



## A New Generation on the Way

The first Bonnevaux Young Adults Retreat  
on 'how to live differently' (p 8-9)



After the retreat, a group walked five days at the French part of the Camino  
(Photo: Enos Mantoani)

## John Main Seminar 2019



Rev Sarah Bachelard led the Seminar on the theme "A Contemplative Christianity for our Time" at Quest University, Squamish, Canada in August. Fr Laurence led a pre-seminar retreat on "Sources of Wisdom" and considered this JMS as "memorable and a breakthrough in understanding modern Christianity". (Read more at p 6-7)

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## Deeper Friends

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

I met Juan when I visited Homeboy Industries in downtown Los Angeles with members of our community. He is in his mid-twenties and a recent father of twins. When someone asked Juan how he came by an unsightly gash gouged in his cheek he said 'it's a long story'. Given his past, it is hard for him to adjust to fatherhood. With the help of Homeboy he has made enormous progress. In a short time the 'nomatterwhat' practical compassion and open-heartedness of this institution dedicated to gang intervention and rehabilitation gave him hope and dignity for the first time. 'Nothing stops a bullet like a job' is their motto.

Juan grew up with an addicted mother and an absent father. His role model and sole friend was an elder brother. Many days they didn't

know where they would sleep. They hustled for food. They shared their clothes and had three sets of underwear between them. When he met Homeboy he had the experience for the first time, of being genuinely accepted for himself. He had always felt he was in the way, unwanted, a nuisance or threat to others. Slowly his shattered sense of self healed and his humanity emerged, battered but functional. He will never have known the luxury of eighteen years growing up in a safe environment before venturing into the world. But he has a wise smile. He knows he has a new start.

After our visit we returned to the parallel universe that makes up this city. At its worst, it is a world of conspicuous wealth, glamour and celebrity. Behind both universes lurks

the powerhouse of showbiz, entertainment and pornography, which spew out endless addictive material to corrupt the imaginative life of rich and poor Angelinos and about half the world besides. For anyone living in this once Edenic part of the world – still beautiful and attractive for its endless mix of human cultures and creative energy – there is also the absurd monster of traffic. Public transportation is a last resort. The shiny tin boxes carrying solitary travellers block every highway system like a Frankenstein out of control. People talk about as if it were a person. Unreality and inhumanity lead to social absurdities: traffic, global warming, drug empires. Illusion is a lethal absurdity. Only hard reality and the cultivation of true attention will free us from it.

## The Tattoos of the Heart

Homeboy Industries has a special room for removing tattoos, which are the tribal language of the gangs. These are not just cute tattoos on your leg but whole-body jobs covering shaven heads, faces, arms, torsos and below. A new life and job requires a new, less anti-social look and so the young men undergo many painful sessions to remove these attachments to their past.

Perhaps our meditation does the same, but it would be another consumer illusion to think that meditation offers a quick, one-off solution. But the earlier we start the better. Children have less baggage. Addictions are less engrained. In our case, recovery depends on how unreal we have become. For most children, the unreality has made less headway, and so meditation works more immediately - provided they receive



*Photo courtesy of Homeboy Industries*

good instruction and support in the practice from teachers or parents.

In S. Africa I was meditating with a class of nine-year olds. I have learned not to ask after meditation if they have any questions as they are usually about the bell I used. I asked 'so, what did you feel...?' One boy put

up his hand: 'I think that's the longest we have ever been quiet in this class', he said. The teacher caught my eye. Another child spoke up, making strange movements with his hands. He said, 'While we were meditating I wasn't using my hands'. His teacher explained later he was addicted to

video games, so badly that he would often be too tired to come to school in the morning. And even when not in front of the screen, he was always mentally playing the game. During those few minutes of meditation he

felt freed from that compulsion.

It takes time to remove the tattoos of habits and addictions that are impressed on mind and emotions. However long it takes, the simple knowledge that we are se-

riously engaged with the work of dis-illusionment is satisfying and rehumanising. We become aware of how we are shedding the habits of chronic imbalance while discovering a dynamic new equilibrium.

## Balancing Life and Forgiving Debts

Balance - in all wisdom traditions - is the universal key to meaning and integrity both morally and physically. The genius of the Greeks was to see this expressed in the beautiful harmony of the human body. Musically, in genius such as Bach's, we love to feel the work for balance and resolution penetrating deeply into our senses.

Stress, the modern disease, is a symptom of both personal and social imbalance. When it becomes extreme we try to reduce its effects but only rarely do we engage with the causes. It is hard to live a balanced life in our fast and over-active world. So, we need exceptional measures - like our twice-daily times of meditation - to counter the social conditioning. Rhythm resets balance. At Bonnevaux I see that the immediate impact on our guests is the peace and beauty of the environment but the next and stronger force is the rhythm of life. Balancing body mind and spirit in a daily timetable of work, thoughtful exchange and prayer is a healing medicine for our stressful time.

Working and social habits undermining mental and physical health form one kind of engrained tattooing from which it seems hard to be free. Money is another. The dollar sign is deeply tattooed on our psyche.

Simone Weil thought that our

social crisis is due to the lack of a concept of economic equilibrium. Do we have to assume that wealth-creation must create a world of 2000 billionaires holding a wealth greater than the GDPs of 152 countries combined? The more enlightened of these wealthy individuals see that such imbalance is harmful. But however personally generous they may be, the systemic problem persists.

