



WCCM

Newsletter of The World Community for Christian Meditation

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Ever Closer to the Source

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



(Image by vined mind from Pixabay)

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Leaver 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



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-

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.

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



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

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

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.

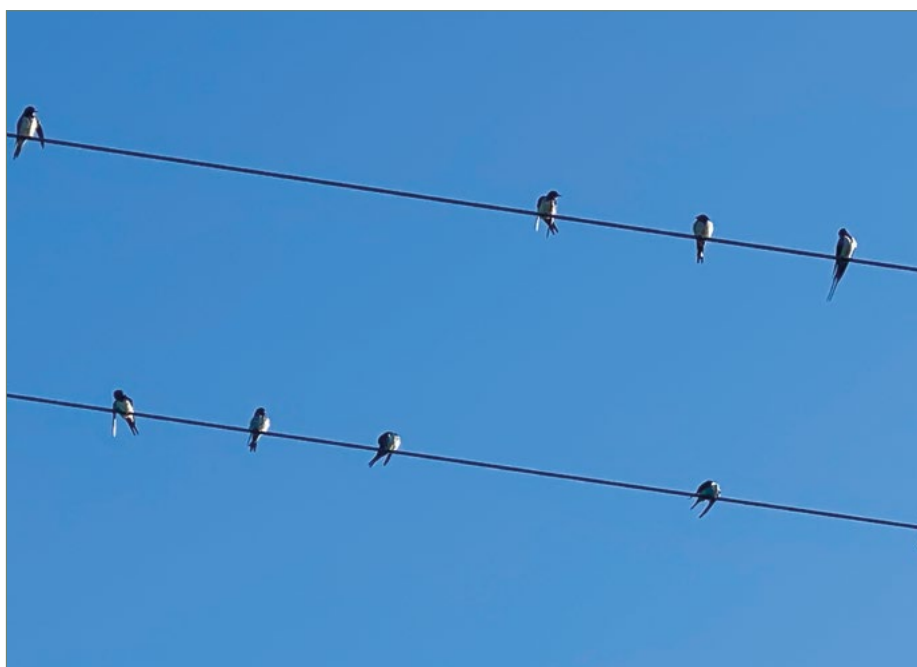
When you get distracted or when you stop meditating for a few days or even longer, you are never more than one step away from the path. Just start again - a new beginning but a familiar path you will come to love and recognise. So, stay with the same word. I would suggest a sacred word, not in your own 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/jgms24>

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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 Tainā 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 chatstz 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>

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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, Taynã Malaspina, Patricio Lynch Pueyrredon and Giovanni Felicioni - More information at: <https://wccm-int.org/ymr24>



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.



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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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VISIT WCCM's ONLINE STORE: <https://mediamedia.com>



Christian Meditation

NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN CHRISTIAN MEDITATION COMMUNITY



SPRING 2024

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THE SACRED CIRCLE OF INTENTION AND ATTENTION

Darrell Taylor, B.A., B.Ed., M.A., C.P.E., C.C.P.A.C.
Spiritual Care Counsellor – Meditation Facilitator

In a previous article, I told the story of my spiritual journey through the turbulent sixties and seventies. Starting as a cradle Catholic, I wound my way through Eastern mysticism, Western occult, California communes, crazy cults, charismatic Pentecostalism, and Bible-thumping fundamentalism in Jackson, Mississippi. Somehow, I found my way back to mainstream Christianity. Then, I discovered Christian Meditation.

Before I encountered John Main's teaching, I had read about Centering Prayer. I wondered if there were any groups in Ottawa where I lived. Then I saw a Christian Meditation poster at the entrance of an old stone church in downtown Ottawa. Maybe this was a Centering Prayer group under a different name, or something similar.

I soon found out it was not Centering Prayer. But I was enticed to stay by a very friendly, elderly man named Paul Harris. After a few sessions, I asked Paul if there was any difference between Centering Prayer and Christian Meditation. He smiled and handed me a printed handout. Before every meditation session, Paul set up a table of handouts, articles, and books. He was prepared for any question. It seemed the only difference between the two methods was John Main's insistence that we say the mantra, Maranatha, from the beginning to the end of our meditation. This was not required in Centering Prayer.

Then I read Cynthia Bourgeault's book *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*. According to Cynthia, there was an essential difference between the two methods. John Main's emphasis was on "attention" while Centering Prayer emphasized "intention." That made things clearer.

Centering Prayer is not done with attention but with intention... Unlike other methods of meditation, Centering Prayer does not furnish an object for your attention—whether it be repeating a

mantra, following your breath, or watching your thoughts as they arise...the sacred word [mantra] in Centering Prayer serves as a placeholder for your intention. <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/intention>



Darrell Taylor, B.A.,
B.Ed., M.A., C.P.E.,
C.C.P.A.C.

On the other hand, John Main says:

In meditation... we renounce words, thoughts, imaginations, and we do so by restricting the mind to the poverty of one word... the most important thing to bear in mind about meditation is to remain faithfully repeating the mantra throughout the time put aside.

Word into Silence

I still wondered if this difference was a case of theological hairsplitting. Is it a false dichotomy? After years of meditating, my conclusion is: yes and no. Yes, in theory, there is an essential difference between attention and intention. But in my case, when it comes to my daily practice, there is no essential difference. I seem to have integrated both into one... two sides to the same coin.

Everyone's spiritual journey is different. I have started a few Christian Meditation groups. I remember Centering Prayer practitioners approaching me to ask if they could join. My answer was always... "of course! C'mon down! What happens when you meditate is between you and the Holy Spirit. Besides, we often have Buddhist friends drop in, not to mention yoga and Sufi practitioners who like to meditate with us. We don't check people's denominational ID cards at the door." Christian Meditation has made me more open and inclusive.

