

**The 2013 National Conference in North Bay, Ontario  
June 7-8-9  
Register today! See inside, page C10.**

## Toronto: Lenten Retreat Group Leaders Meeting



Toronto Group Leaders Sr. Tina Neves and Marilyn Metcalfe

At the Lenten Retreat on February 23, 12 group leaders met with Julie Meakin and Carol Watson, group leader liaisons, to discuss a variety of items relating to our meditation groups.

There is a range of formats and practices across the groups. Some do a bit of meditative walking before the meditation time, some copy and distribute the weekly reading from the website, and others welcome pets!

There is also one Portuguese-speaking group, and the leader gets the material directly from the Portuguese meditation centre. In such a multicultural city as Toronto, perhaps this is something to work towards – information about meditation in different languages?

Leaders mentioned that the meditation pamphlets with contact information were very helpful when newcomers came. It is also good to know which talks are suitable for beginners when new people show up, and have them ready to go at each meeting. There is a group leaders’ manual available on our website [wccm-canada.ca](http://wccm-canada.ca), which has plenty of resources.

Leaders said they would keep an eye out regarding opportunities to teach meditation to children and young people.

In terms of promoting Christian meditation, the usual avenues were: Sunday bulletins, posters, the church

*Continued on page C2*

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## Toronto Group Leaders *continued from front*



Toronto Group Leaders discuss their common challenges, solutions.

website, inviting the clergy/leaders of the parish to a meeting, Facebook, parish newsletters and information fairs.

Some suggestions were made regarding the importance of mentoring and how to do it. We need to be continually training people to be leaders. At first this may simply mean asking them to read the opening or closing prayer. Eventually people may feel confident enough to give a brief introduction to newcomers. Some groups said they had two or three people who were comfortable leading.

The Knox monthly meetings were another topic for discussion. Nighttime travel, distance, transportation issues were all reasons for not attending the Knox meetings. Everyone agreed that the physical layout of the Knox meetings should be more of a half-circle pattern. The lecture-style format seemed too formal.

Even though attending the Knox meetings might be difficult, people appreciated other opportunities to get together, such as the Lenten retreat, the School for Teachers, and the June retreats. It's a vital part of making us a community!

## Ottawa: Group Leaders Hear Stories of John Main

On February 23, approximately 35 group leaders from the Ottawa area met at Good Shepherd Parish in Blackburn Hamlet.

The guest speaker for the day was Polly Schofield, who became involved with Dom John Main and his small community in 1978. Polly is a trained art historian and took charge of the archives and Father John's papers. She stated that one of the great privileges of her life was being with Father John during the days leading up to his death.

(Polly Schofield will be a featured speaker at the national conference in North Bay in June. See the flyer and application form in this edition of the newsletter, or online at [wccm-canada.ca](http://wccm-canada.ca))

Polly's reminiscences of her personal contact with this spiritual man gave us an insight into some of his thinking,



and opened up for us his humorous, loving, playful side.

Polly recalled his thoughts on silence, love and communion – a true relationship of love devoid of sentimentality. Polly also disclosed that he made dying the biggest adventure of his life. There were many thoughts for us to ponder.

In the afternoon session, Polly shared John Main's reflections on sin. There was one phrase, in particular, that we all wanted to remember: "Christ's forgiveness of sin is not the repeal of a judge but the embrace of a lover." Any disharmony caused by sin disrupts – leaving us sin-centered and

separated from God.

Yet forgiveness is the gift of grace. Sin is dried up in the love of God.

**Jenny Cookson**

# From the National Coordinator

## A Dance of Many Movements

As I write this, it is an early west coast spring. Here, unlike other places in Canada, spring is not sudden, yet it is always surprising. From my window, it is as though all of nature is preparing for a glorious performance.

The leaves are ready to unfurl, the buds to open. Shoots peep from the ground. Soft grass stretches towards the sun before bowing in the rain.

