits of the Holy Spirit that are essential to our being “gardeners in His world.” At the closing prayers, participants received a small pot of seeds with the inscription: “As these tiny seeds grow, may they be a sign of your deepening prayer and friendship with Christ.”

On departing, we felt better equipped to bring hope and encouragement to a world that is often fractured. We praise God for the gifts of leadership and insight provided by the facilitators.

– Shirley Murtha

ONTARIO

RETREAT DAYS:
PRAYER AND FINDING THE BALANCE

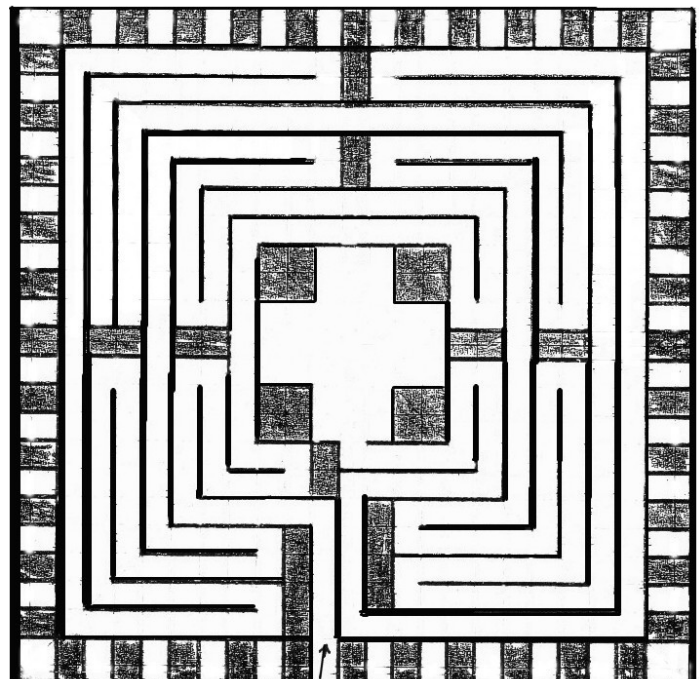
May we be mindful that prayer, silence and community are essential elements for creating harmony in life. This day, a prayer was offered up for me by a friend and time stood still. In the silence, the Spirit wove its mystical web, restoring balance and order to my day and a “letting go” of the busy-ness.

Balance, letting go and order to the day without being enslaved to distraction by our own busy-ness were the themes of the two retreat events I led at St. George’s, Pickering, during Lent. In *Of Spirit & Flesh*, the talks focused on nurturing our souls by reflecting on the importance of silence, prayer and personal use of liturgy. An unexpected highlight was discussion on silence during the Eucharist,

and how many of us have observed the diminishing sacred silence during worship. The consensus was that we should each take the day’s reflections back to our church and see where they lead. Now, in the mystical web we wait and trust that silence will be woven into the Eucharist. (As a footnote, Fr. Laurence Freeman’s article “The Eucharist & Silence” on the international website wccm.org is worth reading.)

A feature of Taizé worship is the use of candles and icons, and the *Soul Music and the Labyrinth* weekend certainly had lots. St. George’s Labyrinth is a rectangular, modified Chartres design built into the floor. The entry faces the Altar, and the center forms a cross. Both altar dais and the center of the Labyrinth were beautifully decorated! An icon of the Risen Christ, candles, an ornament of a kneeling monk, a small statue of Mary – the visuals were to prompt us to be mindful of letting go and of creating balance. One could imagine life being like this: in harmony, with Christ at the center balancing the Mary and Martha in each of us, with prayer strengthening our bond of love with God. The single empty square could represent our need to detach ourselves from fears or from whatever may be keeping us away from Him.

“You came near when I called you, Lord, and you said, ‘Do not be afraid.’” These words were echoed throughout the peaceful ambience of the weekend. Selected cuts shown from the DVD on Christian meditation by Peter Ng and the meditation community in Singapore were well received. I was deeply moved by the commentaries of Peter’s late wife Patricia. What a wonderful testament to meditation she has left for many to witness.



Design of St. George’s Labyrinth – Architect’s Drawing

News from Far and Near *continued*

Friday evening commenced with candlelit Taizé worship – a delicate, yet dynamic blending of contemplative music, silence and prayer. Some participants enjoyed their first walk while others watched in silence, in the moment and the music.