In our fundraising for Bonnevaux over the past three years, I have often been taught by donors about the contemplative use of money. Those of means have given more dollars. But when Jesus saw a poor woman putting a few coins into the Temple treasury he understood that the real value of giving is not quantifiable. When someone comes to me after a talk with an envelope containing a few banknotes for Bonnevaux I feel as moved as by a large donation. All gifts to a good cause express the Christian idea of almsgiving - one of the elements of the triad of spiritual practice with prayer and fasting.

The dollar sign is tattooed and hard to erase from our acquisitive and hoarding instincts. But it can be removed by giving money away. Who hasn't felt better giving rather than hoarding?

The periodic abolition of all debts is first recorded in 2400 BC.



In Mosaic Law every seventh year all debts to fellow Jews were wiped off the slate. Every 49th year all debt and servitude throughout the land was ended. A new start is possible for us all - as it was for Juan - when we believe in our better selves and trust others. Of course, such radical simplicity appears naïve. So does the radical simplicity of the mantra. But in poverty of spirit we clear our debts. We rebalance the books by erasing the tattoos of attachment. This is work, harder than any half-measure. But the dividend of radical poverty is unimaginable, beyond price.

## Violence: A Failure of Imagination



Politics today is fuelled by statistics - and ever more statistics. Lies can easily be made to look rational, convincing the uninformed, twisting minds, planting false news. Many modern tyrants have re-discovered this trick. Creative imagination, however, lifts us to new levels of reality and purifies the heart of fantasy. When imagination degrades into fantasy, fed by desire and illusion, it plunges us into a netherworld where monstrous shapes and inhumane tendencies emerge. This is the tattoo of mendacity, a powerful falsehood, which, as we are learning, is a highly contagious disease.

Politicians have always used the power of the fantasies active in the mass of people. Today the power to inject untruths into the popular mind has been magnified by the internet where most people congregate as they once gathered in town squares, except now by the millions on millions of channels. Today meditation is an indispensable antidote to this diseases of political and commercial fantasy.

## Bad Language

Such warlike insanity, creates a sense of vertigo. We lose any sense of balance and proportion. The behaviour of leaders intoxicated by power, determined to retain it any cost, corrupts language itself. The great evolutionary achievement of Homo Sapiens drops into communication at the level of grunts and sound bytes.

Simone Weil said that 'to become conscious of even the simplest realities we need to pay attention.'

The Church today calls humanity to sanity with regard to our environmental catastrophe. But Pope Francis did not write *Laudato si* only for Catholics. Similarly, all spiritual traditions need to address the crisis of mental imbalance by drawing on their contemplative wisdom, sharing them without regard to their beliefs. To teach meditation is not proselytising beliefs or even religion itself. It is teaching the universal contemplative art, the art of arts: pure attention. It is hard for institutional religions to understand this. The Dalai Lama and the Pope do. The Tibetan leader is an exile, a refugee and politically powerless. Yet he has become one of the most authentic religious figures of our time, not by trying to convert the world to Buddhism but identifying the universals of religion. In great suffering and detachment, he witnesses to the possibility of being both universal and loyal to one's own root identity. He is loved for his devotion to global peace.

Another tattoo to remove, however painfully, is our addiction to violence. This emerges from polarisation and refusing to see reality from our opponent's point of view. But transferring attention from self to another requires a mind freed from unconscious projection, fantasy and all attachment.

Modern political vocabulary is full of abstract words: nation, security, capitalism, order, democracy, freedom. But they are only words not absolutes. When you put a word into capital letters it begins to leak meaning. Empty words then wreak havoc, creating confusion, a smokescreen against truth.

John Main, echoing the teaching of the early Christian masters of prayer, said that 'imagination is the enemy of prayer'. In the work of the mantra we 'renounce all the riches of thought and imagination' by 'laying aside' thoughts. The contemplative mind expands through this practice, helping us to see the reality we are part of. And by controlling fantasy, this releases the higher, creative imagination. Any experienced meditator knows to let go of even good ideas and solutions to problems in the 'time of the work'. To divert our attention from the mantra to ideas during meditation reactivates attachment and interrupts the work of poverty and simplicity to which we are called until the bell sounds.

The meditator also learns that fasting from thoughts and images restores creativity and rationality. Then we better see into the unimaginative absurdity of violence. The first great book of western civilisation, the *Iliad*, describes how Greeks and Trojans massacred each other for ten years over Helen, in whom no one (except one) had the slightest interest. The cause of war was not Helen but competition with other soldiers, fear of shame, macho posturing. For four years, the First World War in a civilised Europe massacred an entire generation of young men, ten million military and seven million civilians. The war aims were never clarified. It was indeed a 'lethal absurdity'.

Speaking the truth saves lives. Jesus said that the words he spoke were 'spirit and they are life'. Listening to them 'you will know the truth and the truth will set you free'. Without truthful language social discourse descends, even in an age of technoscience, into myth and monstrosity. George Orwell in the middle of the

last century imagined the construction of Newspeak, a language of limited vocabulary designed to reduce the expression of any ideas contrary to the official view. One of the characters in 1984 explained it to Winston, the rebel who dared think for himself: 'Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thought-crime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it.'"

War means peace and peace means war. Peace means the safeguarding of an unbalanced system that preserves the privileges of a few. Security means an artificial stability built on fear and prejudice. The ability to discriminate between the real and the unreal, let alone feel the power of truth to set us free, is disabled and it-

self becomes an object of suspicion. Today we see the generation of an interrelated triad of unreality masquerading as fundamentalist truth: in politics, religion and the denial of climate change.

