

The World Community for Christian Meditation in the UK



WINTER
2013/14

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The community is registered in the UK as 'The Christian Meditation Trust (UK)' reg charity no. 1101900

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THE 2013 FRIENDS APPEAL

*Roger Layet (Chair, CMT-UK Trustees) and
Janet Robbins (UK national coordinator, 2012-13)*

In the last edition of the newsletter, the Trustees reported on the financial position of the WCCM in the UK in 2012. Then, in early November, all newsletter recipients should have received a package containing letters from Fr. Laurence and from us, making the one annual appeal for the financial needs of the community. As we write, your donations are flowing in. On behalf of us both and Father Laurence, thank you so much for your generosity.

Rather than sending out individual acknowledgements, for every donation we receive we would like to send a copy of Voices of Freedom to a prison in the UK where we believe we can make a difference. This is a little booklet containing inspiring quotations which were picked by members of the community together with a simple explanation of how to meditate. It is a very small gift that we can share with others. It has cost us very little, but is a gesture of our gratitude.

As you know, we support each other in lots of different ways. We do so by donating money, we do so by service to others in the community (for example by the work of facilitating groups), and – most of all – we do so by meditating, whether together in groups or individually. This is the lifeblood of community. We need each other's support, and we are all grateful for it – this time, for the financial support which all donors have so generously given. It will help WCCM to continue to fulfil its mission of communicating and nurturing Christian meditation.

A LETTER FROM OUR NEW NATIONAL COORDINATOR

Hello, fellow meditators. My name is Rosalind (Roz) Stockley and I have the joy of becoming the National Coordinator for WCCM in the UK, a role that I never dreamed I'd be asked, or even would want, to do but here I am. For many years, until about seven years

ago, I had been a lone meditator before biting the bullet and starting a group. Since then I have gradually become more involved with WCCM and have found it a caring, thoughtful, loving, generous and joyful place to be. I hope that the next two years are as fruitful and enjoyable as the last few have been.



My background is varied. Starting with a physics degree, then working in the accounting and business arena for the first half of my career, this was followed by retraining and working as a psychotherapist for the

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Contributions to the Newsletter are warmly welcomed. Please send all items to
uknewsletter@wccm.org:

David Simpson editor, Dee O'Connell sub-editor,
Pia Huber, Events pages.

Roz Stockley

UK National Coordinator

Deadline for next issue – 1 March 2014

second half. Everything then changed when my husband and I retired and moved from London to Dorset. Since then I have been engaged in mostly voluntary activities (one of them a family business), growing vegetables and keeping chickens. In recent years we have also been blessed with two grandchildren who live in Oxford and we see them as often as we can. Oh, I forgot, I also play golf to keep fit.

Each National Coordinator is confirmed and welcomed into the role at the annual National Council meeting held in November. As well as the formal welcome, those attending the National Council shared in a very moving blessing ceremony before morning meditation on the last day of the Council, offering prayer for me and for the community in our work together. Truly a lovely blessing.

The work of the National Council involves reviewing the activities of groups, regions and special interests during the previous twelve months and identifying what we would like to focus on during the next. I would now like to give you a précis of both of these.

You may remember that last year Janet, our outgoing National Coordinator, was asked to focus on helping the community achieve some significant and necessary practical changes. As a community, we are indebted to the selfless way she went about achieving the priorities set by the National Council in 2012. In summary, she helped to establish the new office in Hamilton Road, Ealing, and improved communication between the office, the regions and individual meditators. She also helped to ensure the sustainability of WCCM UK through effective fundraising, central administration and regional developments, such as working towards integrating Meditating with Children into the regional programmes. We also now have a new website and an improved database. We owe Janet a great deal.

With so much practical work having been done, the National Council this year began to refocus on our core mission to communicate and nurture meditation as passed on through the teaching of John Main, in the Christian tradition, in the spirit of serving the unity of all. A key message evolving through our deliberations was the need to keep things simple and personal – that the strength of our community is the faithfulness to our mantra every day, twice a day with all that we understand this leads to. Consequently, the Council thought it important to deepen the support given to local groups and regions and their activities. Indeed, the number of additional groups formed during the last year (50 since February) has shown that there is a hunger for a more contemplative approach to life and that we need to be

reaching out further to those who have this hunger. How we will go about doing this will evolve. I intend to visit the regions over the next two years to share in their meditation and events, teachings and groups to learn from their experience, so that this can be more widely disseminated within WCCM and to see whether there is more the community can do as a whole to help each other.

As we worked in the National Council, we got together in regional groups for the first time to identify and consider areas where we could give support to each other: sharing events, supporting each other's work with schools and giving each other practical support. This sharing was very energized as the regional coordinators listened to each other's experience, reviewed their reports and thought through the opportunities available to them. I look forward to the fruits of this work manifesting itself in the regions.

There are two particular strands of activity that are more specific. Firstly, the National Council is becoming more aware of younger meditators (18-30s) who perhaps do not have the same church background as older meditators and who may need a different form of support, at least in the early stages of their practice. Over the next year we will seek to work closely with Phil Seal, our Young Meditators Special Interest Coordinator, on how best we can approach this. Secondly, the work done by Charles and Patricia Posnett in establishing Christian Meditation in primary schools will, during 2014, be integrated into the regions, so that our activities can be managed locally but coordinated centrally.

During the weekend the National Council expressed their grateful and heartfelt thanks to the three people leaving their roles as Special Interest Coordinators. To Charles and Patricia Posnett who have now handed on the baton of Special Interest Coordinator for Children, and to Pam Connolly, who has stepped down from the post of School Coordinator. Both these roles are demanding of both time and energy and we are all indebted to the significant service Charles, Patricia and Pam have given to helping others grow in faith.

Taking over from Janet is a daunting task, and I have so much admired how she has fulfilled her mission in the role. My time in post will not be the same but I hope I can build on the work done before me as I am standing on the shoulders of giants – and these giants you can see in the lovely picture of the three previous National Coordinators and me further on in this Newsletter. As I journey in the role, I very much look forward to meeting many of you, and to hearing from you as well with your ideas and views.

With much love to you all

Roz

END OF TERM

Roger Layet

At the National Council in November Janet Robbins came to the end of her two-year term as national coordinator of WCCM in the UK. The Council was delighted to be able to appoint Roz Stockley as her successor. More of Roz elsewhere in this newsletter but it is important here to say something about Janet.

She gave up parts of a full and varied life to serve us all as coordinator. And then in ways that I can only envy she was able to combine going full tilt at the rest of life while giving clear attention to the needs of our community, with clarity and incisiveness.

And has she needed those abilities. Her time in the role has coincided with a time of great change, calling for strong leadership. For example, she has faced the need to instigate an entirely new office set up; somehow to keep up with the explosion of Meditatio outreach activity; and to revamp our website and communication methods.

Such changes have, I know, caused Janet a few headaches, which she has borne in good humour, and often with one of her trademark comments 'I'm still learning!' As Chair of our charitable Trust, it has for me been a delight to work with Janet. I had hoped that she would serve a second two-year term, but I reckon she has done four years work in two anyway . . . and proposed an excellent successor.

And despite a necessary focus on structures and admin, her heart has always remained rooted in our prayer practice. And in helping the regions and the groups. She showed this in her 2012 epic journeys around the UK, visiting every region – an idea I think of as a wonderful manifestation of feminine wisdom. So it is highly appropriate that she ended her term at the National Council, where the reports of the regional and other coordinators who comprise the Council testified to the fruits of her labours – reports which showed how much the UK community has grown and deepened, and which offer so much hope for the continued journey of many into the silent land.

A REMEMBRANCE OF SYLVIA HOLLINGS

2 September 1916 – 26 October 2013

Angela Greenwood

In the mid 1980s Sylvia became one of the founder members of our Christian Meditation Group in Crowthorne. She was a contemplative, strong in action, an example of a person, constant and true, whose actions were the fruits of her rich interior Christ-centred life.

In the group Sylvia's contributions were pithy and to the point and she had a keen, dry sense of humour. She was Spartan in her needs and did not appear to notice the cold. She loved her Great Dane dogs and enjoyed listening to the radio.

She was part of the Dalrymple family and the elder sister of Fr Michael Hollings and Anthony Hollings. During the Second World War she was an Air-Plotter in the WAAF and after the war moved to Crowthorne in Berkshire to look after her mother. She worked as a Health Visitor and was liked and respected by the many people she helped in the community.

For 50 years she was a tireless worker for the Catholic Church in Crowthorne, helping so many people on their pilgrimage of life, especially those who had little. We remember her with love and thanksgiving for her life.

