

Canadian Christian Meditation Community

NEWSLETTER WINTER 2009 VOL. 18 NO. 4 THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

Paul Harris, Meditator and Peace Activist

Paul Harris, Canadian Christian Meditation Co-ordinator (1991-1998), author, and Patron of the WCCM, recently protested at an arms/weapons sale in Ottawa.

Paul, now 83 years of age, has had a longtime involvement in the Canadian peace movement and spoke recently to the members of the Ottawa city council seeking a ban on future arms sales in that city.

Paul's activism was instigated years ago in Ottawa when someone said to him: "I don't trust you meditators, all you do is sit in your cave and contemplate your belly button, while the rest of the world goes hungry." Since hearing that criticism, Paul has urged meditators to become more socially active in justice issues around them.

He stresses the points that John Main was quite adamant that the practice of meditation, far from being an escape from life, actually propels one into the reality of the world around them with compassion for the vulnerable. Paul likes to quote Jesuit priest and author William Johnston, who once said: "The person who meditates often has an inner eye awakened to suffering and injustice in the world and suddenly discovers that he or she cannot refuse the call to action."



As you may already be aware, Paul is a prolific writer and popular speaker. Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will find his informative report on Fr. Laurence Freeman being awarded the Order of Canada and you will find articles about his hospitality and support for fellow meditators and of his travels and speaking engagements.

Kudos to you Paul!

Joseph Clarkson
Newsletter Coordinator

BC Christian Meditation Community Living Grace Retreat

Last September, the BC Christian Meditation Community held a weekend at Rosemary Heights, a 30-acre retreat centre in the suburban area of south Surrey. The program included an introduction to *lectio divina* and a guided outdoor meditative walk, with pauses to reflect on readings from *Meditations from the Wilderness* by Rev. Charles A.E. Brandt. Silence was broken only during a question and answer period, and at a social time Saturday evening. The meditation periods were preceded by Taizé chanting.

Facilitator Joyce Rogers gave four sessions, to explain that we journey by grace, through faith, to hope and love. She began each session with a prayerful invocation, "Take, Lord, and receive," from a prayer by St. Ignatius, which is

included at the end of this article on page C2. The following is a summary of Joyce's presentation.

On grace: Joyce exhorted us to leave self behind, to remember that, "it is by grace that we are saved through faith, not by anything we have done." (Eph.2:8) William Barclay, biblical scholar (1907-1978), wrote that the word *grace* has two basic ideas in it which he explained as follows: "It always has the idea of something completely undeserved. The fact that God came to earth to live and to die for us is not something which humanity deserved; it is an act of pure love on the part of God. The word *grace* emphasizes at one and the same time the helpless poverty of humanity

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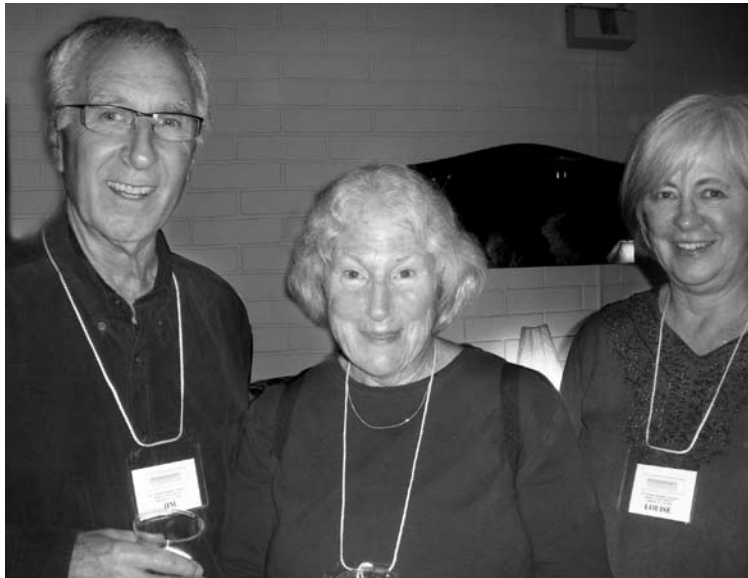
Living Grace retreat *continued from front*

and the limitless kindness of God. The second idea is that grace always has the idea of beauty in it. In modern Greek, the word means charm. In Jesus, we see the sheer winsomeness of God. God is often thought of in terms of might and majesty and power and judgment, but, in Jesus, we are confronted with the sheer loveliness of God.” This communication of Divine goodness underpins our faith.

How we live in faith:

What does faith mean to us? How is God revealed to us? The revelation of God’s love for us is found in John 1:14 (“And the Word was made flesh...”) Theology is faith seeking understanding. Often, understanding eludes us and we falter. At these times surrendering, accepting things as they are – “I believe Lord, help my unbelief” – are our uncomfortable options. Sometimes our faith seems to hang on our will to believe. Yet, these experiences prepare us for surrender, make us vulnerable and reduce our babbling to an honest silence wherein we hear the Spirit. Faith is the response to the call of God in our lives. To be obedient/to obey is *to listen*. Faith is both “the acceptance of things unseen and the assurance of things hoped for.”

