

meditation news



Newsletter of The World Community for
Christian Meditation in the UK

Winter 2020

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meditation news is published quarterly by The World Community for Christian Meditation in the UK. Contributions are warmly welcomed.

Please send articles for the **Spring 2021** issue to: uknewsletter@wccm.uk to reach us by **1 January**.

Space is limited and if the item is more than 700 words please contact us in advance.

Please send events to: events@wccm.uk

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The World Community for
Christian Meditation in the UK

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2021 TOUCH THE EARTH LIGHTLY

Meditation and the Future of the Planet



Speakers: Laurence Freeman OSB & James Thornton
Friday 18th – Sunday 20th June 2021

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick DE55 1AU
(AA accredited as Covid Confident: the Centre has in place risk assessments, safety measures and staff training to operate safely within Govt. guidelines)

See page 3 for more details



2020 Annual Appeal Cards

Thank you to everyone for supporting the 2020 Annual Appeal. If you liked the card with a painting by Annie Wood that was sent with it, there is a small supply at the office which are available to buy at 5 for £1 plus postage.

Please contact Roisin at the UK office:
UKAdmin@wccm.org.



The Jewell Garden with Airborne Seeds, Assisi, Italy
Annie Wood (www.anniewoodart.co.uk)

Advent Reflections and Retreats



The Community at Bonnevaux has an Advent Online Retreat *Lovers are always meeting for the first time* between 30 November and 3 December. The talks

will be available on line so you can build a flexible timetable. Details are on the Bonnevaux website.

Stepping Inside: Meditation in Advent with Liz Watson is a series of four sessions investigating the themes of Advent: Faith, Hope, Joy and Love. Thursdays 26 November, 3, 10 and 17 December online. Contact the Meditatio Centre for more information.

Fr Laurence writes weekly reflections for Advent which are available by email, on his blog and on the WCCM UK and worldwide websites. These are thought-provoking and challenging and can be used on their own or as part of your daily practice.

If you would like to receive these by email you can sign up from the WCCM homepage wccm.org where there is a *Support for your daily practice* section near the end of the page. Click on *Subscribe here* to open the WCCM mailing list, fill in your details and click *Yes for Advent/Lent Reflections*.

Sharing the Gift of Meditation – Grants

The World Community for Christian Meditation exists simply to share the gift of meditation, a gift it received through the teaching of John Main.

If you have an idea about how you would like to help share this gift and need a grant to help you, please follow the link from the 'Grants' banner on the homepage or contact the UK Office for more information about how to apply.



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The World Community for Christian Meditation in the UK,
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Do you have any questions about your meditation practice, or your spiritual life in general?

Meditation Companions are experienced WCCM meditators who are there for you to talk to, in confidence.

Contact Bob Morley.

rgm1@live.co.uk

tel. 07704 419526.



The 2021 UK Conference – a physical gathering in June!

You will have received the flyer about our UK Conference – *Touch the Earth Lightly*.

The planning team have spent many months considering how we would offer this time together. Sadly, we had to cancel our 2020 Gathering.

With careful thought and prayer, we have decided to offer the conference to you as a physical gathering. A chance to truly be together. We are delighted that Father Laurence Freeman and James Thornton will be present, leading the talks, together with our workshop leaders, offering a range of workshop sessions.

Safety has been uppermost in our planning and we are delighted that the CCT Conference Centre in Swanwick has received the COVID Confident Certification. This means that they have been stringent in their measures to safeguard us. So we feel that we can be together in a secure environment.

We also spent a great deal of time considering how we can invite you during these uncertain times. So we are giving you the opportunity to pre book a place at the conference with no requirement for payment until the spring.

This is to enable us to have some idea of how many may be attending so can you please reply as soon as possible by email to WCCMUKConf21@gmail.com or

by post to WCCM in the UK, Lido Centre, 63 Mattock Lane, London W13 9LA, stating: "Please reserve one/two places for me at the 2021 UK Conference". Please include your name and contact details.

We all hope that we will be seeing the shoots of recovery and repair, with perhaps a vaccine or testing that reassures us, allowing us to meet with joy.

I would strongly recommend that you look at the CCT website for your reassurance about safety.

<https://www.cct.org.uk/downloads/covid/conference-with-confidence-booklet-2020.pdf>

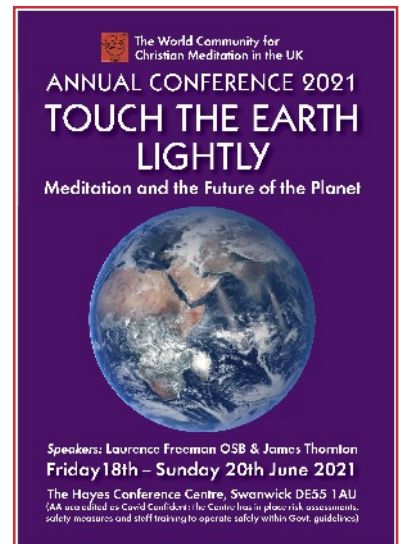
"We have been accredited by the AA as being Covid Confident. This means that we have passed the AA's stringent criteria and have in place the necessary risk assessment, safety measures and staff training to reopen safely, in line with the UK's respective government guidelines as well as UK Hospitality and respective trade association guidelines, as they are published".