SAYING HELLO AND THANK YOU TO THREE NEW SPECIAL INTEREST COORDINATORS

Roz Stockley

The role of the Special Interest Coordinator is to help promote and support Christian Meditation in a specific area, and to develop and maintain a network of interested people, integrating them into the community as a whole.

I am delighted to welcome the following three members of our community who have agreed to serve as Special Interest Coordinators:

- Jacqueline Russell, who is Regional Coordinator for Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, has taken on the role as School of Meditation Coordinator.
- Jane Serrurier, living in Cambridgeshire and with a significant teaching background, has taken on the role of coordination for Meditation with Children.
- John Roberts, from Glastonbury, has taken over the responsibility for the relationship with Goodnews Books.

I thank them all for their willingness to being involved in these aspects of the community and look forward to working with them in their new roles. I also wish them much joy in the work that they have now taken on.

REPORT BACK

NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING, SWANWICK, DERBYSHIRE, 15–17 NOVEMBER

Tim Cullen

As the regional co-ordinator for Sussex, I was invited to this annual meeting. Since this was the first time I had attended, I was asked to write a short piece about my impressions.



The National Council Assembled

Before the meeting, Janet had circulated reports from all the regions, and I was amazed at the richness and diversity of the activities throughout the country. Retreats, quiet days, teaching days, links with hospitals, schools, prisons, care homes. About 40 of us came from Scotland to Cornwall, and one couldn't help being struck by how large the community has grown and how far it has come since its beginnings. And that's before you consider its development internationally: WCCM is present now in over 100 countries worldwide.

Like any growing community or business, organisation and structures are needed to keep it functioning efficiently. Hence, much of the two-day agenda was of a business and administrative nature. Communications between the central office in London, and the regions, and then between the regions and the individual groups took up much of our time. We were fortunate to have Amanda Croucher, the UK Office Co-ordinator there to help answer our many queries. She and Paul Hayward, the Herts and Beds co-ordinator, gave us an excellent presentation on the new website

www.christianmeditation.org.uk

which will be an essential tool to keep our growing community of meditators linked up.

A growing organisation needs different arms to cope with different sets of needs and this can lead to confusion. For me, it was good to have clarified the scope of such bodies as the School of Meditation,

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Meditatio, the World Community, the Action group and the like! Brijji Waterfield, Special Projects Director – Meditatio, gave a presentation on the range of outreach activities undertaken by Meditatio. This left us catching our breath as to what has been achieved in such a short space of time (e.g. meditation in 150 UK primary schools) and what is being planned in the years ahead.

The danger of complexity is that it too easily leads to a deadening of the soul and the primary aims of the mission get lost. This danger was countered with regular periods of meditation in the beautiful chapel and an extremely valuable session where we reflected in groups on the Mission Statement of the community. If you've forgotten it, here it is: *'To communicate and nurture meditation as passed on through the teaching of John Main in the Christian tradition in the spirit of serving the unity of all'*



A quartet of UK National Coordinators

The best bits for me were meeting my colleagues and fellow meditators and hearing about their work. Arranging ourselves into groups to share experiences, problems and advice was invaluable and gave us all new ideas as well as encouragement. It was also great to have the space to get to know some of them on a more personal level. This was facilitated by an enjoyable social evening on Saturday, when Janet and Brijji put together a QUIZ. A winner every time!

WCCM RETREAT IN LANCASHIRE

Mary Frodsham, Bolton

On 18 October, 28 members of WCCM groups (Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Quakers and Unitarians) travelled to The Briery, a retreat house run by The Sisters of the Cross and Passion. The theme of the weekend was The Eye of the Heart and was led by Alex Holmes. Terry Doyle led us in sessions of movement.

We had several periods of meditation during the weekend interspersed with Tai Chi, Zen walking and therapeutic touch; and beautiful music played by Julie Darling on her Celtic harp.

On both nights we observed the 'Great Silence' from Compline until the recommencement of activities on the next day. Both Saturday and Sunday mornings began with Chi Kung followed by a session of meditation.

Alex's teaching was divided into three: 'my God', 'my self' and 'my neighbour'. I personally felt the last session was extremely perceptive and revealing, and made reference to the film *Of Gods and Men*.

Our weekend finished with an Agape Service based on a form of worship used at Iona Abbey.

I believe a sacred time was had by all, which was aided by silence and stillness which enabled us to expand our vision and understanding. All this was underpinned by pleasant company and very good food.

ETTY HILLESUM IN DORSET

David Hoyle

Over 50 people attended the Dorset Meditators' day at The Dorford Centre in Dorchester on 26 October. The speaker, Patrick Woodhouse, a retired Canon of Wells Cathedral, used the story of Etty Hillesum, a young Dutch woman caught up in the Holocaust, as a framework. (See also Liz Watson's article 'A soul forged out of fire' in WCCM Newsletter, April 2012.)

The essence of the day's message was that we all have a unique shape. Our shape forms in childhood. Throughout our lives we are influenced by outside influences and our own internal thoughts so that we reshape ourselves. According to how we reshape ourselves, we make an offering of our service and ourselves to God and our fellow human beings.

Etty's grandfather had been a Rabbi, her father an academic with eyesight problems, her mother a vivacious young Russian immigrant who was considerably younger than her father. Her upbringing was unorthodox and chaotic. She reshaped herself from chaos, mental disturbance and being driven, into following a strongly philosophical pathway.

Etty left her copious diary with a friend, when she voluntarily went to the German transit camp in Holland as a social worker on behalf of the Jewish Council, with the intention of witnessing what happened and to tell the story. She was also able to get further writing out of the camps before herself being taken away to one of the death camps.

From her contemplation she wrote some powerful dicta:

- 'Pray [meditate] as you can, not as you cannot'
- 'The most important thing in this life is to learn how to listen' (to self, to others, to God)
- 'God is what is deepest and most essential in me and in others'

Her faith was not just in the powerful Yahweh

of old but in the vulnerable part of God within us. Safeguarding that was very important: 'the important thing is to defend Your dwelling place to the last'

The strength of her faith was such that she could write 'I have looked Death in the eye and I accept it'.

Etty was offered a hiding place, but she refused to hate and she refused to hide: 'no-one is in their [the Nazis'] clutches who is in Your [God's] arms'.

Of the 25,000 Dutch Jews who were able to hide 18,000 survived.

Patrick Woodhouse's book, *Etty Hillesum: a life transformed*, is published by Bloomsbury, £14.99.

VOICES FROM A RETREAT

Fourteen of us gathered for the Gospel of Thomas School Retreat from 4–10 November at the Monastery of Our Lady and St Bernard, which was founded by the Bernardine Cistercian Order in 2006. It is in the Cotswolds in an 'Area of Natural Outstanding Beauty'.

These are some of our comments on living in silence for a few days:

"A silent retreat is a bit like going to a spa. There's a lot of pampering and some gentle prodding (from the Spirit) which is sometimes uncomfortable or even painful but one knows it is all in a good cause. Whilst there, one receives lots of food for thought often leading to a thorough cleansing of the soul which, revitalised, leaves one ready to meet the world again with renewed energy".

Roz Stockley

"My experience was altogether positive. I found the silence easy and 'cleared the way' for deeper thought. Without the responsibility of making social chit chat I could really concentrate on meditation.

Communicating by notes encouraged me to only ask pertinent questions. By not hearing other people's views and experiences, I could settle into my own uninterrupted musings uncoloured by other people. In a way it opened a path that was scattered with extraneous thoughts. I suppose all in all it was a wonderful luxury which I think will have a profound effect on my life – time will tell, so far so good! The daily meetings with Pam were useful in backing up one's resolve not to open a book 'it's only a few days can't you really try'."

Jill Tremellen

"The retreat for me was very special. Having meditated for several years I had reached quite a 'dry' point when it felt at times as if I was only going through the motions – though I was keeping faithful to the discipline.

Re-discovering God's unconditional love for me, and

the wonder of my meditative journey within the richness of the silence of the week, was just the nourishment my spirit needed. However, I came away feeling renewed and refreshed. The six daily meditation sessions were not as hard as I had envisaged and I slipped into the rhythm of each day quite comfortably. It was a relief just to 'be' – in silent companionship with my fellow retreatants. For anyone thinking of going on such a retreat – just do it: I am so glad I did."

Barbara Jones

"I found the retreat very stimulating, and especially enjoyed the talks, in my case with Kim, and the teaching. I have been reading the Gospel of Thomas for many years and was, therefore, very excited to have the chance to discuss my favourite gospel with Kim. The retreat has given me a much better idea of how to use it as a form of *lectio divina*, which I continue to do."