Hope follows faith: We wait in patience for what we do not see. Our restlessness pushes us towards God. We are



Jim Dudar, Dulcie Davies, Louise Menard

not there yet, nor totally fulfilled. We have an incomplete knowledge of the destination. Aquinas calls us “wayfarers.” John Main calls it “being on the way.” Hope is possible only through living grace, which helps us to overcome our fear of opening to Christ and our fear of losing a part of ourselves, fear of change. Two enemies of hope are our sense of hurriedness and indecision. Multi-tasking (our 21st-century race against time) diminishes our awareness of the present moment, while inde-

cision can be the illusion of too many choices. Hope leads us to trust in God, and sometimes to act or commit in spite of our feelings.

And then there is love: Love is not all about feeling or sentiment. Love is a process of giving and receiving. In John 17, Jesus in His prayer reveals his love for the Father, for us, for all. His redemptive sacrifice allows us to experience ourselves as loved by God. And we can’t love God without loving others. God’s enduring, faithful, compassionate love is more present to us than we are to ourselves. We need only be aware and surrender. We journey by grace, through faith, to hope and love. These are the foundations of the gift of our meditation practice.

**Colleen Donald
Vancouver, BC**

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
All I have and call my own.
You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.
Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.

– St. Ignatius of Loyola

From the National Coordinator

Horizons

Not long ago, I attended a Global Justice Film Festival. The feature film was *Playing for Change: Peace through Music*. It was a remarkable story of hope, perseverance and joy. It began with the film directors recording a street musician in Santa Monica singing “Stand By Me.” They took the recording to many places around the world – African villages, city streets, the Himalayas – and played it to other artists who added their own voices and instruments. The music brought together a variety of people who had never met each other personally, and it was a remarkable experience to hear them all playing together. The underlying principle of the project is that we can do a lot more for this world if we work together than we ever can apart.

There are many similarities with our practice of Christian meditation. Perhaps we could make a movie entitled *Praying for Change: Peace through Meditation!* We see within us the changes that take place in our own lives through the practice of meditation. We discover an internal peace – “that passes understanding” or “which the world cannot give.” As we are changed, so the world is changed. And because there are many people in the world who are meditating, then those changes become worldwide. Peace is spread throughout the world, one person at a time.

Just as the musicians from many different places and backgrounds were brought together by their music, so we are united with our sisters and brothers throughout the world through meditation. Meditation also reaches across the

boundaries and barriers that the various world religions have erected around themselves. It is a unifying practice that brings hope in a world that we have, sadly, managed to divide in so many ways.

Another aspect of this film festival was a reminder of the many injustices in the world. It is so easy to get overwhelmed by the enormity of the problems, and our protection is often to simply switch off. Through meditation, though, we become more open to the work of the Spirit in our lives, and so we find that we are drawn back to an awareness of injustice. It may be that we then begin to think about how we might become more engaged in the issues in a practical way.

This movement from meditation to action is an important one. It is part of our journey of discipleship. As we come closer to Jesus through our meditation, we desire to follow Him more closely. As followers of Jesus, we seek to respond to the world around us in the way that He did. And so, inevitably, we are moved to a compassionate response which becomes lived out in our daily lives.

Meditation may begin for us as a journey inward but, through the transforming work of the Spirit, it will lead us to a journey outward.

See www.playingforchange.com for more information.

Phil Barnett
Winnipeg, MN



We use the single word ‘faith’ to cover a vast range of human experiences. Faith is, fundamentally, the experience of our being grounded in God, rooted in him with absolute sureness and with a confidence that is always deepening because the depths of God can never be measured. This is the experience of prayer. It is falling into the depths of love with complete trust, with a complete ‘letting go’.

– John Main, *Monastery Without Walls*

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OTTAWA'S 3RD ANNUAL SIX-WEEK INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

Six weeks, a blink in a lifespan, but a time of growth and learning for 14 people who registered at St. Paul's Anglican Church in Kanata, last October.

We gathered the first evening, each with our own experiences, and our hopes for what the next six weeks would bring. Over the period we were treated to a diversity of presentations – various speakers, DVDs, taped talks by John Main, instructions on the how-to of meditation and, each evening, a communal meditation time.

From our speakers we learned about meditation and its roots. The life of John Main was presented in such a way that by the end of the talk one felt he was a new friend. The speakers were seasoned meditators who consented to share their meditation journeys with us, and to field any questions we had at the end. The importance of being faithful to the daily practice of our meditation, and the benefits of joining a weekly meditation group for support were reinforced.

A fellow participant told me that he truly appreciated being in the introductory course. He was meditating with a group but found himself at times a little at sea. He felt it very satisfying to go back to the foundations, so to speak.

