

Christian Meditation

NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN CHRISTIAN MEDITATION COMMUNITY



2024 NATIONAL CONFERENCE



VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA



SUMMER 2024

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Editorial Board Congratulations

What an exciting summer for the Canadian Christian Meditation Community! We thank the regional team in British Columbia for their excellent work on hosting the 2024 National Conference (NC24) at the University of British Columbia in beautiful Vancouver, and the Toronto and Montreal meditation communities for hosting the wonderful talks delivered by Fr. Laurence Freeman in their respective cities.

The enthusiasm of the attendees spilled over into a generous sharing of their experiences through the many articles and reflections the newsletter has received. What a thrill to bring you a plump and thought-provoking summer 2024 edition.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the many contributors supporting our meditation community newsletter.

Fr. Laurence Freeman's message to NC24: **Our Relationship with Nature**

Fr. Laurence Freeman, WCCM Director, began the 2024 National Conference in Vancouver with a warm welcome, acknowledging Squamish Elder Wendy Charbonneau's profound indigenous wisdom. Her teachings, which emphasize our deep-rooted connection to nature and our role as custodians of Mother Earth, set the tone for the conference theme *From Anxiety to Peace*.

Father Laurence reminded us of the transformative power of meditation, guiding us to re-centre ourselves to what is the foundation of our practice. He took us through the history of meditation and contemplation, reminding us of Jesus' teaching on prayer in Matthew chapter 6, about the essential elements of prayer: interiority, silence, equanimity, attention and living in the present moment, all of which are needed in our world today.

Father Laurence acknowledged Fr. John Main for helping us recognize the importance of entering the prayer of Christ, transforming our consciousness, to discover the Christ within us and quoted St. Augustine, "Jesus is our teacher of prayer because He prays IN us, WITH us and FOR us." He further emphasized that the essence of prayer is entering our hearts; hence, its name of "Prayer of the Heart." It is a journey from the mind to the heart that transforms into an outward journey when we allow divine love to transform our lives. We become the change we want to see in this world.

Fr. Laurence then guided us through the process of quieting our minds and hearts

for twenty minutes of meditation, after which he brought us back to the theme of the conference. He emphasized that the conference is not just about the

environment but about the relationship between the environment and meditation. He highlighted the role of our keynote speaker, Kaveh Guilanpour, who is the VP of International Strategies at the Centre for Climate and Energy Solutions and a meditator and how Kaveh was going to show us how we, as a community of meditators, can take responsibility and create change for a better world for future generations to come.

Father Laurence then welcomed the other speakers for the weekend: Diane Tolomeo, a poet and author, and Dr. Jason Brown, who spoke inspiringly about the late Charles Brandt, an environmentalist from British Columbia.

In closing, I quote Fr. Laurence Freeman's thoughts: "Once meditation has become part of our life, it teaches us many things about ourselves, life, and the fabric of reality. One of these is that you can meditate regardless of your mood or how things are around you. You can sit and start meditating with a heavy heart and a pessimistic mind, weighed down by the burdens and cares of life. But then, in the simple fidelity of your silence and attention, the dark veil of anxiety lifts, the heaviness dissolves, and you are reconnected to that vein of peace, like a light shining in the dark or a stream of purity in a polluted world."

Andrea Siquiera



Andrea Siquiera



Report on Kaveh Guilanpour's message to NC24:

Climate Change Update

Kaveh Guilanpour is a former senior member of the UN Secretary-General's Climate Action Team and was part of the UK team during the Paris Agreement negotiations. He is Vice-President for International Strategies at the Centre for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES). C2ES is a think-tank in Washington working and advocating for policies that would put the U.S. on a path to net-zero emissions by 2050.



André Choquet

Kaveh updated us on climate change talks. The Paris Agreement signed in 2015 by 200 countries is working – but not fast enough.

People's primary response will always be to mitigate the dread, even if this means avoiding the problem itself.

– Don't Even Think About It,
George Marshall

We need to move from incremental progress to transformative changes to keep global warming between 1.5°C to 2.0°C above

pre-industrial levels and to avoid irreversible environmental and economic disaster.

The slow pace of progress is not because of a lack of political leadership. Climate science identified the problems. We know the solutions and there is enough money to implement them. So, what is the real problem?

The real problem is that humanity has not psychologically evolved to deal with a threat like climate change. Kaveh quoted extensively from the book *Don't Even Think About It* by George Marshall, published ten years ago. The author claims that climate change lacks clear, immediate threats that would ignite our sense of danger. The threats have been ignored and continue to be ignored, even when the risks are greater.

Humans direct their limited capacity to worry about immediate concerns. We lean toward the status quo.

Everyone likes stories and – experts and non-experts alike – convert climate change into stories that embody their own values, assumptions, and prejudices. This leads to an “us versus them” mentality.

After listing many of the problems with humanity's mindset, we could feel the audience getting dizzy. Thankfully, Kaveh moved to the “solutions” part of his talk.

Kaveh asserts we need a more solid foundation to overcome uncertainty, or at least to get comfortable with it. We must move from information to emotion and conviction.

Kaveh suggests stories are a means by which the emotional brain makes sense of the information collected by the rational brain.

Also needed, is diminishing short-term self-interest and emphasizing collective long-term sustainability.

This is where world religions and indigenous wisdom have a role. With their focus on restraint of worldly desires, they can offer insights into long-term thinking and taking responsibility, which can be leveraged into climate change strategies.

Kaveh offered his views on what the WCCM can do.

Accepting climate change requires far more than reading the right books, watching the right documentaries, or ticking off a checklist of well meaning behaviors: it requires conviction – and this is difficult to form and even harder to maintain.”

– Don't Even Think About It,
George Marshall

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échos du silence and the French version of *Meditatio* are available from Méditation chrétienne du Québec, 105 ch du Richelieu, bureau B, McMasterville, QC J3G 1T5, 450-446-4649. info@meditationchretienne.ca.

Page design and layout: www.katemcdo.com

Dr. Diane Tolomeo's message to NC24:

Poems that Move Us to Peace

Dr. Diane Tolomeo, retired professor of English from the University of Victoria, brought her 34 years of teaching to bear on the topic: "I worried a lot: Poems that Move Us to Peace". She comments on three poems: **Dust of Snow** by Robert Frost; **I Worried a Lot** by Mary Oliver; and **The Peace of Wild Things** by Wendell Berry.

All three poems validated places of anxiety which are integral to living productive and meaningful and as well as joyful and peaceful lives. In his poem, for example, Frost credited nature as impacting and changing his mood. The specificity of the imagery suggested that nothing is too small to change us. In fact, Tolomeo reminds us that the original title of Frost's poem was "A Favour." Anxiety can function as life's favour to us, providing a window through which we can perceive a hopeful pathway forward.

In linking her selection of poems, Tolomeo mentioned that Mary Oliver described Robert Frost's work as everything being alright; and, everything is not alright. An engaged life holds both.

In Mary Oliver's poem, we concluded that anxiety is a creature of our minds. The solution is giving up the worry by doing what you didn't think you could do. Go "out into the morning" and sing your life, anyway. You can't fool your soul no matter how much worrying you do. Your soul, with the rising sun, wins in the end.

Peace comes by way of wild things. Tolomeo highlighted this theme from Wendell Berry's poem in

teaching us some Hebrew. The word *wilderness*, in Hebrew, translates into "speak". The wilderness, biblically, has something to say to us. God speaks to us, as God did to the Israelites, in the places of wilderness and anxiety.



Dr. Diane Tolomeo

Berry is worried, yes. But all will be well because he rests in the beauty of wildlife. Yes, we will die. But not right now. Therefore, move past the anxiety. What will you do? The next thing. Inserting some humour and personal anecdote into her presentation, Tolomeo related the confession of a family member yearning for a relationship: I'm not looking, but my eyes are open. In the paradox of living, then, we experience peace and fulfilment, not by grasping for it. But letting it come to you in the midst of embracing all of life, including anxiety. Because whatever comes to you is meant for you.



Martin & Jessica Malina

We concluded from Dr. Tolomeo's talk that poetry is a way to not feel alone. The three poems included imagery from landscapes in nature, written in the wilderness. The poems taught us to look to the natural world for metaphors that tell the story of our lives. Poetry activates unconscious regions of our minds, whereby we associate memory with presence. In faith and hope, we feel the anxiety give way to peace. The problems are still there, but we know we can still be okay right now. Poetry is, therefore, a powerful way to help us journey from anxiety to peace.