Lynda Stark

"It was a challenge to decide to give up my familiar daily life, go away to a new place and to be in silence with a group of people most of whom I didn't know. However we chatted for a while when we arrived and realised we were all there with the intention of going deeper and discovering more. There were six periods of meditation a day, a personal time each day with one of our facilitators, and a talk each day on the Gospel of Thomas. We had the opportunity for expression through art and poetry, and time for walking in the beautiful countryside. Gradually I began to appreciate the feeling of spaciousness and of being lovingly held. The atmosphere was gentle and there was lots of laughter. I came away with what I had gone for, a deeper and more committed connection with my faith."

Patricia Hay

"Spending several days in silence gave me more than I ever expected ... 'go to your cell and it will teach you everything you need to know' came often to my mind. I found the silence loving, uplifting, inspiring, enriching, soothing, and at times unnerving."

Vicky Lamb

"The idea of a week of silence and meditation had seemed very attractive following our regional weekend retreat last year, but as the date for the School Retreat approached I began to feel increasingly nervous. Would I be able to cope? Wasn't this a huge self-indulgence at a very busy time of the year? Helped by beautiful surroundings, a very cosy room and the hospitality of the Sisters, I began to settle into the rhythm of meditation, gentle exercise, teaching sessions and daily personal conversations with Pam or Kim. I was having a lovely time and it wasn't until a couple of days in that I realised that some serious 'work' was needed. This

certainly was not self-indulgence – away from the usual distractions and with Kim and Pam's inspiration I became aware of all sorts of insecurities and excuses for not being open to going deeper. By the end of the retreat I felt that things had shifted somewhere deep down, small chinks had opened up, and meditation practice had become even more precious. The need to share this practice seems increasingly relevant."

Sue Ingham

GOLDEN SUN, GOLDEN RAIN:

IMAGERY OF PRAYER WITH

ST TERESA OF AVILA.

Wonersh group

Two glass icons of these images, made by Julienne McLean, decorated our room. **Contemplation of the heart** was our theme.

Julienne led this wonderful day of reflection at St Augustine's Abbey, Chilworth. Forty people were packed into the Assisi Room for three sessions when Julienne, using her knowledge of the Spanish mystics as well as her expertise as a psycho-therapist, walked us through the stages of the Interior Castle. Each session was followed by 30 minutes of silence, during which some used the beautiful church, others walked in the sun-drenched grounds, and others remained in their seats for this precious prayer time.

During the feedback times, sometimes in pairs and sometimes in open meeting, people expressed their difficulties in adopting the discipline of silence, learning to deal, not only with our racing thoughts but also with the hidden emotions which eventually rise to the surface of our lives when we spend time in silence listening to God.

Many people were moved to tears when considering the deep love relationship we share with God. Many were also touched by the beauty of nature which we so often ignore in our busy schedules. Having time to walk in the grounds we observed mushrooms, toadstools, acorns and autumn leaves which inspired our appreciation of the Creation and the loving Creator.

As a recurring theme in this deep and moving day, the value of us having a 'soul' friend, spiritual director or listener was made very clear by both Julienne and others who shared their experiences with us.

We are so grateful for Julienne's wide knowledge and experience, and her loving, caring teaching.

A QUIET DAY FOR HOSPITAL STAFF AT NOGGS BARN

Anne Mc Donnell

Last September, Noggs Barn hosted a Quiet Day for staff from our local hospital. Liaison with the Chaplaincy team indicated a need for stressed staff from various departments to have some time out, so it was planned to provide opportunity for an introduction to meditation and time to slowly consider the subject of 'happiness'. What is it? What makes us really happy?

Within a confidential and accepting atmosphere the time evolved into a heartfelt exploration of those things which promise superficial satisfaction in contrast with the real joys of life.

Rev. Jane Nursey is a member of the Chaplaincy team at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital and attended the day. She writes:

The role of the Hospital Chaplain has changed over latter years and is no longer as simple as visiting patients at the bedside. Although this remains a key part of the chaplaincy day, Chaplains have an extended pastoral responsibility for relatives and friends who are visiting – and for all staff across the hospital be they medical, nursing, clerical or in other roles.

Sadly, it seems that not many days go by without the NHS making TV or radio news headlines. Usually this is of some type of criticism or of another inflicted change. The effect of this constant prominent 'bad press' can have a demoralising effect on staff who are endeavouring to do their respective jobs as well as they can, despite the restrictions of finance and time put upon them. Often it is overlooked that staff have their own problems and concerns at home and have to try to put these aside on coming to work. With this in mind the Lead Chaplain at the Norfolk and Norwich University Foundation Hospital decided to offer a 'Quiet Day' for staff members.

The venue had been suggested by a chaplaincy volunteer – 'Noggs Barn' is a delightful retreat centre situated conveniently near to the hospital. Two chaplains planned the day with Anne McDonnell, entitled 'Happiness' which took place in September. Anne, the owner and experienced teacher, kindly offered to lead the day – which also enabled the Chaplains to participate themselves – (much appreciated!).

We began with welcome over coffee and a general introduction to the day. There was perhaps a little trepidation as to what would 'happen'. Those who attended came from wide ranging departments – nursing, administration and reception – all of which

have their particular stresses. Out of the 11 who attended, only three or four had any previous experience of meditation. The day was not a 'faith' centred day either – some had allegiance to a faith community and others not.

Anne gently led us in three meditations over the day. She began with explaining that in following a sequence of relaxation and in focusing our thoughts, we could approach the times of silence (each lasting about five minutes).

The first meditation exercise involved a variety of photographic cards which were scattered around on the floor. We were encouraged to select one and explain to the group why this 'spoke' to us of happiness. Then all the pictures were passed around the circle, until we finally received 'our' picture back again, as we contemplated what it was like to 'lose' our picture, and how it was to receive it back.

A light lunch was served by the Chaplains in the house lounge – this offered a 'different' sort of quiet space with an opportunity to chat and make connections. Before we knew it we were being recalled back to the Barn for the afternoon.

Beginning with light exertion – Anne led us in a short session of 'Tai Chi'; a chance to refresh ourselves in the secluded garden, a haven of greenery, and to stretch beyond ourselves physically and mentally to absorb the natural elements under a bright sky.

The main focus of the afternoon was centred around an item symbolising happiness which the participants had been asked to bring along. These proved to be far ranging, from a pair of new shoes to a mandolin. In turn we explained the reasons behind our choice without any comments being made – but allowing a good and safe listening time to one another. Anne gently acknowledged the value of each in turn.

It was amazing how so much could be 'said' by so little. Anne's gentleness made everyone feel safe and gave a place where some shared their current concerns. It proved to be a very emotional afternoon. The group had developed a closeness, sense of care and support which was created by the silence, gentle meditations, relaxing atmosphere and subdued coloured surroundings.

Finally, we took turns to light a candle and said one word, or a short phrase, which summed up the day for us, ending with personal quiet reflection whilst music was played to draw the day to a close.

New friendships have been made. The feedback was most encouraging and there was a sense that people were really thankful for the opportunity to step back from the busyness and anxieties of work and family life.

So the question is 'When will we have another?'

– Yes, please’. This is certainly our intention – having been encouraged by the positive responses and feeling that the day had been beneficial for our staff, and for ourselves as Chaplains.

MEDITATION, THE ART OF ARTS: DISCIPLINE FOR OUR TIME

David Belcher

On Saturday 19 October, 38 people from across the West Midlands met in Shrewsbury for a retreat led by Kim Nataraja, Director of the WCCM School of Meditation. It was Kim’s second visit to the region in recent years and there was eager anticipation of the opportunity to get together and deepen our understanding and experience of the art of meditation.

