

Clem Sauv  appointed chair of WCCM Guiding Board



New chair Clem Sauv  from Toronto, Ontario and previous chair Pauline Peters from Brisbane, Australia

We extend our congratulations to Clem Sauv  on being made Chair of the WCCM Guiding Board at their meeting in March. He takes over from Pauline Peters of Australia who retired after serving as Chair for five years.

Clem brings a wealth of experience to the post, as he has been a member of the Guiding Board since 1994 and a WCCM Trustee since 1997, including a four-year term as Chair. He has been very active in the Christian meditation community in Canada, particularly in relation to the National Council and in the greater Toronto area.

In the latter case, Clem has been the mainstay of the Christian Meditation Community of Toronto for 18 years. His international experience includes a period as administrator of the WCCM International Centre in London, England and

ongoing involvement in the organization of the annual John Main Seminar and other international events. He is also the Community's constitutional expert, having drafted the WCCM constitution and the Canadian and US covenants, and has acted in this area as adviser to several other countries. Our thoughts and prayers accompany Clem as he takes on this important role of responsibility and service to the international community.

The previous Chairs of the Guiding Board are Dr. Balfour Mount (Montreal), Prof. Robert Kiely (Boston), Milo Coerper (Washington DC) Carla Cooper (Houston) and Pauline Peters.

**Phil Barnett
Winnipeg, MB**

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Dying to Live

On Thursday, March 27, John Callaghan, a retired secondary school drama teacher, spoke at the regular monthly meeting of the Toronto Christian Meditation Community. He began his talk by sharing that students of his who had performed in the play *Our Town* were very moved by the way that the play dealt with the topic of appreciating life through the perspective of death. In the play, Emily, who is dead, wants to relive one day of her life and is given the opportunity to relive her eleventh birthday. She finds that many, many wonderful things happened that day and she observes that people do not appreciate life properly. She makes the comment “all that was going on and I never noticed.” John added that this line often evokes an emotional audience response of recognition of a powerful truth.

The concept of dying in order to learn to live repeats itself in spiritual literature. John recalled a number of life experiences where people had shared with him the experience that it was only when they could forget about themselves completely that they could truly be with others and experience life. He reflected that we shouldn't speak of the “spiritual life” but that we should only speak of life because there is really only life and all of life is full of the spirit.

The ego or the self can prevent us from experiencing life because it wants to be in control when we need to accept life as it is and that that we are not in charge or in control of life. We need to let go and become nothing but love embracing life. At the centre of who we are there is love, compassion and intelligence. Unfortunately, the ego wants to use all of these towards ends, towards building up its self importance. We need to soften the ego's dominance so that love can flow through us. We need to become unencumbered and just be, in simplicity, appreciating the richness that surrounds us. We need to be free of the tyranny of urgency: I want, I gotta, I wish I had, freed of “I-want-itis”.

Thomas Merton suggests that when we die to self all that is left is the mystery of God and the mystery of my true self, mysteries that are intimately tied together. John concluded, commenting that “being” really means being fully alive, aware that most of the time you are not fully aware. He encouraged us to be open to life without an agenda and to experiencing some “agenda-less” moments.

Joseph Clarkson
Toronto, ON

Practicalities of Practice

Q. Are there physical benefits to the practice of Christian Meditation?

A. If your teeth are not up to par you might take heart from a recent headline in a North American paper: *Meditating 40 minutes a day can help battle tooth decay.* The article went on to say that studies have shown meditators have saliva that is lower in acid and bacteria and hence resists decay to tooth enamel. *Prevention* magazine has just announced meditation offers greater protection against the flu, and a California study indicates meditators have a stronger immune system against various diseases.

Or how about this? The *USA Today* newspaper recently quoted Dr. Herbert Benson, author of several books and studies on meditation, saying 34% of his infertile patients get pregnant within six months, 78% of insomniacs become regular sleepers and doctor's visits for pain are reduced 36%, all through regular daily periods of meditation. These findings are all very interesting but some of these studies might well be taken with a pinch of spiritual salt.

Since we are one entity, body, mind and spirit, these bodily effects of meditating, if true, can be accepted graciously with thanks. However, what is important to keep in mind here is that any physiological benefits of meditation are quite secondary, or as one might say signs rather than the

essential meaning of meditation.

In his over 200 taped talks on Christian Meditation, John Main rarely mentions any of the physiological benefits of meditation. Father John obviously felt that lower blood pressure or reduced oxygen consumption (proven benefits), paled into insignificance when one considers meditation as a spiritual path into the presence of the indwelling Christ. In other words John Main felt we should keep our priorities straight. Meditation is primarily a faith-filled spiritual discipline and any side effects helpful to the body should be considered quite secondary.

However meditators are often aware of a greater physical vitality and energy, which has led to the aphorism that meditators have 25-hour days. In other words the one hour we devote to meditation is not lost time for we seem to get the investment of time back with interest even in the physiological sphere.