Daylight on Saturday brought new beginnings. While, for some, the powerful liturgy of the previous evening was still resonating within, readings from Lamentations and Ephesians, interspersed with meditation, reflection and Labyrinth walks set the tone today: let go of fears, trust and be at peace. Participants sojourned inward, and outward on the Labyrinth, in silence and with music. At the close of day all gathered in a circle at its center in a final silence and to exchange a hug of peace.

– Marilyn Metcalfe

STORY OF A GROUP

The St. Patrick's Basilica group was formed 12 years ago, in 1994, at this downtown Catholic church, built in 1875, and one of the first churches in our capital. As an inner city parish today it caters primarily to apartment dwellers in the downtown core, as well as employees working in various government departments.

About 20 members meet year-round in a Knights of Columbus room in the church basement, Wednesday nights at 8. At each meeting we listen to a John Main talk, meditate and have a time for questions, announcements and refreshments.

This past November the group assisted the Ottawa Christian meditation coordinating committee in hosting a Saturday morning meeting of meditators from the 31 Ottawa area groups. The focus was on the vital role of the Christian meditation group – how to start one, how to lead one, and from these discussions several new groups started in the city. A feature of the meeting had four meditators among the 70 participants offering testimonials to how they came to the “path”, and its influence in their lives.

Every year we show the videos “Coming Home” and “Quiet Mind” and, on special occasions, listen to talks related to Christian meditation practice. A recent talk discussed “The Stages of the Spiritual Journey of Christian Meditation”. We have a number of potluck parties following the meetings, including Christmas and the beginning of summer. The smiling faces in the photo reflect this social dimension.

Each group in Ottawa seems to have its own character. St. Patrick's has specialized in introducing newcomers to this contemplative way of prayer. Our members include a number of young people, many of them single and living in the inner city. A wide variety of free handouts relating to the teaching and practice, a comprehensive selection of books



The St. Patrick's Basilica group

for sale, and pre-programmed “timed” meditation tapes are a feature at all meetings. We inform others about the group through the church newsletter and bulletin boards. In addition, we have a small advertisement in an Ottawa magazine aimed at spirituality and health consciousness.

Many members of the St. Patrick's group have gone on to start groups in other Ottawa area parishes. We look forward to many more years of bearing fruit in sharing the teaching.

– Paul Harris

MANITOBA

FULLY ALIVE – YOGA AND MEDITATION WEEKEND

St Benedict's Monastery, Winnipeg, March 17-19

What would fish be without chips, valleys without hills, night without day? Strange questions perhaps but, as I reflected on the weekend at St Benedict's, I found myself wondering when had our bodies become divorced from worship, and yoga separated from meditation? Initially I felt the event with two nights away was an extravagance. Gulping, I paid the \$160 only to discover I had embarked on a weekend well beyond the cost, well beyond the limitations I put on my own body, mind and spirit.

Lucie, Casey and Phil led a seamless retreat. Exercise, yoga and meditation, silence and chanting, dance and being still, flowed one into the other, each part giving to the whole. Seemingly it came together with creative ease, but we know their own years of disciplined practice made it possible. They were skilled in sharing their knowledge and experience, teaching by doing. The handouts were welcome for later reading.

Continued on next page

News from Far and Near *continued*

For many of us it was a first experience of yoga, for others a first experience of yoga as a path to the divine. Agitation in initial meditations, with a body intent on rebelling, was fed by the breath of yoga, quietening us in God's presence. Increasingly I was discovering how yoga and meditation nurture each other. Fed by earth's resources and responding in worship beyond words, I felt myself being drawn into the inter-connectedness of life, the gift of God's creation permeating every part of my being.

These themes were echoed again in the sacred dancing on Saturday evening, in rhythm and fun, in new friendships with those who had only been faces at previous meditation workshops.

St Benedict's Monastery, always a welcoming place, heralded spring and also took us into new beginnings to celebrate creation. The sight of a bald eagle, tracks in the snow, flowing water between the ice that was now hugging the banks of the river, all reinforced the signs of life that gifted us that weekend. A high point for me in this already "thin place" was our celebration of the Eucharist as it drew on the worship of the Iona Community.

The challenge remains to take this gift into our lives. We tasted the unity of mind, body and spirit – how yoga can enhance our meditation and meditation enrich our yoga practice to "honour the sacred". It creates a thirst and hunger for more.