The feeling of unreality eerily generated by political debate today is mirrored by the fantasy-world of mass advertising offering images of continuous self-gratification and a world of self-centred relationships. With the emergence of mass-communications we have invented a whole new scale for the ancient sin of lying. But the struggle between truth and illusion is perennial: 'Speaking the truth in love, we grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ... having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour, for we are members one



of another. (Eph 4).

The gospel is political as well as mystical. One thing it is not is compliant with anything corrupt, untruthful and dehumanising.

## Is meditation useful?



Does meditation make a difference? Well, it is not like poetry. 'Poetry makes nothing happen,' said the poet WH Auden, 'it survives in the valley of its making where executives would never want to tamper.' Even poets articulate deep insights that can inspire a whole society. But meditation makes a different kind of difference. It directly changes the meditator and, through him or her, the world they move in. Silence is the great power

of transformation - more universal than the greatest poetry because it works deeper than language or thought itself. Executives, like janitors, leaders like followers, everyone is drawn to meditation. Nothing may happen during meditation but radical change begins - from within outwards. It doesn't solve problems, like impeachment proceedings or Brexit. But it changes the place from which we handle life's problems. Even

more, it changes our minds, cleansing the doors of perception, withdrawing projections and ending the blame game and obsessive fantasies. It releases the creative imagination that is essential for any new order. It is 'good work' - as I argued in my book earlier this year: good work being work that brings out the best in us and produces benefits for others. More than this - at the heart of this - meditation and its fruits make us more loving and teach us how love flows from the pure source of our being and all being. It makes us dare to believe that we are living icons, not a failed evolutionary experiment destined to be superseded by artificial intelligence. Seeing with a new kind of perception that the human is created in the image and likeness of God, we can believe again in the incarnation of beauty - the beauty that has always saved the world and will again.

With much love

*Laurence*  
Laurence Freeman OSB

## News

### John Main Seminar

# A fresh understanding of modern Christianity

Rev Dr Sarah Bachelard led the Seminar in Squamish, Canada, in August



The John Main Seminar 2019 seminar highlighted a not simple but necessary theme: "A Contemplative Christianity for our Time". But the key speaker Rev Dr Sarah Bachelard, from Australia, accomplished the mission in an inspiring and courageous way. The Seminar, held at Quest University, British Columbia, Canada (8-11 August), was "memorable and a breakthrough in understanding modern Christianity", as Fr Laurence ( who led the pre-Seminar retreat on the theme of Sources of Wisdom) described it. All the talks by Sarah are available on audio and video online.

It is not possible to summarize the Seminar (Medio Media will shortly be publishing a book on the Seminar) in a few paragraphs without losing its depth. Her reflections touched on many aspects of the transformation of Christianity in the past years - and tried to stimulate the audience to elaborate on what role Christianity

still can play today and in the future. "Why can't we just meditate?" was the challenging question that Sarah repeated throughout the Seminar.

In the end, Fr Laurence asked the audience to give a single word as feedback of their impressions of the Seminar. These are some of the replies: incisive, profound, honest, hopeful, insightful, graceful, courageous, challenging, humble, prophetic, joyful. It was all of that. And, despite the density of the theme, there was a real connection between Sarah and the audience. Maybe because she is part of WCCM and her proposal was to face together such a hot topic:

"It's been such a joy because of the depth of the listening. It really helped me to communicate. We were kind of engaged in the same enquiry. I was a bit daunted by the speakers of previous John Main Seminars. Then I felt like: well, I am a member of this Community and I want to speak as

a member to our Community, to a question that I feel is important for us. That was a wonderful experience."

### Sarah on the value of Christianity in our secular age:

*"We cannot give a general, argumentative justification for the value of Christianity in our secular age, for its truth and right naming of the deep structures of reality and of the possibilities for being human on this earth. But we can come to recognise some of what it enables in and through us. And as we allow our imaginations to be shaped by its story and our hearts connected to the energies it communicates, we may find ourselves changed, being differently. To begin to be touched, awakened by these energies is to sense that this story tells truth about the kind of being we are and may be; it's to sense that it would be 'a great human loss' if this revelation of God with and for us were to be eroded away, lost as a possibility to the human family.*

*Of course, this is not an argument that will convince a committed secularist. But it is, I hope, an encouragement to our World Community – to keep faith that there are particular gifts that a contemplative Christianity is invited to receive and to offer, and that through us, God willing, they may indeed be released for the life of all."*

**ONLINE** - Watch & listen to the talks: <http://tiny.cc/jms19AV>

## News

# Paul Harris and the importance of Meditation Groups

Paul Harris is a wonderful example of dedication to sharing the gift of meditation. He helped to found many meditation groups not only in Ottawa, where he lives, but all around the world. During the Seminar in Squamish, the Community paid tribute to his dedication. He shared his story in a clear and joyful way. In his speech he especially stressed the importance of the weekly meditation group:

*"I always felt that the primary way of sharing this teaching has to be the weekly meditation group. It is a way that allows newcomers to find out how to meditate. It gives inner strength to ongoing meditators. The group has everything. It has friendship, it is a community of love. The reason I think Christian Meditation has now spread around the world is because of the little groups of people, meeting on a weekly basis, who have taken on the teaching. So I am very committed to the importance of giving some attention to groups. We have now developed online groups, its great... we have groups in hospitals, in every kind of institutions, in addition to homes and churches. We have made some great progress. But*



*Paul Harris receives a gift from JoAnn Kelly-Cullen*

*we cannot lose sight that the groups are a great way of communicating the teaching.*