Martin & Jessica Malina

In Memoriam: Margaret McGowan, 1932-2024



At 90, Margaret McGowan, a longtime Christian meditator, surrounded by her family, passed away peacefully. She was a resident of the Red Oak Retirement Home where her husband of almost seventy years, John, continues to live.

For many years, Marg was part of the coordinating committee for the Ottawa Area Christian Meditation community. She often managed the

book sale table and generously gave her time on the committee.

Marg was also a longstanding and very active parishioner of St. Paul's church.

She leaves behind John, her children Geoff (Bobbie), Jane, Patrick (Paula), and Peggy (Kevin) and predeceased by her son Jack, thirteen grandchildren, five great grandchildren, and her surviving siblings Bill (Anne), Richard, and Tim (April).

Fr. Laurence Freeman's Stop-Over Visit to Montreal:



Climate Change Harmony: Inner and Outer Ecology

Fr. Laurence Freeman began his 2024 Canadian tour in Montreal on June 28 and 29. This was fitting, as Montreal was the site of the Benedictine Priory and ground zero for Christian meditation as established by Fr. John Main in 1977. Montreal is where a young Fr. Laurence Freeman began his journey.

On Friday evening, Fr. Laurence spoke in French about climate change to an eclectic group of veteran meditators and others who were interested in knowing more about the practice and the role it can play in our response to critical changes in the environment. Longtime associate and friend, Fr. Michel Boyer, hosted the event for Meditation Chrétienne du Québec et des Régions Francophones du Canada (MCQRFRC).

Fr. Laurence spoke about climate change and the need to keep an inner ecology in harmony with an outer ecology. Beyond accomplishing the essential remedial actions, Fr. Laurence reminded us that spiritual changes are essential in our quest to save our common Home, as meditation is a cornerstone of transformative change.

His talk gave us a taste for the theme of the CCMC National conference "From Anxiety to Peace" with keynote speaker Kaveh Guilanpour, former senior member of the UN Secretary General's Climate Action Team and VP for International strategies at the Centre for Climate and Energy Solutions

On the Saturday morning, Fr. Laurence spoke in French to members of MCQRFRC and their associates. The topic was the same as the conference offered in the afternoon to the members of CCMC in English, that is *The Ever-Present Origin* (*L'Origine Omniprésente*).

Based on the work of philosopher and mystic Jean Gebser, the perspective is non-dualistic and based on the spiritual development that individuals can attain, which culminates in integrating all life experiences.



Louise
Hébert-Saïndon

Gebser's basic tenet is that spiritual growth occurs in stages or surges that can be co-occurring but evolving over the course of a lifetime. I was reminded of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, of Eric Erikson's ages and stages, and even Kohlberg's stages of moral development. In Gebser's spiritual development model, there are five structures of consciousness, beginning in archaic beliefs, magical thinking, mythical, then the mental or rational and ultimately integral.

What is novel in Gebser's perspective is the departure from a solely rational perspective that is binary. God is no longer perceived as creator, engineer or CEO of creation but as Ever-present Origin, accessible to all humans who, through introspection, can reevaluate their experiences with a spiritual lens and arrive at integration and peace.

Fr. Laurence ended his talk by presenting the icon of Jesus: Christ Pantocreator of Sinai (6th century), depicted as having both a dark and light eye, a figure of integration for all to contemplate as he embodies the darkness and suffering of humanity and the light.

The afternoon talks in English gave a slightly different presentation of the same theme: *The Ever-Present Origin* based on Gebser's work. In this talk, he added the notions related to the Ego as a brick wall, preventing access to the true or spiritual self. The role of meditation was to help knock the bricks out of the wall, thus allowing us to view the other side. He noted some fruits of meditation: taking one's self less seriously, laying aside worries, ultimately having more hope and peace. He asked: Where is Hope? For Gebser, it is a way of understanding and persuading others to develop critical consciousness and contemplation. To this, Fr. Laurence added that meditation breaks down the barriers of self centeredness and even narcissism and builds a community, a truly powerful instrument of change.

Louise Hébert-Saïndon

Fr. Laurence Freeman's Stop-Over Visit to Toronto: **The Ever-Present Origin**



On July 2, Fr. Laurence gave a talk at St. Paul's Anglican Church in Toronto to an enthusiastic audience of 115 people.

Fr. Laurence gave a brief history of when he and John Main came to Montreal in 1977, when the church in Quebec was “imploding.” The decade after Fr. John's passing in 1982 was formative, leading to the first John Main seminar held in 1991 by Fr. Bede Griffiths. The birth of the WCCM was a “Pentecost moment.”

Since then, it has brought Fr. Laurence great joy to witness the Spirit working to bring the gift of meditation to so many, creating a global contemplative community in over 100 countries.

Indeed, the 30th anniversary of the John Main Seminar would be celebrated the following week in New Harmony, Indiana – the same city that hosted the first John Main Seminar – with speaker Archbishop Jason Gordon of Trinidad scheduled to deliver the theme “Widen Your Tents.”

How do we widen our hearts and minds? What is the meaning of a contemplative practice for the times we are in? Is our daily practice of meditation just for our own benefit? Or does it contribute to the world we're experiencing now, a world which is passing through a “dark night”?

Fr. Laurence took the title of his talk “The Ever-Present Origin” from a book by philosopher Jean Gebser (1905-1973). Gebser's work seeks to understand the development of human consciousness and its implications for modern society. He speaks about “the mutation of consciousness” and offers a model of what an evolution of consciousness means and an analysis of where we are.

Gebser gives us hopeful insight into how to endure and grow through troubled times. Fr. Laurence remarked on the discouraging state of U.S. politics, suggesting it signals the end of an era.

Gebser suggests five structures of consciousness. Archaic is the first, such as we see in

cave paintings. The second is magical – when humans saw the connection between human beings and the natural world, they sought to influence or manipulate. Mythical is the third structure which explains the world through stories. The fourth is mental, meaning the use of reason, the centrality of the ego, and a hyper-individualism. We analyze, invent, construct, etc. But the forces of consciousness that produce new technology can also become toxic, as we see with the potential of AI to be destructive and beyond our control. We are currently undergoing the end of this era.

Within us are all these structures of consciousness. We can get “stuck” at the end of one and be unsure where to go. Fr. Laurence pointed to our



Rev. Julie Meakin

understanding of God, of religion – its forms and institutions – as ones that people no longer identify with as much as they did previously. John Main recognized, too, that the forms of Christianity he saw were also at the end of an era.

What can we do about the very disconcerting situation of being at the end of one structure and the attendant disconcerting feelings considering current events – the environment, toxic politics, increasing intolerance, the “decline” of the Church?

Gebser includes the mystical-spiritual dimensions of human consciousness. This should give us hope. The end of an era takes us through a kind of “dark night of the soul” into something new and life-giving. Gebser hoped that a new order can and will emerge in both individuals and society.

How does meditation fit into this emerging new order? We become more conscious, deepening, intensifying and purifying our prayer. This result is a kind of “awakening” in which new structures emerge – and we all know that meditation changes us from the inside out. We deepen our experience of the mystery of Christ, and our union with Christ opens up the experience of the new creation. The very existence of a global community of love, a “monastery without walls”, speaks to a new way of being Christian.

During this “rough patch” we are in concerning the world, we need to stay in the present moment, pay attention, and regain balance not just individually, but in all spheres of life, politics, economics, and so on.

And we need to understand the past if we are going to understand where we are going next... this is hope. Gebser calls for an active, conscious effort to integrate the previous structures of consciousness into

the new integral awareness. Gebser argues that the current global crises are symptoms of the mental structure’s limitations and the transition towards integral consciousness. He believes this integration is essential for addressing the complex challenges of modern life and achieving a harmonious future.

And, so, he terms the fifth stage as “Integral” – and is of the Spirit.

The “ever-present origin” refers not to a beginning, but to the idea that the source/origin of all consciousness structures is timeless and ever-present – the eternal now.

This is present to us in every structure of consciousness. Meditation makes us aware of this. As we change, we also become forces of change. In meditating, we move from the surface to the depths, from distract- edness to attention, from worry and anxiety to peace – this is setting our minds on the Kingdom of God. It moves us from our mental confines to spaciousness, a ‘widening’ of our hearts and minds.

We come to a state of continuous letting go – poverty of the Spirit. As Christ descended to the dead, he also ascended, and we too have to go into the darkness and ascend with Christ. Contemplative practice integrates all the structures of consciousness, which are made healthy and harmonized by the Spirit. The integral stage is the mind of Christ – an awareness of the unity which underlies and the peace this brings.