– Fenella Temmerman

COMMUNITY NOTES

E-MAIL ADDRESS UPDATES

The National Resource Centre: christianmeditation@bellnet.ca

NewsNotes: newsnotes@bellnet.ca

REV. GLENDA MEAKIN, DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

Fr. Laurence has invited Rev. Glenda Meakin to become director of the Meditation Centre in Cockfosters, near London. Knowing her great gifts as a retreat leader and spiritual director, we are not surprised that she has been asked to assume this responsibility. She has agreed to remain as the Canadian School Coordinator; her column *Sharing the Gift* will continue to appear in the NewsNotes. However, Glenda's absence will leave a major hole in the Canadian community. The positive side is that we know that she will contribute her talents to the UK community. We wish her and David, her husband, a good, productive and stimulating year at the service of the international community.

ATTENTION READERS AND GROUP LEADERS

A voice recording of the quarterly letter by Fr. Laurence Freeman, Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation, is available for the visually impaired. Requests may be sent to Brendan Cullen, who is recording the letter. His mailing address is: 625 Placid Avenue, Sault Ste. Marie ON P6B 3M4, tel. 705-759-8332, E-mail: brenkul@sympatico.ca.

Please pass this information on to meditators in your area who would benefit from this service. Better still – contact Brendan on behalf of someone who has difficulty reading and surprise them with their own recording of Fr. Laurence's quarterly message.

YOUR DONATIONS DOLLARS AT WORK!

There are three ways in which you can support financially the Canadian Community for Christian Meditation and the WCCM. Here is a brief description of each one:

- **Friends of the WCCM** – for the support of the International Office in London, England, and to share the teaching around the world. Rosanne L'Ecuyer is the Canadian Coordinator. The Friends Program appeal is featured in the International Newsletter in this issue.
- **CCMC** – has an annual appeal known as the Doreen Romandini Fund to cover the costs of our National Resource Centre in Montreal and other national activities e.g. the School, support to Group Leaders, and the Canadian Council. This appeal goes out in the fall issue of NewsNotes.
- **NewsNotes** – readers are invited to contribute \$15 or more per year towards the cost of printing and distributing the national and international newsletter. This fundraising drive is called Let's Keep Connected. The main appeal is in the spring, with short reminders in the other issues. A Let's Keep Connected form can be found on page C11 of this issue.

CCMC WEBSITE NEWS

Be sure to regularly visit CCMC's official website <http://www.meditatio.ca> designed to provide you with information about Christian meditation in Canada. You will find short introductory talks on Christian meditation, community news including the latest copy of NewsNotes, and lists of Area Coordinators and Christian meditation groups in Canada. Please send all comments, questions and suggestions to Chris Tanner: webmaster@meditatio.ca.

Calendar of Events

Note: For regular updates please refer to the Canadian website at www.meditatio.ca/news/updates.

August 2006

10-13 Aug., Penang, Malaysia. John Main Seminar *The Fire of Silence: Music and Mystics* led by Margaret Rizza. Contact: Patricia Por, Seminar coordinator <ppor@pc.jaring.my> or visit <www.wccm.org>.

September 2006

22-24 Sept., Tweed, ON. *Fully Alive! Christian Meditation and Yoga Retreat* led by Kevin Flynn, Lucie Legault and Casey Rock. Third annual meditation and yoga retreat sponsored by the Canadian Christian Meditation Community. The focus is on discovering how the ancient practice of yoga can enrich meditation by anchoring it in the body. Venue: Bridgewater Retreat Centre. Contact: Casey Rock 416-463-7110 or <caseyrock@rogers.com>.

23 Sept., Charlottetown, PE. *One-Day Workshop* on the spiritual role of the group and the importance of using enlivening teaching skills. Time: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Venue: Mount St. Mary's. Contact: Sr. Kathleen Bolger 902-892-6585 or <kbolger@peimarthas.ca>.

October 2006

19 Oct., Toronto, ON. *Twilight Retreat* led by Fr. Laurence Freeman. Details TBA.

20-22 Oct., Saint John, NB. Christian meditation Retreat Weekend, *Path of Healing for the Self and the World* led by Fr. Laurence Freeman. Venue: Villa Madonna Retreat House. Contact: Sr. Kathleen Bolger 902-892-6585 or <kbolger@peimarthas.ca>.

23 Oct., Halifax NS. *Meditation for Living and Dying*, talk by Fr. Laurence Freeman. Venue: Dalhousie University. Time: 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. This talk may be of particular interest to those involved in the medical field, pastoral, hospice and palliative care. Contact: Rev. Frances Drolet-Smith 902-461-5140.

23 Oct., Halifax NS. *Meditation, Inner Peace, Outer Peace* talk by Fr. Laurence Freeman. Venue: Atlantic School of Theology Chapel. Time: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Contact: Rev. Frances Drolet-Smith 902-461-5140.