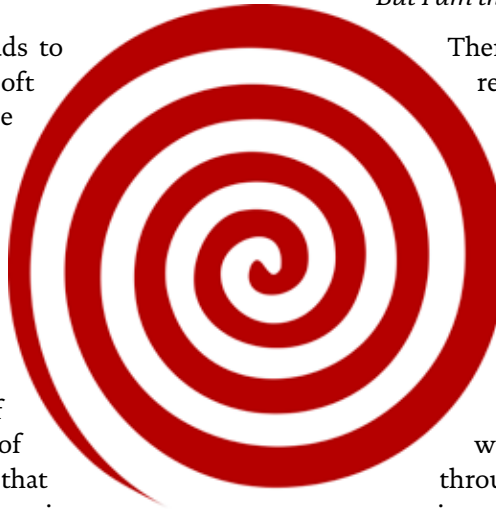
Just before dawn, birds begin tuning in their orchestra. The conductor starts the lead note and each morning the orchestra swells as more join and practice for a grand crescendo. The light swells. The air has lost her winter weight and covers all with a whisper of newborn scents. There is a great sense of expectation. Almost as if nature knew that Easter was near and the universe was preparing to join in with the Lord of the Dance:

*I danced in the morning when the world was begun,  
And I danced with the moon and the stars and the sun,  
And I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth,  
At Bethlehem I had my birth.*

This past winter the stripped and gnarled landscape looked abandoned and barely alive. Too much death afoot. It was the theatre bereft of magic.

But hidden from us, death is being transformed. What we thought we had lost will reappear. Fullness needs emptiness, from which to emerge again. Nature and its creatures know this. It is the humans who forget this eternal silent rhythm. Some of the moves in the dance are painful, and without practice we forget the steps.

*I danced on a Friday and the sky turned black;  
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back;  
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone,  
But I am the dance and I still go on.*



There is a glory in this spring performance, a resurrection of hope as we see all the new beginnings, familiar yet new. Without winter our awareness would be dulled. We need the emptiness of death. Our movement is strengthened through loss.

We learn to make the leaps, to master the steps, both slow and quick, until we are ready to join the dance. Then we learn that all of creation is the dance and we have always been dancing. It is only through the silence that we begin to hear the music.

*Dance, then, wherever you may be;  
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he.  
And I'll lead you all wherever you may be,  
And I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.*

In this issue of the Newsletter there is a letter and brochure about the Friends Program. Please consider making a donation, either individually or as a group. It will help all of the dancers and their teachers in our World Community for Christian Meditation.

And don't forget: June 7-8-9 – sooner than you think! – the CCMC National Biennial Conference, in North Bay, Ontario: *Meditatio: Rooting and Reaching*. Registration Forms are available on our website [wccm-canada.ca](http://wccm-canada.ca). It's time to act now!

– Colleen Donald  
National Coordinator  
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### Canadian Christian Meditation Community National Resource Centre

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# St. Albert: Essential Teaching, Essential Practice



St. Albert School: Back row: Mia Klein-Gebbink, Diane Reid, Ginny Letendre, Lesley Washington, Phil Barnett, Derek Cameron.  
Middle row: Thelma Borromeo, Sr. Lise Veillette, Collyne Bast, Sheila Soulier, Lorraine Hebert. Seated: Lise Risbud, Monique Eng, Maryleen Macrae

I love Google! Years ago I googled *meditation* and was led to a publication from the Canadian Christian Meditation Community. I ordered the publication in 2003 and have been keeping up with John Main's teachings ever since. Last summer I was excited to discover an Essential Teaching Workshop, being offered in St. Albert, Alberta from March 8-10, 2013. My daughter and I were looking for a weekend away together and this looked like the perfect setting for it. Little did we know what we were getting ourselves into, especially for my daughter!

The setting for the weekend workshop was the Star of the North Retreat Centre. This centre has an ideal environment, a wonderful atmosphere of tranquillity and the food was absolutely delicious. One had the privacy of one's room – plus the open areas in which to sit and talk with other people.

There were ten of us attending the workshop from all over the prairie provinces. Our resource teachers were Rev. Phil Barnett (Winnipeg), Mia Klein-Gebbinck (Beaver Lodge), Monique Eng (Edmonton) and Sheila Soulier (Prince Albert). It was nice to finally be able to put faces to some of the names in the newsletters.

(Phil Barnett will be a featured speaker at the national conference in North Bay in June. See the flyer and application form in this edition of the newsletter, or online at [wccm-canada.ca](http://wccm-canada.ca))

The weekend showed how qualified and skilled our resource teachers are. They could take a group of strangers

and make everyone feel comfortable, accepted and able to speak freely.

Meditation to me is an intense personal relationship. The thought of meditation has always seemed to be that it was “over there” – never “a western thing.” In my mother's day it would have been unheard-of, and in my day it has gone from “iffy” to something much more acceptable. This weekend I realized that meditation is actually becoming a way of life for the everyday person.

I had never approached meditation before in a group setting. What an experience! I really enjoyed the sense of sharing and being together while meditating. It was a much deeper, more meaningful meditation for me.