So, I trust you will recognise that we have been very mindful of your needs and the need for us to gather together as a community of love.

We hope to see you in June 2021, when we come together for a truly inspirational conference.

Janet Robbins

On behalf of the UK Conference planning team



Donations

If you would like to make a donation to support the work of WCCM in the UK please send cheques to:

**The Christian Meditation Trust (UK)
Lido Centre, 63 Mattock Lane, London, W13 9LA**

Please include your name and address and make cheques payable to: CMT(UK)

Gift Aid

If you are a UK taxpayer you can Gift Aid your donation, which increases the amount we receive at no extra cost to you.



If you would like to Gift Aid your donation please include and sign the following declaration.

Declaration: I wish the Christian Meditation Trust (UK) to treat this gift and any donations made by me in the previous four years and any donations made by me in the future as Gift Aid donations. I am resident in the United Kingdom. I have paid/will pay basic rate income tax on the gross amount given.

If you have any queries or would like to set up a standing order or electronic transfer, please contact the UK Office Tel. 020 8280 2283 uk@wccm.org

Our new charity: WCCM in the UK

A small update on this matter which was mentioned in the last newsletter.

The virus has had an impact on the timing of changes being put in place, so you will now see the move from *Christian Meditation Trust (UK)* to **WCCM in the UK** in early 2021.

At the same time our website address will change to **WCCM.UK**

Watch this space!

Roz Stockley, Chair of the Trustees

Through a Glass, Darkly

Life at the moment is full of questions. Will science come up with a vaccine for COVID-19 and, if so, when? When will we be able to travel freely, embrace our family and friends, and go with them to church, to a bar, to the cinema or, as is the fantasy of a recently retired friend, go clubbing? Clear answers will no doubt emerge.

What about the bigger questions. 'For now we see through a glass darkly; all that I know now is partial and incomplete' writes St Paul to the Corinthians. (1 Corinthians 12:13). Our partial and incomplete knowledge begs questions, but finding answers to these bigger questions is another matter. The remarkable Russian film director Andrei Tarkovsky's seventh and final film *The Sacrifice*¹ is filled with the big questions:

- 'How is your relationship with God?'
- 'All my life I've felt as if I was waiting in a railway station as if the living I've done so far hasn't actually been real life, just a long wait for something real. What about you?'
- 'Truth, what is truth?'

The film ends with a question. At the very start, Alexander, the main character, is talking to his young son, known only as 'Little Man'. Little Man is mute. Together they are planting into the ground a withered, dead tree. Alexander is telling the boy the legend of the Orthodox monk Pamve who plants a dead tree and asks the novice monk Kolov to water it every day. Kolov obediently carries out this instruction and after three years the tree bursts into blossom. Task completed, Alexander and Little Man walk off, Alexander finishing his monologue to the boy with the words 'In the beginning was the Word...but you are mute, silent as a little salmon'. The final moments of the film see Little Man struggling along a track towards the withered tree with two heavy buckets of water. He waters the tree, lies down at its base, and utters his first words, 'In the beginning was the Word. Why is that Papa? The tree hasn't burst into life, but Little Man has.

The big questions will probably remain as big questions without clear answers. They contain layer upon layer of meaning, like a Russian doll. If we lightly hold the big questions, their meaning will gradually unfurl, not as clear answers but as a deep knowing. For this to happen, we need to stay where we are and go deep within. Like the novice monk Kolov, like Little Man, we need to persist in our daily task of 'watering', of gently laying aside our worries and questions, and with the help of our prayer word, enter into stillness and silence.

'God made our capacity for goodness the innermost part of us' wrote the 14th century German Dominican Johann Tauler. 'In this he gave us our greatest likeness to him who is our father, and this wonderful divine spark is deeper inside us and closer to us than we are ourselves'. The deeper we sink into our silent prayer, the more we

become aware of the riches within, our deepest, original self formed by God in his likeness. We begin to reclaim the gifts which have lain unused, unrecognised within us. The

deeper we go the more we discover. And at the end of our journey inwards we find our wellspring of love, because Love has made its home within us.'²

And living out of that wellspring, we will, like Pamve's tree, like Little Man, burst into life.

Alex Holmes



¹. Andrei Tarkovsky 'The Sacrifice'

². Benignus O'Rourke (Augustinian monk) 'Finding your Hidden Treasure'. p137.

WCCM Digital Presence

In August Leonardo Correa, the WCCM Director of Communications, announced a programme to re-develop the WCCM worldwide digital presence. The plan is to link together the content from the main wccm.org website, Bonnevaux, The School of Meditation, Meditatio, the Contemplative Pathway and the national websites to build one of the most useful, impactful and user-friendly digital ecosystems in the Christian world. But more importantly, **our goal is to serve our audience**, both the existing Community and those new to Christian meditation.