I wholeheartedly agree that intention is essential. This is why there is no such thing as a failed meditation session. Even if my attention wanders and I am distracted a thousand times, my intention is the same. I intend to sit in silence in God's presence and simply

Continued on page 12

Taught or Caught

A Proposed Framework for Christian Meditation for Life

1 – Abstract

When I started as National Coordinator last year, I chose the theme “How can we teach meditation for life?” It was a question that arose after several months of musing. I still don’t have an answer. Rather, it is a starting point. A rallying point for further dialogue with community members.

One can easily teach the essentials of meditation. But what makes the practice ingrained in an individual? I started thinking that one can practice meditation, but only God can “catch you” and make meditation an integral part of your life. It can happen suddenly, as with Saint Paul on the road to Damascus. Or it can slowly grow into you. Which was my case.

2 – What is a Framework?

According to the Oxford dictionary, a framework is “a set of beliefs, ideas, or rules that is used as the basis for making judgments, decisions, etc.” It is typically principle based. It is not prescriptive. It can be applied in many circumstances or by many organizations if we’re talking about a framework impacting companies.

One example that is often used in my line of work (Responsible Investing) is the framework called Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), developed by the most popular Canadian on the planet right now: Mark Carney, ex-governor of the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England. Mark Carney famously developed the TCFD with Michael Bloomberg, philanthropist and ex-Mayor of New York.

The TCFD is a framework where organizations disclose publicly the climate-related risks and opportunities of their businesses. Worldwide, more than

4,000 businesses and governments have publicly committed to reporting in alignment with TCFD.

But let me show you step by step the process I went through to develop a proposed framework for Christian Meditation for Life.

3 – Introducing a Framework for Christian Meditation for Life



André Choquet

“How can we teach meditation for life?” I asked earlier. There is a play on words here:

For life, as in for a lifetime. John Main, our spiritual inspiration, and the one who revived Christian Meditation in the West, taught meditation as a lifetime practice. It is a discipline that is simple to learn, yet difficult to maintain.

For life, as in fullness of life. John Main wrote in *Moment of Christ*:

The consequences or results of meditation are just this fullness of life—harmony, oneness and energy, a divine energy that we find in our own heart, in our own spirit. That energy is the energy of all creation. As Jesus tells us, it is the energy that is love.

I admire John Main and I have listened to all his recordings at least three times. I am also inspired by Fr. Laurence Freeman, especially by his book *Jesus the Teacher Within*.

The framework presented has a Christian focus, but I believe this framework could be modified for other traditions. My focus is from a Christian perspective because I know it best and it’s part of me.

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A Si-LENT Journey 2024

Sharing the Gift is our Call



L->R Back row: Gisèle C, Andrea S, Niala F, Lianne K.
Front row: Yvonne M, Elizabeth T, Joanie V.

Each time I share the gift of meditation, I feel like a true disciple of Christ.

As the Regional Coordinator for Alberta and Saskatchewan, my goal this Lent was to host two Lenten events as part of my Lenten sacrifice. I organized:

- An in-person silent retreat day at St. James Church in Okotoks, my home parish.
- A six-week online introduction to Christian meditation course.

Timing is everything! Offering these sessions at the start of Lent increased interest in learning about Christian Meditation. Nine people attended the in-person retreat, and twenty-five attended the online course.

Reflect & Renew: In-person Silent Retreat

It was my first time organizing a silent retreat.

Each attendee received a folder that included the day's schedule and each of Fr. John Main's three talk themes, allowing them to pen down their thoughts while listening to the talks.

We started the six-hour day retreat with the Eucharist, a regular Saturday morning parish mass. I requested that Fr. Vijay, our parish priest, bless all the attendees for the retreat, and he did this after the Mass, which added a special touch to begin our day of silence with Jesus.

After briefly introducing ourselves, we listened to Fr. John Main's first of three talks for the day, "Leaving Self Behind." This was followed by "Setting Our Minds on the Kingdom," and the third talk after lunch was "Present Reality."

Following each talk, we meditated for 20 minutes, after which there was a 30-minute personal, quiet reflection session. During this time, the attendees had choices of

going into the church's main sanctuary for adoration, praying the rosary, journaling, going for a walk, colouring mandalas, or reading books in the St. André Room, our parish library.

After a quiet lunch of hearty, warm, homemade vegetable and barley soup made by my meditation friend Kathy Setka, and fruit and veggies, I facilitated a 15-minute qigong session before the last talk and meditation.



Andrea Siquiera

Continued on page 18

Young Adult Programs WCCM 2024



Over the last few years, WCCM has dedicated itself to disseminating its projects and initiatives among young adults (18 to 45 years old). In 2023, we were present at World Youth Day with Pope Francis. In 2024, WCCM continues to expand its projects and aims to support young people in developing their contemplative journeys. We know that the rate of depression, anxiety and other mental disorders has increased significantly in recent years among young people.

The main projects for 2024 are:

RETREATS

For the first time, we introduce two annual retreats for young people.

INTERNATIONAL RETREAT

The international Young Adults retreat in Bonnevaux will be held July 30 to August 4, and led by Laurence Freeman, Giovanni Felicioni, Patricio Lynch and Taynã Malaspina.

The theme: **Where has the joy gone? Reconnecting with our True Selves.**

The retreat will also have an online version.

For more information visit: [Where has the joy gone? Reconnecting with our true selves.](#)

LATIN AMERICA RETREAT

The retreat in Latin America, which will be held in Brazil from May 31 to June 2, and led by Patricio

Lynch, Taynã Malaspina, Carlos Siqueira, Ida Mara Freire and Laurence Freeman (online participation).



Taynã Malaspina
Director of Young
Adults Programme

The theme: *Spiritual Intelligence: the flowering of a full and meaningful life.*

The retreat will also have an online version in Portuguese and Spanish.

For more information:

Spiritual Intelligence: the flowering of a full and meaningful life.

MEDITATION AND EDUCATION

WCCM will also be starting a program called Integral Education: stimulating spirituality with young people. This project aims to develop a program that will raise awareness of the importance of developing Spiritual Intelligence in schools and universities.