Reviewing the history/tradition of the Christian meditation and John Main's teachings meant a lot to me. I also love the Canadian connection. I found learning to recognize the stages of the spiritual journey has helped me to better understand my own growth. The labyrinth analogy was especially enlightening.

We now have so many resources available at our fingertips to help us move forward on our meditative journey. I may never start a group meditation but am now better equipped to share my experience of meditation with someone else.

It was pure pleasure to meet everyone and share this experience together. We even had the added bonus of guitar accompaniment for our group singing. It was certainly the individual uniqueness of all of us (teachers/students) which made this such a special time.

Maryleen Macrae

# Knox College Seminar finds common ground with Islam

## Toronto: An ecumenism of silence

Toronto meditators were invited to share in an “ecumenism of silence” on February 28, when for the first time a Muslim scholar was invited to the monthly Knox College Seminar, to talk about the connection between meditation and Islam.

Laury Silvers is the author of *A Soaring Minaret: Abu-Bakr Al-Wasiti and the rise of Baghdadi Sufism* and teaches in the University of Toronto’s Department for the Study of Religion. She converted to Islam as a young adult, attracted almost as much by the beauty of the faith and its deep culture, as by the spiritual fulfillment it brought her.

And this was no accident, she added, for a sense of beauty is part and parcel of the Islamic approach to the world.

In the Qur’an and other Islamic texts, said Silvers, “the words *good* and *bad* are not generally used in a moral sense. Instead, things that are morally right are described in terms of beauty.”

“So an act of compassion is a beautiful action,” she explained. “Selfishness or greed is something ugly.”

As for the word ‘meditation’, she said, the closest equivalent is the Arabic word *dhikr* (pronounced like the English “dicker”). *Dhikr* is usually translated as *remembrance*, but the word opens outward into many meanings.

“*Dhikr* is a process,” said Silvers, “not a goal. It is our constant approaching, or returning to, God.”

“In Islam, the ‘original sin’ – or the closest thing we have to that Christian concept – is forgetfulness.”

“It’s the result of life, but that means it’s not all bad! Desire, ambition, greed all make us forget God. But so do things like love, our connection to the world and people, even the baby’s first instinctive connection to her mother. They’re good things, but our enjoyment of them distracts us from God, and we forget.”

*Dhikr*, then, or remembrance, carries the idea of repentance. The prophet Muhammad said that the very simple, inward act of remembering God is greater than any other act of piety.

This is common ground indeed with Christians, as in Matthew, chapter 6, where the Father, who sees in secret, knows our needs, and recognizes our truest acts of faith.

For Sufis, especially, she concluded, “beauty comes from *dhikr*, from our constant turning and returning to God. What’s important is the constant transformation.”

So Sufis engage in numerous forms of prayer and meditation – chanting, singing, dancing, whirling – to focus their entire selves on God. It’s all *dhikr*.

Silvers is a practicing Sufi. Today Sufism is a major branch of Islam, though one often attacked by modern originalist theologies, which venerate and even make a fetish of the original practices of the first Muslims – a peculiarly modern impulse, ironically, which shows up in almost every faith tradition today.

“So today Sufism is sometimes looked upon as a kind of add-on, the ‘nice’ face of Islam!” But, she said, Muslims themselves don’t see it like this. “For centuries, Sufism *was* Islam. And today it’s right at the heart of it.”

It was this Sufi sense of God’s beauty acting in the world that first won Laury Silvers’s heart. Brought up in a very secularized family, she found she had too many questions about life and reality, and not enough answers.

She experimented with different traditions, including Orthodox Judaism, perhaps partly because her father was Jewish.

Then a course at university introduced her to the work of Meister Eckhart and al-Arabi. Many Christian meditators have studied the rich spirituality of Eckhart.

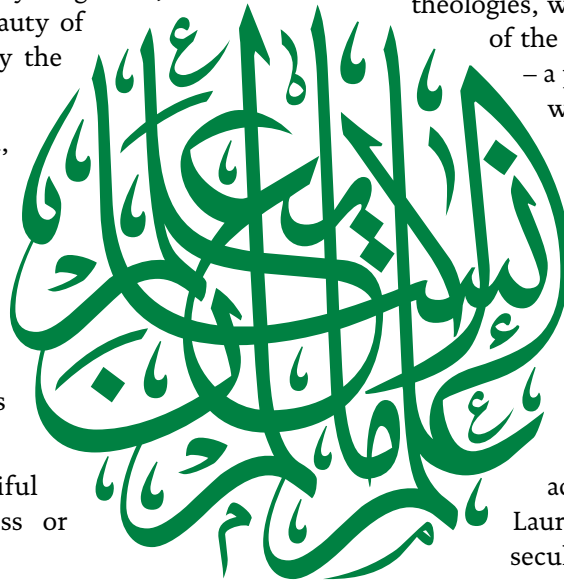
But for Silvers, it was al-Arabi – considered one of the greatest scholars, philosophers and scientists of all time, as well as a brilliant Islamic theologian – who caught her attention. In a sense, this was *dhikr* forcing itself upon her.