The COVID-19 crisis showed us that our digital presence is not just a nice-to-have, but it's vital to the mission of **sharing the teachings of Christian meditation with the wider world**. Now, more than ever, our digital channels are key to making our contribution to the world, and spreading peace and unity for all.

The first phase, bringing a new look to wccm.org should be in place by the end of November, with the project completed by the spring.

Here in the UK we will adopt the look and function of the new digital presence when it is available. This will incorporate the charity changes that Roz details on page three with the new name: *WCCM in the UK* and website: *wccm.uk* Our new website will better support mobile and tablet users than the current one which was designed for people sitting at their desks. Exciting times!

Andy Goddard, UK Website Administrator



Soul Desire

A new book written by the Cumbria Coordinator, Cameron Butland

Foreword by the Rt Rev'd John Stroyan, President of the Association for Promoting Retreats

This is a timely book responding to a widespread restlessness and need for something more and that 'more' is what God alone can give. It reminds us that contemplation is not reserved for the desert or the monastic life but that it is for all of us.

Bishop John Stroyan, President of APR

Lively, engaging and original. Cameron Butland's passion for and commitment to contemplative prayer is clear and well communicated

Richard Broughton WCCM in the UK

A valuable little book. It has added to the foundations of my faith and will help to support my choices in the future

Terry Winterton, Friend in Residence, Religious Society of Friends

Many people ask, 'how can I follow a contemplative way in a busy life?' Sometimes it has been said that living as a contemplative in a monastic setting is thought to be hard enough, so how can someone living a demanding modern life hope to enter daily into silence?

This book is written for those who ask such questions. The book looks at the contemplative way rooted in the words and stories of the fourth century desert teachers. The teaching of contemporary writers is then linked to the advice of the ancient desert fathers and mothers. The author finally draws out five principles for modern contemplatives to follow in their daily lives.

Soul Desire is written for those who are new to contemplation. If we are to value silence and meditation we need to trust in the contemplative relationship and allow ourselves to experience the love of God. This experience will teach us everything we need to know. God's love taught St Anthony of Egypt and in the same way this love alone can transform our lives.

Cameron Butland

To order your copy, cost £12 (free p&p), please email booksosp@gmail.com or contact Cameron Butland directly at cda03@gmail.com

Essential Teaching Weekend Update

The last 6 months has been a very frustrating time for event organisers, retreat centres and participants but 'it is as it is' and everyone is doing their best in the challenging circumstances.

We had hoped to offer the Essential Teaching Weekend at The Briery Retreat Centre, Ilkley in October, however as the time approached the combination of low bookings and the continued uncertainty around COVID-19 sadly left us with little choice but to cancel.

Those who had booked for The Briery were offered a place on an Essential Teaching Online which will take place on Saturdays from the 9/30th January 2021. Places are limited to 9 which is the number of people everyone can see on the Zoom screen using an iPad/tablet and were taken up very quickly. Consequently, we now have a waiting list and would like to offer this again as soon as possible. So, if you are interested in attending an Essential Teaching Online please do get in touch, as once we have the numbers we can make plans.

The next Essential Teaching Weekend is scheduled to take place at the Ammerdown Centre, Somerset from 7 to 9 May 2021. More information can be found in the advert below and at www.ammerdown.org.

Meanwhile, we look forward to more certain times.

Julie Roberts

School of Meditation Coordinator WCCM in the UK

World Community for Christian Meditation in the UK

Essential Teaching Weekend

Ammerdown, Somerset

7-9 May 2021

Have you been meditating in the John Main tradition for more than a year? Do you feel you would like to grow in your understanding of your meditation practice and be more confident about passing it on to others? An Essential Teaching Weekend is designed as a participative residential weekend. Presentations by teachers in the community, group discussion and practical exercises will help to build confidence to pass on the gift of meditation.

The style of the weekend is relaxed and will take place at The Ammerdown Centre, a tranquil setting in the heart of the beautiful Somerset countryside, just 12 miles south of Bath. The comfortable accommodation is all ensuite. The weekend is subsidised by the UK Community and includes all accommodation, meals, and talks.

Cost £175 per person

For more details, information about bursaries and an application form please email: jacqrussell3@gmail.com

or call the UK office on 020 8280 2283

The School of Meditation in the UK

Inner Healing in Lockdown

I lead a meditation group in Cardiff but since the lockdown in March we have been meditating separately, but keeping to the same time slot. I often sat outside in my garden during the spring and summer, letting all thoughts go and meditating. During or following such a session I sensed something from my past freeing me and felt moved to write the following about my early life:

I was born during the war in Aberdare. My father was serving abroad with the Royal Engineers. I lived in my maternal grandfather's house with him and my mother. My paternal grandparents lived nearby. I was very close to them all and I loved them to bits. My mother became seriously ill when I was a few months old (she would have been given antibiotics now but then she was at risk of losing her life). She had to have bed rest but fortunately, I had my three grandparents.