One could hear a pin drop as the room fell silent for a period of meditation. Fr. Laurence brought us out with Jesus’ words to his disciples from John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.”

Rev. Julia Meakin



Fr. Laurence Freeman

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE SILENCE ●

Darrell Taylor
Spiritual Care Counsellor – Meditation Facilitator

What happens when we sit in silent meditation? John Main emphasizes “nothing happens.” We should meditate with no expectations. A newcomer to our meditation group asks: “Then, why meditate? What’s the point?”

We all come to meditation with different expectations. Will meditation help me relax? Will it make me more patient? Will it draw me closer to God? We are counselled to ignore such questions, but encouraged to keep meditating. To keep saying our mantra.

Fr. John said meditation is ordinary. “It’s as ordinary as breathing.” But there is a caveat, that “the ordinary is shot through with the extraordinary.” Meditation is ordinary, and it is extraordinary. Like most spiritual truths, it is a paradox. Here’s a funny brief story about paradox.

A group of Jewish students from the local yeshiva were arguing about the truth. They ask the rabbi, “Rabbi, Rabbi, is it true? Is the truth a paradox?” The old rabbi paused and stroked his bushy rabbinical beard. Then, with a grin and a twinkle in his eyes, he looked up and says, “Ah well...yes and no.”

My last article was about the power of the mantra as a sacred prayer. Silently repeating “maranatha” creates a circle. In Aramaic, the word has two meanings depending on what syllable gets stressed. It means, “Come Lord.” We are calling on the Lord and asking Him to come to us. But maranatha also means, “The Lord comes.” It is an answer. The Lord responds immediately. It is both the asking and the receiving. Jesus is always there to complete the circle so we can make a conscious connection. The request and the response are simultaneous. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega. Praying maranatha is a beautiful, circular dance.

Of course, we do not ponder such explanations while sitting still in silent meditation. We focus our

full attention on simply sounding the sacred word. Is anything happening? No, not on the surface. But wonderful things are happening below the surface. We are being changed, transformed. The transformations are invisible. They happen in that sacred darkness, which is the secret place of the heart. These changes are “dark” to our senses. That is why meditation is also called “the prayer of faith.”

What is faith?

The letter to the Hebrews says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb. 11:1) By faith we see the invisible. “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly: what is essential is invisible to the eye.” (*The Little Prince*, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: “In the

daytime, our vision is limited. But at nighttime the sky opens up, and we see into the vast darkness of the starry universe.”)

In meditation, our eyes are closed. Our senses are dark. Our mind made silent. We enter our inner closet and shut the door (Mt 6:6). We pray in secret and subject ourselves to the “blindness” of faith. With stilled senses and a silenced mind, the heart opens. Then we see with the heart. Seeing with the eyes of the heart is the essence of faith.

What happens when we meditate? The answer is a paradox. Nothing happens and everything happens. Nothing happens we can see with our physical eyes or grasp with our ego-centred mind. But something wonderful is happening by faith, below the surface. We are slowly but powerfully transformed by the awesome silence of the Spirit of God. By faith, we are being changed, transfigured in the dark “cloud of unknowing.” We begin to see the outlines of another world, the vast spiritual world. It takes practice. And it takes the daily discipline of Christian Meditation. Maranatha.

Darrell Taylor



Darrell Taylor

Meditation is Pro-Social, Pro-Growth, Pro-Empathetic

If you want to dig into the truth about Christian Meditation, you first have to look beyond the superficial and sweep away certain misunderstandings swirling in the popular mindset. Meditation practice, in general, attracts much negative attention because it is often associated with the following three false assumptions:

MISUNDERSTANDING #1:

Meditation makes you anti-social

Visions of religious elites cloistered behind fortress walls in remote, out-of-the-way hermitages capture the popular imagination. While introverted personalities are more easily drawn to the ascetic life of silence, stillness, and the solitude of the prayer of the heart, meditation in fact fosters extraversion. Scientific studies have recently correlated meditation practice with pro-social behaviour. For example, experiments have documented interpersonal benefits arising from meditation interventions in therapy. Meditation doesn't make a person anti-social. Meditation is not an escape from social reality. It is not to entice you to avoid difficult social encounters and conversations. Instead, its regular practice improves your capacity to pay attention to others and deepen the quality of your relationships. Meditation practice provides the basis, the grounding, for an authentic and healthy engagement with social reality. Meditation is pro-social.

MISUNDERSTANDING #2:

Meditation keeps you stuck in your ways

Being still during prayer conjures the false perception that meditation abets physiological, emotional, and spiritual stasis. While meditation practice slows down our physical, mental, and emotional activity, it doesn't stop those natural processes. Meditation practice does not lead to inertia. In fact, because of our cultural conditioning for hyper-activity, it's more difficult to slow down. In meditation, we discover a more natural, simpler cadence for living. Again,

scientific studies have recently linked meditation practice with a physiological change in regulating the heart rate. New neural pathways get forged in our brains. With ongoing meditation practice, the body changes in ways that promote mature growth in relationship with ourselves, to our world, and those around us. Our basic physical, emotional and spiritual motivations adapt and change. Meditation practice ultimately promotes continual personal development and growth.



Pr. Martin Malina

MISUNDERSTANDING #3:

Meditation makes you selfish and self-centred

In my Lutheran tradition, the words of Martin Luther first come to mind. He defined sin as being “turned in on oneself.” Navel-gazing is a popular criticism levelled at meditation. Rejected as a true prayer practice, especially in Protestant circles. It is easy to categorize meditation with ‘new age’, narcissism, and self-preoccupation. Considering scientific findings, blanket assertions that meditation keeps you turned in on yourself are no longer defensible. In fact, researchers have shown that meditation promotes an “other-centred” frame of mind, accomplished by building our capacity for empathy. One study, cited below, correlated meditation with increased motivation to care for those who suffer. Meditation, if anything, promotes loving concern for others.

John Main famously said that meditation creates a community of love. If anyone wants to belong to such a community in whatever context and grow in compassionate care for others, it is sound advice to start with a meditation practice.

Pr. Martin Malina

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Ora et Labora

Prayer and Work

“Prayer and Work” is the name given this space as a regular feature devoted to sharing information and news about the [WCCM Benedictine Oblates](#). It comes from the balance between prayer and work (and reading) that St. Benedict stresses in his Rule and that Oblates strive to follow in everyday life. You can now expect to see a new article in each newsletter. Enjoy!

If you would like more information about the Oblates, please contact Dorothy Wood at dorogeo50@gmail.com.

Becoming an Oblate: Shedding my Priestly Identity

Oblation — a strange word out of the writing and records of monastic communities, ancient and modern. From this word, we have a more familiar one, oblate. Oblation means “offering”. On July 7, 2024, I became an Oblate of the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM).

In my oblation or offering, I made life-long promises of obedience, stability, and conversion to the work and mission of WCCM. Its mission is to teach, encourage, and support the practice of silent meditation as a holistic spiritual practice for all people. In monastic circles, the running jest is that almost anyone can learn to become a good Oblate, but priests have the most difficulty; furthermore, they do not make good Monks or Oblates. The reasoning has logic because of priests’ formation in biblical studies and theology; they have enjoyed a privileged part of their institutional contexts. It is difficult to make the needed adjustments, to be of service rather than to direct, to not being charged, or to lie down the role of “learned one”, the one who the institution grants privileges because of their ordination.

My process of becoming an Oblate lent itself to shed my priestly identity, aided by moving and anonymity over these past several years. This stripping away of my priestly status enabled me to be more receptive of my being, of the presence of the Spirit within

beholding me and enabling me to experience God in silence and stillness without the need of liturgical words and actions. While my letting go was reluctant, it was necessary to have a “spirit of poverty”, an interior experience where we are completely naked

before God, in that we bring nothing, offer nothing, and expect nothing. It is a condition described in the writings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers and many monastics. In this way of being, we develop a deeper intimacy with our creator.

The prayer of pure silence is a shaping influence, one that we are physically unaware of in the practice but bleeds out into all areas of life. While technically not performing customary priestly roles, I am still a priest, even one with an unused license. I am a priest on my knees cleaning the floor in our Soup Kitchen, shovelling compost for a friend, preparing old furniture, leading

meditation online (for more information contact me at mcast709@gmail.com) and walking and praying in nature.