Silvers was warmly received by the assembled meditators, who all experienced that sense of something new becoming familiar and, with the gift of this perspective, the familiar things of their own faith appearing new again.

So while Silvers may have been the first member of another faith tradition to have addressed the Knox Seminar, she will certainly not be the last.

**With notes from Marie Dyach**

The illustration is a Muslim calligraphic device meaning “Allah has taught man that which he knew not.”



## Calgary: Fr Laurence Freeman's Twilight Retreat

Engeline Piet, a meditator for thirty-two years, introduced Fr Laurence to the 57 attendees at the Chapel of the FCJ Christian Life Centre, Calgary.

Fr Laurence reiterated the simplicity of Christian meditation, and reminded us of the fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

He referred to the example of St Brendan, a monk who in the sixth century sailed from Ireland into the unknown Atlantic. Similarly, for any serious journey we undertake, we must push off into the unknown – away from all the familiarities of our life, towards a distant shore. Yet we carry with us our hope.

The same is true of our journey into Christian meditation. We must focus on our mantra and lay aside all thoughts.

Fr Laurence reminded us of the story of Jesus with Martha and Mary, and their different personalities, like two halves of ourselves, which should be balanced. As we know from this story, Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to him. Martha was in the kitchen preparing a meal by herself, and became frustrated and resentful and complained to Jesus. We too can become distracted by our emotions, but the discipline of Meditation helps us to focus on the moment, on our mantra, to the exclusion of everything else, inside or outside.

We then meditated together for 20 minutes. There was a fifteen-minute refreshment break, then we reassembled for questions and comments. The evening concluded shortly after nine o'clock.

**Rosemary Bishop**

## Charlottetown: Stretching Our Horizons

Fr. Laurence began his ten-day cross-Canada tour in PEI on Friday, October 19. The theme of his tour, *The Further Shore – Stretching the Horizon of Hope*, seemed so appropriate, as he would travel from our eastern shore across to BC and Canada's western shore.

Saturday morning our retreat began at the parish hall of Holy Redeemer Church in Charlottetown. More than 100 meditators gathered, and the organizing committee had done a marvellous job.

Sr. Kathleen Bolger welcomed everyone to the day, then opened with a prayer of listening and quiet and a reflection on the Jan Novotka song *In this Holy Place*. Then Tom Garland, one of the committee organizers, introduced Fr. Laurence and our retreat began, with morning and afternoon sessions of talks by Fr. Laurence, meditation, and a dialogue of questions and answers.

Fr. Laurence began by speaking of meditation as a way of addressing both our personal problems and the problems of our times – it can bring harmony and integration to both. Meditation is a way we learn to be present to the moment, and this prayer of presence allows inner transformation to happen. To live contemplatively is to live with our feet on the ground – the ground of knowing who we are, and that we are of God.

Fr. Laurence also talked about caves – mysterious places of refuge, and one of the greatest symbols of the human heart. Meditation is a journey into that cave, a journey from the head into the heart, into the discovery of our true self.

He also spoke of the gift of attention, which enables us to focus and thus to stretch the horizons of our heart. In meditation we are stretching our attention, strengthening and developing it as we are faithful to our daily practice.

After lunch we gathered outside for a contemplative walk and focused our awareness on each step. It was a moving experience to see over 100 meditators walking in silence and communicating in their hearts with a loving God.

As the day drew to a close we were challenged to “stretch our horizons and reach for the further shore.” As Jesus taught us by his life to both go aside and pray and then return to others to listen and to heal, so the WCCM is working worldwide to address the hunger within the human spirit.

A number of outreach programs are bringing meditation to a wider environment – children, the homeless, the marginalized, students, business/financial workers, the sick, prisoners, 12-step members and more. We were encouraged to speak of meditation in any setting, not just churches.

The imagery of the retreat was particularly vivid for us as Maritimers. Setting out from land on our journey to the further shore, at times we encountered turbulent seas. We have experienced the ups and downs of everyday life, as well as the way the mantra restores calmness to our spirit. As we stretch our gaze to the far horizons we feel privileged to be chosen to experience this silent prayer, in communion with other people and groups, across the nation and around the world.