From the book *Frequently Asked Questions about Christian Meditation: The Path of Contemplative Prayer* by Paul Harris (Novalis Publishers). Paul can be reached at paulturner-harris@aol.com.

From the National Coordinator

Horizons

Spring is such a wonderful season, especially after a long winter. My wife Barbara is a keen gardener, so we share the excitement of seeing the plants come up through the soil and eventually bloom. The trees begin to cover with a haze of green and then into fresh leaves. A lovely process as it gradually unfolds.

Another joy is the return of the song-birds and waterfowl. In Winnipeg we are on the main migration route so we see a wide variety. One of our rites of spring, early on Wednesday mornings in May, is to join other birders at Fort Whyte, a conservation area and wildlife centre. It is a delight to see the different species arrive as the month progresses, in the company of the other birders – some beginners, others very experienced. I still marvel at the ability of those who catch a mere glimpse of a bird and know immediately what it is.

This year I had the additional pleasure of attending a birding festival at Delta Marsh on Lake Manitoba. The first evening, setting my alarm for 4:45 a.m. was well worth it. In the dawn light we drove out to witness sharp-tailed grouse doing their elaborate courtship dance – white tails in the air and feet beating the ground. The rest of the day was just as exciting, seeing some species I had never seen before. Up at 5:45 the next morning, the weather was cold and windy but it turned out to be a great day for warblers. At one point, standing in front of bushes that were just alive with birds, it was hard to know where to look – there were so many. The group leader was quick to spot the unusual ones and point us in the right direction. Some of the colours and markings

are spectacular and I took great delight in the hand of the Creator. At the end of the stay we compiled a list of all of the species identified, and there were 164! I had managed to see or hear 109 and was thrilled.

This isn't a naturalist newsletter, though, so I should talk about meditation! I do see some parallels:

- Though we were all on the same weekend, we each had our unique experience. As meditators, we are on the same journey, but our individual journey and relationship with God is unique.
- Someone may see a bird or describe it, but I don't get the joy unless I see the bird myself. Someone can talk about the benefits of meditation, but not until I do it myself am I able to experience it.
- We are all at different stages. While we may admire those more experienced, the only way to get there is to do the practice.
- There are definite advantages to being in a group – joy, companionship and mutual support in sharing the experience.
- There is value in attending special events. We learn from the wisdom and knowledge of leaders, are encouraged in our own practice and come away renewed and filled with enthusiasm.

Like spring, our spiritual journey and the benefits of meditation unfold gradually. The seasons and wonders of nature, like the practice of meditation, are gifts from God for our benefit. Let us make good use of the gifts.

Phil Barnett
Winnipeg, MB



Please note the change of address for the National Resource Centre in Montreal:
P.O. Box 52, Station NDG, Montreal, QC. H4A 3P4

Canadian Christian Meditation Community National Resource Centre

(5964 ave. Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Suite 208
corner ave. Royal)

P.O. Box 52, Station NDG
Montreal, Quebec H4A 3P4
514-485-7928

christianmeditation@bellnet.ca
www.meditatio.ca

Editorial Team

Phil Barnett, Joseph Clarkson, Colleen Donald, Joy Gordon,
Michel Legault and Mark Schofield.

Send submissions to Joseph Clarkson, NewsNotes Coordinator.
E-mail: newsnotes@bellnet.ca or joseph.clarkson@rogers.com

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

NEWS FROM FAR AND NEAR



Front row: Jean Murray, Flora Benoit, Jean Anderchek and Ron Dicks. Back row: Robin Lane and Ted Sugden. Missing from the picture are committee members James Kubina and Weldon Burlock.

OTTAWA AREA VISIONING WEEKEND

From March 7-9, during the biggest snowstorm of this winter, the Ottawa Area Coordinating Committee held a Visioning Weekend at Galilee Centre in Arnprior. We meditated and talked further about the responses we had received from meditators to the questionnaires we circulated in our visits to groups last year. We also reflected on our priorities for each year, and how to meet the needs of the meditation community. On the whole it was a very enjoyable and inspiring weekend.

Ron Dicks
Ottawa, ON

SCARBORO MEDITATION GROUP MARKS ITS QUARTER CENTURY

Fr. Terry Gallagher began a weekly meditation group at the Scarborough Foreign Missions in Scarborough 25 years ago. He reports: We have a second community of meditators that began as an evening outreach on Wednesdays since the first week of January. We pause in Lent and again in Advent when we put on a meditation series for the Scarborough and greater Toronto areas. Christian meditation is always the focus on one of these evenings and, this past Lent, Marilyn Metcalfe gave a presentation titled "A Working Woman's Prayer."

Other evenings offered varying experiences of prayer – meditative prayer with Jean Vanier's L'Arche community, praying with the Henri Nouwen Centre community, an evening on Meister Eckhart, and another on Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement. Each meeting included or ended with meditative silence or with our usual 25-minute meditation. The series averaged about 40 to 50 meditators each session.