*I am now almost 93. And I thought at this time I would not get more distractions. But I recognized that I did not have quite the right idea. We all want to control things. With Christian Meditation we will not be in control, we cant be in control. I thought once I get older the distractions would get lower. So I could be in this deep silence that John of the Cross and Theresa of Avila*

*talked about. Forget about that. But do you know what? I now have come to know an important truth: yes, I am still meditating and I still have distractions. But it does not bother me anymore, because I guess I have given up controlling distractions. I have now come to a realization that is not my meditation, it is Jesus who is praying within me. He is taking over my meditation and distractions."*

**ONLINE** - Watch Paul Harris's full speech: <http://tiny.cc/phjms19>

## Mexico will host the John Main Seminar in 2020

The John Main Seminar 2020 will be held in Mexico, from 19 to 26 October. More details on the location, speakers and registration information will be shared soon. The theme will be "One Heart, One Hope - Indigenous Wisdom and the Future of Humanity".

Contact: [wccm-mexico@wccm-mexico.org](mailto:wccm-mexico@wccm-mexico.org)



# Bonnevaux

Visit [www.bonnevauxwccm.org](http://www.bonnevauxwccm.org)

## Meditation Retreat for Young Adults: a taste of a better life



*Retreat nurtured friendship between the participants / Photo: Enos Mantoani*

End of July, summertime in France, "heatwave" days. At 7am the bell on the top of the Abbaye of Bonnevaux rings. Little by little meditators start to arrive for the practice of silence and stillness at the old chapel. They are young people between their twenties and forties, and this is a special week for them to learn to live in a different way.

The Meditation Retreat for Young Adults on the theme Living Differently (24-31 July) was one of the first

retreats at Bonnevaux - the international home of The World Community for Christian Meditation. It brought together meditators from 15 countries. The daily routine included the meditation practice, yoga, teaching, work, creative journaling, one-to-one meetings with team leaders and friendship. All essential elements for a more balanced life - something lacking in the modern world.

Bonnevaux was founded to be a centre of peace and for peace. A place

where new generations can spend time to go deeper into the meditation practice and build strength to take that inner peace to the world. Laurence Freeman explained the background of the retreat: "The structure of the day was based on the wisdom of Saint Benedict, balancing mind, body and spirit, with time for manual labour, for reading, for discussions, for mental stimulation and of course, times of prayer. The times of meditation (morning, midday and evening) were the key for the dynamic rhythm that took shape during the retreat. The purpose was to give young people an opportunity to be with each other, to form personal contacts in the sharing of the journey, sharing of the mystery of life, to take the time to listen to themselves, to listen to each other, to realize that life is not a lonely journey. There is a solitary aspect of life that we have to live and grow through, but we should not be lonely. What came from this retreat for me was the discovery that the cure for loneliness, the great disease of our time, is to be in solitude together".

## Reflections on the retreat

*We all get up around the same time, we meet at the chapel at the same time, we participate in the events of the day at the same time. We all have so many choices in the world, we tend to focus on what our personal story is and we don't think about the meaning of the collective story. When we are on a retreat like this, while we all remain individuals and we each have our own part to play, we realize that we are also part of a collec-*

*tive story. We get funneled into that story, and it flows like a river. This is a lesson we can definitely take away.*

*(Edward O'Connor, New Zealand)*

*We have been talking a lot about contemplation and action. I think the role of meditation is that the contemplative life is part of the active life. Because it teaches you on "how to be"; to be free, to be whatever we are called to be. And this will give*

*us the necessary assistance to do whatever we are called to do outside of here. In the world we live today: with anxiety and with people always in a hurry, meditation teaches you to stop for 20 minutes twice a day and bring your attention to one word. And on a bigger scale teaches us how to live better. How to live a more focused life, a more attentive life, a more loving and compassionate life.*

*(Gabriel Goncalves, Brazil)*



## Bonnevaux

### After the retreat, walking the Camino

On the 31st of August, 11 participants from the Young Adults Retreat started a five-day walk along part of the Camino of Saint Jacques de Compostella, the Paris/Tours portion that runs very close to the grounds of Bonnevaux. The route is one of a network of ancient pathways throughout France that merge at the foot of the Pyrenees to join the famous pilgrim path to Santiago.



Photo: Enos Mantoani

### *We learned so much about each other, but also ourselves*

By Emily Waters-Leiga, USA



What do you get when you take 11 people, with 9 different nationalities, aged 20-64, who have only known each other for a week, and send them off to navigate five days of walking across rural France? It sounds almost like some sort of social experiment or reality show when I put it like that, but that is precisely the basis of our experience walking the Camino.

Each of us had different backgrounds, goals, fitness levels, opinions, and everything else under the sun. Perhaps you can imagine, given this, that not everything went smoothly. We got to know aspects

of each other that usually only come out after knowing someone for years. All of us, in our own ways, were pushed to our limits during the Camino – and I for one, am so thankful for every part of it.

Our days were filled with walking either in silence or while talking to our fellow pilgrims. A few times, we paired up and answered deeper questions, which I loved. The exercise of talking to someone about more serious topics allowed us to get to know sides of one another that we probably wouldn't have gotten to know otherwise. We also took time to meditate each day in gorgeous churches in the small villages we stayed in, and some time most days to journal.

Each day of the Camino was simultaneously so similar yet so different. Every day we saw similar landscapes. There were many vast open fields, and endless sunflowers. We walked long distances every day and were never sure exactly how far we needed to go. But every day felt so

different from the last, because of the incredible extent that we grew together each day. We learned so much about each other, but also ourselves. Personally, I learned a lot about surrendering control when necessary. There were countless unknowns throughout the Camino and I had to accept that I couldn't control every aspect of our situation.