**Lynda Fitzgerald**

# *This Is My Story*

## Ottawa: Fresh Water from the Old Well



Rev. Glenda Meakin and attentive audience

On the weekend of March 15–17, fifty meditators gathered at La Maison de Notre-Dame-de-la-Providence retreat house in Orleans, Ontario for a weekend silent retreat led by Rev. Glenda Meakin.

The theme for the weekend was “This is My Story” – meditation and reflections on the foundational stories through which we view the world.

Do we view the world through the lens of the prevailing cultural narrative – a narrative which no longer makes any reference to God? Or do we see reality through the alternative narrative vision put forward by a faith perspective? What are some of the ways Christian meditation helps us to discern competing narratives and where we are in the story?

Rev Meakin helped us to see how the stories of the Gospel can cast new light on our own narratives. She unwrapped and refreshed for us a number of Lenten stories, in particular the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, the man born blind, and the Prodigal Son. She also made use of the highly spiritual and evocative poetry of Mary Oliver.

(Rev. Meakin will be the Keynote Speaker at the National Conference in North Bay in June. See the flyer and application form in this edition of the newsletter, or online at [wccm-canada.ca](http://wccm-canada.ca).)

The lessons were many and powerful. Jesus offers an alternative vision of what it means to be human. God’s joy is to have us in relationship. Pay attention to the presence of Christ in our hearts and the incredible freedom God gives us. It is a no-holds-barred embrace when we turn back to God. It is very hard to accept the depth to which God loves us. The Old Testament is about God’s fidelity and the people’s infidelity to the covenant. Jesus is forever moving us into a wider and wider circle of God’s love. The extravagance of God’s love is always meant to be given away.

The experience of the weekend was enhanced by the beautiful setting of the retreat house, with snow on the ground and a herd of resident deer. All in all, a wonderful preparation for the Easter season.

**Charlotte Gupta**

.....  
Jesus said, “Know what is in front of your face,  
and what is hidden will be disclosed to you.”

Gospel of Thomas, 5



# TO LIVE WITH THE SPIRIT IS TO BE A LISTENER

Br. Ignatius Feaver, OFM Cap., led the afternoon session of the Greater Toronto Area's Saturday Lenten Retreat. Br. Ignatius facilitated sessions on *Lectio* and *Visio Divina*.

He began with background music and a meditative reading of Sr. Jessica Power's prayer "To Live with the Spirit is to be a Listener." Sr. Jessica reminds us that "the soul that walks where the wind of Spirit blows turns like a wandering weather-vane towards love." We walk in "waylessness" and "unknowing" – surging Godward, and holding "as moving earth holds sleeping noonday, the peace that is the listening of the soul."

Br. Ignatius described *Lectio* as reading scripture, not only with our eyes, but with the eyes of the soul. Paraphrasing Ezekiel 3:3, it is "eating God's Word, savouring it, being filled with it." The practice has monastic roots and was highly favoured by St. Benedict.

To get to the heart of the matter, Br. Ignatius challenged us to approach *Lectio* as contemplative living. He pointed to the definition of Jesuit writer Brian McDermott:

By 'contemplative' I am not referring to a deep mystical experience, but rather the kind of relationship with God in which you are able to notice what God is

like and what God is doing, be affected by it, notice how one is affected, and respond to God out of that awareness.

After this introduction, we followed a *Lectio Divina* guide to listening to John 13:3-14 where Jesus washes the feet of the disciples.

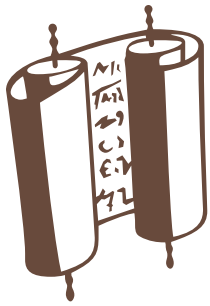
In the second part of the session, we were introduced to praying with a visual representation, or 'holy seeing'.

Br. Ignatius cited several artists who explained the source of their art as inspired by God. For example, the 19th-century symbolist painter Charles Marie Dulac wrote that "I am nothing, my art is given to me as an expression of the Lord. ...if He withdraws, I can do nothing." Canada's Emily Carr wrote that "all real art is the eternal seeking to express God, the one substance out of which all things are made."

If so many artists are actively engaged with the mystery of God, it follows that viewing their art can bring one into the presence of beauty, light and truth. For this session, Br. Ignatius brought us an image of the San Damiano cross which inspired and had a transforming effect upon St. Francis of Assisi.

**Joseph Clarkson**





# Our Website Needs You!

## Ancient Truths Meet New Media

Our gorgeous new WCCM-Canada website [wccm-canada.ca](http://wccm-canada.ca) is getting bigger and better!