Now as an Oblate, I am committed to be of service in the mission and work of WCCM.

The poet and mystic Rumi says, “In the tiny spaces between breaths and the silence between your thoughts, I have placed a door that leads directly to me.”



Rev. Dr. G. Wayne Short

Rev. Dr. G. Wayne Short



From left to right:
Fr. Laurence Freeman, Daphne (Oblate),
Lorena Vicente (final oblation), Dorothy
Wood (National Oblate Coordinator &
mentor), Robert Bedolfe (final oblation).

Hound of Heaven: My Oblate Journey

I just made my final oblation on July 2, 2024, breaking a 41-year record in novitiate history according to Fr. Laurence! Let me tell you the story.

It started when my late, good friend Erika Schweigherlehner introduced me to the Montreal Priory in 1983 and becoming an Oblate novice the following year. Time passed. The priory dissolved; personal and parental health issues arose; career moves happened; all of which led me to not pursue the oblate path. Nonetheless, I continued my involvement with the Christian Meditation community.

In 2004, I attended the School for Meditation, which led to the formation of two groups at St. Basil's Church in Toronto, one led by Erika and the other by myself. In 2009, when diagnosed with thyroid cancer, which required surgery, radiation and other treatments, I withdrew from the leadership of the group. My good friend Marie Dyach took over the leadership. She is still at the helm.

Indeed, you may ask at this point in the story, why after so many years as a novice would I make a final oblation now? I do not have a logical or reasonable answer other than this: since early this year; I felt a call to do so. No other explanation exists. After a lot of discernment, guided by my wise mentor, Dorothy Wood, I felt ready to answer the call.

Preparing for my final oblation has given me a deep appreciation for the richness of the oblate path. Reading the Rule each day, using the one with

commentaries by J. Chittister, makes it applicable to our everyday life as a Christian today.

Meditating twice daily while reciting the Liturgy of the Hours brings stability, structure and richness to my spiritual life. I look forward to it with love, not as a duty.



Lorena Vicente at her final oblation
(L) with mentor Dorothy Wood (R)

Surprisingly enough, I have noticed a change in myself for the better, in my relationship with God, with myself, and most of all, with others... more patience, tolerance, less reactivity, less judgment, etc.

As part of the work of our community, an Introductory Workshop to Christian Meditation was held at Our Lady of Lourdes on July 20, 2024. My hopes and aspirations are this will lead to the birth of a new meditation group.

Without Dorothy's loving guidance, I would not have reached this point today. Her mentorship helped me discern God's calling.

So, on July 2, 2024, I finally responded to the invitation issued in 1983 by accepting the call. But the story does not end because making my final oblation was not an ending, but a beginning. "The Hound of Heaven" is relentless in its pursuit... .

*O where can I go from your spirit, or where can
I flee from your face... — Psalm 139:1-18; 23-24*

Who knows what else may be ahead on this path...?

May God grant me the gift of perseverance and a deep appreciation of the grace in being an oblate.

Lorena Vicente



Honouring the Legacy of Fr. Charles Brandt

A Contemplative Ecologist for Our Times

My personal interest in contemplative ecology led me to an introduction to Fr. Charles Brandt, who became a mentor and teacher.

Born in 1923 in Kansas City, Missouri, Fr. Brandt died in 2020. From an early age he was engaged in the arts, but his formal education began in 1948 with a degree in biology and ornithology from Cornell.

In 1952, he discovers his spiritual calling and becomes ordained in the Anglican tradition. By 1956, he transfers to the Roman Catholic church. Drawn to monastic life, he enters a Trappist abbey in Iowa. After several years he realizes he is seeking the solitary life and in 1964 visits a new community of hermits living in Merville, on Vancouver Island, joins the Hermits of St. John the Baptist and, though rare for the times, becomes ordained as a hermit-priest in 1966.

As the Hermits disband in 1970, Fr. Charles moves his hermitage to Black Creek, deep in the temperate rain-forest on the Oyster River. In his book *Self and Environment* he speaks of walking in the forest where it enables him to enter into a communion with “every other being in the universe.”

The telling of Fr. Brandt’s vocational turning points begins with his early experience of the natural world of birds when he was a teenager. He saw a stream of different species of warblers in all their mating plumages, migrating through their nesting grounds. “It was an overwhelming experience of beauty and wonder and wild”. On reading Henry David Thoreau, he learned Thoreau went “into the woods to find out what life was all about, and I wanted to do something like that.”

In discerning between the Anglican and Catholic traditions, he read Thomas Merton’s *Seven Storey Mountain*,

and wrote, “that was what I was looking for. I wanted to know if it was possible to really experience God in this lifetime. Can you talk to him as a person?” He says this revelation changed his whole thinking of monastic life.

Reading Bede Griffiths’ book *The Golden String*, one of Charles’ formative texts, led to his pilgrimage to India in 1989. Also, Griffiths had a huge influence on Charles’ interest in meditation and eventually to his becoming an Oblate of Bede’s monastery in India.

In the late 1970s and 80s, Fr. Charles became a passionate environmentalist. He was much influenced by the Passionist

priest, Thomas Berry, who was trying to bring Christianity into the new cosmology.

To be a hermit, you must provide for your own living and one skill Charles learned early in the Abbey was bookbinding, his lifelong occupation. In the mid 1970s, he travelled abroad to learn more about the restoration of historic texts. He was a gifted conservation binder and restorationist and had many notable restoration projects.

Charles lived, embodied, practiced, and taught that meditation is one component of a broader, embodied, contemplative spirituality. He strongly advocated meditation to find Christ within, practiced *Lectio Divina*, Liturgy of the Hours, walking meditation, photography and bird watching, fly-fishing, bookbinding and conservation and restoration of texts. And he says, “do that which brings you joy.”

Fr. Charles did several media interviews, and all these are available on YouTube. Also, see www.holyscapes.org and www.charlesbrandt.ca.

Jason M. Brown



Jason M. Brown

Immerse Yourself in Silence:

One-Year Contemplative Residency

Greetings from the Brandt Oyster River Hermitage Society (BORHS)! We are a non-profit society that is dedicated to preserving the memory and promoting the legacy of Catholic hermit-priest Father Charles Brandt (1923-2020). Fr. Charles spent many years discerning the right circumstances for his vocation as a contemplative, but eventually landed in Black Creek, British Columbia. During his discernment, Fr. Charles met with many spiritual teachers, including the famous writer, Thomas Merton. For many years, Fr. Charles travelled for his work as a specialist in text preservation and restoration.

Though his vocation called him to the Roman Catholic priesthood, with Thomas Berry, Fr. Charles was deeply connected to the contemplative traditions found in all the world's religions. Rather than escaping from the world, Fr. Charles was drawn more deeply into it. He loved the local landscape and ecology, and following his intellectual hero Fr. Thomas Berry, he became an advocate for protecting salmon, rivers and old-growth forests. This practice of contemplative ecology integrates concern for the human world, with a deep spiritual longing for oneness with the Divine.

Black Creek, which is located just south of Campbell River on Vancouver Island, is on the east coast of the island. Charles' hermitage is on the south bank of the Oyster River on a steep tree covered bluff.

The Brandt Oyster River Hermitage Society dedicates itself to not only maintaining the hermitage where Fr. Charles lived, but also to promoting his vision for a deeper integration of ecology and spirituality. We are very excited to offer Fr. Charles' hermitage as a space for a contemplative to deepen their own practice and share insights into the spiritual life with our community.

For more information about our residency program:
<https://charlesbrandt.ca/a-call-for-contemplatives/>

Jason M. Brown



The Hermitage





Mark and Polly Schofield

Feathered Friend Award



After Paul Harris became the first patron of the **Feathered Friend CCMC Patron Recognition** in Ottawa at NC22, two new patrons shared the distinction and recognition at NC24 in Vancouver.

Mark and Polly Schofield joined the growing list of distinguished leaders in the CCMC who have influenced and grown for decades the practice of Christian Meditation in Canada.

The idea of a **Feathered Friend CCMC Patron** was born from the Christian Meditation logo:



The logo reflects the dual posture we take in meditation: our bodies are alert and attentive to the moment but not rigid; our minds focused and concentrated on the mantra, feeding deeply from the source in the depths of our being. The dove, of course, is a Christian symbol of the Holy Spirit, and in meditation we receive the gifts of the Spirit by drinking deeply from

the cup and in the waters of our baptism.