When my father returned from the war, he wanted the three of us to move to Essex. He had been stationed there in the war and, as a qualified teacher he would have no problem in getting a job in the idyll of rural Essex. My mother didn't want to go at all – she would be leaving behind everything and everyone she knew. But we went.

Finding somewhere to live in post-war Britain was hard but we were allocated a prefab.

I cannot remember the first few years in Essex but enough happened then to have deeply affected me at a sub-conscious level. When I was three, waiting for a bus home with my mother, she let go of my hand for a minute and I wandered into the road. A passing lorry dragged me along the road by its wheels. I was told that I had head injuries, was paralysed for five months afterwards and lost most of my reflexes. All this was pre-NHS. When I recovered, I had whooping-cough then gastro-enteritis. I cannot remember any of this.

What I do remember is the friction between my parents. As an adult, I can see how it all happened. It was inevitable. They were both struggling emotionally and no-one was to blame. But I was a little child and I can now acknowledge my own hurt. My mother missed Wales dreadfully and was probably clinically depressed (no treatment for that, of course). She spent her days looking after me throughout my illnesses and she was on her own for hours on end, wondering what else would go wrong.

My father had to take a bus to and from school. Twice a week, he made four journeys - he took evening classes as well. He must have been very angry and disappointed at the way things were. This had been his dream after all the years in the war!

So my memories, (conscious and sub-conscious) of the pre-fab years are mostly unhappy ones - until the last few months when something changed.

Where we live now in Cardiff, we had a tiny galley kitchen. Outside, there was a toilet and coal house. Two years ago, the toilet and coal house were demolished to make our kitchen bigger. The resulting area is very light and has a lot of windows.

During lockdown, I have spent a lot of time in the garden. I have made our back garden 'semi-wild', heaving with herbs and cottage plants such as honeysuckle, ox-eye daisies and lavender. I noticed that I was very calm and happy when I sat outside (near the 'new kitchen'). It was a feeling that I couldn't adequately explain. Then I 'knew' what it was.

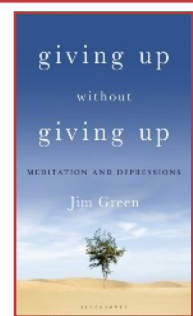
The extended part of our current kitchen has a sloping roof but, from a seated position, it appears to be flat. A memory from the flat-roofed pre-fab had surfaced! All around us in our little garden in Essex, there were cottage plants and bees. After industrial Aberdare, the sound of the bird-song was overwhelming.

I think that I have been graced by the Holy Spirit to return to those early years and thank God that He has given me an insight into a place that wasn't all bad!

The memory of the bees this summer at my house now, busy on the lavender and the bird-song was sheer delight. But so, also, was the pre-fab garden.

Diana Morgan

Giving up without giving up
the book by Jim Green, author of *Geese*, that was mentioned in the autumn item on *Meditation and Mental Health* is available from Goodnews Books.



Goodnews books

See online the range of books, talks, and DVDs
WCCM UK Distributors

• Resources for schools and churches

• Sale or return book-packs for events

Goodnews Books

St John's Church Complex
296 Sundon Park Road
Luton
Bedfordshire LU3 3AL

01582 571011

orders@goodnewsbooks.co.uk
www.goodnewsbooks.co.uk

Geese

*After she'd lived some years alone
in a house filled with the silence
of the woods beyond the fence,
my mother started to hear the geese.*

*If the red lines from a lost sun
were striping the sky
and the trees had stopped moving altogether
and the meal-for-one was eaten and washed up
and the first broken cry
rolled faint through the air
before swelling to a bombing raid
of unstoppable klaxons
honking louder and louder
bellowing down her chimney
shaking the double-glazing
heading – the intimacy of it! –
straight for her small house,
she would rush out
holding a tiny camera
at arm's length,
see the heavy V of bodies
slumping through the air above,
press it to her eye, squint
and squeeze.*

*Weeks later I'd receive a print
of a grey sky
with a grey smudge
somewhere near the middle.*



*Now, at night, in a circle of people
sitting upright in silent
welcome and surrender
in a tall old barn
many miles, many years away,
as geese suddenly thunder
through our dark peace,
I can't let them go.*

*Eyes closed,
I reach for a camera.*

Jim Green

(This poem was a prizewinner at the Bedford International Writing Competition 2019.)

A Quaker Voice

Cherish that of God within you
from Quaker 'Advices and Queries' no.2

This childhood memory has stayed with me over the years. I was worrying about tomorrow's visit to Mr. Wilson, a kind, gentle man, and our local dentist. To comfort me, my Dad explained that the real 'Me' lived deep down inside, and could never be reached by the dentist's drill, or anything else that might frighten me.