So we are looking for editor assistants to help out. The hours are few, but the satisfaction is huge.

If you can help out, please contact **Luis Zunino** at [lzunino@gmail.com](mailto:lzunino@gmail.com)



## PASSAGES

“And He instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey ...” Mark 6:8

In recent months, a number of members of our community have passed on, leaving us to reflect on their contribution to our lives and our practice, the depth of meaning they brought to their actions in the spirit, and how we may continue along our own paths, enriched by the grace of their example. We include two of those here.

**RON DICKS** was an Anglican church member who worked as a social worker. Having grown up in the coastal village of Burgeo, Newfoundland, he loved the ocean. Throughout his life, he continued to appreciate nature and going for walks or a ski outing in the forest. He would connect with the sacredness one finds hidden in animals, trees, or waves. But he went further, he would appreciate the scene fully, he would recognize it as a treasure, and he could be totally present to this encounter, let the moment sink profoundly into himself in order to savour it.

It’s not a surprise then that when Ron encountered the path of silence in meditation, some 10 years ago, he immediately recognized it as the discipline for him. One could say that practicing meditation for him was like skiing on a track-set trail: such a clear path, based on the simple and regular

**FR JIM RENT CSB** was a Basilian Father who had come to meditation in recent years. He once said that praying the Office over the years had provided a focal point for his prayers. It had also drawn him deeply into the prayer of the heart, and the practice of meditation.

A teacher for many years, he worked with young people in Thunder Bay and elsewhere. In recent years, he retired to work on the Congregation’s archives, work he found deeply peaceful and satisfying. He also assisted at St. Basil’s parish, next to the University of Toronto campus. His celebration of the mass was always reverently unhurried, always inviting the assembly to offer periods of silence, both before and after the Proclamation of the Word, and after the eucharist.

Fr. Jim was a priest who smiled easily, especially as he greeted people before and after Mass, and he never seemed

repetition of a mantra, just like the cadence of skis and poles in the rhythm of cross-country skiing.

The path of meditation soon became central to Ron’s life and he found ways to help others discover the practice. He started a meditation group, and later became the coordinator of the meditation community for the Ottawa area, and then for Ontario, supporting both meditators and group leaders. He helped in the creation of new groups, and in the formation of teachers, and chaired the organizing committee for the National Conference in 2011.

His love of silence, his deep connection with nature, and his moments of stillness in meditation did not isolate him. Rather, those periods of quiet time led him to build community with others.

**Michel Legault**

too preoccupied to extend a warm hand of friendship to everyone he encountered.. Meditation had become important to his faith, and he attended the Kingston School in the fall of 2010. He began to be a familiar and helpful participant in the activities of the Toronto meditation community.

During a Toronto retreat at the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine Centre, he gave a well-appreciated homily. His last homily, given at St. Basil’s just a few weeks before his death from cancer, emphasized the need for each of us to allow our childhood faith experiences to mature to a more adult level in our lives. It was a principle he never ceased to apply in his own faith journey.

**Eugene A. Sendelweck**

# MEDITATE ON THE BEAUTIFUL SHORES OF LAKE NIPISSING

**Act Now! Book your place at the National Conference!**  
North Bay, Ontario – June 7-8-9

Join us at St Joseph's Motherhouse in the stunning natural beauty of North Bay, Ontario at the height of the tourist season!

The **Canadian Christian Meditation Community National Conference 2013** promises to be an unforgettable weekend of wisdom and spiritual growth.

The conference theme – *Meditation: Rooting & Reaching* – captures the essence of germination, growth and aspiration that lies at the heart of our meditation. The deeper our roots go in the soil of our practice, the higher and farther our branches can reach, casting the seeds of our faith abroad.

Along with the acclaimed and popular keynote speaker, Rev. Glenda Meakin, the 3 days of the conference will be crowded with many of the most requested speakers in the meditation community – see below.

Put your faith into action, and some action into your faith. Fill out and mail the registration form in this newsletter – or do it electronically online, at [wccm-canada.ca](http://wccm-canada.ca).

Don't miss this extraordinary experience! Come to the National Conference in North Bay. **Register today!**

## Come share the wisdom of these seasoned speakers

**Rev. Glenda Meakin, keynote speaker** – Retired Anglican priest, and meditator since 1985, Glenda has served the Christian meditation community as a member of the Canadian Council and Coordinator of the school program. She currently leads retreats across Canada and the United States and serves as a member of the International Executive Group of the WCCM School Council.