Back to the days in Montreal where John Main taught, Mark and Polly were both instrumental and played important roles in establishing the emerging national community. A “real feather in her cap” remarks Polly in her acceptance letter, was working with Fr. John and Fr. Laurence to inspire the teaching of children’s meditation worldwide. Polly led retreats and for several years was the national oblate coordinator.

Using his skills from his work with the BBC, Mark anchored the audio-visual, administrative, financial and legal aspects of the CCMC, and in recent years provided resources, books, and CDs at events across the continent via the Medio Media Bookstore in Montreal. Mark and Polly exemplified in their tireless work a dedication to their passion for Christian Meditation and its many gifts.

The online and in-person annual general meeting at NC24 heartily endorsed with applause of Mark and Polly Schofield as recipients of the **2024 Feathered Friend CCMC Patron Recognition**.

Climate Change Update *continued from C3*

With many members acting in diverse spheres like politics, finance, science, arts – all sharing a discipline that reconciles the head and the heart – WCCM members are well placed to take part with decision makers to move from being conflicted to having conviction. To move forward towards a common, sustainable future.

Kaveh leaves us with four challenges for WCCM:

- Foster the inner ecology to positively impact the outer ecology
- Change yourself to change the world
- Make the action to combat climate change a sacred cause

- Through meditation and community, help humanity fall in love with Creation once again

Kaveh left us with a quote from Rumi that could apply to climate negotiators ahead of COP 29 in Azerbaijan from November 11-22, 2024:

In the tiny space between your breaths and the silence between your thoughts, I have placed a door that leads directly to me.

– Rumi

Canadian Christian Meditation Community Bookstore

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Orders can be placed using the website,
or via email, or by phone (please leave a
message and you will be called back).

If you are holding an event and would like
to order publications on sale or return,
an order form is available on request.



Inventory Clearance

On offer is the complete set of **Monastic Studies**,
published by the Montreal Prioory between 1983 and
1990. All seven issues are available for only the cost of
mailing at roughly \$30.

Single copies are also available at a postage cost of
approximately \$15. Full content descriptions are avail-
able on the bookstore website (www.mediomedia.ca).

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Notification to Recipients of the CCMC Print Newsletter

Dear Reader of the Print Newsletter,

We thank all donors who contribute to the cost of paying for the print publication of our CCMC newsletter. Unfortunately, there are few dedicated contributors. With rising costs for print publication and the reality of our situation as a charity, we are reaching an untenable financial situation. Publication costs will soon exceed donations.

In our efforts to balance accessibility with sustainability, we are asking for your support. Please consider the following options:

1. Switch to the online e-version of the newsletter or,
2. Continue to receive the printed newsletter (4 issues/year) but based on a minimum annual donation of \$30.

Future printed newsletters will be mailed based on this suggested annual donation.

If there are any questions, you can always reach us at **info@wccm-canada.ca**.

Respectfully yours,

The CCMC National Council Members

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WCCM

Newsletter of The World Community for Christian Meditation

Registered CIO Charity No. 1182213

Ever Closer to the Source

A NEW SERIES OF INTRODUCTORY TEACHINGS BY LAURENCE FREEMAN REFRESHES THE SIMPLICITY OF THE JOURNEY



(Image by vined mind from Pixabay)

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Legacy Friends

A letter from Laurence Freeman OSB

The “Essential Teaching” of Christian Meditation, like the Gospel itself, is simple and ever fresh. This is why it can – and needs to be – expressed anew for each generation. We need to use the language of the day so that the words of the sacred texts do not become stale or over-familiar. And we need to address the actual needs and challenges of our time. This letter contains the first of four online talks which attempt to do this. These don't replace former introductions, but I hope they will refresh and renew the way we can all share this great gift.

The response to this series was very heartening – over 3000 people in different time zones listened to each session. The series were translated simultaneously into five languages and each week more people signed up. This testifies both to the dedication and skill of our teams in the community and to the contemporary “hunger for prayer” which John Main identified and to which he knew that our contemplative tradition can powerfully respond. A follow-up series of six sessions called *Feeling the Way* begins in August which will offer deeper support and understanding to the journey that many new meditators began with this introductory series.

FIRST TALK

Starting to meditate, we all start from where we are. After 45 years of meditating, I can say with authority I am still a beginner. The meditator is always returning to his or her beginning. Why begin in the first place? Even if you only have a superficial feeling of curiosity about meditation, it's a sign to take seriously. Try, take a first step. You have nothing to lose except your limitations and your fears about your limitations. It might just be a milestone on your life's journey. Simply to try, with

an open mind and heart, may itself be a life-changing decision. In fact, you are opening yourself to something new, some dimension of yourself you want and need to know better. You're looking ahead into a new part of yourself.

Beginning the journey of meditation is a journey within a journey – the ever-mysterious journey of your life. You are responding to a call from deep within yourself, beyond thought or explanation. If nothing else, meditation will

ner force that draws us to meditation is faith. Human beings grow through faith – meaning through relationship, integrity, being true to oneself. Experience will teach you the difference between faith and belief. In meditation, as in all important things, experience is the teacher.

You are beginning a journey to deepen your way of living faithfully – with meaning, hope and love. It's a practice and a journey of human faithfulness.



give you a new depth and help you live from that depth.

You may be thinking “Everyone is talking about how great meditation is: some see it as prayer and part of the religious traditions of wisdom. Others may do it just to for mental or physical health reasons and it has the scientific seal of approval for that. So, spiritual wisdom traditions and modern science agree meditation is worthwhile. Let's see if it's for me.” John Main put it another way when he said, “We are made to meditate. It's as natural to the spirit as breathing is to the body.”

Whatever motivates you to begin, it is more than just curiosity or even about feeling lost or desperate. The in-

St. Irenaeus said, “The beginning is faith, the end is love, and the union of the two is God.” If you are not religious and don't have a belief about God, that can be an advantage at first because our ideas about God can be a problem when it comes to reality. But be warned, meditation is not about being focused on ourselves. There is even a real danger you may discover something called God. If you are religious, also be warned: meditation will change your image and beliefs about God. Most people have faith in someone else's faith and so it just becomes belief. Meditation brings you to first-hand faith.

Or perhaps you had an early religious education, but it failed to prepare you

maturely for adult life. It too became superficial, with shallow explanations, guilt drives and infantile fears. Religion can become a form of consumerism, or even oppression, that fails to deliver what it preaches. Leaving that kind of religion behind calls for true faith.

The main motivation for beginning is realising that reality - your life, the world, everything that is or you think is - is more than it first seems. You will discover a new, invisible yet real dimension, by going below the surface of things, beyond what you think and imagine and believe.

We get stuck on surface issues: what we are to eat, what we are to wear, problem-solving, filling out unnecessary forms, surviving in our complex, hectic world. Our social environment is more than a little mad with its materialistic values and same-day delivery culture that promises what it cannot deliver. What we get is instead stress, a feeling of futility and boredom. With all the novelties on offer, it's like realising halfway through watching a film that it's one you've seen before. What is advertised by our present values: leisure, time to be ourselves, a beautiful complexion, happiness, fulfilment, relationship, freedom, is not what we get. We are conditioned by a lie.

To live inside a lie is like being sedated. It's an increasingly depressing existence; it creates frustrated, self-destructive anger. That anger, and the sadness behind it, is expressed even in the way we drive a car or stand in a queue and how we treat those we love. Meditation is taking the first step in getting out of that sedated state and waking up.

What will we find? Depth. Authenticity. A way of being beyond words. At first, it may feel like going under water - but don't panic! You quickly realise you can breathe under water. There is more to life than the surface and there

is more life in the depth.

To begin to meditate is to put your faith in your own intuition that "there is something more to life". Starting to meditate is doing something about finding this "something more" in a way you never can just by reading, watching YouTube or listening to talks.

Meditation is pure action. I can't meditate for you, but we can meditate

many ways to meditate. I will tell you what I have learned, not because I claim it is the only or the best way. Meditators don't need to compete about their differences. But there are some universals - like silence, stillness, simplicity and, especially, paying attention. One other universal truth is consistency - a form of faith. If you are looking for a spring, it's better to dig deep in one hole rather



together as we will in a minute. In fact, as we will discuss next week, meditating with others is one of the best ways to begin. Another way of putting this is that meditation is learning to be rather than just to do or think. Being is pure action. We don't have to do anything to be. Just be - and we really can, once we stop clinging to the surface of things, the waves of the mind and transient feelings.