Etty Hillesum described 'a really deep well inside me, and in it dwells God. ... I imagine that there are people who pray with their eyes turned to heaven. They seek God outside themselves. And there are those who bow their heads and bury their faces in their hands. I think that these seek God inside.'¹ Similarly, David Wood wrote of a place 'deep, deep inside ourselves ... [w]here we have common ground with God.' And, typical of David, he added, 'It is a place so sacred that even God takes his shoes off!'² Is this the place Jesus meant when he said 'When you pray, go into your private room ...'³

Sitting alone or with others in silent prayer, in Quaker Worship or in Christian Meditation, my attention turns to the life-giving Presence within me – that which brought

me into life, keeps my heart beating and my lungs drawing breath. (Call it God, if you like; or if you don't care to use that word, then just call it Life.) And, in the quiet, I might become conscious of the breathing of those around me, or the woodlouse making a slow, dogged progress across the floor, or a blackbird singing in the garden – all outward manifestations of an inner-Life which permeates all of us, and all Creation. Very different from navel-gazing, it is looking inward only to pick up my end of a common thread which connects me with everyone and everything. As someone once said, "Your life is not about you. You are about Life."

John Dennison

¹ Etty Hillesum: *An Interrupted Life*

² David Wood: *Dark Prayer*

³ Matthew 6:6



Living with the Mystics – Ramana Maharshi

Every 3 months a group of between 20 and 30 meditators meet in Cumbria, to gather together in silence and also to share, individually and collectively, our thoughts and experience of 'living with a mystic' for the previous 3 months. This is usually done by reading one or a series of books by that particular mystic. Examples of the mystics 'lived with' in the 15 years since the inception of the group are ancient and modern, such as The Cloud of Unknowing, Julian of Norwich, Simone Weil, Bede Griffiths, Rumi, etc.

The mystics for future study are chosen by the group. Anyone is invited to the meetings, and although study of the mystic beforehand is preferable, it is not essential. The mystic 'lived with' for the past 3 months is Ramana Maharshi. He was probably the most famous sage of the twentieth century both in India and the rest of the world. He was renowned for his saintly life, and for being Self-realised (a knowing that his true self is a One-ness with God, and is not his mind or his body).

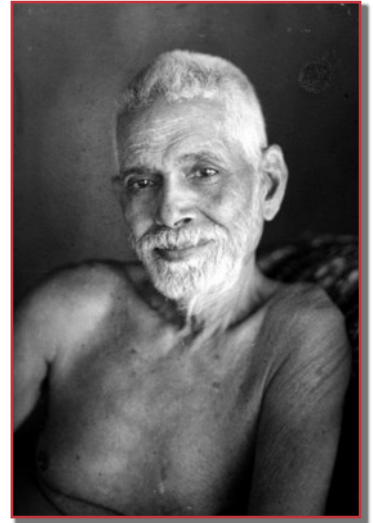
Ramana Maharshi always said that his most important teaching was done in silence. He meant that when people were in his physical presence, their minds were affected. In some cases the effects were astonishingly strong.

His second-most important teaching was a practice called *vichara* in Sanskrit. The customary English translation is 'self-enquiry.' Self-enquiry as taught by Ramana is the effort to keep attention continuously on the source of the I-thought. He called this source the Heart or the Self. He summarised his method in a pamphlet called *Nan Yar* which translates as 'Who Am I?', which was for years his most widely disseminated writing. (There are clear similarities here with Jesus' words 'Who do you say that I am?'). In his book on spiritual teaching, his response is '*Sat, Chit, Ananda*' which translates as 'Existence, Consciousness, Bliss'.

Some of the meaningful experiences and extracts from Ramana (*in italics*) quoted from our meditation community having 'lived with' him in the last 3 months:

- John Main wrote 'The person meditating is like the eye that can see but cannot see itself'. These words illuminate the fundamental teaching of Ramana Maharshi, a source of John Main's meditation teaching - that the seeing eye sees none other than God Himself and is the true self, the divine within us. It also recalls Meister Eckhart, 'The eye with which I see God is exactly the same eye with which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowledge and one love'.
- Ramana says our purpose in life is to be
- 'I am that I am ...The self is God'
'You are the self; you are already That'
'All that is required to realise the Self is to be still'
In the stillness and the silence, we surrender all thoughts, desires and feelings, we let go of the ego and become our true selves.

- I had never heard of Ramana Maharshi until he was offered as the mystic to live with, and it's been really quite exciting to have the chance to read and explore his teachings. He's particularly interesting where one's journey has included the WCCM. Fr John Main was originally taught to meditate by Swami Satyananda, who had in turn spent time with Ramana Maharshi, and was immersed in the Advaitic teachings. The Swami's own epitaph was: *the more ego is eliminated, the nearer man goes to the source of his life.*
- *When a person knows his true Self for the first time something else arises from the depths of his being and takes possession of him. That something is behind the mind; it is infinite, divine, eternal. Some people call it The Kingdom of Heaven, others call it the soul, others again Nirvana, and Hindus call it Liberation. You may give it what name you wish. When this happens, a person has not really lost himself; rather he has found himself.*
- *During meditation: You must learn to realize the subject and object as one. In meditating on an object, whether concrete or abstract, you are destroying the sense of oneness and creating duality. Meditate on what you are in reality.*
- Ramana's approach is unusual, and I would say, for westerners at least, very necessary. It becomes for us, with all our concern and anxieties about ourselves, a very direct and practical way to inner freedom. We do not have to get embroiled in the many theories and mythologies that often go with mysticism.
- A very short summary:
The only language able to express the whole truth is silence.
That says it all, doesn't it?
- *God is in fact The Self. Seek within you and you will find Him there. Then you will have constant communion with Him. The message is always there, it is never silent. It can never forsake you nor can you ever move away from Him. Your mind is outgoing. Because of that tendency, it sees objects as being outside, and God among them. Turn the mind within and you will find the objects there; you will also find that God is your very Self, and there is nothing but Him. You identify yourself with the body. But you are not the body. You are not the mind. You are I-Am, the Self. The Self is only One. That is the Reality. 'I Am' is the whole Truth.*