**Priscilla Solomon, CSJ, Opening & Closing Ceremonies** – A sister of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie, Sr Priscilla works in the justice ministry – a constitutive element of the Gospel – focusing on ecological justice; human trafficking; indigenous rights, healing, right relations, and reconciliation; and the elimination of poverty. She works in the faith and justice office of her congregation. Priscilla is Ojibway, one of 10 children of elders Eva and Art Solomon.

**Phil Barnett** – retired Anglican priest, former Canadian national coordinator, and currently Canadian coordinator for the School. In 2010, he went to Trinidad, Barbados and Curaçao where he gave introductory talks, group leader workshops, a retreat weekend and local TV interview.

**Joseph Clarkson** – recently retired with over 30 years of teaching experience at the elementary, secondary and adult levels. Since retirement, he has completed a master of theological studies at the Toronto School of Theology. Joseph has spoken to numerous groups across Canada on topics such as mysticism, spirituality, prayer, contemplation and the Trinity, illuminating their scriptural roots in his presentations.

**Ted Dionne** – life-long resident of Oshawa, graduate of University of Windsor, philosophy. Ted worked as a police officer for 30 years and taught at Durham College for 10 years. He is familiar with the 11th step, and throughout his life, has supported many people who have traveled the AA journey. He participates enthusiastically in many sports and activities, including dancing with his wife, Linda.

**Kevin Flynn** – Anglican priest, director of Anglican Studies at St. Paul's University, Ottawa. Kevin has led meditation groups in Toronto and Ottawa and co-leads the annual "Fully Alive" retreat that introduces yoga to Christian meditators. He is a member of the Canadian Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue since 2000 and was formerly a member of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews. His interest in yoga and Indian spiritual tradition has led him on three journeys to India.

**Joyce Hardman** – life skills coach and former elementary teacher who lived and practised in a yoga ashram for over ten years. **Cathy Nobleman** works with chaplaincy at Correctional Services Canada. Both are active

members of a United church in Ottawa. Together with Liz Thyrtwitt, they co-lead a very inclusive and ecumenical meditation group there.

**Paul Harris** – former Canadian Christian Meditation national coordinator, Paul is the author/editor of eight books on Christian meditation, including the bestseller *Silence and Stillness in Every Season: Daily Readings with John Main*. His most recent book is *Frequently Asked Questions About Christian Meditation: The Path of Contemplative Prayer*.

**Michel Legault** – While he was Canadian National Coordinator, Michel was invited to visit the Christian meditation communities in Barbados, Trinidad, Curacao and Haiti. In these countries, he met with and provided support to current meditation groups and introduced the practice to numerous groups including children and youth.

**Sister Mary Sammon** – born and raised in North Bay, Ontario, the youngest of four children. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie after high school. She taught high school music for many years (strings, band and vocal) and has been involved with liturgical music as choir director, organist or pianist since the age of fourteen. She has been a follower of John Main for over 20 years. She is retired from teaching but still teaches violin, cello, guitar and piano to children whose parents cannot afford lessons.

**Polly Schofield** came to be involved with Dom John Main in 1978, through her two sons, whose religious instruction Father John and Brother Laurence agreed to take on. They formed the nucleus of the now worldwide children's meditation program. She was one of the first oblates of the Montreal Priory with her husband Mark. An art historian, she was asked by Father Laurence to curate the papers of Father John and the Priory. Polly is the director of Meditatio – the Montreal Meditation Centre, and Canadian Oblate Coordinator.

**Beth Smith** – former educator and high school administrator, now working as a chaplain for inmates at a secure treatment unit in Brockville. The facility is run by Corrections Canada and is also staffed with medical professionals from the Royal Ottawa Hospital, to treat these inmates for their various mental health issues.

**Francisco Wulff** – born and raised in Caracas, Venezuela, came with his family to Canada in 1988 at age 20. In 1995, he worked in Washington, DC for the World Bank. In 2001, he went back to Venezuela to continue working in international development. In 2001, he spent a year at the Meditatio House in London, UK. Francisco has a special interest in the link between meditation and the business world.

# C H A N G E S

Have you ever made a change that instead of producing good results, made things worse?

We've all heard the phrase: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." This certainly encourages us to do nothing if everything is working fine. When something is not working, we either fix it carefully without affecting the parts that are well, or we replace everything and start over, discarding the defect, along with the good. At times, we approach changes with caution, afraid of the consequences, and the blame that comes with making mistakes. Other times, we take the risk for the possibility of success and the satisfaction from doing the right thing, or making an improvement.