The program development is structured as follows:

- **Phase 1:** definition of research sample (select countries)
- **Phase 2:** conducting research with young people, parents, educators and academic directors to identify unmet needs and resources used to develop spirituality.
- **Phase 3:** designing the program methodology and pre- and post-project evaluation tools.
- **Phase 4:** Implementation of the pilot project.

Continued overleaf

Young Adult Programs WCCM 2024



YOUNG ADULTS' COUNCIL

The council was reorganized after the World Youth Day. Today, we have eight young people from different countries discussing projects and bringing insights into future WCCM youth projects.



WCCMYoung: CHANNEL ON INSIGHT TIMER

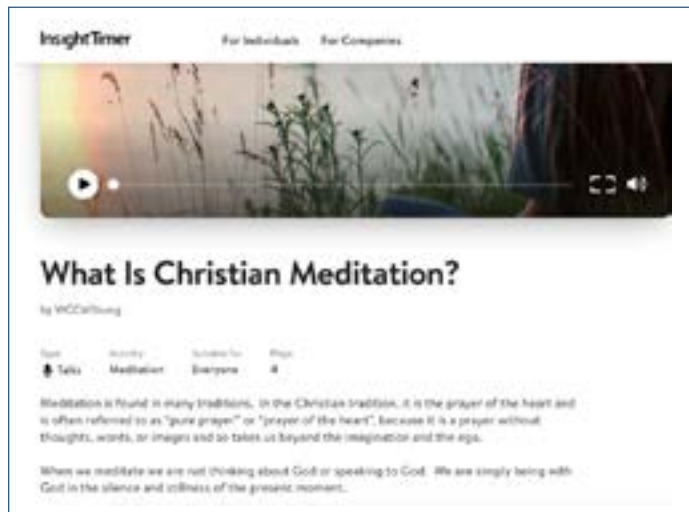
Insight Timer #1 Free Meditation App for Sleep, Relaxation & More.

The Insight Timer community is made up of 26 million meditators worldwide. With more free content than any other meditation app, Insight Timer has 190,000+ guided meditations and live events, hosted by 17,000+ world-renowned teachers and experts from a range of cultures and backgrounds. Our community is widespread and inclusive.

For introductory meditation audios for young audiences, refer:

<https://insighttimer.com/WCCMYoung>

<https://insighttimer.com/WCCMYoung/guided-meditations/what-is-christian-meditation>



ONLINE COURSES

Meditation and Life Project Program for Young Adults

We live in a time when many young people are experiencing a crisis of meaning. They are overwhelmed by feelings of anxiety, anguish, and meaninglessness. This program aims to support young people and young adults (18 to 40 years old) to reflect on their choices, begin the contemplative journey through meditation, recover the experience of the sacred in their daily lives and finally build a life project in line with their values and their essence. Portuguese and English version available in 12 lessons.

Young Adults Online Groups

Online Christian meditation groups for young people encouraging young people to start local projects.

For more info: <https://wccm.org/news/young-adults-meditation-groups/>

Moving Forward

We hope that throughout 2024 we can share the practice of Christian meditation with more and more young people, so they experience its benefits and enjoy fruits of charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness and temperance. Qualities of living so often in short supply today, but necessary for an abundant and meaningful life.

Called to be Joyful in Hope



TOM GRACE (OTTAWA, ON)

Around October this year, Barbara Chouinard and I were chatting on world problems. We concluded it was time for an Advent retreat. As suspected, finding a venue proved to be the most difficult part. Already, it was late to book a Christmas event. Gratefully, Holy Spirit Church, Stittsville, Ontario still had space available.

Despite a snowy, slippery start to December 2, 25 in-person participants arrived for the first Ottawa area post-Pandemic event.

Reverend Kevin Flynn pointed to this year's November gospel readings, noting they do not lead to the Christmas Nativity. In the past, this only happened once. Advent texts bring us to Parousia (the second coming of Christ), yet to come. "There's a longing for peace and justice for a new creation... Advent is principally and profoundly discovered in an emphasis on the culmination of what God has achieved for 'us and for our salvation' in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ."

As the war in Ukraine rages on, with no signs of relief for the Palestinians nor the remaining hostages, Kevin

addressed the question: "What is hope?" For him, it's not optimism – everything will work out just fine. He sees "hope" as confidence in whatever turns out; hope as a resource, enabling you to stay alive, confident, and grounded. The ground for confidence is not found in ourselves, but found in the world and in everything (which includes ourselves). It exists because, in love, God desires it exists.

Reverend Kevin remarked that our culture does not value learning. We are impatient with it. Learning must be delivered tomorrow by Amazon. Through the practice of meditation, we become patient. It's a gift we give ourselves and those around us.

It's been a long time since we gathered in such a large group. Beyond a doubt, "it was a treat to be on retreat." For me, the meditation period was extra special. Kevin's soft, gentle voice giving cues to relax as we entered into the silence. I felt we had found once again something lost. We were exiles now come home. MA-RA-NA-THA... Come, Lord Jesus.

Theresa Ziebell



Who are the WCCM Benedictine Oblates in Canada?



In order to better understand WCCM Benedictine oblates, it may be good to speak briefly about **Benedictine oblates** generally. Benedictine oblates are lay people from all walks of life. They feel called to live as "monastics in the world" and follow the Rule of St. Benedict as applied to lay persons in the 21st

century. They go through the preparatory stages of postulancy and the novitiate before making their final oblation. They promise obedience, stability and conversion of life, as do Benedictine religious, although these promises are obviously adapted since they do not live within a religious community, as do

Continued on page 18

Taught or Caught continued from page 3

Part 1: Self-centered meditation

I started learning about meditation almost 30 years ago. I was living in Trinidad & Tobago from 1994 to 1995. I attended the School of Philosophy. I learned Transcendental Meditation (TM), a secular form of meditation. Scriptures from various traditions, works by various philosophers and even Shakespeare's plays were used to teach us universal truths.

TM focused mostly on the benefits of meditation, not the fruits of meditation as we know them from Galatians 5:22: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. I don't recall a spiritual focus in the practice.