25 Oct., Montreal, QC. *One-Day Retreat* led by Fr. Laurence Freeman. Venue: Ermitage St. Croix. Some rooms are available for people who would like to sleep there before or after the retreat, or both. Cost: \$100 for the day, \$130

including one night, and \$160 for 2 nights. Contact: Magda Jass 514-489-0998 or <meteor.jass.heritage@qc.aibn.com> or mail to 4540 Wilson Ave., Montreal, QC, H4A 2V4 - stating nights you wish to stay – with registration fee of \$30 by 15 Sept.

November 2006

9 Nov., Charlottetown, PE. Evening session on one of the greatest mystics of God's love, *Hildegard of Bingen and her Prayer of Silence*. Venue: Mount St. Mary's. Contact: Sister Kathleen Bolger 902-892-6585 or <kbolger@peimarthas.ca>.

24-26 Nov., Winnipeg, MB. *The School – Sharing the Gift* led by the School resource team. Venue: St Benedict's Retreat and Conference Centre. Contact: Phil Barnett 204-488-8093 or <pbarnett.stpetes@mts.net>.

27 Nov, Winnipeg, MB. Twilight Retreat led by Rev. Glenda Meakin. Venue: St. Peter's Anglican Church, 755 Elm St. Contact: Phil Barnett 204-488-8093 or <pbarnett.stpetes@mts.net>.

March 2007

1-17 March, India. Pilgrimage to India. See <www.meditatio.ca> "Upcoming Events" link to download a brochure.

May 2007

5 May, Charlottetown, PE. *Atlantic Group Leaders Workshop*. Venue: Mount St. Mary's. Contact: Sister Kathleen Bolger 902-892-6585 or <kbolger@peimarthas.ca>.

June 2007

1-3 June, Rustico, PE. *The School – Sharing the Gift* led by Rev. Glenda Meakin and Michel Legault. Venue: Belcourt Centre. Contact: Sister Kathleen Bolger 902-892-6585 or <kbolger@peimarthas.ca>.

29 June-July 1, Vancouver, BC. *The Canadian Christian Meditation Community Conference*. Keynote speaker: Fr. Laurence Freeman. Venue: University of British Columbia. Mark your calendar now! Details next issue of NewsNotes.

October 2007

16-21 Oct., Eastern Townships, QC. *John Main Seminar*. Contact: 514 481-8746 or <JMS2007@bellnet.ca>. Mark your calendar now! Details next issue of NewsNotes.

Want to list an event? You will find a user-friendly form to submit additions at www.meditatio.ca/Forms/EventForm.html.

Sheelah Treflé Hidden Visits Toronto

Contemplating the Scapegoat: Reflections on Sacrificial Violence

At a Toronto Twilight Retreat, May 18, Sheelah Treflé Hidden gave listeners much to reflect on. Sheelah has a Masters in Peace Studies, has done peace work in Kosovo and the Middle East, and is involved in Christian-Muslim relations in Bradford, England, where she lives. A René Girard scholar, she gave us a whirlwind tour of some theories of this influential French critic, cultural theorist and devout Catholic.

All of us are familiar with the idea of the scapegoat, in our lives and in the world – “ethnic cleansing” of Bosnians in Kosovo, or the shameful treatment throughout history of Jews, by Christians. What does the scapegoat have to do with us as human beings, as Christians, as meditators?

The idea of mimesis is central to Girardian theory. Humans learn by imitation and desire to imitate others. This includes a desire for what the other desires, leading to conflict. Individual conflict eventually affects whole communities because the rivalry is reciprocal. Everyone against everyone leads to chaos. But when all are focused against one, a “scapegoat”, violence can be diverted for a time. Before being sacrificed, the victim is seen as the source of violence and chaos in the community. After sacrifice, the victim takes on a sacred identity. A ritual of ‘controlled’ violence thus prevents actual violence and preserves the community. This original, or “founding”, story is repeated in various cultures and in religious ritual.