As someone sensitive to nature, this experience reminded me of a rose garden. Fourteen new roses were planted in God's garden, buds tightly furled, mysterious, with potential for great beauty. Six weeks later, under the nurturing of Marg McGowan they were blossoming in beauty and grace.

**Reta Hamilton
Ottawa, ON**

Pembroke Meditation Group Tenth Annual Retreat at Black Bay, September 2009

Camp Stella Maris, or "the camp" as it is affectionately known, is a beautiful spot on Black Bay owned by the Grey Sisters in Pembroke. The Pembroke area meditators have been fortunate to be guests at the invitation of Sister Helen Dunnigan since 1999. Our core group of Rita McGoldrick, Barbara O'Reilly, Margaret Onroy and Sister Helen has been the main planning team over the 10 years of the retreat. It started as a day event and has evolved to Friday till Sunday, traditionally on the last weekend in September.

The main building – the Pine Lodge – has single rooms and a common living/dining area where we congregate for evening social times. Meditation takes place in the camp Chapel.



Last year's program was organized by Margaret Conroy and Barbara O'Reilly. In Barbara's own words, "The essential teaching of saying the Mantra in faithful repetition became more transparent as a work that integrates the 'doing' personality with the 'being' personality in such a lovely way." General comments ranged from a simple thank you to sweeping sentences: "Our silence deepened and our times of sharing also grew in profundity." "I came away with a new lease on life. The scenery is breathtaking. A weekend I would recommend to anyone."

There are people from several different denominations who attend the group's regular meditation on Tuesdays and the retreats. Lutheran pastor Martin Malina is one clergyman who continues to attend both. He said: "Every time I pray with this group I am thankful for our unique journeys of faith and life that have brought us together. I am thankful

FAR AND NEAR

that despite our denominational variances and different church backgrounds we have been graced with a unity in our prayer; a unity for which Jesus prayed among his disciples of every time and place.”

The organization of the weekend is greatly appreciated. I especially appreciate the differences we bring to the group, and the support and respect we give each other. Thanks to the Grey Sisters for the opportunity to use their hideaway.

**Hilda Young
Petawawa, ON**



3. Being. To illustrate prayer as being, Sr. Kathleen used a diagram which she had from doing a course on personality and human relations, and which she has found very relevant to Christian meditation. She posed two questions: “Where are we?” “Who are we?”)

We begin with an inkling, move gradually to the habitual and, with God’s help, on to certitude. We need the ego and the emotions in cooperation. We need to become rooted in our innermost centre, i.e., the Spirit of God, and in the Divine, in the ordinary, everyday fabric of our lives. As St. Paul said, “It is not you that sustains the root, the root sustains you.” Live for the eternal life within.

**Irene Reid
Halifax, NS**



Sr. Kathleen on prayer – from Christian Meditation: A Way to a Listening Heart

This is the first of three workshop sessions given in October 2009 at a retreat led by Sr. Kathleen Bolger SSM at St. Alban’s Anglican Church, Dartmouth NS. Watch for Sr. Kathleen on Distractions and Sr. Kathleen on Meditation and the Gift of the Mantra in upcoming issues of this newsletter.

There are hundreds of ways to pray. Three main ways are: talking, listening, being.

1. In **talking** prayer, God is perceived to be “outside of us”. We tell God our needs, wants and petitions for self and others.
2. **Listening** prayer is “being with God”. This is what Jesus was teaching. As we come to see this, and learn to be still, we discover that we are listening more to people, are more compassionate, and perform acts of kindness. Being means just “to be” with God, God within. The kingdom of God is on earth, in the beauty of creation and in people’s lives. The kingdom of God is also within us. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. This is what it means to live in Christ.

Seven Years – Let’s Celebrate!

Seven years! This is roughly the age I was when, as a child, I would go to my paternal grandmother’s place. My grandmother had a ritual that we would practice together every night. We would sit in a good armchair in the living room and together recite some prayers. In the silence we would stay there, still, without talking, until dark. There she would tell me, “It’s time to go to bed.” I was only a child, but I liked these privileged evenings alone with my grandmother.

During my adolescence, I often saw my father sitting in an armchair, in silence, eyes closed, for long periods. My mother would ask, “But what is he doing?” I didn’t know exactly, because in the ’60s we didn’t openly talk about meditation. I knew as a young girl I had seen my grandmother do the same thing, and that I did likewise.

My Romanian grandfather, of hesychast tradition, had probably taught them this ritual. At least this is what I like to believe. In 2002, before a trip to Romania, I unexpectedly stopped at the Franciscan Fathers’ grotto in Lachute, Quebec. I found a leaflet that talked about Christian meditation. I knew instinctively what my grandparents did in their moments of silence.

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I spent one month in Romania and lived in a monastery. I was able to recreate a spiritual link with my ancestral roots. On my return to Quebec, I joined a Christian meditation group in Gatineau, led at the time by Michel Legault. I had the same difficulties that all other meditators have; I tortured myself over the choice of several mantras before *Maranatha* fell into my heart. It was when I understood that we were millions of people around the world uniting at the same time with our common mantra that I accepted the Christian meditation adventure. I gained daily from the fruits of meditation.