As a group of 11 extremely different individuals, we took on this journey together. Together, we learned what it's like to be walking far away from everything you know, and not being sure when you'll next see a town. We learned what it's like to stay in a refuge. We learned about cooperation and patience in situations way outside of our comfort zones. We were pushed to our limits, but I think that's where the most growth happens.

**ONLINE** - listen to some participants sharing about the experience of the Camino: <http://tiny.cc/BnvxUp0819>

## News

### School of Meditation: "train the trainer" workshop



The first essential teaching "train the trainer" workshop was recently held following the John Main Seminar in Canada. This is a program to enhance capacity within local communities to train meditators to lead essential teaching workshops and to be able to lead and present at retreats and events.

The director of the School, Cathy Day, was very pleased with the first workshop: "It was well received and is already bringing new energy to communities through the shared enthusiasm and confident support provided by those who attended. It was a great privilege and personally enriching time". A second workshop will be conducted in Penang in November.

### Signs of revitalization in WCCM Chile



Magdalena Pueba was invited to lead a silent meditation retreat in Pucón, Chile, on August (2-4). She is former National Coordinator of WCCM Argentina and an experienced teacher in the Community. Fr Simon from South Korea and Sr. Eugenie were also part of the group.

The beauty of the location, the warmth and generosity of the local people who cared for the details, and the simplicity of the chapel and rooms all led to the more conscious and deeper practice of meditation.

During the retreat, Magdalena

spoke on the roots of Christian Meditation, the Desert Fathers, meditation as a discipline, meditation's health benefits. She also outlined the history of WCCM and described recent community updates.

Magdalena also conducted a well-attended workshop on Christian Meditation at Temuco. The goal her efforts, she said, is to help revitalize the Community in Chile. The prospects for a renewed community, she believes, are very favorable, thanks to the strong interest of the many people who attended the different events.

### International Calendar

#### Some important upcoming events

#### 25 November - 1st December

Bonnevaux Advent Retreat  
(fully booked)

#### 14 December

Preparing for Christmas, Meditatio Centre London  
Led by Laurence Freeman  
More info: <http://tiny.cc/PrepXms19>

#### 29 January - 15 February 2020

WCCM Pilgrimage to India "Christian Ashrams and St. Thomas Churches"  
More info: <http://tiny.cc/indiap2020>

#### 7 - 15 February

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land  
led by Laurence Freeman. More info: <http://tiny.cc/HolyLand2020>

#### 5 - 12 April 2020

Bonnevaux Easter Retreat  
Led by Laurence Freeman.  
More info coming soon at: [bonnevauxwccm.org](http://bonnevauxwccm.org)

#### 21 - 24 May 2020

Meditatio Seminar in Bonnevaux: Meditation & Ecology.  
More info coming soon at: [bonnevauxwccm.org](http://bonnevauxwccm.org)

#### 4 - 11 July 2020

Monte Oliveto Retreat: The Wisdom of the Young.  
More info: [monteoliveto@wccm.org](mailto:monteoliveto@wccm.org)

## In Focus

# Anja T'Kindt, Belgium



I started to meditate in a natural way during the time I was community leader of a new L'Arche-community in Belgium. I hadn't heard about Christian meditation yet. In our L'Arche-houses, where people with and without learning disabilities are sharing life, there was a lot of violence and depression among our new people with disabilities. The only way to calm them was to sit beside them without judging and to be present with all the love in your heart. Little by little, they discovered they were loved and precious just the way they are. This

love started to heal them.

It was also a difficult time for me. I discovered I wasn't always so able to love everybody freely. I could feel powerlessness in myself and a capacity for aggression and impatience. I felt, just like our people with disabilities, the brokenness in me and I, too, needed somebody to love me to be healed.

In the same period, my father died. A wise friend suggested that I take 15 minutes every day to be in the presence of God, to lean on him and just let my brokenness be in his hands, just like with our people with disabilities. She suggested 'to be' with my sadness instead of 'to do' something about it. Sometimes the confrontation with my sadness was hard, other moments it was consoling to be in the lovely presence of God, but most of the time I didn't understand what I was doing and found it boring. But little by little, the sadness started to heal. I could feel that deeper than my brokenness was a huge field of life and light inside of me that I could touch and could live from.

I continued to make time every day to be in the presence of this in-

ner life and light. Later on, a friend told me about Christian meditation and it resonated with my experiences. By being in silence, saying and listening faithfully to the mantra and not judging, I can sometimes touch that deeper source of peace, love and presence within me. Every moment I am spending with the silence, the silence is also spending with me and doing his lovely work that has to be done. It helps me to be more gentle with myself, to be more present to others and to love more freely. It makes me more human.

I am happy I could participate this summer in the retreat for young adults of WCCM in Bonnevaux. I met people who are dreaming, longing and living on the same level of the heart as I do. I felt immediately at home. Back home, I joined the WCCM in Flanders, with outreach programs for people who don't have an affinity with Christianity. The world needs the contemplative approach to silence, presence and love if it is to be transformed into a better place for everyone. I believe that meditation can be the source of a more humane society.