Rev. Terry Gallagher sfm
Scarborough, ON

MEDITATION GROUPS IN ONTARIO COTTAGE COUNTRY

Heading to the cottage this summer near Barry's Bay or Bancroft? Consider contacting one of these groups leaders to see if there is a meeting while you are close by so that could join in.

Barry's Bay – Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m.
Contact Zofia Zawidzka zzawidzka@hotmail.com

Bancroft – Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m.
Contact Joanne Alves (613) 332-4977
joannemontpetit@yahoo.ca

It would be best to call ahead for directions and to ensure that the meeting is being held for a particular week.

Joanne Alves
Bancroft, ON



Retreat facilitator Rev. Glenda Meakin

LENTEN 'QUIET DAY' RETREAT

On March 1, meditators from the Kitchener/Waterloo area spent a Lenten Quiet Day at Renison College with Rev. Glenda Meakin.

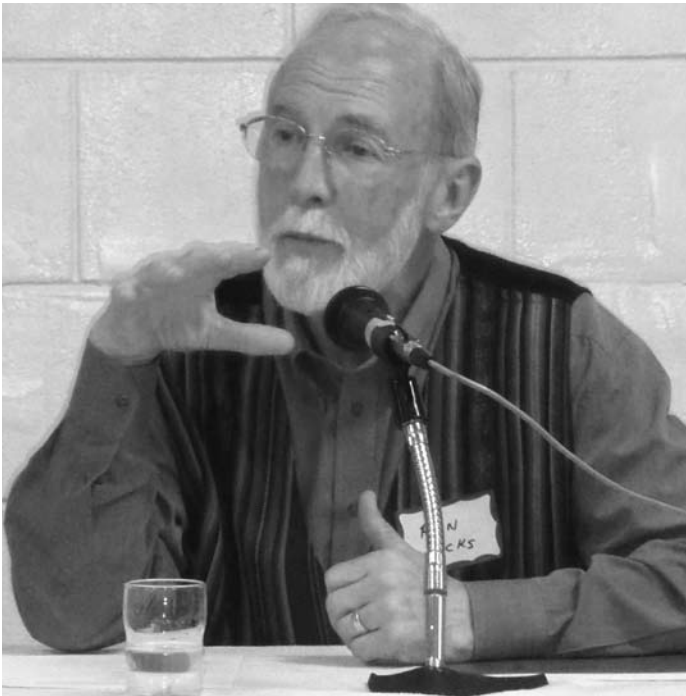
Our day started with an introduction to Christian meditation for those new to the practice. Glenda then took us back to the Garden of Eden and, in her gentle way, showed how we fall into the same pattern as did Adam and Eve. We are not satisfied with the person God created us to be and, foolishly thinking we can do better, we move away from the loving intimate relationship of God and man.

In the afternoon, Glenda led us from the garden to the wilderness, where Jesus was confronted by the three temp-

tations. Jesus resisted these temptations, and his relationship with God remained unbroken. We too must recognize and resist these temptations, so we can come out of our self-imposed hiding places and allow God to find us. Only then can we start living a life full of love and happiness, as we were created to live.

It was a wonderful day that gave each of us a lot to ponder for Lent and, indeed, forever.

Gill Stephens
St. Marys, ON



Ron Dicks

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION AND PRAYER OF THE HEART

On May 27, the meditation group at Emmanuel United Church in Ottawa hosted an evening talk, “Christian Meditation and Prayer of the Heart”, presented by Ron Dicks. Over 60 meditators from Ottawa and area listened to Ron’s discussion of the loss – and recovery – of silent Christian prayer as taught by the Desert fathers and mothers of the 3rd and 4th centuries. While never lost in the Eastern Christian tradition, this way of contemplative prayer faded in the West when scholasticism and orthodoxy became the norm. Once the domain of monasteries and cloisters, the tradition, revived by John Main as Christian meditation, is today a prayer without denominational boundaries in “monasteries without walls” around the world.

Meditation, Ron says, is a form of prayer carried out in silence, “being with God within Who is within us” (immanent) rather than speaking to a transcendent God outside of us. The goal of this prayer has always been to make us one with God. The fruits of this meditation were identified as growth in love toward oneself and toward others;

and growth in simplicity, leading us from contemplation to action.

I have long been a believer in, and practitioner of, meditation. From my own experience, I know that the regular practice of meditation has the ability to bring us closer to God and to unite people. There is no conflict in silence. It can bring everyone together in one Spirit.

Rita Kuiack
Ottawa, ON

OTTAWA MEDITATORS ENJOY FR. TOM RIOPELLE’S TALK

On January 20, Fr. Tom gave a talk on silent prayer at his parish church of St Patrick’s Fallowfield. About 40 people attended from the Ottawa area, some who practice Christian meditation and some who had never meditated before.