In my seventh anniversary year as a meditator, a wonderful gift was offered to me. The second daily meditation that I could never find time to do, fell into my heart, my head, my body, becoming part of my being. That second meditation became important and found its meaning. My daily life was enriched by it. I could change my life by changing my way of thinking.

All this to confirm Michel's words when he was saying, "One of the most important words in meditation is to persevere."

**Hélène de Buckingham
Buckingham, QC**



Paul Harris's cottage in Combermere, Ontario, was busy in August with meditation groups from Ottawa, Bancroft and Barry's Bay spending "community" days swimming, hiking, canoeing, barbecuing, and meditating. Some members of the Bancroft/Barry's Bay groups pictured here came together on August 16.



Belleville Lay School of Theology

On October 26, Ron Dicks, former Ontario Regional Coordinator, gave a talk on Christian Meditation as part of a series in the 2009 Belleville Lay School of Theology program held at St. Matthew's United Church. Approximately 25 people attended.

Ron first described his journey to meditation. He was experiencing a desire to go deeper in his spiritual life and discovered Christian meditation through reading John Main's book *The Present Christ*. He has practiced meditation for the last nine years.

He sees the rapid growth of Christian meditation groups around the world as a sign of a widespread hunger among Christians; prayer of words has proved not sufficient for

them. This hunger has been felt and met by many through meditation over the centuries. Quoting Meister Eckhart he said, "the best and utmost attainment is to remain still and let God act and speak within you." Meditation, as a form of contemplative prayer, is the act of being in God's presence, loving Him and allowing ourselves to be loved by Him.

Ron's talk stressed the following points:

- God dwells at the centre of every person's life, yet "we are not at home much",
- Meditation is a means of "staying home" through the mantra which helps us to focus and to bring us to silence,
- Meditation is a way to personal transformation, slowly making us like Christ, divinizing us,
- Through faithfulness to daily meditation, our fragmented selves become more integrated and we come home to our true selves.

**Bernadette Hymus
Belleville, ON**

Our Hearts – God's Homeliest Home

These words of Julian of Norwich were the message from Sr. Anne Kathleen McLaughlin, a Grey Nun from Pembroke, Ontario, when she gave two talks on "Meditating with the Mystics" and presented her two-act play on the life of Julian. (She had also presented the play in Julian's cell in Norwich in 1999.) The event on October 17, 2009 was sponsored by the Seaway Area Christian Meditation Community, and held at the Lakeshore United Church in Morrisburg, ON where we were welcomed by Rev. Arlyce Schiebout. Robin

Lane, Area Coordinator, and her committee, arranged a wonderful day attended by nearly 100 people from 18 communities, including Ottawa.

Sr. Anne Kathleen asked: "What drew you on this beautiful Saturday to hear presentations about the mystics?" Some said it was to learn about our roots as meditators. Others said the mystics gave them inspiration and hope, and evidence of how God is to be found in the ordinary of daily life. To Sr. Anne Kathleen, mystics such as Julian, and Hafiz, the Sufi mystic, show how profoundly we are loved. Julian, she said, had one night of visions and spent the rest of her life reflecting on them. The mystics wrote about direct, personal experience of God.

Another theme which the mystics emphasized was that there is a unity in all things. These days, physicists are giving the same message which was known by mystics in the fourteenth century. A more modern writer, Teilhard de Chardin, indicated that "the world is taking on light and fire for me – the divine at the heart of the universe." On the other hand, Angela of Foligno (1248-1309), a lay member of the Franciscan Order, spoke of how "I saw him darkly and that darkness was a great blessing. I experienced love and certainty in the darkness. Of a certainty," she said, "I possess him."

Sr. Anne Kathleen presented many quotations by Dame Julian from the play. For me, the most memorable and profound was the message of how much we are loved, as manifested through Julian. "I chose this solitude," she said, "that I might listen to those who come to me for healing and they did come."

Ron Dicks
Ottawa, ON

God's Energy is the Energy of Love Paul Harris speaks on Meditation and Prayer

Members of the Christian meditation group recently established at Our Lady of Fatima Parish and approximately 35 participants welcomed Paul Harris, October 5, for a talk entitled "Christian Meditation: The Path of Contemplative Prayer." The evening featured a meditation period and a question and answer session. In the audience was the pastor, Fr. Jeffery King, who has offered support and encouragement to the group, under the leadership of Eva Hegmann.

Paul began by recounting a visit to Mother Teresa and her religious community in Calcutta, India. He travelled with Fr. Laurence Freeman and six meditators from Canada. Fr. Laurence spoke to 150 novices on Christian meditation. Mother Teresa confirmed that the daily practice of this way of prayer was the basis of her spirituality and that of her worldwide Sisters of Charity.