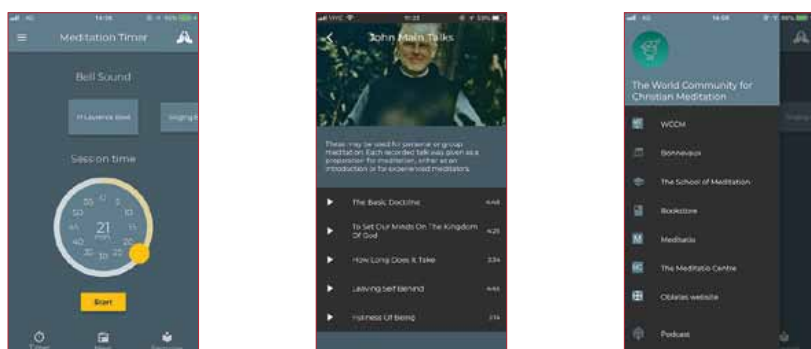
Meditatio Newsletter is published four times a year by the International Office of The World Community for Christian Meditation, St Marks, Myddelton Square London EC1R 1XX, London, UK.  
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Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano  
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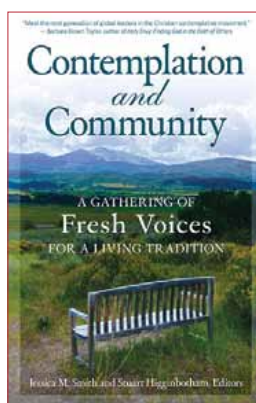
## Resources

### New WCCM App



The new WCCM App is now available for Android and Apple devices. It has a fresh design and many new features. There are three main sections: a new meditation timer, along with 'how to meditate' instructions and the opening and closing prayers; the latest WCCM news; and a Resources tab, including Daily Wisdom, audio talks by John Main, Contemplative Revolution podcasts, links to the School's online courses, online groups, and much more. Check it out at: <http://tiny.cc/nwccmapp>

### Books

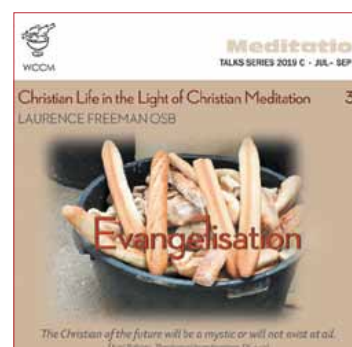


This collection brings together the diverse voices of the new leaders who have emerged in the contemplative movement. Exploring a multitude of themes, such as silence, imagination,

meditation, embodiment, community and social action, this volume features new voices reflecting globally on the gifts, challenges, differences and commonalities of Christian contemplation today for communities and people of faith. WCCM's Sarah Bachelard, Sicco Claus and Leonardo Correa contributed to this book.

**Contemplation and Community: A Gathering of Fresh Voices for a Living Tradition**, edited by T. Higginbotham and Jessica Smith  
The Crossroad Publishing Company  
More info here: <http://tiny.cc/CtCmbook>

### Audio & CDs



The latest Meditatio CD Series.  
Listen to or download the tracks:  
<http://tiny.cc/Med2019C>  
Order a copy of the CD:  
<http://tiny.cc/evangel3>

### Online Courses



#### Building the Meditation Habit

A free course by Padraic Dunne

Learn practical tools to help you move beyond the initial decision to meditate

**Register now:**

<http://tiny.cc/MedHabOC>

**To order:** contact the resource centre nearest to you. Our centres are listed below



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(Within NZ Only)



## Holding the Space, in the Centre of Australia

By Sue Woods

WCCM Australia (NT) Coordinator

**My name is Sue Woods and I live with David, my husband of 37 years, and Celia Kemp, at Campfire in the Heart, Alice Springs. David and I felt called to establish a place in the Centre of Australia where people could deepen in their search for their centre.**

We were formed for over 20 years by Lay Christian Community, St Joseph's House of Prayer, in Goulburn, NSW. That's where we met, married and had our four beautiful daughters. 'Stretch wide the space within your tent' were words given in the community in 1998. The call led us to Alice Springs in October, 1998. David worked with the Arrernte people and I worked in Aged Care. We lived in a suburban house for the first five years in Alice. When we realised that the girls would leave home to travel or study we felt it was time to look for a place that we could establish as a Retreat and Conference Centre, where we could continue to offer prayer and hospitality. In July 2003 we were abundantly blessed to be able to purchase the property we call 'Campfire in the Heart'.

Fifteen years on now and we continue to be blessed to share this property, to hold the space, where many people come for Community morning prayer, Christian Meditation, campfire reflection, retreat, or for a visit to the Centre, or for a Conference, some come to work and support us with the vision.

David, Celia and I have developed a five day retreat program which takes themes for each day. Land, Water, Incarnation, Fire, Air/Spirit. Celia joined us some 7 years ago. We lead



*Land meditation walk on one of our Retreats.*

four, five day retreats each year. Two 'Wide Skies/Open Hearts' and two 'Into the Desert' Retreats. These are silent retreats with different spiritual practices shared and experienced.

Celia, as part of her work for the Anglican Board of Mission, has developed over the years, three Bible Study apps for your phone: *Into the Desert* which was written as a Lenten Reflection; *Deep Calls to Deep* which is for reflection during Advent; *Songs from a Strange Land* reflections from Easter to Pentecost. (They are free at [www.abmission.org/apps](http://www.abmission.org/apps))

*Into the Desert* and *Songs from a Strange Land* are available as booklets from ABM. Themes of Christian Meditation appear in all the resources. Celia is a Christian Meditator.