Fr. Tom told how God speaks to us in silence. Here are a few of the points that had an impact on me:

- How important it is to be silent, actively listening to God. “Be still and know that I am God” - how well we who meditate know that phrase. Jesus spent a lot of time in silent prayer – in dynamic silence with the Father. “The Church has to learn to pray in silence,” Fr. Tom added.
- *Lectio divina* i.e. meditative reflection over Scripture as prayer. “Sometimes when we read Scripture, even though we have read something many times before, suddenly we get it. The light goes on, we see it clearly.”
- “God is the only one who can transform us. The language of God is God in man; the language of God is silence.” Only God can do the work in us, when we are open to receive it, when we make ourselves ready for His divine grace.
- “Showing up to give God our time in prayer is a prayer.” I thought how true that is for meditation. John Main asked us to be faithfully committed to our daily prayer of meditation, for 20 to 30 minutes twice a day.
- “[Keeping to your] prayer time, even when you have time off from your daily routine, keeps you anchored for the day.” Many of us may feel the same way. It is being constant; listening to God in the silence; standing firm in one’s belief.

The evening continued with a very informative talk by Eva Hegmann on the early beginnings of contemplative prayer, going back to the fourth century writings of John Cassian in the Conferences, and how John Main, in the 1960s, revived this way of prayer. Francie d’Annunzio explained how to meditate as John Main taught. Louise Rathier played *Laudate Dominum* on her guitar to lead us into meditation and John Bryant followed with a psalm.

After warm refreshments and friendship, and fortified in body and spirit, we headed off into the cold night.

Francie d’Annunzio
Ottawa, ON

Continued on next page

News from Far and Near *continued*



SOUTH RUSTICO MEDITATION AND YOGA RETREAT

The weekend of April 12 saw 21 enthusiastic individuals take part in a Christian meditation/yoga retreat at Belcourt Centre, South Rustico. The 75-year old retreat house overlooks the sand dunes of PEI's North Shore and provides a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere for a weekend of meditation, gentle yoga, country walks, silence and friendship.

The sessions were led by Lucie Legault, Barbara Dick, Teri Hall and Sr. Kathleen Bolger. We were encouraged to appreciate the role of our bodies in prayer by practicing yoga postures. Early morning yoga flowed into our gatherings to meditate, to eat and to enjoy each other's company – all in silence. We danced in the evening “like no one was watching”, once again taking steps in learning how to befriend our bodies.

The whole me – all of me – we experienced our meditation and yoga practice as an expression of joy, connection and prayer to the Spirit. We are one in heart, body and soul.

Teri Hall
Rollo Bay, PE

MEDITATION GROUP LEADER WORKSHOP

On April 5 at the FCJ Christian Life Centre in Calgary, Rev Phil Barnett, CCMC National Coordinator welcomed eleven experienced Christian Meditation group leaders from Alberta, five of whom traveled from out of town. Rev Phil introduced a variety of topics for general discussion before small groups continued discussion and then regrouped for presentations. Topics included: *The Importance of Groups*; *The Various Roles of Group Leaders*; *Welcoming New Members*; *Starting a New Group and Making It Known*; *The Sequence During a Meditation Session, (talk, music, meditation, music, comments and questions)*; *Dealing with Difficult Situations* and *Leadership in the Group*. Rosemary Bishop, Area Coordinator for Alberta and Saskatchewan led the

discussion on the topic of *Creating a Sacred Space for Meditation*. At least one group leader had experienced a situation in all topics and shared their experiences of suggestions and resolutions to challenging circumstances.

Following these discussions the group watched the video “The Quiet Mind”. The workshop concluded with meditation led by Engeline Piet of Calgary, a longtime volunteer group leader at the FCJ Christian Life Centre.

Rosemary Bishop
Calgary, AB

BC COMMUNITY PRAYER DAY

Thirty Christian meditators from around BC's lower mainland gathered for a community day of prayer on Saturday April 19. We met at St. Edmund's parish in North Vancouver. For those able to arrive an hour early, the day began with Mass. We then proceeded to St. Edmund's Elementary School, to the small gym, for coffee provided by members of the parish Christian meditation group. After registration, BC Regional Coordinator Colleen Donald welcomed the gathering.

Our morning program consisted of periods of meditation, interspersed by recorded talks from Fr. Laurence's UK tour on the subject of “Prayer in the 21st Century”. In addition to meditation and prayer periods, our mid-morning break was taken in silence. At our brown-bag lunch, we gathered in impromptu groups around small tables. This gave us a chance to catch up with members of the other groups whom we might not have seen for a while. The afternoon continued with more meditation.

Colleen thanked everyone at the end of the day and distributed registration flyers for a retreat with Rev. Glenda Meakin at Westminster Abbey, BC, on September 12-14, 2008.

The day was funded by donations from participants, plus the generous support of St. Edmund's parish.

Derek Cameron
Vancouver, BC

MEDITATION GROUP HONOURS COMMITTED MEMBER

Lucille Cameron, a member of the Kelowna Meditation Group, passed away on Tuesday, March 4. For over 20 years Lucille had been a committed member of the group. Those privileged to know her described her as a “little diamond”. Her deep, quiet faith and positive attitude had great meaning for her and saw her through many trying times. Lucille was a wonderful role model for those who needed spiritual focus. She lived what she believed.