I also practiced mindfulness upon my return from the Caribbean to Canada in 1999. I studied at the time various books written by Thích Nhất Hạnh, a famous Buddhist monk who promoted mindfulness in the West. That practice focused on regulating mind and body. Again, I don't recall a spiritual focus in the practice.

Part 2: Other-centered meditation

Then, at age 50, Christian Meditation (CM) came to me in 2017. John Main's collection of recorded talks had a major impact on my life. They brought home the link between meditation and Christianity. CM focuses on both the benefits and the fruits of meditation.

CM is other-centered, which links to Jesus' teaching and his two great commandments.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:37-39

I would say CM encompasses mindfulness, hence the circle within a circle.



Part 3 – Beyond 6th Grade Religious Education

Shortly after CM found me and I listened to John Main and read Fr. Laurence's *Jesus the Teacher Within*, I started realizing I didn't really know Jesus. I thought he was "just another prophet." A learned man, who was taught his "religion" in his first 30 years, and preached it for three years thereafter. Like the gurus,

Buddha or Socrates, who influenced the world for the next 2,000 years.

It was certainly not ingrained in me that he is the Son of God, the Saviour, who died for our collective sins, was resurrected, and is part of the Holy Trinity. After all, I only had a 6th Grade Christian religious education.

The Holy Spirit guided me to an online weekly bible study group led by a Christian-Trinidadian friend I had met in Trinidad twenty years earlier. I started reading the Bible from the Gospels to Revelation and from Genesis all the way to the Gospels. Little by little, every morning before my meditation, I would listen to the Bible being read to me on Bible Gateway.com. It took me over a year to complete, but it was an eye-mind-heart opening experience. As John 8:31-32 says, *"If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

One thing noticeable when you read the Bible is the depiction of God in the Old vs the New Testament. In the Old Testament, God seems to be portrayed as jealous, a judge, a vengeful being. Whereby in the New Testament, he is a loving, forgiving Father, who will not forsake us. But God hasn't changed. God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. God was never not loving. It is our human and imperfect ways of perceiving and communicating the nature of God that, through time, has changed.

And what about Jesus? Who is he? I have a scientific mind. My father was an engineer, so science tended to override religion at the dinner table. I am a person who needs proof about things. In particular, the existence of God and the man-divine nature of Jesus.

Well, I found others needed the same. And, like scientists, they did the required work except they are called "apologists." People like Josh and Sean McDowell in *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* and Lee Strobel in *The Case for Christ*, they approach Jesus in a methodical way. Like a detective or an archeologist. And they are unequivocal. Once you consider all the archeological evidence, you interview all the biblical scholars, and assemble everything we know through the Apostles, who continued asserting what they had witnessed even when, under extreme torture, you can only land in one of two camps. You are either convinced Jesus is the Son of God or you believe he was a lunatic. There is no in between. Now, I am like those scientists who know Jesus is the Son of God. And for me, well beyond my sixth-grade religious education, makes all the difference in the world.

Slowly, I incorporated contemplative and religious habits in my daily routine.

Part 4 – Reconciling the Prayers

Meditation is called *The Prayer of the Heart*. There is no attached intention. No prayer lists. The goal is not one of gain. On the contrary, the intent is to let go and leave behind the self. Even holy thoughts must be given up during meditation. Christian meditation purifies the heart from egotistical influences, attachments, and identifications. A purer heart gradually displays the fruits of the Spirit.

The Prayer of the Heart does not replace or invalidate other forms of prayer, like devotional prayer. I find meditation helps me appreciate better devotional prayer.

Now, I practice and appreciate more the religious rituals of the Catholic church like the rosary, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of reconciliation. Thanks to meditation, they now make sense, but not when I was in grade six.

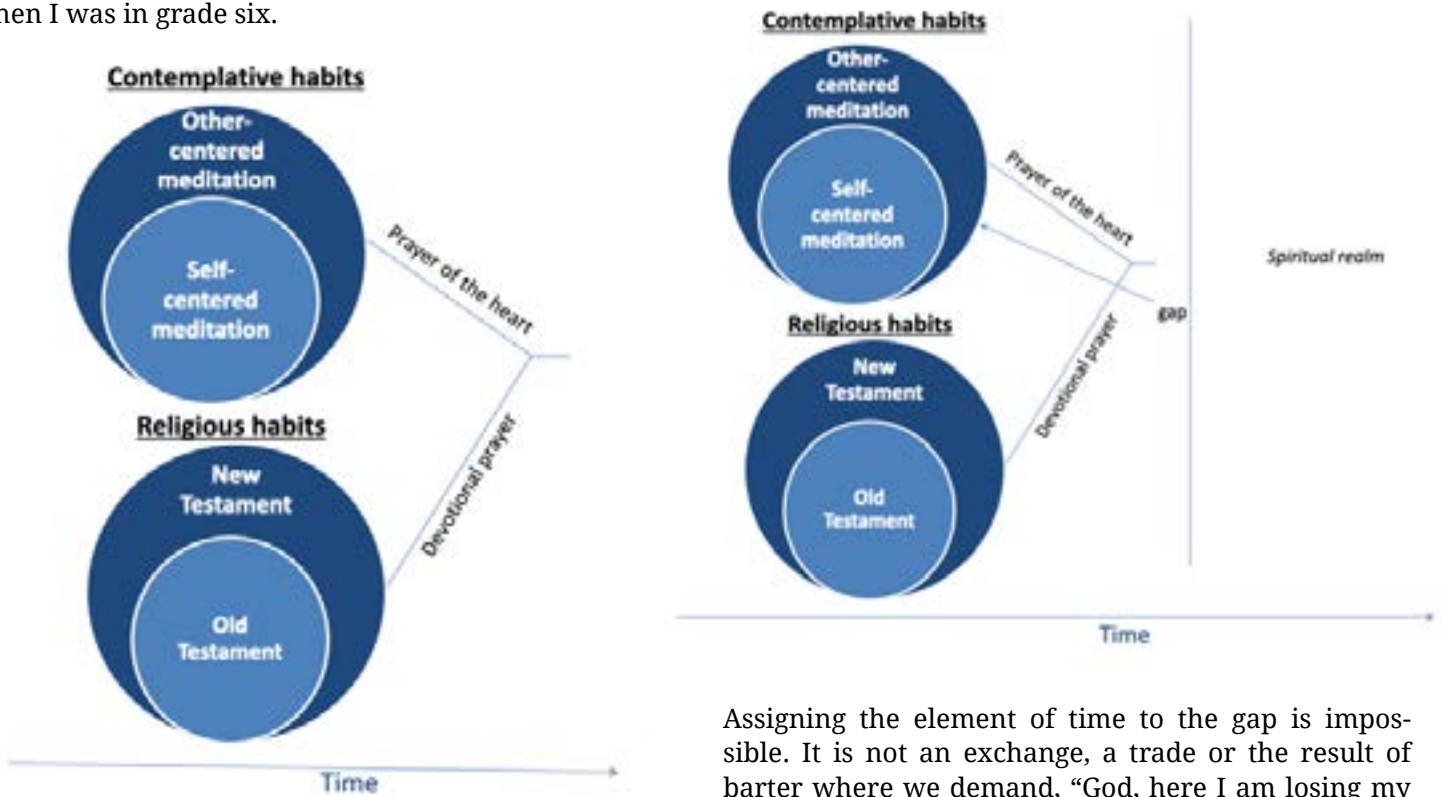
God have a personal relationship with me, where he even knows the number of hairs on my head?