So, let's get down to action. How can we meditate? That's like asking someone how to get from A to B. The directions you will get will depend on who you ask. But because people are basically good, whoever you stop and ask will give you the best answer they can, and you're free to trust them or not. So, I will give you the best answer I can. There are

than starting a new hole each time you dig.

So, I suggest you give this way a good try over the next four weeks. Beginners need open minds and hearts and a relaxed, alert body. Meditation is not headspace. Meditation is not what you think. It is embodied, and we discover this as we see how much more we are than our thoughts, desires, fears and fantasies. The body can teach us this if we have forgotten it by becoming stuck in our headspace. The body is a spiritual friend, a best friend, even when it is sick or not as beautiful as we would like it to be. It never lies because it is always in the now, the present. How often are our minds in the now? They fly from past to future - and sit most of the day in the transit lounge of fantasy. Meditation is

the journey into the eternal now and discovering that it is without boundaries. The body anchors us in the present moment so that we can sail the ocean of being.

The first step is to sit. Sitting is half-way between standing and lying down, between resting and working. Your physical posture then should be relaxed and alert. If you're on a chair: feet on the ground, back straight, shoulders and facial muscles loose. Or, if you are on a cushion on the ground, give yourself enough support to sit upright. However you sit, don't slouch or be too rigid. You don't have to "look like a meditator". Just be alert and comfortable. Meditation is a middle path, sometimes a razor's edge, between extremes.

Close your eyes lightly and notice your breath coming in and leaving your body, uniting you to everyone else in the world who needs to breathe and with the planet and all its miraculous processes of nature that produce the air we need. Pay attention to the flow in and out. We are receiving the gift of life as we breathe in and we are letting go, becoming poor and un-clinging as we breathe out. All without thinking, like breathing under water. Without even trying too hard. All this is a simple preparation of the body and the mind.

Second step: really start the journey. Deepen the work of attention you have begun. Start to repeat a single word. Say it interiorly, silently, attentively. We know how difficult it is to sustain attention. We're conditioned to have a very short attention span. So, in this phase of the journey, be prepared for frequent, even constant distraction. But learn how distraction can teach you rather than become discouraged by it.

When you find, after a few seconds, that you are not paying attention to the mantra because you're planning something, remembering something,



daydreaming or torturing yourself with negative thoughts - as soon as you are aware of this, drop the thought and return to the word. As soon as you are aware. Awareness is an important word for the new meditator. Meditation is about becoming more aware, more awake. This leads you to become more conscious, and so more accepting and more human. So, becoming aware of the fact you have stopped saying the mantra is something to feel good about – it's not bad, not a failure. Start saying the mantra again as soon as you are aware of it, and you have gained ground on the journey.

This is a journey of faith. You make it by saying the mantra faithfully. Be humble. The ego is not in charge of your meditation. That's why you will feel more free. Essential freedom - liberty of spirit - is freedom from the control of the ego. Say the mantra gently, peacefully, with a light but faithful touch. The mantra is taking the attention off yourself, off the ego, and that's why it feels

liberating even if it isn't easy.

This is a journey - a life-long journey. Every meditation, every time you say the mantra, is a new beginning. We are not gaining mileage points but restoring the beginner's mind, the attitude of a child and the innocence of a child's sense of wonder. Meditation is simple, radically simple.

Sit down, close your eyes, say your mantra. Listen to the word as you say it. Don't visualise it but listen to it. Articulate it clearly. Return to your mantra. Do this at least... once a year. But preferably at least twice a day for between 20 and 30 minutes. How long will it take? How long will it take for what? To achieve what? Enlightenment? We are enlightened but we don't have enough faith to know it.

Choosing the word, the mantra, is important. You will stay with the same word during the meditation and for each meditation morning and evening because your mantra is your little path through the jungle of your thoughts,

out into the open space of your heart. And always stay on your path. The mantra takes us into silence. Silence is healing, restorative and, after all the noise in and around us, an amazing relief. You will look forward to your meditation times like a shower after a noisy, sweaty day. It is an immersion in a non-egocentric world.

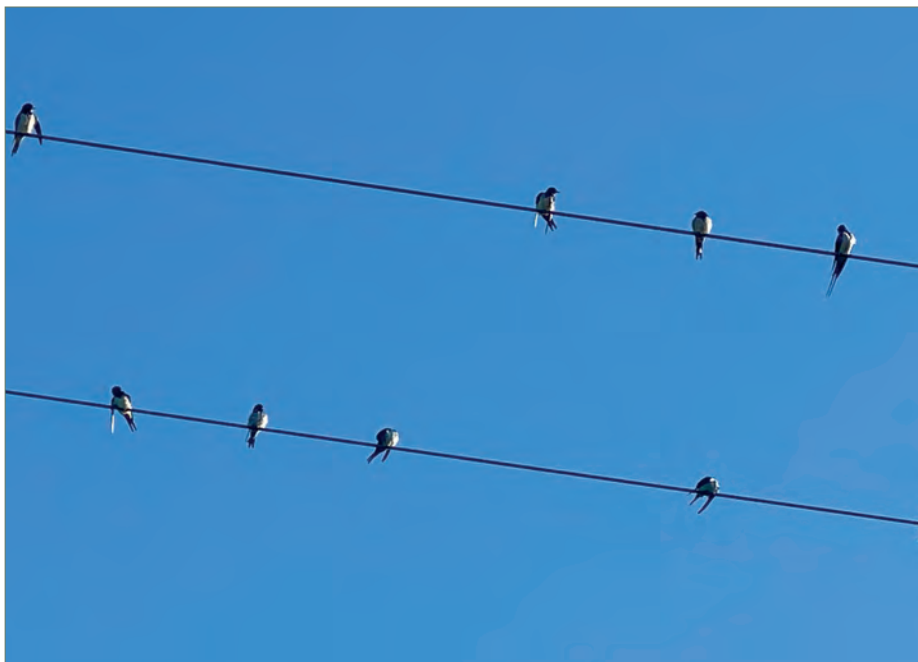
When you get distracted or when you stop meditating for a few days or even longer, you are never more than one step away from the path. Just start again - a new beginning but a familiar path you will come to love and recognise. So, stay with the same word. I would suggest a sacred word, not in your own language, and gentle and rhythmic in sound and tone. I personally recommend the word "ma-ranatha". It is Aramaic for "the Lord comes" or "Come, Lord". But we are not thinking of its meaning. It is the oldest Christian prayer. But you don't have to be a believer to say it. Say it as four equal syllables: *ma-ra-na-tha*. Form the word clearly in your mind, in your heart, as you say it gently, faithfully. Listen to it and allow it to lead you simply, in faith, into stillness and silence.

How long will it take to get into a daily practice? I don't know you. I know myself and it took me a few years because I am a slow learner and lack discipline. I even had to become a monk. But I also didn't have a community of

support at the time - although I had my teacher who initiated me, never bullied me and was infinitely patient.

For the week ahead, try to meditate morning and evening. Set your timer: minimum 10 minutes and optimum for now, 20 minutes. You can down-

tired or upset to meditate when the time comes, before you walk away, ask yourself what you really want and don't try to fool yourself. Take a few moments to prepare for meditation: a short physical stretch, breath awareness, listening to some music, taking



load a timer on the WCCM app and choose your meditation bowl sound. Practise some daily exercises that will help to prepare you for the next meditation, especially the evening one: when you are waiting for something - a lift, a light to change - don't automatically look at your phone or read the ads. Remember the mantra, lightly, gently. If you feel too busy,

a 5-minute power nap. We don't meditate to relax. We relax in order to meditate. Find the best place to meditate. This can be your "external cell" where you find it easier to enter the interior cell of your heart.

Laurence

Things you should know about the new Learning to Meditate series with Laurence Freeman:

- * The talks will be available on the website in the format of a simple online course that anyone can subscribe to (free of charge).
- * The talks will also be edited for use in meditation groups so that members can invite their friends to come along for the series.
- * The talks and transcripts will be made available to the National Communities with a step-by-step guide for presenting them as a four-week introductory course. This will be presented as an updated version of the original six-week course.

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John Main Seminar 2024: Back to New Harmony, birthplace of WCCM, and forward

THE MOST IMPORTANT ANNUAL EVENT OF THE COMMUNITY WILL BE HELD IN NEW HARMONY, INDIANA (US), 8-13 JULY

New Harmony is a special place for WCCM. It was there that in 1991, during a John Main Seminar led by Fr Bede Griffiths, the Community received a name: The World Community for Christian Meditation. For this reason, it is symbolic that a little over than 30 years later, a new John Main Seminar will be hosted there, this time led by Jason Gordon (Archbishop of Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago) on the theme "Widen Your Tent". It is like a new beginning and a very special opportunity for the global family to meet (in-person or online) and reflect on what way we can "travel together" in such challenging times. WCCM now is in its thirties. It is time to consider change, growth, and to keep spreading the seeds of hope that meditation gives us as a way of faith.