Joan Needham
Kelowna, BC

Calendar of Events

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

July 2008

12 July, Montebello, QC. Annual Meditation Community Picnic at Sedberg School Lake. Meet in the carpark from 9:30 on for transportation to the lake. Meditation at noon followed by pot-luck lunch. Swimming, boating, walking, sitting under the trees. For further information and directions Magda Jass 514-489-0998, Polly Schofield 514-481-8746. Magda.jass@gmail.com, Polly.schofield@gmail.com.

September 2008

4 September, Calgary, AB. Meditation Drop-In. Time: 7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. Venue: FCJ Christian Life Centre, 219-19th Ave. S. W., Calgary, AB. Contact: (403) 229-4215.

9 September, Charlottetown, PE. Beginning/Renewing Christian Meditation. Experience a journey from dialogue in prayer to silence and stillness. Time: 9:05 a.m.-10:00 a.m., repeated 7:15 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Venue: Mount St. Mary's Charlottetown. Contact: Sr. Kathleen Bolger, kbolger@peimarthas.ca. All denominations welcome.

10 September, Charlottetown, PE. Spirituality in Daily Life. Meditating on Scripture and on God's Creation. Time: bi-monthly Wednesday. 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m. Venue: Mount St. Mary's Charlottetown. Contact: Sr. Kathleen Bolger, kbolger@peimarthas.ca. All denominations welcome.

12-14 September, Mission BC. *The Gift of Wonder* A weekend retreat led by Rev. Glenda Meakin. Time: after dinner Friday, Sept 12 to after lunch Sunday, Sept 14. Venue: Westminster Abbey, Mission BC. For more information see Upcoming Events for September at www.meditatio.ca or contact: Colleen Donald at (604) 985-1592.

16 September, Charlottetown, PE. Tuesday Weekly Christian Meditation. Time: 9:05 a.m.-9:50 a.m., repeated 7:15 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Venue: Mount St. Mary's Charlottetown. Contact: Sr. Kathleen Bolger, kbolger@peimarthas.ca. All denominations welcome.

16 September, Charlottetown, PE. "Just to Be Tuesdays". In a quiet setting, take time to relax, pray, read, write. For those who wish meditation practice and spiritual guidance. Time: between 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Venue: Mount St. Mary's Charlottetown. Contact: Sr. Kathleen Bolger, kbolger@peimarthas.ca. All denominations welcome.

19-21 September, Toronto ON. *Aspects of Love.* **Please note:** This weekend retreat with Fr. Laurence Freeman is fully booked. No more space, neither residential nor commuter, and the waiting list is closed. Thank you to everyone for your support.

22 September, Charlottetown, PE. Mondays – Integrating meditation into daily living and regular 12 Step meetings. Time: 7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. Venue: Murphy Community Centre (Rm 312), 200 Richmond St., Charlottetown. Contact: Sr. Kathleen Bolger, kbolger@peimarthas.ca. All denominations welcome.

24-28 September, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. 2008 Contemplative Outreach Annual Conference. "Oneness: Unity in Completion." Fr. Thomas Keating and Fr. Laurence Freeman. For details, see Contemplative Outreach website <http://www.centeringprayer.com>

27 September, Ottawa, ON. *Workshop for Leaders.* Leader: Ron Dicks (with other presenters). Place: St. Paul's Anglican Church, 20 Young Road, Kanata, just north of Hazeldean Rd. Time: 9:30 am to 4:00 pm. Cost: Donation. Note: Please bring a brown bag lunch. RSVP Ted Sugden tsugden@magma.ca at 613 225-6093 or Jean Anderchek jsa@distributel.net at 613 832-3436.

October 2008

2 October, Calgary, AB. Meditation Drop-In. Time: 7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. Venue: FCJ Christian Life Centre, 219-19th Ave. S. W., Calgary, AB. Contact: (403) 229-4215.

9-12 October, South Rustico, PE. *Encountering the Word.* Silence meditation and reflection on scripture passages to deepen and enrich our journey. Facilitator: Rev. Glenda Meakin. Time: 7:00 p.m. Thursday to Sunday noon. Venue: Belcourt Centre, South Rustico. Contact: Sr. Kathleen Bolger, (902) 892-6585 or kbolger@peimarthas.ca

17-19 October, Kingston, ON. *Fully Alive: A yoga and meditation retreat.* Venue: Providence Spirituality Centre. Facilitators: Kevin Flynn, Lucie Legault, Casey Rock. Contact: Casey Rock at (416) 463-7110 or caseyrocker@rogers.com.

Continued on next page

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

Calendar of Events *continued*

25 October, Sudbury, ON. *Une voie de silence.* A one-day meditation event with speaker Michel Legault. Location: Centre Santé, 19 chemin Froot, Sudbury, ON, time: 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, Saturday, October 25. This retreat will be given in French. For more information contact: Madelaine Mageau at 613 584-9192,

November 2008

6 November, Calgary, AB. Meditation Drop-In. Time: 7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. Venue: FCJ Christian Life Centre, 219-19th Ave. S. W., Calgary, AB. Contact: (403) 229-4215.