Or, as recorded in Matthew 16:25, where Jesus says, *“For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”*

Or in other words, in surrendering to the will of God, one gains freedom. Words which touch me deep inside whenever I read or hear them.

Demonstrated below, is this surrendering and letting go leading to a “gap.” A “gap” exists in the framework between contemplative/religious habits and what I have come to understand as the spiritual realm. This gap could be one month, one year, twenty years, but as Peter says, impossible to measure:

“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” 2 Peter 3:8



Part 5 – The “shift”

Then came a time during my meditation practice when something shifted. I can’t pinpoint when. It wasn’t the result of following a formula or a specific number of repeated meditation sessions. The change came when I abandoned myself to God.

What amazes me are the paradoxes of the Christian faith. From a certain point of view, Christianity is unique in that it doesn’t make sense. *Stop Making Sense*, the Talking Heads 1984 album title, comes to mind. How can an undefinable, unattainable, infinite

Assigning the element of time to the gap is impossible. It is not an exchange, a trade or the result of barter where we demand, “God, here I am losing my life, give me my new life NOW!” One must surrender completely to God and have faith. As C.S. Lewis said in his famous “house” analogy, Jesus doesn’t want to just occupy the living room, he wants to move into your whole house.

I believe John Main alludes to that moment as the “opening of the inward eye,” indeed “the shift.”

Part 6 – Transformation

Humbly travelling this journey of faith, I envision “the shift” as entering into holy ground (to the right of the vertical bar). As my understanding evolves, words fail

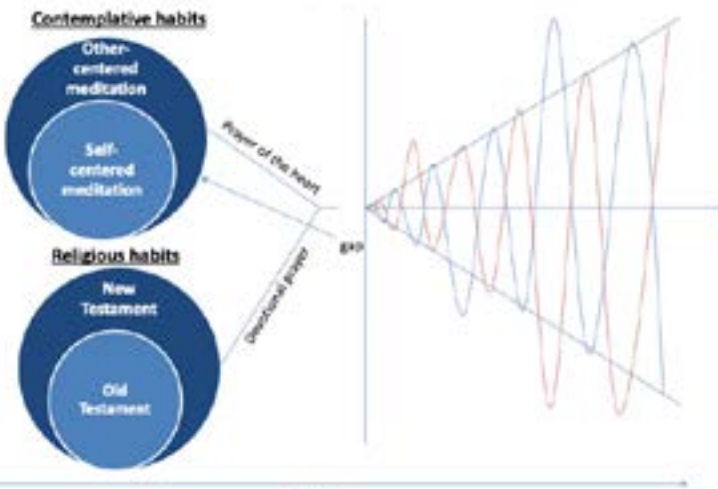
Continued overleaf

Taught or Caught *continued from previous*

to define what happens next, but images, tell a story.

Life continues after “the shift.” It is not a single enlightened moment, where one has reached the destination. The real journey of transformation is just starting.

We continue to grow. More and more we experience the fullness of God that appears to me like a synchronistic dance or the spiraling of two forces around a horizontal line.



The red and blue lines I perceive as seemingly opposite aspects of life and in the scriptures and elsewhere could represent, for example:

- Action and contemplation
- Martha (duty) and Mary (devotion),
- Moses (law) and Isaiah (prophecy)
- Heart and mind
- Science and religion
- Yin and Yang

The straight horizontal line in the middle of the wiggly lines represents: The Way, The Truth, The Holy Spirit. The cornerstone of everything.

Beyond the 45-degree diagonal lines: that’s the territory of sin. Sin simply means we veer too far away from God or direct our attention away from Him. Such as, when too much emphasis is placed on science as the answer to humanity’s needs without reverence and awe for the Absolute. It creates an imbalance, as we are witnessing now with our planet. A shift in human consciousness accompanied with a collective humbling in light of our sins, may be needed to swing the pendulum.

Where we are going is to the far right of the diagram. Christianity is a religion with a destination: the full reunification of heaven and earth. However, this doesn’t happen at a certain point in time because time itself is part of God’s creation.