What does Biblical narrative say about scapegoating? Sheelah pointed to Cain and Abel. Because Abel’s sacrifice was “more pleasing to God”, Cain murdered his brother. Cursed and expelled from the land, Cain fears he will be a target for revenge. However, God puts a mark on him to protect him. According to Girard, we are dealing here with “things hidden since the beginning of the world” and the mechanism of sacrificial violence. For some scholars, Abel’s blood sacrifice as “pleasing to God” was a religious and socially controlling violence that developed into Temple-sanctioned sacrificial violence. Although Cain is a murderer, God stops the cycle of violence by showing mercy – giving him a mark to prevent his own death – and preventing another killing. As the prophets Hosea and Micah tell, ‘God desires mercy, not sacrifice’. Blood sacrifice to appease an angry God is common in religion and myths through time. The stories of Cain and Abel, Joseph, and Job challenge this link between violence and the sacred by telling the story from the victim’s perspective and showing that violence lies in humans, not in God.

In the New Testament, Sheelah saw Jesus’ death as an exposé of the lie of sacrificial violence. Like the prophets, Jesus declares God desires mercy, not sacrifice, to make

possible His kingdom. Jesus’ death was not a violent sacrifice to appease an angry God, but was meant to put an end to this notion. In Mark and Luke, the veil of the Temple torn from top to bottom symbolizes the “misrecognition” of the sacrificial system. By his death Jesus offered an alternative model to imitate – of mercy, compassion, and love.

How, then, does our spirituality affect the scapegoating tendency we have as human beings? Violence is not just physical but also verbal and emotional. It involves a withdrawal of empathy from others. We project our jealousy, hatred, and fear onto others because our own inner turmoil remains unresolved. The great mystics of all religious traditions speak of the transforming power of silence as a way to connect with the true self. Jesus himself said pray in a “secret place” and “use few words”, because your Father knows your needs. Christian meditation helps us on this path to self-awareness, and to a deepening awareness of God and of neighbour. Meditation is a process of liberation. We dissolve the illusion of the ego, not seeking to possess but to become dispossessed. Thus the mimetic rivalry between us and others can be overcome. Meditation allows no self-deception – we see ourselves as we are. Having self-knowledge of our own wounds we can see the wounds in others. Learning we are forgiven we can forgive. Jesus said, “Love your neighbour as yourself”, and meditation helps us to do that – to love ourselves and then to see ourselves in our neighbours. Meditation, as St. Benedict says, enables us to “listen with the ear of the heart”.

Thank you, Sheelah, for a stimulating talk. We wish you well in your continuing work for peace.

– Julie Meakin, Toronto

Plan Your 2007 Vacation in “Super Natural” B.C.!!

The Canadian Christian Meditation Community
of British Columbia will be hosting

**The Canadian Christian Meditation Community
National Conference**

June 29, 30, & July 1 2007

Keynote Speaker: Father Laurence Freeman OSB
Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation



Location: University of British Columbia, Vancouver B.C.

Conference Coordinator: Joyce Rogers
Team Members: Art Mistler and Louise Menard



World Community of Christian Meditation FRIENDS PROGRAM

*See International section
for description of Friends Program*

For Canadian residents who wish to benefit from the Canadian charitable donation tax rebate, donations may be made through the Canadian WCCM Friends Program Coordinator, Rosanne L'Ecuyer.

Please use the following form:

I wish to pledge \$130 Other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Your pledges or donations may be sent to:

Friends of WCCM, c/o Rosanne L'Ecuyer, 4988 Victoria Ave., Montreal, Qc. H3W 2N3
tel : 514-739-9440 • e-mail: friendswccm@bellnet.ca

Cheques or money orders should be made to the order of Meditatio – Friends of WCCM.

LET'S KEEP CONNECTED

Canadian Christian Meditation Community - NewsNotes

I wish to receive renew NewsNotes for 2006

Name (if different from address label) _____

Address _____

City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Contribution \$15 enclosed - payable to Meditatio/CCMC.

I want to help others receive the mailing. I have added an extra donation:

\$15 \$25 \$35 Other _____

Tax receipts issued for donations over \$15.00. Thank you.

PLEASE MAIL TO: Meditatio Christian Meditation Community
P.O. Box 552, Station NDG, Montreal, QC H4A 3P9

BOOK ORDER FORM

Please see descriptions in the International section

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

QUANTITY	TITLE	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL PRICE
	8127 Spiritual Community	\$48.00	
	8128 The Essentials of Christian Meditation	\$16.00	

TOTAL _____

+ 10% POSTAGE _____

TOTAL AMOUNT _____

Please mail to:

National Resource Centre, P.O.Box 552 Station NDG, Montreal QC, H4A 3P9

Tel 514-485-7928. email: christianmeditation@bellnet.ca

Cheques payable to: Meditatio, CMC.

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:
Canadian Christian Meditation Community
P.O. Box 552, Station NDG
Montreal, Quebec H4A 3P9

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40007931