Bob Morley

Questions and Answers:

Is there a special call to Christian Meditation, or is everyone invited?

I suggest the answer is “yes” to everyone’s invitation. Karl Rahner, the great twentieth century theologian was quite clear that contemplative prayer “is not confined to a privileged few” but is a universal call to each and every Christian. He also added that this way to prayer “occurs within the framework of normal graces”.

The contemplative call originates with our baptism

Thomas Merton (1915-68), the American Cistercian monk and writer, was adamant that the fall from paradise in Genesis was a fall from the contemplative state and a loss of the original unity with God. For that reason Merton came to realize that contemplation was not a call to a chosen few but a universal call to everyone. And he also understood the contemplative call for Christians originated with our baptism. He did however express sorrow that so few Christians answer this call from God to silent contemplative prayer. In the book *What is Contemplation?* Merton writes:

The seeds of contemplation are planted in every Christian soul at Baptism. But seeds must grow and develop before you reap the harvest. There are thousands of Christians walking about the face of the earth bearing in their bodies the infinite God of whom they know practically nothing. The seeds of contemplation have been planted in these souls, but they merely lie dormant. They do not germinate.

The seeds of contemplation

Regarding those who reject the contemplative call, Merton elaborates on the gospel story of the sower who scatters the seeds; some seeds fall in the path and are eaten up by the birds of the air, other seeds fall in shallow ground, do not take root, wither and die, but other seeds fall on fertile ground and bear fruit in due season. Merton points out that excessive activity, cares and concerns of the world often drown out the voice of God calling us to this way of prayer. In our excessive busyness, the seeds, (God’s call) are eaten up by the birds of the air or fall on infertile ground.

The heights of contemplation are offered to ordinary people

We must also remember that the author of the 14 century work *The Cloud of unknowing* says that this way of silent prayer is open to even the most unlearned person; the author adds this prayer is simply a normal development of the ordinary Christian life. Two other great medieval spiritual teachers, Meister Eckhart (1260 -1327) and Johannes Tauler (1300 -1361) also reflect a similar teaching that the heights of contemplative prayer are offered to ordinary people.

The hound of heaven chases us

However I do believe that while the invitation to the spiritual path and this way of prayer is open to every Christian, nevertheless we do seem to also receive an individual invitation. Perhaps this is best reflected in the poem ‘The Hound of Heaven’ by Francis Thompson (1859 -1907) with the Lord portrayed as a blood hound on the trail of each one of us (our special invitation). We do everything to block the invitation but the Hound keeps chasing us.

*I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind, and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.*

*Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following feet,
And a voice above their beat,
“Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter me”.*

Then Francis Thompson at the end of the poem talks about how the Hound of Heaven has finally caught up with him. God speaks:

*All which I took from thee I did but take
Not for thy harms,
But that thou might’st seek it in my arms.
All which thy child’s mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home.*

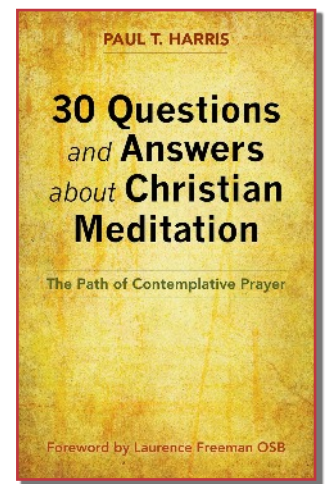
If to-day you hear his voice, harden not your hearts

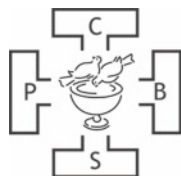
As the poem illustrates so well it is Jesus who takes the initiative in our spiritual conversion and it is Jesus who issues the invitation to a deeper way of prayer. “Behold I stand at the door and knock” (Rev. 3:20).

So again the call to Christian Meditation is a general call through our baptism. The seeds of contemplation are planted deeply within us. However God also issues a unique call to each one of us. Thomas Merton has put it so well: “We become contemplative when God discovers Himself in us”. We must always remember that the call to meditation is a gift and a grace from God: ‘if today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts’ (Psalm 95.8)

Paul Harris

From the book *Thirty Questions and Answers about Christian Meditation: The path of Contemplative Prayer* by Paul Harris. Novalis Publishers, Canada, Forward by Laurence Freeman).





Monastics in the World – WCCM Oblate Community

Meditation creates community.