In the first session, Kim offered us some reflections on the development of religious consciousness as part of human social evolution and the way this has found expression in the spiritual experience and teachings of individuals such as the Buddha, Jesus and the prophet Mohammed. These insights, in turn, were mediated through the body of disciples that grew up around each of these teachers, and the institutions that subsequently arose as expressions of a religious faith centred on their teachings. Finally ... ‘We end up with words, the thoughts of these great teachers filtered through the cultural, mental, psychological, emotional framework of the listener.’ (*Dancing with Your Shadow*, K. Nataraja, Medio Media, 2006)

Kim described how two distinct strands in Christianity had developed from the differing views of Origenest and Coptic monks of how we can experience God. ‘... one stressed pure faith and an unreflective acceptance of a set of beliefs based on the agreed scriptures as the only criteria for being a true Christian and the other one felt this was not enough; they stressed the importance of going deeper and thus acquiring spiritual knowledge of God through Spirit-led insights and experiences.’ (K. Nataraja, 2006)

We can sense this separation within the Christian tradition today. If we want to re-discover the insights that lie at the heart of Jesus’s teaching we need to capture the immediacy of his presence in our hearts ... ‘His spirit dwell(ing) within us, making us temples of holiness: God himself dwelling within us.’ (John Main) However, this can bring us into conflict with the forces of organised religion which demand an unconditional acceptance of creeds and doctrines based on an uncritical view of canonical scripture as the only source of divine revelation. Consequently, religious institutions have tended to view the

contemplative path and the practice of meditation as a subversive activity. They are probably right. ‘... meditation is a process of liberation: we must set these truths free in our lives.’! (John Main)

The second session took the form of an interactive workshop. Kim provided a list of unattributed quotations concerning the nature of spiritual experience and invited us to share our reaction to them, and try to guess from which tradition they had come, Christian, Hindu or Buddhist. This led to a lively discussion and, surprisingly, many of the sayings our group attributed to eastern religions turned out to be Christian, mostly from the Desert Fathers.

In the final session after lunch, with everyone feeling suitably mellow, Kim drew together some of the themes that had emerged from the earlier sessions and helped us to see how the tradition of contemplative prayer had its routes in the direct experience of the presence of Jesus in the hearts of his followers. She showed how the practice and sayings of the desert fathers in the third and fourth centuries and later mystical writers, such as Meister Eckhart and the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* in the Middle Ages, were now finding a new expression in the practice of Christian Meditation as pioneered by John Main, and his successors.

Subversive we may be, but only of those forces within the Church and Christian tradition which seek to bury the living Spirit of Jesus beneath mountains of dogma, and ecclesiastical structures that prevent us from engaging with the reality of people’s experience today. Long live the revolution!

OBSCULTA – THE OBLATE LISTENING IN THE WORLD

Eileen Dutt

Obsculta – the oblate listening in the world was the chosen theme for the third Benedictine Oblate Congress held in Rome from 4–10 October 2013. I sense this Congress marked a change in perception of our ‘monastery without walls’ by our Benedictine brothers and sisters in Christ around the world. Why? To quote Tom, an oblate of Douai Abbey in England and the British Benedictine oblate coordinator for the Congress: ‘most oblates belonged to a monastery; some belonged to a monastery without walls taking oblation to further and unknown levels for most of us.’ Or to put it another way, and here I quote from a talk given by Fr. Laurence to the General Chapter of the Olivetan Congregation in October 2010: ‘a monastery without walls is a new concept because it is a new kind of ecclesial organism; and I cannot define it exactly. However, like many forms of the

Benedictine life over the past 1,600 years, it has come into existence before it can be fully defined. I can say that it is recognised canonically.'

Given that there were 11 WCCM oblates present from countries as far flung as America, Argentina, Australia, Canada, Holland and the UK, this list could, and hopefully will at the next Congress in Rabat, Morocco in 2017, be much longer. There were many opportunities for us to share our reasons, and these will, I am sure, have differed from person to person: why we chose to make our promise of stability to a 'monastery without walls' rather than, perhaps, a local Benedictine community.

In keeping with the chosen theme of the Congress, and the reason why we were all gathered together in the first place, there was a lot of sharing of personal story, experiences, struggles and aspirations. An oblate from Nigeria shared in our small group: 'when we truly listen we sacramentalise what we are hearing. Listening is a sacrament we can all offer.' Powerful words! I certainly felt I was in a privileged position as I listened to stories shared by delegates from countries I have yet to visit and whose circumstances are outside my experience and sometimes even my understanding. It was a time of grace and something I will always treasure, that's for sure.



I have only been able to share here a little about the Congress. Should you wish to find out more, including the texts of talks given by the main speakers and many photographs, I suggest you go to the official website www.benedictine-oblates.org/2013. If you would like to learn more about what becoming a Benedictine oblate of WCCM entails, do visit our own website

www.wccm.org/category/category/oblates or email me on edutobl@christianmeditation.org (please note new email address although the existing one is still available).

As we stand on the threshold of Advent, I can think of no better words to close with than the following:

And with eyes wide open to the divinizing light, and with astonished ears, let us hear God's voice crying out to us every day and admonishing us: 'Today, if you hear [God's] voice, harden not your hearts.' And again, 'Let the one who has ears for hearing, hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' (Benedictine Rulebook, The Prologue 9–11) Michael Casey O.Cist.

THE FESTIVAL OF WELLBEING

OCTOBER 2013

Chris Hill

A hall full of lively people of all ages met in Bishopsgate Institute for the Festival of Wellbeing, organised by the *Resurgence and Ecologist* magazine.

The title of the day was **The Shift from Economic Growth to Growth in Wellbeing** with 16 brilliant speakers. The discussions focussed on nature being at the centre of the way we live, the innumerable problems of genetically modified food, and the reduction in the amount of organic seeds available to be sown in farms designed to increase biodiversity.

We learned of the proven importance of walking amongst the trees to enhance our immune systems, and how to grow meadows and vegetables on local authority land – for all to share! Richard Wilkinson quoted from his book *The Spirit Level* and explained how unhappiness prevails when we have gross inequalities in society.

Rowan Williams entitled his talk 'What the Body Knows'. He feels that the way we currently live is rootless, whereas if we paid attention to ourselves – mind, body and spirit – the truth would emerge. The keys to knowledge were attention, attunement and atonement.

Satish Kumar's talk concluded the day. He explained that his new book *Soil, Soul, Society* would help us to understand the need to move from individualism to community – just like meditation!

REFLECTIONS

'E.T. PHONE HOME'

Katherine Quinnell

Although I have taken part in a number of prayer groups of different denominations during the course of my life, it was not until February 1980 that I joined a newly formed group for 'Silent Prayer'. Until then, I had never heard of Christian Meditation and contemplation, and I found what I had been searching for.

We were introduced to the teaching of John Main, listened to talks and read his books, as well as those of other great spiritual writers. The WCCM

bookmark says all we need to know about how to meditate and what to pray for, before saying the mantra.

John Main's teaching on 'how to meditate' may sound to some like a technique, but in a prayer to the Holy Spirit we say 'Open our minds that we may see the hidden things of God, and send LOVE into our hearts like a flame of fire . . .'. The key is LOVE, and I keep in mind the words of St Paul, 1 Corinthians, chapter 13.

There are two points in John Main's teaching that have particularly impressed me over the 33 years. One is to meditate regularly and not to get side-tracked by books, talks and discussions about meditation. The other point is that, to meditate properly, one needs to be relaxed. Hence the sitting position, attention to breathing and awareness of tension spots in the body before saying the mantra.

My interest in the prison service began after working in music with teenage girls in need of care. In the mid-1970s I joined the Guild of St Leonard, subscribing to a quarterly intercession paper praying for offenders and all in the prison service. It is tremendously encouraging to hear that Christian Meditation is being taught to prisoners, and I hope to read *A Way in the Wilderness* by James Bishop who was serving a 12 year prison sentence and discovered the value of the mantra and Christian Meditation.

For some time I have felt that people suffering from emotional and mental problems would benefit greatly from this way of prayer, so it is heartening to know that people in hospitals are being helped in this way too.

Recently, while watching a replay of *E.T.* I was struck by the intensity of longing in the little alien's voice when he said 'E.T. phone HOME' and his despair when there seemed to be no response. When I pray, I like to feel that I am 'phoning home', and I am increasingly confident that there is always an answer.

D.I.Y. (WE'LL DO IT OURSELVES!)

Mary Wilkinson

The bus times were wrong. Parking would be a problem. The return train wouldn't get us back till early in the morning. So we couldn't get to St Marks for their course. We don't have a handy theological college in our Somerset village. It rather looked as though **The roots of Christian Mysticism** course was not for us.

Several of us have been meditating for some years, and have attended Essential Teaching Weekends as well as retreats. So, we were very keen to explore the ways in which other people had grown closer to God and needed to find a solution. We decided to try DIY.

We started with the Gospels. Where, when, how did Christ the Lord meditate, pray at his mother's knee, take part in the liturgy of the Synagogue, find a place to be alone with his Father, draw his friends to deeper, unifying prayer? We read; we thought; we prayed; we shared. It turned into a sort of group *lectio* – a gentle and accepting exploration together of what it means to try to live the life of the Spirit .