Conclusion: The framework in Summary

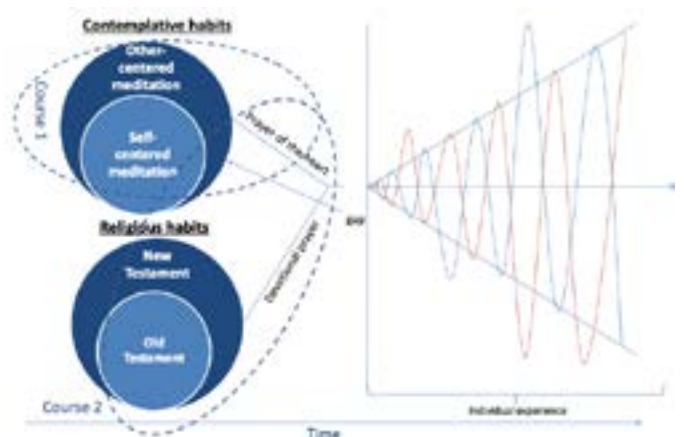
One question that comes to mind is: can the above framework be used to create a series of courses to teach meditation? As mentioned before, the framework has a definite Christian bent. But not everyone wishes to pursue a path similar to this one. Like rain and sunshine, God’s love pours down on everyone. And there are a multitude of ways for human beings to connect with the infinite. I see two broad courses that could cover the various parts of the framework.

Course 1: This would be similar to the current 6-week course or the Leadership and Meditation course offered at Georgetown university. It would be more or less secular. It would make use of scriptures and wisdom writing from many traditions. John Main and Laurence’s Freeman’s writing would be in the curriculum. It would be a foundational course accessible to anyone and everyone.

Course 2: This course would target those who want to go deeper in their own tradition and religious habits (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Indigenous Spirituality). In our Western secular culture, this could lead to a deeper appreciation of one’s own religious tradition. For the Christian course, the goal would be, as John Main said, to know deep down inside that we are:

- Creatures created by God.
- Redeemed by the love of Jesus.
- Temples of the Holy Spirit.

In my opinion, it is difficult for meditation practitioners who only have a basic religious education to truly grasp the above. In our secular world, some people pursue meditation practices without any teachings in religious scriptures or habits from their own tradition. When I look back at my time practicing TM,



I feel I always remained at the circumference of the wheel of prayer. I only started approaching the core of the wheel of prayer with a combination of contemplative and religious habits. That's how we can start understanding Jesus' sayings that are so controversial, paradoxical and hard to accept by a lot of Christians. But this is the topic of a future article!

Dear Lord, thank you for helping me to see every day how your Love is always present in the universe,

including in me. Grant me patience with, and care for, myself, others, and the rest of Your creation as we all progress on your journey of reconciliation. Give me the wisdom to recognize that your infinite wisdom cannot be fully contained in any framework or graphical interpretation. Guide me along your way with humility and awe. I say this prayer in the name of your Son, Jesus, who reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

André Choquet, CCMC National Coordinator

Remembering Joseph Clarkson

Joseph Clarkson passed away on January 25, 2024, at home surrounded by his family with his wife, Katharine, his children, Stephanie and Iain, and his daughter-in-law Reanna. This was followed by a Celebration of Life on February 2, 2024.

As his wife Katharine shared, Joseph “had a double lung transplant in June 2022, so we managed to have an extra 18 months to spend together with our children, their partners and our two grandchildren. With the transplanted lungs, we went for many hikes, had our grandchildren stay overnight weekly and danced at our son’s wedding. So much to be grateful for. He found his meditation so important, but especially as the lungs deteriorated and he needed to be restfully active.”

Joseph was appointed WCCM-Toronto Area Coordinator in 2009 for a four-year term, and he served until 2013. During his active years, Joseph occasionally led retreats in the GTA and Ottawa areas.

Elaine Mills

Remembrances

From Mary Curran:

In 2001, Joe Clarkson became principal in one of the most diverse and high needs schools in the Toronto Catholic District School Board. For two years, I worked with him and learned what servant leadership looks like at ground level. Joe talked to us in daily conversations, not just at staff meetings. He asked questions. What works better for our students? How do we involve families? What practical ways do we reach out to the community? Teacher and student

groups emerged, links with the parish and the local community grew. I remember the shock on the face of the manager of a local McDonalds when two of us



visited to check how our students behaved at lunch time. And to our delight, admissions to the school increased within two years. Today, I clearly remember the morning Joe emerged with his toolbox from the principal’s office. He took out his drill to fix a large picture in the main hall. Deo gratias, Joe. Rest in Peace.

From Rev. Marilyn Metcalfe:

A lasting memory I have of Joe is his ability to always be present to others at all times, even when he

was facing serious health challenges. We shared many life stories on a drive to Kingston one year as we were heading to lead an Essential Teaching weekend for our community. As many may know, the long drive along the highway to Kingston is uninteresting, even more so when traffic backs up. For Joe, however, it was not a boring drive and when traffic backed up; he chose the scenic route. Along the way, we stopped at a small café and shared a bountiful snack together—two colleagues breaking bread together. It was a special moment and one far better than stopping at the roadside truck stops which were full of hustle and bustle. You might wonder why this touched me so deeply—it was a time when I needed a respite from a health challenge I was dealing with.

I am grateful for the support and encouragement Joe always gave me, and I treasure the time we spent leading retreats and community gatherings. Joe, my forever friend in Heaven—may you rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.

Intention and Attention continued from page 2



“be” while letting go of all thoughts. The silent intention of my heart counts as meditation. How so? My intention underlays my attention to the mantra. I bring my intention into the practice of attention. Maranatha is a prayer that expresses that intention.

Maranatha is not a meaningless word. Fr. Keating calls the mantra a “sacred word.” Maranatha certainly is a sacred word. It is a one-word prayer. It is packed with history and layers of meaning. Of course, when meditating, I simply focus on sounding the word. I do not think about its meaning.

In Aramaic, maranatha means, “Come Lord.” This is a request. We are asking for something. For the Lord to come, to be with us, and to be in us. But maranatha also means, “the Lord comes.” This is the answer to our request. Both asking and receiving. Like our breath, going out and taking in. Maranatha embodies this sacred circle.

Christianity teaches that God intimately knows our hearts. God knows what we will ask before we even ask it. This is because, at the deepest level, we are rooted in God. Our essential identity... our very being... merges into the ground of all Being, that is God. At that meeting point is the Christ, both human and divine.