12 November, Calgary, AB. *Introduction to Meditation – Part 1.* Time: 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m. Venue: FCJ Christian Life Centre, 219-19th Ave. S. W., Calgary, AB. Contact: (403) 229-4215.

19 November, Calgary, AB. *Introduction to Meditation – Part 2.* Time: 7:00 p.m. -9:00 p.m. Venue: FCJ Christian Life Centre, 219-19th Ave. S. W., Calgary, AB. Contact: (403) 229-4215.

29 November, Ottawa, ON. *Advent: Living Between Memory and Hope* Advent Retreat with Kevin Flynn, Director of Anglican Studies, St. Paul University, Place: Main Chapel of St. Paul University, 249 Main St. (2nd floor Laframboise Pavilion, just south of mail building). Time:

10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Free parking in the north parking lot, entry at Hazel St. intersection. Cost: Donation. Contact: Anne Louise Mahoney at 613 730-2060 or annelou11@sympatico.ca. Please bring a bag lunch and a drink.

December 2008

4 December, Calgary, AB. Meditation Drop-In. Time: 7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. Venue: FCJ Christian Life Centre, 219-19th Ave. S. W., Calgary, AB. Contact: (403) 229-4215.

13 December, Calgary, AB. Meditation Retreat Day. Time: 9:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Venue: FCJ Christian Life Centre, 219-19th Ave. S. W., Calgary, AB. Contact: (403) 228-4215.

Regularly Scheduled Events

First Thursday of each month. Calgary, AB. *Meditation Booster – Monthly Drop-in* led by Engeline Piet at FCJ Christian Life Centre 219-19th Avenue. Time: 12 noon to 12:45 p.m. and 7 to 8 p.m. Contact: FCJ Christian Life Centre at 403-228-4215.

Last Thursday of each month. Toronto, Ontario. CMCT monthly training meeting. Location: Knox College, University of Toronto, 59 George St. Not held in July and August. Individual events are described above. For more information contact: Joy Gordon at 416 485-9718.

From the School in Pembroke to Sharing the Gift in Kandahar, Afghanistan

Having practiced Christian meditation on my own for a number of years, the School was a great opportunity for me to connect with the greater community and to deepen my knowledge of this ancient form of prayer. Also, as a military chaplain preparing to deploy to Afghanistan, the School has provided me the confidence and the resources I was seeking in order to share the gift of Christian meditation with other soldiers under my care. Knowing the numerous stresses soldiers face while on operations, I am convinced

that the path of meditation can be a powerful gift to them, helping to sustain them through difficult times, as it has done for me over the years. My hope is to establish a weekly meditation group right on the main camp in Kandahar. God willing, may it become a beacon of peace for all in that region of the world.

Padre Michel Dion
Major
Senior Task Force Chaplain
Petawawa ON

A Prayer for the start of the Meditation Session

Come and find the quiet centre
in the crowded life we lead,
find the room for hope to enter
find the frame where we are freed;
clear the chaos and the clutter,
clear our eyes, that we can see
all the things that really matter,
be at peace,
simply be.

Michel Legault in the Caribbean

Tiptoeing on Sacred Ground

When a meditator in Curaçao invited me to walk a trail that she and others work at making more accessible, I could not resist, though it meant leaving at 6:30 a.m. so we could be back before the midday heat. After walking for half an hour on a sandy section through a tropical forest, we arrived at a rocky surface.

There was one spot, though, that was covered with grass, a striking contrast with the rest of the rough ground.

Maria took the time to bend down to touch it.

“When my children were little and saw grass like this,” she said. “They either walked around it or tiptoed carefully on it to protect its fragile beauty.” That comment had resonance for me in a number of ways.

The first link was in preparing for my visit to Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, and Curaçao on behalf of the Canadian Christian Meditation Community.

In response to invitations by Fr. Laurence, the National Council decided last fall to provide support to meditation groups in these countries. I was to visit them and give public talks. It’s always with reverence that we prepare to present the Christian meditation tradition. As I was going to other countries, dealing with people of a different culture, my sense of respect was heightened. Truly, I felt I was tiptoeing on sacred ground.

The way of meditation is also a road in the land of mystery, where we walk in awe, carefully, for fear of destroying the deep mystery that we enter. We use fewer words in order to remain in touch with the unnameable. Continuing our walk, Maria and I reached the ocean’s rugged shore on which wave after wave came crashing, a vibrant explosion of blue, turquoise and white, accompanied by a powerful, rhythmic sound. “Magnificent! Incredibly beautiful!” As we saw new angles, we moved to a simpler “Wow! Wow!”

There was no need for description: the mix of silence and a short mantra was sufficient. Again, we loop back to contemplative prayer, where less is necessary; when less is more.

Over the last two weeks of April, I met meditators in all three countries who were grateful to connect to the Canadian Community and appreciated our friendship. I presented this way of silence to groups of from five to 150 in parishes, convents and meeting halls, to teenagers and to adults of all ages. One trait they had in common with us is their deep hunger for God, for silence. We are companions on the same pilgrimage.