We have various reactions to change: Fear: *I'm not used to this. Something may go wrong.* Anger: *Who did this? Why can't people mind their own business?* Sadness: *The goodness that was, is gone.* Pleased: *This is refreshing!* Analytical: *How is this compared to the usual? Is this the best anyone can do?* Supportive: *Let's make this work.* Or, if it is beyond our control, we may simply not care.

Is change necessary? It is often inevitable. Fact is, without change, there is no growth.

In Luke 5:4, Jesus asked Peter to put out into deep water. Peter, an experienced fisherman, naturally objected because they had been fishing all night and caught nothing. Jesus asked him to change his thinking. It was against his normal procedure to keep trying if his experience told him that there are days like this, when the fish are simply not there. We know what happened. He obeyed, and the fish were there, more than ever. Peter accepted the change.

In Luke 10:40, Martha asked Jesus to tell Mary to help her.

Since Mary was just "sitting there" we might normally expect Jesus to help Martha out. But Jesus's response was different. He knew what was important at that time and so, he could see, did Mary. He did not ask her to change what she was doing.

In John 2:3, Jesus's mother told him "They have no more wine." This time, though the wine situation was not Jesus's problem, His mother Mary did the unexpected and put Him in a spot, asking the servants to follow His instructions. It was from this obedience that the water changed into wine.

My wife sometimes comes up with a gem of a dish. I compliment her and express my pleasure. Her natural response is to keep making it and serving the same dish. However, she knows when I am about to get tired of it. She keeps me happy by making changes, knowing when to make them.

Change is like death. It will come. We can't have the same pope forever, and the pope does not always have to die before he is replaced. He does not have to be from Europe. Professionals need periodic re-certification. Our shoes will wear out. Autumn leaves will be replaced.

God makes and allows changes. Not for the sake of change, but because he is good and loving. As God's creatures, we facilitate his expression of love and goodness.

In meditation, we allow God to change us. It brings us into an awareness of the timing of changes in our lives. With that new awareness, we become able to accept the new as we let go of the old. It is this interaction of awareness and acceptance that makes our life's journey worthwhile, and exciting.

**Noli Mababangloob**

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# Toronto: Finding God in Our Daily Routine

Marilyn Metcalfe led the morning session of the Greater Toronto Area's Saturday Lenten Retreat. Her reflections on Benedictine spirituality encouraged us to see the Rule of St. Benedict as a guide towards gentleness, with ourselves in the process of deepening our relationship with God.

Trying to combine an active prayer life with family responsibilities and work obligations can be an overwhelming juggling act. It really requires some trustworthy guidance. Marilyn offered us the guidance of St. Benedict and Br. Lawrence, author of *The Practice of the Presence of God*.

She emphasized that the place we meet God is in our daily life experiences. Moments of divine in-breaking can happen when we're washing the dishes, reading the Psalms, spending time in silence, or finding breadcrumbs in the margarine. The occasion doesn't matter. God can embrace, instruct, heal or transform us in each of our daily routines.

Yet we have to be ready. Marilyn used the metaphor of tree roots to demonstrate the kind of determination that

is needed to remain open, humble and receptive to God's in-breaking. The tree roots do not stop for obstacles, but find ways around them. Thus the roots end up not stopped by their surroundings, but shaped by them.

So too we must be persistent in our efforts to be receptive and open to God, in our lifetime pilgrimage of change and transformation. Every day is a new opportunity to become more loving and receptive, more able to move towards 'the other.'

We are on the path of coming to be who God wants us to be. Our daily routines can take us away from this, or can lead us into transformation. In this process, the heart is a little like a cell phone which can connect us immediately to others and to God.

During Lent, we are encouraged to be awake and aware, to repent (change) in a joyful manner so that our daily routines can deepen our relationship with God and with others.

**Joseph Clarkson**

## Thunder Bay: Unity and Continuity

On the evening of Monday, December 3, members from Thunder Bay's four Christian meditation groups came together in the church hall of Our Lady of Loretto for an Advent meditation. The gathering created an opportunity for us to honour the memory of Terry Coady, who died in Spring 2011, and to celebrate the presence and continuing work of Alice Ward.

Together, Terry and Alice helped to bring Christian meditation to this city, through more than thirty years

of dedication to the work. In Alice's view, it was all God's doing: He wanted this form of prayer to come to Thunder Bay, so that was that. However, as one member pointed out to her, "You could have said no."

Some pleasant social time followed with tea, coffee and snacks. The evening gave us an opportunity to meditate as one larger group, and afterwards to get to know each other better. It was a gentle, happy occasion – one which we hope may become an annual event.

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