Now we meet each month (except in Lent and August). First we meditate. Then we begin prayerfully to set out our individual findings. Some may have done a little research. The parish church has quite a good library to support us; we go on-line; we bring out notes from old lectures; it is surprising just how many books we've got between us. Bath and Wells has a helpful librarian, and we have the fruits of our own contemplation and reflection. We are not academics or intellectuals displaying our learning, just seekers after the truth of Christ.

It is important to us that nobody feels under any pressure to do preparation or to make an offering to the group. Each does what s/he feels inclined or called to do. Last evening one said she had no time to do anything except look up some 'quotes'. Considering and praying over just one of her 'quotes' took much of that evening. Someone may have read a book or an article which they condense for us. We humbly give our reactions and are enriched by the profundities of each other's thinking and meditation. It is a real time of grace and shared insight and contemplation.

At present we are experiencing some of the thinking of Teilhard de Chardin. He reveals the reality of what the incarnation is, not just for humanity but also for the entire spiritual and material universe. He is grounding us in this world, getting us to face up to what it means to be human, 'borne ever onwards in the stream of universal becoming'.

We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.

We end the evening with one of Susan's refreshing juices and some 'nibbles'. And leave with gladdened hearts. Deo gratias.

A DAY IN THE RADIO 2 STUDIO

Freda Nichols

Greetings! Our group at St. Mary's in Witney, Oxon, continues to meet weekly. Three Quakers have joined us and we have about a dozen regular meditators. We have not put on any specific events but seek to be a quiet presence.

Very amazingly, quite out of the blue, and perhaps because I'm known to be a member of this

group, I was asked to take part in a Radio 2 programme on spirituality and ageing. I was able to say a few words about taking hold of life and finding wholeness in quiet, and the presenter, Hardeep Singh Kohli, was most kind. It was a very interesting experience including a taxi coming to whisk me into the Oxford studio. I felt amazingly at peace.

There aren't any queues lining up to sign me up for a regular series to comment on spirituality! However, I am much drawn to the idea of 'mustard seed' faith and felt 'held' in this very brief and ordinary opportunity. I thought you might like to know about it – it was fun!



Christian Meditation with Children

SILENT LISTENING

Charles & Patricia Posnett



Have you ever noticed that the word 'silent' is an anagram of the word 'listen'?

Certainly we are unable to listen attentively unless we are not only silent in terms of there being an absence of noise around us but also silent in terms of there being an absence of distractions in our minds. This state

of loving attention is what we strive to achieve in Christian Meditation.



This simple practice enables us to turn our attention away from our own ego and all the triviality and superficiality around us and become the spiritual beings that we are meant to be – truly in union with our creator and clearly in tune with his will for us here on earth.

The ability of young children to adopt this

simple practice is evidenced by those schools who have decided to incorporate Christian Meditation into their school day, and by the enthusiasm with which the children embrace those precious minutes of silence in an otherwise frenetic agenda of physical and mental activity.

A spiritual hunger is implicit in all our lives, but all too frequently we try to seek happiness through mindless superficiality, excessive use of facebook or twitter or other forms of opinion-based distraction.

However, there is an alternative. The gift of 'silent listening' is a grace which is easily achievable and one that can stay with us throughout life. The regular practice of listening and meditation deepens our sense of peace and it is readily recognised by the children as a way that they can get to know themselves better. They become more comfortable in their own skin.



What is even more wondrous is that this simple prayer of the heart deepens the spiritual awareness of the children, and the fruits of the spirit – such as joy, patience and peace – become daily more apparent as their experience of loving attention to their creator becomes part of their everyday lives.

The anecdotal evidence for this transformation is widespread. Although the children are never asked to measure the impact of these periods of Christian Meditation, they are noticeably more attentive not only to the next school lesson, but also their sense of community and their interaction with their classmates become ever more evident. They will notice if one of their friends is in any sort of trouble and comfort them. They are also keen to take the practice of meditation home and share the fruits and benefits with their families. We are told that as many as 75% of the children like meditation so much that they are keen to teach it to their parents and siblings. This in turn leads to the family praying together – sometimes for the first time.

This overwhelming sense of community, at school and in the home, is not surprising when you consider that the Rule of St Benedict of Nursia (480–

547) was written for contemplative monks living in community and has been widely used for communities of men and women ever since.

The very first word of the prologue of St Benedict's Rule is the word 'listen' and it is noteworthy that the oblates of the World Community of Christian Meditation embrace the Rule as part of their oblation and practise it in their everyday lives.

'Silent listening' is a way of life and the 'attentiveness' that results in both children and adults is an expression of their love for each other. As we know, paying attention to a fellow human being or to God is the ultimate sign of love and respect for 'the other', thus we learn to grow in spiritual grace.

By learning to attend we learn to see with absolute clarity what is before us. We learn to hear what is said to us. We learn to be fully open to reality. Without such selfless attention we can never fully experience what really 'is'.

We learn to be silent. We learn to listen. We learn to be at peace with ourselves and the world around us.

STOP PRESS!

We are delighted that, after much effort from the Welsh team, a **Silent Retreat** will take place from **Monday 3 to Friday 7 February 2014** on the theme of the Gospel of St Thomas, with 3 meditations each day. The week will be run by Andrew and Delyth Cresswell with Don MacGregor. The venue is the Llangasty Retreat House, in Brecon, Wales.

www.llangasty.com

- £275 for occupancy of a single room (mostly monastery cell size)
- £310 for single occupancy of a twin room (mostly spacious)
- £510 for double occupancy (made at the time of booking) of a twin room.

For bookings or for more information, please contact Delyth on

01597 823868 delythcresswell@yahoo.co.uk or

Jayne MacGregor

01348 837750 jaynemacgregor@yahoo.co.uk

BOOK REVIEW

Walking into Celtic Spirituality. The founding saints of British Christianity of the fifth to eighth centuries and their holy places by Cameron Butland, Open Spirituality Publishing, £7.99.

Sarah Kirkup

Cameron is Chaplain of Rydal Hall, Vicar of St Mary's Rydal, and Rector of St Oswald's, Grasmere. For the past eight or so years he has worked closely with Christian Meditation in Cumbria (part of WCCM) and has provided us with inspiration and support. I was delighted when he took some time off to write this book.

There are 20 short chapters, each consisting of a brief autobiography of the founding saints, a description of a walk related to that saint, and associated resources.

Very little is known about some of the saints and quite a few of them were unknown to me: Tysllio and Maelrubba are two of those. I enjoyed reading about their lives and there is detailed information about each walk – a map, how long, where to park, map references and so on. In particular, it was the resource sections which provided me with most joy and understanding about Celtic Spirituality – for instance, the stories about Ninian's garden, Columcille (Columba) creating a river, and Cuthbert's horse finding hay and bread. These illustrate aspects of Celtic Spirituality – simplicity, sharing our gifts, and honouring creation – better than any one definition. As the title suggests, this book is more than just about Celtic Spirituality, it takes us into this way of life so that we can become a part of it. Cameron makes the link with their ways of life and prayer and St Antony of the Desert Fathers and Mothers – the founders of contemplative prayer. Related hymns and prayers make up the other resources.

Cameron's way of writing is both informative and accessible. While it is evident that the book has been carefully researched, it is a pity that there are an unusual number of typographical errors. However, this does not prevent me from highly recommending a book that works on at least three levels: introductions to the Celtic saints; a guidebook to walks in holy places in England, Wales and Scotland; and as a resource for private prayer and/or public worship. For me the highlight is the insight into, and understanding of, Celtic Spirituality.

The book is widely available in bookshops and online, but if you have difficulty in finding a copy, please contact Christian Meditation in Cumbria: Richard Broughton 01946 862990.

POEMS

CONTEMPLA(C)TION

Thomas Younger

I started praying
to befriend the silence
but in that silence
I first heard the cry of those
oppressed by violence.

I started praying
to heal the separateness within
but facing my own divisions
I turned to find a world
divided by sin.

I started praying
in a verdant house of prayer
but on returning to the city
found that the homeless
greeted me there.

I started praying
to nurture this deepest, fresh belonging
then couldn't ignore the strangers
who were refused
the new life of their longing.

I started praying
to part the soil
and plant the seeds of peace
but soon found my garden
bounded by
fires that would not cease.

And now?
I cannot stop.

IN LUMB: A LESSON IN BEGINNER'S MIND

Thomas Younger

I set down the watering can
beside the path;
my whole being now thirsts
for solitude
and like a lover
she awaits me
in the ashram
at the garden's end.
I push and path
my way through the foliage,
the river runs by unending.