Mother Teresa revealed the secret of her life's work when she said: "God does great things in silence... His language is silence... meditation is the fuel which powers a life of service to others... we must set aside this time each morning and evening to find a new energy within. God's energy, the energy of love."

Paul emphasized the role of John Main who saw the great social, spiritual and psychological stresses of modern society creating a need for a deep, contemplative response.



Ron Dicks' Diary

October 26: Gave Introduction to Christian Meditation session to the Lay School of Theology in Belleville, followed by 20-minute meditation period. About 30 present, including new group leader, Bernadette Hymus. People very interested; asked good questions. There are two groups in Belleville, one at Bernadette's home and one at St. Thomas Anglican Church. (See article by Bernadette in this newsletter, plus photo of part of the group)

October 26: On the way back to Ottawa, had lunch with small group in Kingston. Group led by Rosalind Weston. Gave short talk. Answered a lot of questions. (See photo above)

October 28: Gave another introductory talk. This time, Parkdale United Church, Ottawa, at request of minister Rev. Dr. Anthony Bailey. Enough interest among the 13 present to form a new group. (See photo below)

Ron Dicks
Ottawa, ON



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For regular updates go to www.meditatio.ca/News/updates.html

January

28 January, Toronto, ON. *The Mind creates the Abyss and the Heart Crosses it* led by John Callaghan, WCCM-Toronto member. Regular monthly teaching meeting at Knox College, University of Toronto, 59 St. George Street. Time: 7-9 p.m. For more information: Maureen Casey Rowed at 416-733-0233, e-mail <myetmoe@hotmail.com> or Joy Gordon 416-485-9718.

February

25 February, Toronto, ON. *Meditation as Subversive Activity* led by Julie Meakin, WCCM-Toronto member. Regular monthly teaching meeting at Knox College, University of Toronto, 59 St. George Street. Time: 7-9 p.m. For more information: Maureen Casey Rowed at 416-733-0233, e-mail <myetmoe@hotmail.com> or Joy Gordon 416-485-9718.

March

5-7 March, Ottawa, ON. A Silent Weekend Retreat: *Listening to the Daily News with a Contemplative Heart.* Venue: Maison Notre-Dame-de-la-Providence, Orleans, Ontario. Time: 7 p.m. Friday to Sunday after lunch. Cost: \$185. Register by February 12. Contact: Reta Hamilton at 613-838-2401.

20 March, Toronto, ON. Lenten day retreat with Julie Meakin. Theme: TBA. Venue: Parish Hall of St. Basil's Church, 50 St. Joseph Street (Bay & Bloor). Time: 1-4 p.m.

23 March, Ottawa, ON. *The Yearning of the Heart* Evening retreat by: Rev. Phil Barnett, National Coordinator CCMC. Venue: Emmanuel United Church 691 Smythe Rd. Time: 7-9:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 23, 2010. To register or for more details call: Ron Dicks at 613 739-1046

25 March, Toronto, ON. *The Yearning of the Heart* led by Rev. Phil Barnett, CCMC National Coordinator. Regular monthly teaching meeting at Knox College, University of Toronto, 59 St. George Street. Time: 7-9 p.m. For more information: Maureen Casey Rowed at 416-733-0233, e-mail <myetmoe@hotmail.com> or Joy Gordon 416-485-9718.

April

17 April, Vancouver, B.C. *Staying the Course – Fidelity and Perseverance.* A community retreat day of renewal for meditators on the journey. It is also an opportunity to meet and pray with fellow pilgrims. Brown bag lunch. By donation. Contact: Colleen Donald at 604-985-1592.

29 April, Toronto, ON. *Roots of Christian Mysticism: Teresa of Avila, Mystic and Social Critic* led by Rev. Gerald Loweth, WCCM-Toronto member. Regular monthly teaching meeting at Knox College, University of Toronto, 59 St. George Street. Time: 7-9 p.m. For more information: Maureen Casey Rowed at 416-733-0233, e-mail <myetmoe@hotmail.com> or Joy Gordon 416-485-9718.

May

27 May, Toronto, ON. *Apatheia* led by Michael Hryniuk of St. Michael's College. Regular monthly teaching meeting at Knox College, University of Toronto, 59 St. George Street. Time: 7-9 p.m. For more information: Maureen Casey Rowed at 416-733-0233,

e-mail <myetmoe@hotmail.com> or Joy Gordon 416-485-9718.

29 May, Ottawa, ON. *The Way You Pray is the Way You Live: Sharing Our Journey.* Several meditators – some young and some not so young – will share how they came to the path of Christian Meditation, and their experience of the fruits of this way of contemplative prayer in their daily lives. Join us for this day of fellowship, inspiration and meditation. This would be a wonderful opportunity to introduce a friend or family member to Christian Meditation. Venue: The Good Shepherd Parish, 3092 Innes Rd, Orleans. Time: 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. This is a pot luck so bring finger foods to share. Please register by May 22 with Gail Lussier or Marilyn Dunn at 613-830-9545.