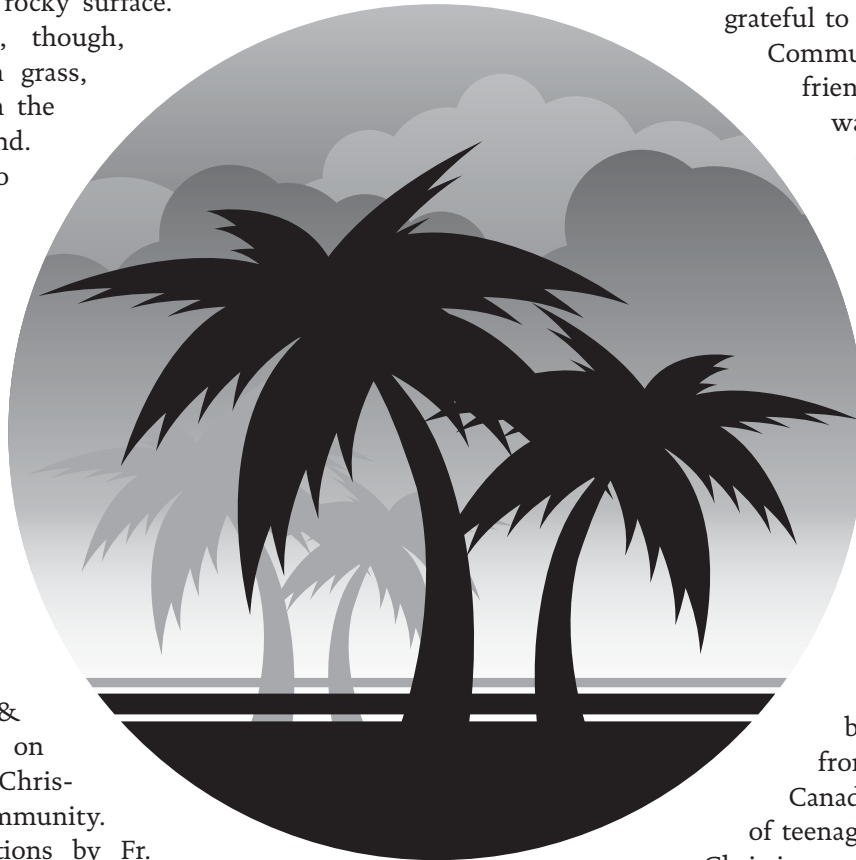
An experience the first day in Port-of-Spain remains particularly vivid, probably because it’s so different from what I have lived in Canada. I was to meet a group of teenage girls who were new to Christian meditation. Just before 8

o’clock, they started to arrive, until there were about 150 of them! They sat on the floor of the gym, ready to listen. After I presented the practice for some 20 minutes, we moved right into meditation for 10 minutes. There was immediately a sacred silence, an absolute quiet. Even after the meditation was over, the silence remained. It was a true moment of grace. In a climate of reverence, we tiptoed together on sacred ground.

One word comes to mind to capture these visits: gratitude. For the warmth and hospitality of the meditators in all three countries. For the receptivity to this form of contemplative prayer. For the abundance of life that reminds us of the inexhaustible richness we discover on our pilgrimage.

**Michel Legault
Cantley, QC**

legault.smeltzer@videotron.ca



Christian Meditation School held in Kingston, Ontario



From May 30 to June 1, Michel Legault, Coordinator of Schools for Canada, led another School in Kingston, Ontario. The school brought together meditators from all over Ontario, from as far away as Bancroft, Harrow (near Windsor), London, Toronto, Oakville, Scarborough, Ottawa, Prescott, Kingston and from Gatineau, Quebec. The rain only lent to an atmosphere of coziness and connection as we began on the Friday night by sharing with one another our personal journeys to the practice of meditation. It was amazing to hear the diversity of paths, but also to realize the common threads that ran through all of our experiences.

On Saturday we had an opportunity to prepare and present a brief talk on some aspect of meditation to one other person and then later to a small group. With practice, we were able to articulate in a more organized and confident fashion our thoughts and experiences of the basic teachings of Christian Meditation. In the next session, we enjoyed an interesting refresher course in the roots of Christian Meditation led by Joseph Clarkson.

Madelaine Mageau gave a wonderful talk about the meditation journey, outlining the various stages for us in a beautiful and metaphoric manner. Ron Dicks shared with us about “the pearl of great price.” He covered the importance of groups, the role of the group leader or facilitator, as some prefer, and how to create a sacred space. The “servant” nature of leadership was discussed (See the quotes from Richard Rohr at the end of this article.) Each participant was

given a wonderful resource manual as a reference for their ongoing work of sharing Christian Meditation.