As Jesus prayed,

I have given them your word. I pray that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you... that they may be one as we are one, I in them and you in me, so that they may be brought to complete unity.

Gospel of St. John 17.

Maranatha symbolizes this dynamic meeting point merging into unity. It activates this merging of my being into the ultimate Being. I believe this is what is happening as I recite my mantra, Maranatha. But it is happening without my conscious knowledge. It is happening by faith, in secret, in silence, and in my heart. I am merely consenting. That is my intention. When I sound my mantra and focus my attention, I am surrendering to this fact. I am not forcing this to happen. I am trusting that God and I are one in Christ.

Maranatha.

REGISTER NOW!

**LAST DAY FOR LIVE-IN
REGISTRATIONS MAY 30!**



Fr. Laurence Freeman



Kaveh Guilanpour

The **Canadian Christian Meditation Community (CCMC)**
invites you to attend the

National Conference Retreat

July 5–7, 2024 UBC Vancouver, British Columbia

From Anxiety to Peace

We will see why the solution to the ecological crisis lies in our inner ecology. For what we are like internally so we will act externally.

Led by **Laurence Freeman OSB**, Spiritual Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation.

Keynote speaker **Kaveh Guilanpour**, former senior member of the UN Secretary General's Climate Action Team and Vice-President for International Strategies at the Centre for Climate and Energy Solutions.

Other speakers are **Squamish Elder Wendy Charbonneau**, **Dr. Jason Brown**, Lecturer in Religious Studies, Simon Fraser University and **Dr. Diane Tolomeo**, Professor Emerita, University of Victoria.

For more information, visit **wccm-canada.ca** or register online at **www.bit.ly/CCMC-NC2024**. Attend in person or online. Register early, as residential and commuter spaces are limited. All are welcome.

Contact JoAnn at **604-318-3429** or email Maeve at **bccchristianmeditation@gmail.com**.

wccm-canada.ca



Giving the Gift of Meditation to the World in 2024

The Friends of the World Community for Christian Meditation (the Friends Program) provides vital annual support to the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM) towards sharing the gift of meditation worldwide. This financial support is critical to WCCM activities and especially helps in teaching and nurturing the practice in both established and emerging communities, particularly those poor and marginalized.

The attached brochure provides details about the program and where the money goes. Tax receipts will be issued for your donations. To meditate costs nothing, but to create materials, to travel, and to teach meditation in countries near and far costs money.

For the past year we were able to reach out to more people through our online platforms. The Friends Program enables Fr. Laurence to offer retreats, talks and presentations in emerging countries, when financial sponsorship is unavailable from local sources. With travel restrictions lifted we are resuming many of those activities.

The funding supports the WCCM School, which trains meditation teachers and provides the resources to support and nurture meditators globally.

Meditation is the outreach of the community consisting of programs, publications and events that bring the fruits and benefits of meditation to the wider world. It seeks to bring universal spiritual wisdom and values to bear upon a world in crisis; from politics to medicine, church, science and the economy. Through seminars, media and the formation of young contemplatives in the world, it takes meditation to the worlds of business, mental health, addiction, education, environment, prisons and inter-faith dialogue.

The Friends Program also funds distribution of regular resource materials including the quarterly WCCM Newsletter to thousands of meditators in more than 120 countries worldwide. The Program supports translation of resource materials into many languages to support our local communities and reach out to the world community. It also funds publication of books and audio/video resources which may not be commercially viable but are necessary.

The fastest growing segment of meditators is children. In over 60 countries, more than 100,000 children now practice meditation. A whole generation of meditators is emerging who could potentially change the world!

How can I become a Friend?

You can make a donation to the Friends Program and introduce the program to others in your meditation group.

No gift is too small. All gifts are appreciated and will have a direct impact on sustaining our community's work and mission.

Donations can be made by cheque or money order payable to:

The Canadian Christian Meditation Community

Attention: Ibolya Agoston

11411 98 St. Fort St John BC V1J 7B5

By credit card, or online, through:

CanadaHelps: The Canadian Christian Meditation Community

As Father Laurence has said, 'No monetary value can be linked to meditation. It is freely given and freely shared, like the gospel, and this is why the teaching of meditation is, for us, a form of evangelization. Because of this we are aware how precious the gift is. And that is precisely why we feel the urge to share it with others and be part of the communion of meditators across the globe'.

In peace,

Ibolya Agoston, Coordinator CCMC Friends Program



The Canadian Christian Meditation Community (CCMC) invites you to attend

The Ever-Present Origin

Saturday, June 29, 2024 1:00pm–4:10pm

Sanctuaire Marie Reine des Coeurs, Pastoral Room, 3800 rue Bossuet

Parking: Beside Cadillac metro station, on Sherbrooke E, 1 short block away



Speaker,
Fr. Laurence Freeman

Under the stresses of modern living, we easily become uprooted and scattered, living fragmentary and distracted lives and yet, even when living in this way, we are not far from the kingdom, the “ever-present origin” which is the presence of God in all places and at all times. Meditation re-roots us in this experience of real presence. It is the gift we practice and the gift we can share. There is no greater gift for us to share with the world today.

Lunch with our sister Francophone Christian Meditation community will take place at 11:30–12:30 (bring your own).

Register at www.bit.ly/June29Talk Cost \$35

For more information, contact Magda Jass at magda.jass@gmail.com





The Canadian Christian Meditation Community (CCMC)
invites you to attend

The Ever-Present Origin

July 2, 2024 7:00–9:00pm

St. Paul's on Bloor, 227 Bloor Street East, Toronto



Speaker,
Fr. Laurence Freeman

Under the stresses of modern living, we easily become uprooted and scattered, living fragmentary and distracted lives and yet, even when living in this way, we are not far from the kingdom, the “ever-present origin” which is the presence of God in all places and at all times. Meditation re-roots us in this experience of real presence. It is the gift we practice and the gift we can share. There is no greater gift for us to share with the world today.

Light snacks and refreshments will be served.