June

4-6 June, Toronto ON. WCCM-Toronto annual weekend retreat, led by Rev. Glenda Meakin. Theme: *The Gift of Simplicity.* Venue: St. John's Convent, 233 Cummer Avenue (Yonge & Finch). Time: Friday evening to Sunday noon. Cost: Residential \$200 single; Commuters \$140. Contact: Lucy Chong 647-288-8206; e-mail <lucych@rogers.com> or Claire Andrews 416-922-7230.

11-13 June, Montreal QC. Weekend Retreat – Polly Schofield will present from Dom John Main OSB's old retreats. Venue: the Cistercian Abbey at Rougemont. Time: between 3 and 4 p.m. Friday, June 13 to 1:30 p.m., Sunday, June 15. Cost: \$145 for a room with private bathroom and shower, \$100 for a room with shared bathroom and shower, for those bring own sheets and pillowcase and towel. Book early since space is limited. To register: send \$45 made out to Christian Meditation Retreats to: Magda Jass, 4540 Wilson Ave., Montreal, QC, H4A 2V4. Contact: Magda Jass at 514 489-0998.

17 June, Toronto, ON. *Encountering the Divine in Beauty* led by Joseph Clarkson, WCCM-Toronto member. Regular monthly teaching meeting at Knox College, University of Toronto, 59 St. George Street. (Meeting will be followed by annual Satsang.) Time: 7 to 9 p.m. For more information: Maureen Casey Rowed at 416-733-0233, e-mail <myetmoe@hotmail.com> or Joy Gordon 416-485-9718.

September 2010

17-19 September, Vancouver, B.C. *The School: Workshop on Essential Teaching.* Learn how to share the gift of meditation with others. This weekend retreat for 20 participants will be held at Westminster Abbey in Mission and led by Rev. Glenda Meakin. For more information: Colleen Donald at 604-985-1592.

20-23 September, Montreal QC. Retreat with Fr. Laurence Freeman Venue: Manoir d'Youville, 468 Boulevard d'Youville, Île Saint-Bernard, Chateauguay, QC. Time: 2 p.m. Monday Sep. 20 to 11 a.m. Thursday Sep 23. Cost: Room with single bed, shared washroom: \$300; Room with 2 single beds, shared washroom: \$465 for 2; Room with 1 double bed, shared washroom: \$465 for 2; Room with 2 single beds, private bathroom: \$500 for 2; Room with 1 double bed, private bathroom: \$500 for 2 or \$335 for 1. To register: send \$75 made out to Christian Meditation Retreats to: Magda Jass, 4540 Wilson Ave., Montreal, QC, H4A 2V4. Contact: Magda Jass at 514 489-0998.

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

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, ON. WCCM-Toronto monthly teaching meeting. Location: Knox College, University of Toronto, 59 St. George Street. Not held July and August. Individual events are described above. For more information: Maureen Casey Rowed at 416-733-0233, e-mail <myetmoe@hotmail.com> or Joy Gordon 416-485-9718.



Reflections from a Meditation Group Leader

Greetings, I am a meditation group leader in Ottawa. One of our group members has written a lovely piece about what meditation has meant for her. With her permission, I am submitting it:

MEDITATING ON OUR MEDITATION GROUP

After two years of participating in a meditation group, I was thinking about my experience the other day. Even though I am officially retired, my day-to-day life seems at times extremely hectic and demanding and the practice of meditation, both at home and with the group, is a lifesaver. The participants in my group vary from week to week, but many of them are regular and we are more comfortable with one another as the weeks go by. Our co-leaders are quietly encouraging and provide stability and continuity so we feel no pressure if we need to miss a meeting. It occurred to me that one of the things I most appreciate, apart from the opportunity to meditate with others, is the understanding that nothing is expected of me beyond coming to the group when I am able, and participating in discussion if I wish to do so. With all my other commitments this is an amazingly restful and enjoyable feeling! I am indeed grateful that I was led to meditation and to this group in particular.

Daphne Picklyk
Ottawa, ON

Submitted by Joyce Hardman

Meditatio

The Christian Meditation Community

A summary of the Financial Statements for 2007 & 2008

Detailed reports can be found on the Canada Revenue Agency Charities Division website at: www.cra-arc.gc.ca/charities/

	2008	2007
Assets		
Current account	\$28,212	\$34,919
Investments	20,000	10,000
Inventory (publications)	30,768	29,737
Accounts receivables & pre-paid	862	20,084
Total Assets	\$79,842	\$94,740
Receipts and Disbursements		
Receipts		
Bookstore sales	\$16,650	\$32,566
Donations for the Newsletter	4,418	10,752
General Donations and Grants	35,401	48,274
Program Revenues	10,609	2,053
Miscellaneous revenues & interest	550	591
John Main Seminar 2007 (surplus & loan repayment)	745	13,755
GST & PST refund	8,984	0
Total Receipts	\$77,357	\$107,991
Disbursements		
Bookstore purchases	\$12,594	\$19,553
Newsletter printing and postage	18,114	19,463
Donations (WCCM, Friends, etc)	10,304	10,400
Office (rent, postage, insurance, communications, equipment, supplies)	14,917	19,260
Program expenses	14,320	18,138
Travel and expenses	14,970	8,027
John Main Seminar 2007 (loan)	0	5,855
Total Disbursements	\$85,219	\$100,696
Surplus (Deficit)	(\$7,862)	\$7,295