Meditators who experience personal transformation through a daily practice seek to express this in ways suitable to their own path. Oblation is one of these.

The World Community is ecumenical and the Oblate community specially reflects this. However, the WCCM as a whole acknowledges a special relationship to the Benedictine tradition which was the first in the western Church to form a stable form of inclusive religious life and, in succeeding generations, has always adapted to the needs and circumstances of the age. Oblates live out their oblation in a spirit of 'obedience, stability and

conversion' and promise 'to share always in the life and work of our Community'.

The basic element of the Oblate Community, is the 'cell'. This word has a long monastic tradition referring originally to the monk's cave or room. With us it is used to describe presence not only physical space. The cell meets with regularity, to meditate, to share the Word, to consider their ways of sharing in the work of the wider community and where time allows share a meal together. All are welcome.

International Oblate Coordinator: Eileen Dutt

07721 574767 or eduttobl@christianmeditation.org.uk

Oblate Events

Annual UK Oblate Weekend: Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 October 2021. at The Monastery of Christ Our Saviour, Turvey, Bedfordshire. Please contact: Angela Gregson: rydal2814@yahoo.co.uk 01706 563 024 or text Oblates 07792 083 942.

The next **Quarterly Oblate Community Day** will be an online Zoom meeting. Contact: Gilly Withers gilly@withers.org 07896 742047 for details.

Benedict's Well - weekly online Oblate led prayer session and talk. Mondays at 9am. Contact: Julia Williamson julia.williamson78@gmail.com

WCCM Oblate cell meetings

Cambridge: Contact: Jane Serrurier 07557 476227

North London: Meets at Christ the King Church, Cockfosters. Contact: Rita McKenna on 0208 449 5013.

Berkshire: Online Zoom meeting on the last Wednesday of each month from 14.15 - 15.45. Contact: Angela Greenwood angelagreenwood@hotmail.com 01344 774254

Northern Cell (Leeds): Saturdays 16 January, 27 February & 10 April. Contact: Angela Gregson for details at rydal2814@yahoo.co.uk or on 01706 563024.

Online UK Led Oblate Cell Meetings: Sunday 10 January 11.00-12.30, Wednesday 20 January 19.30-21.00, Sunday 14 February 11.00-12.30, Wednesday 24 February 19.30-21.00, Sunday 14 March 11.00-12.30 & Wednesday 24 March 19.30-21.00. Contact Angela Gregson rydal2814@yahoo.co.uk for more information.

A many-purposed mantra

As a relative newcomer to Benedictine meditation, I admit I struggled with "Maranatha" as a mantra but settled into its English equivalent, "Come, Lord Jesus".

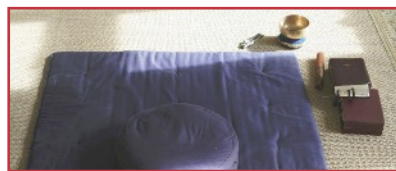
In May I had to have a lumpectomy for breast cancer. The day before the operation, I reflected that my mantra would be a far better way of "going under" than the usual counting down from 10. I had worked through it 1½ times before I was awake again with the operation behind me.

It transpired that a second operation was needed a month later, and meditation prepared me into a beautiful calm. On operation day, I put my mantra to every use possible. I'm a real victim of "white coat syndrome" when my blood pressure is taken, but not that day. Each time (4 in all) that they prepared to read my blood pressure, I breathed slowly and mentally said my mantra, and each time the result was good. Once again, I slid under the anaesthetic with the mantra's company.

In the past few days, when faced with a tricky phone call, or a worrying thought has crossed my mind, I've used the mantra and all has been well.

There's nothing magical about the mantra. It is simply a calming way of leading into stillness, into a deep awareness of God's presence. As the mantra is our point of focus in any mental distractions during meditation, so, I have discovered, it serves a similar purpose in everyday life. What better way to face the difficulties of life than with a plea to our Lord and Saviour to accompany us? I pray that other readers may find everyday applications too.

Shelagh Jones



Events

Events are subject to COVID-19 restrictions, some may be held as online Zoom events, others may be cancelled at short notice. Contact the organiser(s) for the latest information.

Events from December. Please visit the Christian Meditation UK website for more details and to check for changes and additional events: //wccm.uk/events

National

Friday 18 to Sunday 20 June 2021. Annual Conference . See page 3 for details of how to register your interest. Venue: The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick DE55 1AU.

School of Meditation Events. Contact: Jacqueline Russell jacrussell3@gmail.com or phone UK office: 020 8280 2283.

Saturdays 9, 16, 23, 30 January 2021. Essential Teaching Online. Leader: Julie Roberts. **Venue:** Online. **Cost:** £20. This course is full but please register your interest for the next one. **Contact:** julie.ann.roberts@icloud.com

Friday 7 to Sunday 9 May. School of Meditation Essential Teaching Weekend. Leader: Julie Roberts with Joanne Caine. **Venue:** The Ammerdown Centre, nr Bath, Somerset. **Cost:** subsidised £175 includes talks, meals and accommodation.