Register at www.bit.ly/EverPresentOrigin Cost \$35

For more information, contact Elaine Mills at
elaine.louise.mills@gmail.com | wccm-canada.ca





In addition to the three English talks
in Montreal and Toronto
advertised in this newsletter,

Fr. Laurence Freeman

will also lead two talks in French:

Friday June 28 at 7:30 pm

Plaidoyer pour une écologie intérieure

and Saturday June 29 at 9:30 am

L'origine omniprésente

Please visit the website of our sister **Francophone Christian
Meditation Community** for more information and to register:

<https://www.meditationchretienne.ca/visite-2024-du-pere-benedictin-laurence-freeman-chez-nous-3-conferences-28-et-29-juin-2024/>

The Board of the Federal Charity

The Canadian Christian Meditation Community/
La communauté de méditation chrétienne du Canada

invites you to the

Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Christian Meditation Community

July 6, 2024 at 7:00 pm Vancouver time (PST)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87132817069>

Meeting ID: 871 3281 7069

Benedictine Oblates continued from page 7

Benedictine monks and nuns. Their promises are received by the abbot/abbess of a Benedictine abbey to which they remain attached, normally for life.

In contrast, **WCCM Benedictine oblates** in almost all, if not all cases, begin as meditators within the WCCM. Somewhere along the line, they meet WCCM oblates or read about them, and eventually feel called to enter upon the path to become a Benedictine oblate within the WCCM. As a result, WCCM Benedictine oblates are WCCM meditators first, and they remain so. Like other Benedictine oblates, they embark upon the oblate path as postulants and then become novices and eventually make their final oblation, promising obedience, stability and conversion of life. Their final oblation is accepted by the WCCM Benedictine prior, Fr. Laurence Freeman. However, their vow of stability is not to a brick-and-mortar abbey but to the worldwide WCCM community and so they live their oblation within a “monastery without walls”. Unlike other Benedictine oblates, their promises of obedience and stability include twice-daily meditation.

WCCM Benedictine oblates are strongly encouraged to work for the WCCM community, in one way or another. Many lead and/or participate in meditation

groups. A number have started meditation groups and have promoted and taught meditation. In this, they are indistinguishable from other meditators who do the same within the WCCM community.

Currently, there are 64 WCCM Canadian Benedictine oblates. Two oblates are currently living abroad and we have one oblate from the Mexican community in Canada at the moment. We have oblates in New Brunswick (1), Nova Scotia (2), Quebec (18), Ontario (39), Alberta (1), British Columbia (2) and the Northwest Territories (1), with the largest communities being in Montreal, Ottawa and the Toronto area.

This is an aging community. A fair number of oblates started their journey in the days of the Montreal priory. There are a number who live in towns and rural communities, somewhat isolated and at a distance from larger centres such as Toronto, where they could easily connect. However, Canadian WCCM Benedictine oblates are committed to their calling. They live it out as best they can in knowing they are part of a worldwide community.

For more information:

<https://oblates.wccm.org/v2019/>.

Dorothy Wood



A Si-LENT Journey 2024 continued from page 4

We closed the retreat, praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet, after which we had fellowship by sharing the day's events and finally praying the WCCM Community closing prayer.

An online Lenten Journey into Silence: Six-week Introduction to Christian Meditation Course

This was the second year of offering this course. Given the short notice, it was very well received. We had 27 registered from across Canada! Thanks to the advertising by our National Coordinator, André Choquet, who helped with the registration numbers. We had folks from Ontario, Winnipeg, Alberta and BC!

I decided to run the course differently this time. I organized to have three guest speakers in weeks 3, 4, and 5 to add variety to the session talks and to showcase long-time meditators in our community.

The guest speakers were Lise Babin, André Choquet from Toronto, and Martin Malina from Ottawa. They each did a fantastic job. Sharing the gift of meditation in a most endearing and meaningful way. I am truly grateful.

The format I used for the course was a PowerPoint presentation, which added structure and flow to the hour. The course materials for the presentation were what WCCM offers for the six-week introduction course.



Widen Your Tent
The John Main Seminar 2024
New Harmony, IN July 8-13



Led by **Jason Gordon**, Archbishop of Trinidad & Tobago, with **Father Laurence Freeman**

The title comes from the prophet Isaiah (54:2): 'Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.' He delivered this message 2,800 years ago at a dangerous crisis in the life of his people. It is no less a call we need to hear, understand and act on in the global crisis of our time.

<https://www.johnmainseminar.org/>

**Canadian Christian Meditation
Community Bookstore**

www.mediomedia.ca



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.

**Canadian Christian Meditation
Community Bookstore**

P.O. Box 52, Station NDG, Montreal, QC. H4A 3P4
514-441-7646 (answering service)

mediomedia@wccm-canada.ca
www.mediomedia.ca

I wish to receive the WCCM & CCMC Newsletters, 4 issues per year:

Electronic version (suggested annual contribution \$25).

Print version (suggested annual contribution \$30).

Name _____

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Municipality _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

I wish to make a donation to The Canadian Christian Meditation Community of: \$ _____

A tax receipt will be issued for donations of over \$25.00

Please make cheques payable to The Canadian Christian Meditation Community. Mailing address on page C12.

Or by E-Tx to info@wccm-canada.ca. Or through www.canadahelps.org – search 'Christian Meditation Community'


By credit card: _____ / _____
number expiry CVC



Notice of Staggered Distribution of the WCCM Newsletter

Please note at the time of publication of the Canadian Christian Meditation Community newsletter, the WCCM newsletter was not available. Once published, it will be made available on our bookstore website at **www.mediomedia.ca**.

In addition, for those subscribers who receive mailed copies, a print copy of the WCCM newsletter will be included for distribution with the next print copy of the Canadian Christian Meditation Community newsletter.



Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:
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RPO Royal Orchard
Thornhill, Ontario, L3T 7R9
Tel: 514-485-7928
www.wccm-canada.ca
Past issues of the Newsletter can be found at:
The Medio Media Canada Bookstore:
www.mediomedia.ca

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