Below the falls

just where the foam clears
a trout floats
its graceful form
free of the errant current.
It gazes
into the wild water
which washes down over the rocks,
unmoving
but for the occasional
swing of the head
its mouth seeking
the stranger trespassing on the surface.
I turn aside
settle between
the four walls
submerge myself
in the stream
of attention.

And thoughts come,
as sure as the river's flow.

Time fades ...

... eventually reasserting itself
in the momentary bleep
of a Casio call-to-prayer.
I emerge
to see
the trout
maintaining her vigil,
her marathon of watchfulness.

What does she wait for?
Will it ever come?
Questions borne off
like pooh sticks –
the answer in her abiding
that bids me
begin again!

CONTEMPLATION

Edmund Matyjaseki

No longing now, no stirring, not a sound;
The quiet occupation of a rested mind
In contemplation. Gaze into a space,
Eyes seeing there a wall, lamplight,
Hearing rain

At the centre not a sound or sight

A still point of recollection
Lit by its own light that does not shine
But is
That through which is seen all else, the mind

Transparent like a window,
A pane of clear plain glass,
Between the present and eternity.

TIME TO LET GO

Jeanne Blowers

Once there was a tree that put away her green summer dress and put on her autumn cloak of many colours, red, orange, green, brown and yellow. Everyone said she looked beautiful. Even the breeze sang her glory as he rustled among her leaves.

Then, slowly, day by day, the edges of her garment began to fade and curl and the many colours turned a crisp brown.

The wind grew stronger and the rustling turned to rattling.

‘Let go,’ shouted the wind, ‘Let go.’

‘Let go to let me out,’ sobbed a little voice from deep within.

‘Drop my leaves, be without colour, without a voice, without a song – NEVER’ snapped the tree.

‘Let go. Let go’ ‘Let me out, Let me out,’ chorused the two voices.

The tree grew tired and her leaves weak.

Finally she let go and dropped them to the ground.

Free at last, they sang and twirled and somersaulted as they fell.

Some landed silently, others continued to dance in the wind. A few scorned and laughed as they crackled away.

‘Nothing to wear, Nothing to say, Nothing to show I’m ME’ wept the tree.

‘Why Oh why did I let go?’

Cold dark empty days and a feeling of

uselessness followed.

A fear of axe in search of winter wood caused the tree to tremble.

‘All is hopeless. All is lost.’ She cried.

The voice of wind gave way to breeze. The watery sun grew strong and smiled once more.

It was then that the voice of ‘let me out’ began to sing, and songbirds rested on the tree’s thin limbs.

Slowly, fresh green sprouted from her branches.

A leafy robe covered each twig and flower buds of the gentlest pink and cream began to uncurl.

‘We are the new life,’ they said.

Soft green gave way to darker shades and open petals fell as fruit formed.

Summer laughed and left.

Once again the tree got out her autumn cloak of many colours.

‘Time to let go,’ she sang, and invited the wind into her outstretched arms.

She welcomed the emptiness for it was full of birth, and she would carry it silently until the greening time appeared again.

WONDER OF LIFE

Margrit Dahm

It was at the time
when the winter moon enlivened
the darkness of the day,
when the crystal –
stirred by the nearness
of nativity –
enthroned the king,
and enchanted by the sound
of approaching voices
we marvelled
at the secret of Life.

LAUNCHING OUR NEW WEBSITE!

After several months in development, we recently launched the new website for our UK community

www.christianmeditation.org.uk

Its aim is to provide helpful information about Christian Meditation in the UK and in particular our events and local groups, making everything more accessible for enquirers. Key new features include a tool that allows you to enter a postcode and identify the groups that meet in your area.

We have also developed a UK calendar that combines event information for all UK events across the regions, including Meditatio events. These can all be searched by region or as a calendar view.

Please do take a look and let us know what you think by emailing us at uk@wccm.org

The screenshot shows the website interface for Christian Meditation in the UK. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Why Meditate?', 'How to Meditate', 'Find a Christian Meditation Group', 'What's on', and 'Contact us'. Below this is a search bar and a 'Reaching Out' section with links for 'News and Articles', 'Become a Friend of WCCM', and 'Shop'. The main content area includes a header for 'Christian Meditation in the UK' with the tagline 'The World Community for Christian Meditation'. A featured article titled 'What is Christian Meditation?' explains the practice as a simple, universal spiritual practice. To the right, there is a section for 'Upcoming Events' listing a conference on July 4-6, 2014, and several meditation events in December. At the bottom, there are sections for 'Advent Reflection: The Journey to Christmas' and 'The Complementary Arts of Infinite Tai Chi and Christian Meditation'.

**The School of Meditation
Essential Teaching Weekend
16–18 May 2014
Green Pastures, Poole, Dorset**

Have you been meditating for more than a year? Do you feel you would like to grow in your understanding of your meditation practice?

This residential weekend will help you arrive at a deeper insight into what the experience of meditation means to you personally . . .

And to see ways in which this experience can be shared with others.

Rooms available on a first come, first served basis. Total cost of weekend to include all meals, hot drinks etc. is **£139.00 per person.**

To book a place, please contact:

Jacqueline Russell
15 Helford Close, Aylesbury HP21 8BG
01296 488450
jacq.russell@ntlworld.com

'Dancing with Your Shadow'

**14 –16 February 2014
with Kim Nataraja**

Meditation and the role it fulfils in helping us to discover who we really are. We are more than we think we are! Once we have discovered in the silence our enduring connection with the Divine, we allow it to penetrate our surface personality and the surface and depth of our being can be integrated and transformed. Then we will act from the heart. We will look at what hinders us on this journey towards wholeness. Meditation sessions will form an integral part of the weekend.

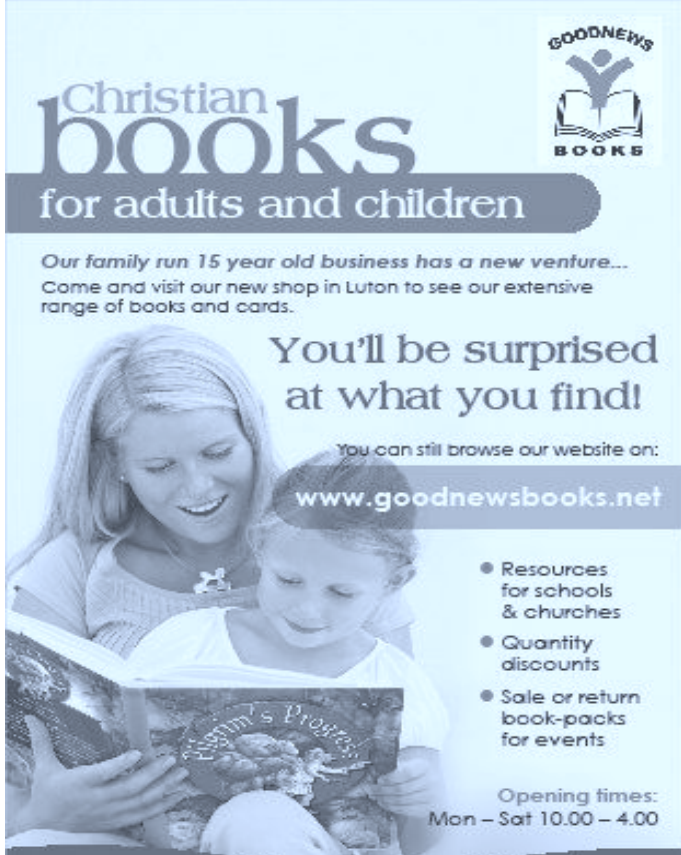
Cost: £130.00 per person for full board from Friday 6pm supper until after lunch on Sunday. To book visit our website: www.briery.org.uk or contact us at:

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If you would like to make a donation to support the work of WCCM in the UK please send cheques to:
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Please provide your Name & Address and make cheques payable to: CMT (UK)

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NOTHING ON NAXOS

David Simpson

Each of us is summoned to a fundamental simplicity. Each of us must learn to be. This is the call of deep prayer. (John Main, *Door to Silence*)

I am sitting in my room. Outside it is raining, the sky dark with storm clouds. I am drinking an ouzo and reading a history of the Ottoman Empire. I am very happy. I feel I should be doing something else, but as it is not obvious to me what that might be, I shall, for now, continue not doing it.

So, what is nothing? No money. No plans or prospects. No regrets. Just food (enough). Warmth. A glass of krasí. Tobacco. Coffee. Something to do. Or read. Or watch. No “God”. Just whatever is, today, now, this instant.