Noli Mababangloob led us in Taize chants during our shared Eucharist which was led by Rev. Canon Audrey Conard from Toronto. Rather than a homily we were all asked to respond to the Gospel reading (Matt 7:24-27). The liturgy included a commissioning ceremony, individually tailored to each one of us, by the team members, Michel Legault, Ron Dicks, Chris Tanner, Madeline Mageau, and Joseph Clarkson. We were reminded that we are to be light in the world.

**Beth Smith
Prescott, ON**

Good leadership is not simply having good ideas or the ability to exercise control, but having the ability to love deeply and believe in other people.

Thus, as Jesus said from the beginning, leadership is the truest kind of servant-hood.

Inner authority becomes external authority when it both comes from within and simultaneously attracts, affirms, and directs others.

Those with inner authority are in touch with deep human truth.

from *Near Occasions of Grace*
Richard Rohr

Christian Meditation School held in Pembroke, Ontario



Friday April 11 was a day of wind and rain in Eastern Ontario that progressed to ice pellets, freezing rain and a snowstorm. Luckily the 11 participants and three presenters at the 13th Christian Meditation School were safe and snug in the Marguerite Centre, starting an intense and spiritually enriching journey into the essential teaching about Christian meditation.

The resource team, Ron Dicks, Michel Legault and Rev. Glenda Meakin, welcomed the group and invited us to create a spirit of community, filled with peace, trust and joy. The weekend was structured around a full schedule of talks, small group sessions, periods of meditation, and opportunities to know one another better over meals and frequent breaks. The atmosphere went from beautiful, deep silence during meditation to good-humoured competition and laughter as we did the quiz “In Search of Our Roots” – a quiz on John Main and the Christian meditation tradition.

Adding to the wealth of material presented and the excellent handouts was the richness inherent in the group itself. Participants came from very different meditation situations – small groups within churches, groups in private homes, large groups at a retreat centre. One participant, Kathryn

McMorrow of Montreal, has been to numerous Christian meditation groups around the world. Another, Michel Dion of Petawawa, is a military chaplain who will be making Christian meditation available to Canadian troops serving in Afghanistan when he leaves with a deployment in the fall. Retreatants who were relatively new to Christian meditation were inspired by the experiences and wisdom of long-time meditators like Zophia Zawidzka of Barry’s Bay and Frère Kennedy of Ottawa.

By departure time early Sunday afternoon the snow had melted away. The promise of spring was back in the air and participants said goodbye with genuine affection and appreciation for the experience we had together. Coincidentally, a flock of Canadian geese flew over the Marguerite Centre heading north toward the Ottawa River as people were leaving – a symbol of group encouragement. Honking their ‘mantra’ as they made their journey, they proclaimed the return of spring and reminded us how blessed we all are, in so many different ways.

**Margaret Conroy
Pembroke, ON**

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Introduction to Christian Meditation in St. John's, Newfoundland

Like Tarzan's Jane, I take a firm grasp on Saturdays in order to swing clear through a busy week. Otherwise, I and mine might be lost in the darkest jungle by Wednesday. So, to consider giving an entire Saturday to a workshop to learn about Christian meditation seemed extravagant. *Maybe just the morning*, I thought!

But like the woman who went to the well expecting to draw just enough for her needs and hurry home again, I fell under the spell of a teacher who seemed to really identify with what I might see as stumbling blocks to living a deeper, richer life. He encouraged me to let down my bucket, and more than once daily, into a well of silence where I would discover myself, deeply known and truly loved.

The teacher was Michel Legault, past co-ordinator of CCMC. He had been invited by the small Christian meditation community in St. John's to lead this day-long workshop. In his own life, Michel has allowed his passion for walking and hiking to engage him in meeting the world from a pilgrim's disposition. This dialogue with nature enables him to draw down parables and make the parallels between nature's vocabulary of stillness and silence and the practice of Christian meditation. He used the metaphor of the trail, the path, the way; of finding one's way or losing it, of openness, willingness, discovery, renewal. The talks were like maps easily followed, opening out to fields of invitation, and then the exquisite longing to be at home in this journey, living this simple, loving way.

I was not alone in thrall. There were about 50 of us in the auditorium at one of the city's hospitals. Nearly half had some previous exposure to Christian meditation; the rest were complete novices. So, Michel told us the story of Christian meditation – the ancient and the new – from the early mothers and fathers of the desert, especially John Cassian's and, later, Benedict's monastic and mystical writings, to Bede Griffiths, John Main and Fr. Laurence Freeman. Michel also read quotes from the ebb and flow of east and west in the worldwide community in which Christian meditation has flowered. He showed us how we are connected, then and now, and gently invited us to silence together.

Thank you, Michel, for taking us far enough up the trail that we might catch sight of a deeper vision for our life.

Sue Cummings
Manager of Pastoral Care and Ethics, Eastern Health
St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

Footnote: For many years, the Christian meditation community in St. John's has relied on a few dedicated individuals who are reaching out to new leadership and a wider community. Their vision and Michel's generous response have encouraged the unfolding of a new blossom. We look forward to making new contacts with the rest of the national and international community in the near future to draw you here to Newfoundland and Labrador to be present with us.

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