Fr Bede during Contemplative Eucharist in New Harmony in 1991 (Photo WCCM Archives)

Memories from 1991

Bob Kiely (USA): "We were invited in 1991 to New Harmony in a really hot August week, and the speaker was Fr Bede Griffiths. I had never met him before. Each morning, we had meditation, he gave a talk. He was in his saffron robes, but he was such an Oxford Englishman. He

spoke about the Cosmic Christ. There were people from the USA, Canada, UK, also from Singapore and the Philippines. The general agreement was that the Community would continue, that Laurence would continue teaching and that he should get support. He also needed a base and at that time he went to Cockfosters (London). It

was decided that we should have a newsletter and a publishing house (Medio Media). Little by little, it began to take shape."

Magda Jass (Canada): "We had our real first meeting of WCCM in New Harmony. That was the moment when the community was established, its birth. We thought it was just a little community,

Jason Gordon: "We will gather to seek God's wisdom for the WCCM"

"John Main recovered the teaching on Christian Meditation from John Cassian and in that recovery brought contemplative gifts to our modern age. The community has taken these gifts and spread them throughout the world. This year, in our John Main Seminar, we are taking the gifts that John Main has brought and pairing

them with another contemplative gift: conversation in the Spirit, Synodality, which Pope Francis has brought to the worldwide Church. Many traditions of Christianity have had this Synodal gift brought within them. This is a biblical gift in which we listen to God through listening to one another. This year, we gather to seek God's wisdom for the

WCCM, and we want you participating with us as we seek God's wisdom and where God wants the community to go in its next stage so that we can bring the fruits of contemplation and contemplative life to all of God's people."

Watch the message by Jason Gordon here:

<https://wccm-int.org/jgjms24>

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fragile, almost like a baby is fragile. And we were so happy that it was happening, that there was a new community and a new beginning. But at the same time, we had no idea where it was going to go.”

Peter Ng (Singapore): “We just wanted to start, but we did not know where it was taking us. Our gift to the world was the teaching of meditation which had been sort of developed by John Main. We hoped that what we do would be global in reach. That’s why we called it the ‘World Community’. And we were very clear that it was going to be a community and that the heart, the centre of

our community, would be the individual meditator. And the key operating unity would be the weekly meditation group.”

Expectation in the USA Community

The WCCM USA Coordinator, **Matt Reeves**, speaks about the general feeling among its members for this seminar: “The U.S. community is full of expectation that a return to New Harmony will be similarly momentous. With Archbishop Jason Gordon’s talks on ‘Widen Your Tent’, a process for listening and dialogue on the Spirit’s work

among us now and the spiritual energy and community that silence creates, we are hopeful that in the 2024 John Main Seminar, the Spirit will release fresh vision and vitality for the WCCM.”

Widen Your Tent - John Main Seminar 2024

8–13 July 2024

New Harmony, Indiana, USA

Led by Jason Gordon

IN-PERSON & ONLINE

For more information:

<https://johnmainseminar.org>

A message from the Guiding Board

THE 2024 GUIDING BOARD MEETING WAS HOSTED AT BONNEVAUX SHORTLY BEFORE HOLY WEEK

We have just concluded the meeting of the Guiding Board at Bonnevaux and want to give you a brief summary of what was discussed and agreed. The Board meets to reflect on what is happening in WCCM – challenges and celebrations as well as new ideas and opportunities. This helps us identify direction and give guidance to the National Communities and WCCM Trustees.

Challenges this year have included strong demands put upon our small Bonnevaux core community which provides the spirit of hospitality and service, but which has also felt the stress of doing so. We made rapid progress in the past four years and have decided we need to slow down till August to review how we manage and do things. This coincides with a general review of WCCM organisation and governance, a time of reflection and consultation for which we are grateful for your prayer and support.

We also discussed the need to encourage volunteers to assist in our work. People like to be asked to help. When the London Centre asked for



volunteers, twenty people stepped forward! The Board advises trying this everywhere. We celebrated the work of Tāyṇā Malaspina, our Director of Young Adult Programs and the youngest member of the Board, especially in developing a Spiritual Intelligence course for schools and universities. We listened to Jim Green, who heads our Earth Crisis Forum, and responded enthusiastically to his ideas for spreading awareness of a contemplative engagement with climate change. The WCCM Academy has completed the first of its two-year programmes of Contemplative Living with excellent feedback

from students and teachers. The students had spent a week at Bonnevaux just before our meeting.

We heard from Kath Houston, Director of Liaison with National Communities, about growth in the number of groups with examples of flourishing initiatives as well as tough challenges for renewal in older communities. A new four-week online Introduction to Meditation course in April/May and will be circulated for national communities to use.

A major discussion concerned consulting the grassroots of the WCCM in a “synodal” process. We agreed to try this

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further at the John Main Seminar (8-13 July at New Harmony, IN) and launch it later this year throughout the community.

There is more to do than time or people to do it, but our priorities (each led by a Board member) are:

- 1) Synodal Process
- 2) Earth Forum
- 3) Young Adults

4) Implementing our Governance Review

5) WCCM Programme

6) Meditatio Outreach

7) Communicating our message to new audiences

8) Raising awareness of Stewardship needs.

Being comes before Doing. Action needs deeper commitment to stillness.

Be with us and do what you can. Please send your thoughts or suggestions to: GuidingBoard@wccm.org.

We are happy to be on this journey sharing this mission with you.

With our love,

All of us on the WCCM Guiding Board

The Vision of Beauty: Laurence Freeman invitation to a Contemplative Pilgrimage in Italy

Italy will be the location of this year's WCCM Pilgrimage led by Laurence Freeman, from 26 September to 4 October - just before the Monte Oliveto Retreat. Read Fr Laurence's invitation: "This year's Pilgrimage expresses the WCCM theme, the essential goodness and beauty of the world: 'And God saw that it was very good'. All pilgrimage involves moving from place to place with the enjoyment of good company. But the true

destination is spiritual not physical, which means the whole person in harmony with others and their surroundings.

Our goal is the 'vision of beauty'. Beauty heals us personally so we can heal the world. This pilgrimage has to have a significant financial cost, but I believe that if each of us truly sees beauty in new ways, we will be better healers of the world. We will be in beautiful places and contemplate

beautiful art, not as tourists rushing from one thing to another, but as contemplatives, taking time to be truly present to the divine gift of beauty as part of God's own being. Each day will give priority to prayer, finding the beauty within, sharing our response to the gift of enrichment and peace.

I look forward to being in this time of beauty and healing with you for the sake of the world."



Pilgrims will see the "Two Birds" from Ravenna, inspiration for the WCCM logo (photo by chatst2 from Pixabay)

The Vision of Beauty 26 September to 4th October

Highlights:

Milan
Como
Lake Garda
Verona
Venice
Ravenna
Arezzo
Sansepolcro
Fiesole
Florence

Monte Oliveto Maggiore

For more information and registration: <https://wccm-int.org/ITPilg24>

News & Articles

Spiritual Intelligence: the need for reconnection

TAYNĀ MALASPINA SPEAKS ABOUT A NEW PROJECT WHOSE GOAL IS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE FACE THE CHALLENGES OF OUR TIMES

Can you explain a little bit what Spiritual Intelligence is?

Taynā - This year, within the youth programme, the Spiritual Intelligence project is our priority. This is because we believe that this is one of the ways in which WCCM contributes to enriching the wellbeing of young people in the face of the challenges of modernity.

Lisa Miller, professor of psychology at Columbia University, explains how we humans are hard-wired for spirituality, but we've lost the connection. Faith-based traditions once connected most of us to something larger than ourselves, and without that, we've entered a self-centred age of widespread depression, addiction, and suicide. Dr Miller has insight into how to awaken our brains and reconnect to the deeper force in life, even if you don't believe in a God.

Although spirituality has been studied for years, "spiritual intelligence" is a relatively new term. Howard Gardner, known for the theory of multiple intelligences, did not include spiritual intelligence in his list of intelligences. He found it challenging to codify quantifiable scientific criteria for spiritual intelligence. Instead, Gardner suggested an "existential intelligence" as a viable alternative.