“God” went west in May. With Him (it was/is a “He”) out of the way, life became simpler. One foot in front of the other, one minute, hour, day, at a time. And the real god (we need a new pronoun for the real god) started shining through. In the kindness of strangers. In happy accidents. In children. In friends, old and new. In bus timetables, ferries, taxi drivers. And, eventually, in Naxos.

Eliot wrote “April is the cruellest month” but for me, it has always been late August. Everything dead, or dying. Crops in. Trees still green, but dull, no longer exuberant with life. But here October brings a second spring – the ground covered with swathes of wild cyclamen, autumn crocus, cistus, daisies, wild thyme, the trees greening, bees busy buzzing, fungi everywhere, the hillsides as green as Ireland, meadows and terraces covered in sorrel and dandelion – the Greeks call it all “orta” (weeds), and eat it with abandon.

So you walk. And look. And breathe. And live.

Walking is good. It takes time. You meet raki distillers. You get lifts. It gets you from A to B (sometimes) quicker than a car – they weren’t idiots, the old Greeks; nor are the new ones – they give you a lift when you ask. Modern roads cost money, and modern cars don’t like to go uphill too fast. So, not many roads, and they take the long way round to get from here to there. The old footpaths go straight, up and down hill, and get you to where you’re going in short order. And while you’re walking, you have time to notice things. The view. The flowers. The time.

I always thought sculpting would drive me mad. It takes so long. Bashing away at a piece of rock with a hammer and chisel, slowly finding a shape. Actually, it’s a kind of meditation, a complete absorption in the material, the process. And an enforced detachment – Naxos marble is beautiful, but very crystalline, so it glitters like diamonds and lets light shine through, but is also painfully liable to crack, just when you think you have made something worthwhile. It’s done it to

me twice now. You just have to start again. Fail. Fail again. Fail better.

From our eyrie, 1200 feet above the Aegean, looking north and east, on a clear day, we can see Ikaria, where the inhabitants are reputed to live to over a hundred. Beyond is Patmos, where Saint John wrote his gospel and strange revelations. South east on the far horizon, between Donoussa and Amorgos, you can see Rhodes, the original home, after Jerusalem and Cyprus, of the knights of Saint John. And, after dark, we see the flashes of thunderstorms over Turkey, and the lights of Smyrna reflected on the clouds, 150 kilometres away.

We live on Lagos Raki – the Hare’s Back – a kilometre or so north of Mesi, on the northern tip of Naxos. We are off the grid – no electricity, other than what we can make for ourselves, no water other than what god chooses to let down on us by way of rain on the roof funnelled into a cistern, no heat other than sunshine and firewood. I had a bath (a wash in a plastic basin with water heated on the stove) the other day, and found out how long it takes to gather and chop enough wood to heat water for a shave and a thorough clean. About 45 minutes. It makes you think twice about turning on a tap and getting instant hot water, or getting water at all.

Ditto food. We gather – fungi from the fields, peppers, tomatoes, beetroot, beans, potatoes, from Stuart’s garden. Bread may come, from the nearest village, 6 kilometres across the valley, an hour’s walk. Fish, if we hear the fishman’s van, crying his catch, and get to him before he’s gone on to the next village. Meat from Chora, 50 kilometres and two hours’ bus ride away to the south. Some days we don’t eat much.

I run out of tobacco. To get more, I must walk for an hour down to Apollon. Hope the little shop is open. Hope Yanni has some tobacco. Walk back up the hill to the Hare’s Back. Do I really want a smoke that badly? I want to see Eleni, my sculpture teacher. Friends have a car and drop me off. I stay the night. Yanni plays his lyre and baglamas, a kind of small bouzouki. On Sunday morning, the sky is clear although it is blowing a howling gale. I look at my map. It will, I think, take 4 or 5 hours to walk home. I could go by road, and take the chance of a lift (everyone will stop, but you can walk for two hours and not see a car) or walk over Mavro Vouni, the third high mountain on the island, and have an adventure. Seven hours later, I get home. I have walked over Scottish moorland, down verdant spring fed valleys, been blown sideways by the wind, seen both sides of this little kingdom in the sea, got lost twice, and been frightened, a bit.

I am richer than Croesus. What he had could be taken from him. Having nothing, there is nothing to lose, and everything is pure gift.

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EVENTS

NATIONAL

Wednesday 9 to Sunday 13 April. Young and Contemplative Retreat. This retreat has taken place annually for the last three years. We will share time together in stillness and silence, gather for talks about different aspects of Christian contemplation, and get a feel for the rhythm of life of Hilfield Friary, where the retreat will be held. All people around the ages of 18-30 are welcome, whether you have been meditating for many years, or are just beginning to be interested in times of quiet prayer. Venue: Hilfield Friary, Hilfield Dorchester. Dorset DT2 7BE;
<http://www.hilfieldfriary.org.uk/> For more information contact: Philip.youngcontemplatives@gmail.com

Saturday 12 to Sunday 20 April. Young Meditators Easter Retreat. Led by Fr Laurence Freeman OSB, Bere Island, County Cork, Ireland.

Friday 16 to Sunday, 18 May. The School of Meditation. Essential Teaching Weekend. Venue: Green Pastures Retreat Centre; 17 Burton Road Poole Dorset BH13 6DT <http://www.green-pastures.org/>
Contact: Jacqueline Russell, 15 Helford Close, Aylesbury HP21 8BG 01296 488450; jacq.russell@ntlworld.com
Friday 4 July to Sunday 6 July. Christian Meditation Conference, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Contact: uk@wccm.org; 0208 280 0049

SCOTLAND

Friday 4 to Sunday 6 April. Meditation Retreat. Venue: St Mary's Kinnoull Monastery, Hatton Road Kinnoull Perth PH2 7BP (<http://www.kinnoullmonastery.co.uk/about/>). Contact Alex Holmes: christianmeditationscotland@gmail.com

NORTHWEST ENGLAND

Saturday 25 January. 10:00-15:00 The silent revelation of unconditional love. Led by Bob Morley. Tithe Barn, Grasmere, LA22 9SW. Contact Richard Broughton 01946 86290 . cmcwccm@fastmail.com

Friday 14 to Sunday 16 March The Hying Retreat with Graeme Watson. Contact Richard Broughton as above.

Wednesday 14 May Diarmuid O'Murchu at Rydal Hall, Rydal, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9LX 015394 32050

Friday 13 to Sunday 15 June. Led by Cameron Butland and Ginny Wall. Venue: Glenthorne Quaker Meeting Centre. Easedale Rd. Ambleside Cumbria LA22 9QH Contact Richard Broughton as above.

WALES

Monday 3 to Friday 7 February. Silent retreat: Gospel of St Thomas. Led by Andrew and Delyth Cresswell with Don MacGregor. Venue: Llangasty Retreat House, in Brecon, Wales. www.llangasty.com Bookings, cost etc please contact Delyth on 01597 823868, delythcresswell@yahoo.co.uk or Jayne MacGregor 01348 837750. jaynemacgregor@yahoo.co.uk

WEST MIDLANDS

Saturday, 12 April. The sacrament of the present moment. Led by Liz Watson: Venue Kings Heath Quaker Meeting House, Birmingham B14 7PE. For further details and booking form, contact Joy Cheek joycheek@hotmail.co.uk or 0121 449 0511.

Saturday, 12 July. Be still and know that I am God. Led by Chris Hurley. Venue and contacts as above

Saturday, 8 November. Calm and Insight: Learning the skills of prayer. Led by Br Nicholas from Glasshampton Monastery. Venue and contact details as above.