Northwest England

Saturday 30 January 10:00 to 16:00. Day of Gathering – ‘Remembrance in the Presence of Love’. Speaker: Bob Morley. **Venue:** Ambleside Parish Centre, Vicarage Road, Ambleside, LA22 9DH. **Cost:** suggested donation £10. Drinks provided, please bring your own lunch. **Contact:** Bob Morley rgm1@live.co.uk; 016974 72644

Tuesday 2 February 11:00-15:00. Living with the Mystics – Origen. Introduced by: Bob Morley. **Venue:** Ambleside Parish Centre, Vicarage Road, Ambleside, LA22 9DH. **Cost:** suggested donation £5. Drinks provided, please bring your own lunch. **Contact:** Bob Morley rgm1@live.co.uk; 016974 72644

Southwest England

Saturday 12 December. Short retreat for Advent. 2 groups of people in the morning OR in the afternoon subject to local Covid restrictions at the time (live streaming may be available). **Venue:** Emmaus House in Whitchurch near Bristol. **Contact:** carolineshalom.price@gmail.com (and keep an eye on Facebook for more information – search for ‘Bristol and Bath Christian Meditation’).

London

Wednesdays (2nd December onwards) 19:00-20:15. Addiction and Grace Meditation Group. Venue: Kairos Centre, Mount Angelus Road, Roehampton, London SW15 4JA. **Contact:** May Nicol maybnicol@aol.com 07768 310666

Meditatio Centre St Marks Church, Myddelton Sq London EC1R 1XX 020 7278 2070 meditatio@wccm.org www.meditatiocentrelondon.org Bookshop opening times: Monday - Friday 10:00-17:00

Please keep in touch for up to date information about our events. Some of our events will be offered at the Centre and some online.

We are continuing to offer online meditation on Wednesday 13:00. Please contact meditatio@wccm.org to join.

Repeating events:

First Thursday of every month 18:30-20:00 On beginning Meditation: an Introduction to Christian Meditation.

Single events:

Thursdays in Advent 18:30-21:00: 26 November, 3, 10, 17 December. Spiritual Growth. Stepping Inside: Meditation in Advent. Leader: Liz Watson. **Cost:** £15 Concessions £10. **THESE TALKS WILL BE ONLINE**

Saturday 5 December 10:30-16:00. Interfaith. Abishiktananda. Leader: Sr Marie-Claude. **Cost:** £30 Concessions £20. Please bring a packed lunch. Coffee and tea provided.

Saturday 12 December 10:30-16:00. Preparing for Christmas. Leader: Laurence Freeman OSB. **Cost:** £30 Concessions £20. Please bring a packed lunch. Coffee and tea provided.

Westminster Cathedral

Daily Meditation: 12.30–13:00 Monday to Friday. In the chapel in St Paul’s Bookshop. All welcome.

First Wednesday Quiet Days: Due to COVID-19 restrictions all events have been cancelled.

Silence in the City

See www.silenceinthecity.org.uk for the programme. Unless stated otherwise all talks are at: Westminster Cathedral Hall, London SW1P 1QH. Pre-booking is necessary. Contact: 020 7252 2453 info@silenceinthecity.org.uk

Publication dates and submitting events

Please send articles for publication to:
uknewsletter@wccm.uk.

Space is limited and if the item is more than 700 words please contact us in advance.

If you have a meditation event that you would like publicised in meditation news or on the UK website, please send the details to arrive by the copy date to
events@wccm.uk

There is a link on the What’s On page on the website. Please include consent to publish the contact details in the newsletter and website.

Issue	Available	Events Included	Copy Date
Spring	Mid-February	March to June	1 January
Summer	Mid-May	June to September	1 April
Autumn	Mid-August	September to December	1 July
Winter	Mid-November	December to March	1 October

Keeping In Touch

If would like to ...

- Receive Meditation News by email or post
- Find out about meditation groups in your local area
- Find out about the Lone Meditator Network

Visit: www.christianmeditation.org.uk

Email: uk@wccm.org or Phone: **020 8280 2283**

Or contact:

**WCCM UK Office,
63 Mattock Lane, London, W13 9LA**

Contacts

UK Office

The Christian Meditation Trust (UK) – Registered Charity No. 1101900

📍 Lido Centre, 63 Mattock Lane, London W13 9LA

☎ 020 8280 2283

✉ uk@wccm.org

🌐 www.christianmeditation.org.uk

National

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ukchair@wccm.org

Safeguarding Trustee: Richard Eddleston–07980 631311 riedd@btinternet.com

Goodnews Books: John Roberts–01458 832704 john.wilcott@gmail.com

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ukmeditationwithchildren@wccm.org

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Marginalised: Terry Doyle–07971 105082 terry-doyle@live.co.uk

Meditatio Centre: Kate Coombs–020 7278 2070 kate@wccm.org

Meditation With Children in Schools: Laura Mapstone–07503 737350

ukmeditationwithchildren@wccm.org

Meditation Companions: Bob Morley–07704 419526 rgm1@live.co.uk

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