Danah Zohar coined the term "spiritual intelligence" and introduced the idea in her 1971 book *ReWiring the Corporate Brain*. According to her, spiritual intelligence involves understanding and integrating the spiritual dimensions of life with practical aspects. It encompasses awareness of our relationship to the divine and the ability to act beyond selfish motives.



(Image by StockSnap from Pixabay)

For Danah Zohar, spiritual intelligence (SQ or SI) transcends the conventional measures of intelligence. While IQ focuses on rationality and emotional intelligence (EQ) emphasizes understanding and managing emotions, SQ operates at a deeper level—the realm of meaning, purpose and values. According to Cindy Wigglesworth, SI is the ability to behave with wisdom and compassion, while maintaining inner and outer peace, regardless of the situation.

What are the status and perspectives of this project?

Taynā - This is what we can call a medium- and long-term project. This year, we organised a survey of two audiences:

- * young adults (18 to 45 years old)
- * education professionals (schools and universities)

The aim of this research is to understand the behaviour of young people with regard to the topic of spirituality today and also how educational institutions integrate spirituality into the curriculum. With the results of this research, we will design a Spiritual Intelligence programme for schools and uni-

versities. In addition, we intend to build an app for young people to nurture their spiritual dimension. And more: we plan to organise an online symposium on Education & Spirituality with speakers such as Lisa Miller, Cindy Wigglesworth and Laurence Freeman.

Can you recommend material for those who want to learn more about Spiritual Intelligence?

Taynā: There is a lot of information on the topic at <https://spiritualityineducation.org/>. In addition, there are some books that can help those who want to delve deeper:

The Awakened Brain: The New Science of Spirituality and Our Quest for an Inspired Life, Lisa Miller (Random House)

The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving, Lisa Miller (St. Martin's Press)

SQ21: The Twenty-One Skills of Spiritual Intelligence, Cindy Wigglesworth (Select Books, Inc)

Spiritual Intelligence: Beyond the different religions, every human being can develop the spiritual intelligence, Francesc Torralba Roselló (Plataforma Editorial)

News & Articles

Flooding, Contemplation, and Reawakening Our Capacity for Solidarity

BY LEONARDO CORREA



Rescue operations for residents of flooded neighborhoods in Porto Alegre, Brazil. (Photo: Alex Rocha/PMPA)

In early May, South Brazil faced one of the worst climate disasters in its history. Torrential rains destroyed roads and bridges, and rivers engulfed entire cities. Many lives were lost, and many people lost everything. I live in Porto Alegre, the capital of the southernmost Brazilian state, and was fortunate that my home was not directly affected. However, the city was flooded by Guaiaba Lake, and we experienced blackouts and misinformation, leading to panic and a rush to supermarkets as if the end of the world had arrived.

As I walked through a supermarket, I reflected on how, in situations like this, human beings tend to exhibit predictable collective behaviour. Each person primarily focuses on saving their own life, loved ones, and home. The needs of others become almost invisible, or even an obstacle to our survival. For instance, someone might be more concerned about securing a gallon of water before someone else. This realisation annoyed me because I know I too can act selfishly, prioritising my own survival and ignoring the suffering of others.

We understand that this behaviour is common, but it doesn't have to be the norm. We can resist the crowd and put our own comfort or safety at risk to help others. Moreover, if we have a contemplative practice, such as meditation, we should be better equipped to be more other-centred. As Ramana Maharshi once said, "There are no others." We are all one.

Extreme weather events are now the "new normal". We must adapt not only to save ourselves but also to generate a transformation, a metanoia. In this new normal, kindness and solidarity would be the spontaneous responses to such tragedies. We need each other, but if we don't have a genuine experience of unity, such as we can know through meditation, then all our lovely words will be empty. I believe that a contemplative revolution is possible, where the experience of community and love becomes the "new normal".

If you're interested in exploring the connection between meditation and the Climate Crisis, visit our special page with resources and events relating to this topic at:

https://wccm-int.org/med_eccm

Where has the Joy gone? Reconnecting with our True Selves

Retreat for adults from 18 to 45 years old at Bonnevaux (and online) 30 July - 4 August

Led by Laurence Freeman, Taynā Malaspina, Patricio Lynch Pueyrredon and Giovanni Felicioni - More information at: <https://wccm-int.org/yvr24>



In Focus

João Correia

NATIONAL COORDINATOR, PORTUGAL



My journey of Christian meditation began during what might be termed a “mid-life crisis” when, in 2014 and after 38 years of secular life devoid of any religious or spiritual experience, an inner questioning arose about the life and its meaning which I have experienced in its most mental and materialistic aspects: as paradoxes and contradictions, words without roots, actions without direction. In a very naive way, I felt the need to find a purpose, a meaning, a direction for who I “wanted” to be.

In this state of “soul”, life introduced me, firstly, to a search for self-knowledge, to contacts with meditation and Buddhist teachings, and then to a secu-

lar perspective of mindfulness. At the same time, in a family context, I was led to begin a two-year course of adult Christian catechesis in the local parish.

During this four-year period, meditation, self-knowledge and the knowledge of God and Christ were simply revolutionary. The understanding of God the Creator, who is above all things, and of Jesus Christ - his life, death and resurrection - God who became man to save us, beings created in his image, worthy and deserving of his love, despite how fragile we are, is continually transforming my whole being and doing.

From the faith and hope I have received, from listening to the word and the sacred, from the journey of personal and spiritual conversion, naturally arises the desire to establish a deeper personal relationship with Christ, which began with researching the words “Christian meditation” and consequently led me to WCCM.

From 2019 onwards, my journey in Christian meditation began with the weekly online group, which played a key role during the Covid-19 pandemic; a first experience in Bonnevaux, which I have repeated on an annual basis; learning from Oblates in the community; with the teachings of John Main and

Laurence Freeman; with the creation of a face-to-face group in the local parish; with the growth, albeit inconstant, in individual practice; and, more recently, with a more active role in national coordination, accompanied by a strong feeling and evidence that humanity yearns for a more harmonious Christianity between being and doing, between contemplation and action, between the spoken word and the lived word.

I am and always will be a novice disciple of Jesus Christ, who seeks, through Christian meditation and, to paraphrase John Main, to allow God's presence in me to be the reality that gives meaning, shape and direction to everything I am and do. And my experience, witnessed and shared by those closest to me, is that I have improved in many aspects of my life, my behaviour, my being, especially in my attention and relationship with others, in better knowledge and mastery of my frailties, seeking daily to reinvent myself, for a better version of myself and a more intimate relationship with Jesus; and as the Spirit floods me with his love, so, naturally and like for many others who are on the path, grows the commitment to share this discipline of prayer to strengthen Christian unity.



WCCM Newsletter is published four times a year by the International Office of The World Community for Christian Meditation, St Marks, Myddelton Square London EC1R 1XX, London, UK.
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Would you like to contribute to the WCCM Newsletter? Our next deadline is 15 July.

Events & Resources

Annual Appeal: “Embracing Change: Emerging Stronger”

The WCCM Annual Appeal week will be happening this year from 10 to 17 June with the theme “Embracing Change: Emerging Stronger”. Fr Laurence says: “May I thank you for your generous response to last year’s Spring Appeal which has helped immensely and been a powerful encouragement? Raising £250,000 uplifted me and filled me with hope - thank you!”

It helps us do many things, from our retreat program in Bonnevaux, to giving scholarships and covering operational costs, to supporting the online series of talks and providing multiple translations of key texts. We are essentially a volunteer community which is supported by a small, paid group of skilled and highly motivated meditators.

Can you help us to continue in this



work? Any amount you give towards what it costs to share the gift of meditation across the globe will help and inspire us.”

To help you decide what you can give, here are some categories for support. A regular donation, of course, allows us to plan more effectively:

- * A recurring monthly gift
- * An annual gift
- * A one-time donation
- * Remembering the WCCM in your will

Information about the Annual Appeal 2024 will be available during the appeal week at wccm.org

Feeling the Way - A Six-Week course online

Continuing the Journey of Meditation, discovering new ways of seeing ourselves, our neighbours, the planet and God. Please join us for this six-week online course with Laurence Freeman. The sessions will be on: 26 August; 2, 9, 16, 23 September; 2 October. This course will be in English with French, Spanish, Italian, German and Dutch interpretation.



Scan the QR code above for more information and registration or visit:
<https://wccm-int.org/ftw24>

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