MANCHESTER

Weekly groups meet on the last Saturday of each month at 1.30pm, in the Parish Hall of Our Lady's church, Raby Street, Moss Side, Manchester. M16 7JQ. Contact - Sheila Wood - 0161 226 2354 johncotling@aol.com New and experienced meditators welcome. www.christianmeditationnorthwest.org

EAST ENGLAND

Saturday 5 April, 10:00-16:00. Quiet day led by Robin Burgess. Venue: Pleshey Retreat House Chelmsford CM3 1HA. Drinks provided, bring your own

lunch. Suggested donation £15. Please book. Contact Jean Searson 0774 6036895 jeansearson@hotmail.com

Saturday 10 May 11:00-16:00. Essex Meditators Community Day. Venue: 8 the Downs, Great Dunmow CM6 1DT. Drinks and light lunch will be provided. Donations requested. Places are limited so early booking is advised Contact Rosemary Drew 01371 872662 rose.drew@btinternet.com

Saturday, 20 August 9:30-16:00. Bringing the Body to Prayer. simple movements and preparing the body for sitting, as well as meditation and times of silence. Suitable for all. Led by Chris Hurley. Drinks provided, bring your own lunch. Suggested donation £15. Venue: Pleshey Retreat House, Chelmsford CM3 1HA. Contact Jean Searson 0774 6036895 jeansearson@hotmail.com

SOUTHWEST ENGLAND

Saturday 15 February, 10:00-16:00. The spirituality of the book of hours by Rainer Maria Wilke. Led by Patrick Woodhouse. Venue: St Alphege's Church Hall, Oldfield Lane, Bath BA2 3NR. Please bring your own lunch. Tea and coffee provided. Access for the disabled. Suggested donation £7. To register (please do if you intend coming) or for more information, call Roger Layet: 01275 463727

SOUTHEAST ENGLAND

Saturday 11 January, 10:30-15:30. Living with the Mystics. Series of lectures held quarterly. First meeting is themed on Daniel O'Leary's books: *Unmasking God: recognising the divine in the ordinary* and *Travelling Light*. Venue: St Nicolas' Church, Guildford; www.stnicolas-guildford.org.uk/DiscussionandPrayerGroups.html. Bring your own lunch, teas & coffees provided. No charge, suggested donation of £5. Contacts: Ray or Vicky Lamb on 01483 571469

Saturday 5 April. 9:30 for start at 10:00-16:00. God's passionate love song. Led by Graham Watson. Venue: St John's Seminary, St John's Seminary, Cranleigh Road, Wonersh, Near Guildford GU5 0QX Surrey. Suggested donation: £10. Bring a packed lunch, drinks provided. Please book with Brian & Sheila Longman 01483 505814 or blon470680@aol.com

LONDON EVENTS

THE MEDITATIO CENTRE

St Marks, Myddelton Square, London EC1R 1XX
Tel: 0207 278 2070 Fax: 0207 2782070 (Mondays to Fridays 9:00-17:00) Email: meditatio@wccm.org
Check the website too for updates!
www.wccmmeditatio.org

Weekday Meditation at 13.00-13.30 - All welcome
Wednesdays 11:00-12:30 A moment of calm – Drop in Open Mornings

Fridays 18:30-20:30; UK Creative silence Contributions by donation to cover costs

Contact Mike michael.rathbone@yahoo.com or Anna bonettoanna@gmail.com

Bodyworkshops:

Mondays, 16:00-16:45; Children's yoga and meditation (suitable for ages 5-7) led by Lucy Fawcett; cost £5 each class. Payable half-termly in advance (15 April - 15 July 15; 9 Sept 9 – 9 Dec)

Mondays, 19:30-21:00; Yoga by Lucy Fawcett; cost £14 drop-in, £12 for 6 classes £8 concessions. (26 March-22

July; 9 September-16 December); contact Lucy:
lucy@fawcett@me.com

Saturday 27 September Meditatio Gathering – Finding Meaning

Meditatio events at different venues:

Wednesday 28 to Thursday 29 May. Seminar on Interfaith. Venue: Regents College, London.

Thursday 23 October, Meditatio Seminar on Business
London venue tba

MEDITATIO HOUSE

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION RETREAT CENTRE

32, Hamilton Road, London W5 2EH Tel: 0208 579 5911
email: meditatio@wccm.org

Daily Meditation: at 7:00 (8.00 am Saturday and Sunday); 12:00 and 18:30 (except Wednesday 18.30)

Mondays: 19.30 Introduction to Meditation led by Fr Laurence Freeman OSB or others.

Wednesdays: 18.00 Young Meditators meet for yoga and meditation

First Saturday of the Month 14:00-16:00. Quiet afternoon for those on a 12-Step Program

Third Saturday of the Month 10:30-21:00. A contemplative day with meditation, *lectio*, discussions and sharing meals. Led by and for the young adult meditators of the community

THE VITA ET PAX SPIRITUALITY CENTRE (FORMERLY THE BENEDICTINE CENTRE FOR SPIRITUALITY)

Venue: upstairs above the Church of Christ the King (Vita et Pax), at 29 Bramley Road, N14 4HE. This is a short walk from Oakwood Underground station on the Piccadilly Line. www.benedictinecentreretreats.org.uk

Saturday, 5 April: Meditation, the journey to inner freedom. Kim Nataraja

Thursday, 26 June: Evening talk and meditation. Fr Laurence Freeman OSB

To book your place on any of these events please phone 020 8449 2499 or email: retreats@bcsuk.wanadoo.co.uk

WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL

Daily Meditation: 12.30-1pm Monday – Friday. In the chapel in St Paul Bookshop. All welcome.

First Wednesday Quiet Days. The first Wednesday of each Month is a retreat day held in the Hinsley Room in Morpeth Terrace, next to Westminster Cathedral from 12:00-16:30.

5 February Water into Wine Jill Benet, Coordinator of Contemplative Outreach London & South-East. Co-founder of Silence in the City.

5 March Who Will Throw the First Stone? Antonio Benet, writer & lay contemplative.

2 April New Life John Woodhouse, interfaith coordinator.

7 May Rise Up and Follow Me Fr.Robin Burgess, spiritual director, Ealing Abbey parish team.

4 June The Spirit Lives in Me. Eileen Dutt, Oblate coordinator for WCCM UK.

2 July Living Water Michael Moran, Salesian and worker for peace & reconciliation.

6 August Feed My Lambs Sarah Richards, spiritual director.

3 September Who is My Neighbour? Eileen McDade, spiritual director & co-founder of Silence in the City.

1 October The Pearl of Great Price Michael Dorey, spiritual director & CLC chaplain.

5 November Prepare the Way Margaret Lane, lay contemplative and authority on St. Augustine of Hippo.

3 December Born Again Mary Lean, writer & spiritual director.

SILENCE IN THE CITY

Unless stated otherwise all talks at: Westminster Cathedral Hall, London SW1P 1QH.

www.silenceinthecity.org.uk; email:

info@silenceinthecity.org.uk. 0207 231 6278 or 0207 252 2453. Prebooking necessary.

Thursday 9 January 19:00-21:00, Refreshments from 18:30. **Finding sense in a complex world: the need for a spiritual paradigm.** Led by Oliver McTurnan. Suggested donation £10

Wednesday 7 May 19:00-21:00, Refreshments from 18:30. **Title tba.** Rt Revd Dr Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, now Lord Williams of Oystermouth and Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge. Suggested donation £10.

Wednesday 4 June 19:00-21:00, Refreshments from 18:30. **Title tba.** Sr Iliia Delio OSF

Tuesday 18 November 19:00-21:00, Refreshments from 18:30. **Title tba.** Fr Timothy Radcliffe O.P.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

If you would like to receive this quarterly newsletter, or wish to find out more, please complete the details below and send to: WCCM UK Office, 32 Hamilton Road, London W5 2EH or T: 0208 280 0049 E: ukadmin@wccm.org

- I would like to receive the quarterly Newsletter by email/in hard copy format* (delete as appropriate)
- I would like to receive the monthly events bulletin by email
- I would like to find out about meditation groups in my local area*
- I would like to find out about the Lone Meditator Network

Name:

Email:

*If you would like to receive information by post, please include your address below:

Address:

Post Code:

Aware, Awake & Alive ... the way of meditation



The Christian Meditation Conference 4 – 6 July 2014 The Hayes Centre Swanwick, Derbyshire

About the conference

We will focus on the practice of meditation as a path that is steadily and continuously waking us up, refining our awareness, enlivening and reconnecting us.

Whilst the weekend will be a conference rather than a retreat, meditation sessions will frame our time together and draw us into community.

Kim Nataraja and **Liz Watson** will lead us during the weekend, offering insights on the theme to stimulate our personal exploration. Wherever we are on the pilgrimage, many years on the road or taking the first tentative steps, we always have much to learn from each other and encouragement to give to each other. To keep us in balance there will be time for rest, walks, yoga and tai chi.

We are delighted **Don MacGregor**, author of *Blue Sky God* will also be sharing time with us at the conference.

Per person rates:

- Single ensuite room £185.00
- Shared ensuite room (per person) £155.00
- Standard single room £160.00
- Standard shared room (per person) £130.00
- Saturday only (day rate) £75.00

To book a place, we will require a non refundable £90 deposit. Please contact: Jacqueline Russell, 15 Helford Close, Aylesbury HP21 8BG

E: uk@wccm.org T: 0208 280 0049