CALLED BY NAME

I have spent a lot of time in silence
to come to this day;

Silence was calling me by name

But I could not hear it until one day,
I read in a book that I now hold dear:

let yourself be loved

and now,
I no longer fear

Now silence and love wash over me and

I am,
Free
Free, to be, to be...

William Watson, Meditation Group Leader,
St. Bernard's, Toronto



At the Oct. 29 monthly teaching meeting at Knox College in Toronto, Carolyn Murray presented a summary of the approaches of Martin Laird, Laurence Freeman and John Main on the path of contemplative prayer into the present moment.

Carolyn began her presentation with a brief overview of Martin Laird's book *Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation*. She began on a very positive note, citing that "God is always Self-Giving; it is a question of removing the obstacles that make it difficult to receive this self-gift. This receptivity is what contemplative practice cultivates." (p. 54). Laird acknowledges that contemplation is a gift from God that we cannot earn or engender. He does, though, articulate some skills that create what he calls a "harmonious synergy between human effort and divine grace." These skills were summarized by Carolyn who explained Laird's metaphor of three doorways into the present moment that help us to relinquish attachment to the mind and ego.

The first doorway to the present moment is the repetition of the word. Martin writes that "the prayer word's main purpose is simply to bring the attention back from chasing thoughts and thereby assist the gentle excavation of the present moment." (65) This commitment to the interior repetition of the prayer word assists us to let go of mental noise, boredom and our sense of separation from God and from others, and, increasingly brings us to a state of recollection and of detachment.

The second doorway to the present moment is the movement away from *doing*. We move from the saying of our word and fighting against thoughts and obsessive mental and emotional patterns of our reactive mind to *being*, to letting go and being aware of our word and of our interior silence. This movement is a gradual change from an overt confrontation with our messy mind whereby we try to

control the mind through the mantra towards a gentle, calm state of awareness. There are two aspects to this doorway, an "on the cushion" aspect and an "off the cushion" aspect to this skill. So, we are "on the cushion" during our meditation and "off the cushion" for the rest of the day during which time we are increasingly living in the present moment.

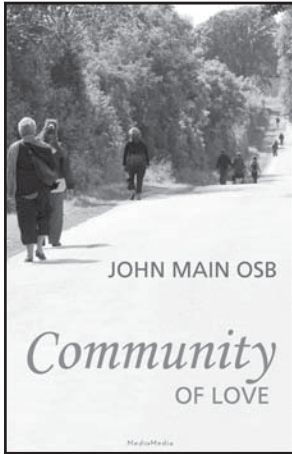
When we switch from self to awareness itself, Laird says that we become "the vastness into which we gaze." Turning to scripture, he recognizes that St. Paul experienced this when he says "I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2: 19-20). To come to this point, is to come to the profound insight that "the God we seek has already found us."

The third doorway to the present moment is the discovery of the mystery of silence. Laird gives us some sense of the importance of this experience by describing it as "the grace of a lifetime" and also as the "pearl of great price." He explains that this doorway is accessed as a fruit of contemplative practice by those who persevere and are faithful, by those who maintain continuity in their prayer practice. Silence is the mysterious place that we arrive at when "all strategies of spiritual acquisition become silent." It is the fruit of the change that occurs when our awareness switches from self to awareness itself. He clarifies by explaining that this shift opens up the present moment for us and we then become "the vastness into which we gaze."

Carolyn found that the essence of Laird's three doorways was present in the levels of consciousness explicated in the Laurence Freeman book *On the Inner Pilgrimage* and also in some of the last letters of John Main collected in *The Monastery Without Walls*. She encouraged us to go back to these texts and use them as a guide to our path of meditation. These spiritual masters will give us insight and courage to as we plunge into the present moment on and off the cushion.

Joseph Clarkson
Toronto, ON

PUBLICATIONS



Community of Love

John Main OSB softcover #6009 \$15.00

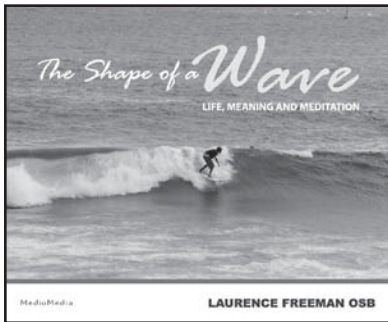
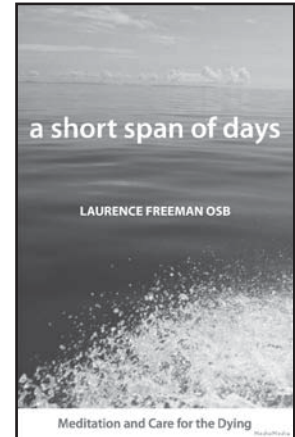
John Main's rich vision continues to inspire the growth and deepening of his teaching in fresh ways. This book brings together many insights into the experience of wholeness, in ourselves, with others, and with the society in which we live. John Main's deepest vision of life was that of a community of love.