Celia, together with the Rev Glenn Loughrey, has also written *A Voice in the Wilderness: Listening to the Statement from the Heart*. Bishop Chris McLeod, National Aboriginal Bishop says: "I encourage all who use this important study to stop, listen, and pray that our ears may be opened

and our nations's heart healed." (It is available as a free PDF or to purchase as a book at [www.abmission.org/voice](http://www.abmission.org/voice))

Christian Meditation is a spiritual practice I have made a commitment to since 1992. Fr Laurence Freeman gave a retreat in Sydney that year and I had a copy of his tapes and listened to them while on my personal retreat later that year. When we moved to Alice Springs there was a Christian Meditation group meeting weekly, just around the corner from where we lived. I joined that group. The leaders left Alice after a couple of years and the meeting moved location a couple of times. Then, when we moved to the Campfire property in September, 2003 it seemed obvious to hold the weekly Christian Meditation group here, in the Prayer Room. Monday's we meet at 5.30-6.30, often gathering after Meditation to share a Community meal together.

Christian Meditation is one of the spiritual practices we share with those

*continued over page*

who come to Campfire on Retreat. We Meditate morning and evening each day of the Retreat. The retreatants often reflect back at the end of our time, how they have appreciated meditation and how they hope to continue meditation as a daily practice. Some people have gone on to begin a Christian Meditation Group in their area.

Gratitude, is part of our regular morning prayer as a community. We gather in the Prayer Room at 7.30 Monday - Friday each week and begin prayer with gratitude and thanksgiving. We read the Lectionary Reading for the day followed by a time of silence, then sharing a word from the readings that speaks to us. Intercession, for our needs and the needs of the world is also part of our daily prayer.

Music, Poetry and Art are also forms of spiritual practice which we use in our prayer times and retreat times.

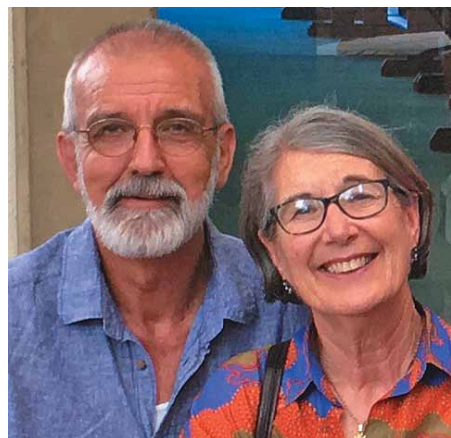
On one of our Retreats recently, Glynn wrote this poem (right) – it was after the Land day and she went out the back of Campfire to the large old coolibah tree and these words came to her.

On Wednesday evenings we host a gathering of local people and others to share a meal and gather around the Campfire to share stories, on various topics – A space is held and everyone is invited to share.

Campfire in the Heart is a place where we hold the space for people to deepen their spiritual journey to their centre.

For more information about Campfire in the Heart you can go to our website:

[www.campfireintheheart.com.au](http://www.campfireintheheart.com.au)



Sue and David Woods



Another spiritual practice is the Labyrinth. Walking a sacred path. We lead Labyrinth walks through the year and people are welcome to walk the Labyrinth anytime.

## Written beneath the Coolibah Tree

Oh burdened Heart  
Oh Spirit Dry  
The Gate beckons  
Come over to the other side  
Is God's whisper on the leaves  
In the breeze  
Follow the Path  
In the sounds of silence

Tread reverently  
on the fine red Sands of Time  
Stay in the moment  
Child of God  
MARANATHA  
In the depths of your soul

Walk on  
Gently embraced  
By the soft swaying of the Trees  
Inviting you to go deeper

Look up, Child  
The sacramental Blue Tent  
Meets sacrificial-blood Red Earth  
You are Covenant safe

Through the rugged  
parched creek bed ...  
Child there is beauty  
And hope of Life to come  
In the Season of Dry

And beyond  
Behold  
The majesty of the Coolibah  
Let yourself be drawn in

Surrender yourself  
to the protection of  
Its arms  
Clothed so elegantly in green  
Watch the Sunlight  
Dappled and dancing  
As the leaves sway in the breeze  
The Breath of Life  
For you  
Oh Child of God

Lean your weary back  
into the strength of  
the Trunk  
It's gnarled bark  
gently caressing away  
your tension  
Hold the moment Child  
MARANATHA

Immerse yourself in the Tree  
Deeply rooted in Mother Earth  
Be grounded with It  
Drink with It  
Respectfully taking its sufficiency  
From the deeply-coursing  
life-sustaining  
Vein

Drink in the Peace of God  
Find rest for your soul  
Your spirit is quenched  
Dear Child  
And Streams of Living Water flow  
From your Heart

**Glynn Elliott**

# Naiyu Pilgrimage, August 2019

By Ros Bradley

***Namburea wangary unying! Or hello in the MalakMalak language [one of many] spoken in Naiyu, a remote Indigenous community on the Daly River, three hours south of Darwin. We were privileged to meet the elder and artist Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann AM, who shares the practice of *dadirri*, plus many others in the community.***

Known as the Meditation Mob, all nine of us from very different backgrounds, enjoyed three full days here.

*'Dadirri is inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness. Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us.'* It is in everyone. We thought we'd experience *dadirri* down by the river or under a tree; instead we were immersed in it by sitting with vibrant voices in the community led by Miriam Rose. We were present to a time-rich process of yarning and storytelling to what was happening in Naiyu – witnessing simultaneous conversations, banter, laughter, tears, singing and dancing. All part of the raw and unfiltered daily community life. We saw deep and respectful listening and were impressed with the community's strength of belonging and togetherness.