Much of this newly republished book reveals Fr John's thought on a wide range of subjects not specifically on the teaching of meditation. He has clear, striking insights for modern people on some of the major issues that perplex our lives today; the focus is not theoretical or ideological, but experiential. These insights originate in experience of God and point towards the same experience for ourselves.

A Short Span of Days

Laurence Freeman OSB softcover #6025 \$9.00

Death is a truth we instinctively try to avoid or deny. But when confronted with the reality of it, we can only break down and disintegrate or break through and transcend. In this reprint of a groundbreaking little book, Fr. Laurence shows us how meditation opens the way to this understanding. In meditation, as we drop all immediate concerns and attachments and become silent, we experience loss and separation. We taste death, and our fear of it gradually loses its power, leaving us free to see life's ultimate horizon. In that new vision, we find meaning and the gift of wisdom.



The Shape of a Wave: Life, Meaning and Meditation

Laurence Freeman OSB 5 CDs #6163 \$40.00

"What is the meaning of life?" The universal question. In the fourth century, John Cassian and his companion Germanus travel to the Egyptian desert to seek the answer from Abba Moses. In these talks from the 2009 retreat at Monte Oliveto, Fr. Laurence unifies ancient and modern perspectives using the metaphor of the wave – a dispersion of energy from a point of origin revealing the deep meaning caught in the flow of love itself. Meditation and the meaning within this practice of love and prayer bring clarity and acceptance to the seeker.

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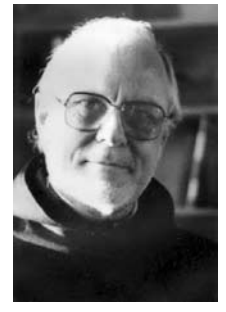
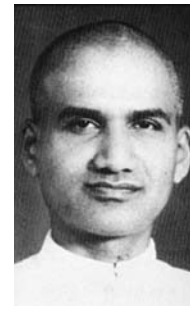
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Swami Satyananda: the Story of an Unlikely Christian Legacy

as told by Clem Sauvé at the September 2009 meeting of WCCM-Toronto



In 1955, John Main, then on the staff of the British Colonial Service in Malaya, met Swami Satyananda. “When I first met him, on some official business or other, I was deeply impressed by his peacefulness and calm wisdom.” (It was not the teaching that attracted John Main to the swami, but the teacher himself.)

Swami Satyananda had set up an orphanage and a school, and John Main grew interested in the spiritual basis for this love and service to others. The swami attributed it to his daily practice of meditation. When John Main asked to be taught to meditate the swami agreed. John Main meditated with him weekly for 15 months.

The Swami’s spirituality: In the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, transmission of religious training and knowledge is very personal, passed on through a lineage that can always be identified. For Swami Satyananda this went back to the Ramakrishna Order, a monastic Hindu order which was, and remains, the largest monastic order in the world. Swami Satyananda met, and was influenced by the teachings of Ramana Maharishi and Aurobindo. In the end, the swami attained “the peace which passes understanding,” the direct experience of non-duality. He had visions of the saints; he became a mystic.

Swami Satyananda established the Pure Life Society, whose mission was to promote the harmonious religious ideal of one god, one world, one race. Although the swami remained a Hindu, it can be said that he transcended Hinduism, becoming a synthesizer of religions and promoting

harmony between people of different cultures and faiths. He founded a temple for the One God, where each person was free to worship in his or her own way. His involvement in social and educational services included founding additional orphanages and schools for underprivileged children, winning him high respect and honour in his country.

Meditation continued throughout to be the underpinning – the spiritual foundation – of his life’s work, with morning and evening practice every day. He taught that meditation was as essential as eating and breathing. Swami Satyananda died in a traffic accident in April 1961.

Influence on John Main: His experience with Swami Satyananda influenced John Main’s teaching of Christian meditation in four concrete ways. He learned directly from the swami the discipline of meditating twice daily, and the use of a mantra. The idea of meeting regularly to meditate in groups comes from his weekly sessions with the swami, as does the practice of regular teaching meetings with short talks. These simple procedures, stemming from those meetings between John Main and Swami Satyananda, have become the very basics of our practice of Christian meditation.

**Joseph Clarkson
Toronto, ON**

In July 2009, Fr. Laurence Freeman was one of three keynote speakers at the Swami Satyananda Centenary Seminar, Creating a World that Works for All, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. See article in the Christian Meditation Newsletter, Vol. 33, No. 3, September 2009.

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