Our first morning saw us taken down to the Daly River for our *Welcome to Country*. Paddling on the edge, our crowns and bellies were 'baptised' by elders, connecting us to Mother Earth and announcing that we were there on Country. Poignant and touching, we felt the spirit everywhere and in everything.

During our sharing, community members would slowly drift into the



ebb and flow of the yarning circle. Elders were highly respected with certain laws to follow in sitting and serving. Kinship laws were strong. Women, men and teenage boys and young girls all spoke, some more than others. Leslie, a born mimic and storyteller, was still emotionally raw from her mother being part of the Stolen Generation. She then had us in stitches mimicking young Aboriginal men who, in the past, would answer their white 'masters' with a '*berry good sir*.' Mili, a visiting elder and weaver from Beswick, near Katherine, shared the joy and pain of the footprints from early missionaries: the first lot who were kind and generous, and the later ones who divided communities with their strict Catholic rules. Not to mention the awful repercussions from the 2007 Federal government Intervention. She spoke about *Ngalandakku*, the need for Universal Peace and Harmony, the importance to forgive and accept (as opposed to forgive and forget) with compassion and gratitude. And then there was John who had survived a crocodile attack through sheer luck, grit and determination by poking his fingernail into the crocs eye! And Brigid, aged 76, still fiery with a cheeky sense of humour who had sadly lost her younger sister only three weeks ago.

The community seemed alive with generational mentoring, from Miriam Rose and other elders. As we connected with story, we connected to sorrow too. Miriam took us to the site of a terrible and needless massacre where many years ago about 1000 Aboriginal people had been killed by white men. Very sobering, as we sat and pondered on these lost ancestors whose spirits were there with us. We heard too that the combination of

the Federal Intervention and Territory policy, had changed the community from being functional and purposeful to one of zero autonomy causing havoc in people's lives. High unemployment, lack of purpose and low self-esteem had led to a spate of suicides including Miriam's nephew who took his life aged 22. We could see how pain travels through families and community.

Death was not a taboo subject and her nephew's taking of his life was mentioned several times. Indeed, his death became the trigger to the birth of the Miriam Rose Foundation and the Naiyu Action Group.

Yet there was sharing of joy too. The community is abundant in spirit. When Miriam talked about *dadirri*, she told us 'the bush is like a book, full of signs.' And we heard several times 'we don't own the land, the land owns us.' Their connection to Country, family and culture is paramount to healing as the traditional knowledge about trees, animals and plants imparts sacredness and knowledge. We too sensed the importance of nature. Hearing and watching the plethora of birds and their birdsong from the swirling kites, cuckoos and cockatoos to the pied herons and galahs who perched in great numbers on the telephone lines moved us too. A sight to remember! I can't recall seeing as many birds as here. Kites hovered and swooped to receive their lunch – wallaby innards.

The local Merrepen Arts Centre is a key part of the community. Children are encouraged to paint, and we saw some talented work. On our last night there was a small corroboree with singing, dancing and bush tucker. We could sense the community spirit as everyone clapped enthusiastically in tune with the music, sang songs and hymns – some written by Miriam Rose – and we danced alongside some of the painted men and women. Not to mention the bush tucker, with whistling duck, magpie geese and roo tail on offer. Strong gamey tastes! We felt a great sense of belonging under the beam of a full moon. It was an honour and privilege to be there.

*continued page 17*



## The Contemplative way makes a difference

**Joy Hayes**

WCCM Australia coordinator, Tasmania

**The Tasmanian meditation community is very stable and has been for many years. There are seven active groups; five in Hobart and two in Launceston. Many of them have been meeting for over 15 years.**

The silence of our meditation has developed deep friendships within each group and across the state. Over the years we have been blessed to have many Retreats, Essential Teaching Weekends, and also a School Retreat. We are proud to be a part of this community as we know what a difference the *contemplative way* makes in our lives and the lives of those around us.

Many of you will be familiar with the Emmanuel Centre in Launceston and Maryknoll Retreat Centre, to the south of Hobart. The Emmanuel Centre was previously run by the Sisters of St Joseph, and while we miss their wisdom and deep spirituality, the centre is still with us albeit in a different form; and is still

beautiful and holy. Sadly Maryknoll, which was run by the Presentation Sisters, has closed. Recently 22 of the southern meditators held a final Meditation Day there, in what is a truly sacred place. One wrote:

*This Autumn morning's mauve dawn light bathed the mountains, valleys, coastline and city where the three waters of the River Derwent, D'Entrasteaux Channel and Great Southern Ocean meet at Maryknoll in southern Tasmania. With waves curling, water lapping on the sand, birds calling, gum-nuts bursting and petals opening whilst gold and orange were leaves falling to the Earth, 22 meditators joined a silent circle, which quietened when the echo of the chimes called us to meditate. An extract from Revd Sarah Bachelard's 'Christianity and the Climate Crisis' focused our attention and prayer, inspiring and teaching us, 'to live in crisis', bringing hope to each one of us. It was truly a day that refreshed and restored our spirits, whilst we offered prayers of gratitude for the Maryknoll site.*

Another member of the group said:

*The overriding feeling of the group was that although the building may have gone, the spirit will live on. The vision that the Presentation Sisters had for social inclusion will remain and the people now living there will be touched by that very same spirit.*

Each year our Launceston groups have a Quiet Day to raise funds for our community. It is a day to stop and be still; an opportunity to listen inwardly and ponder the meaning of all that you see or hear. This year we will experience silence, meditation, *visio* and *lectio divina*, deep listening and reflection.

### Into Great Silence

*Exploring the Contemplative Meaning of Silence: stillness, solitude and service*

**Thurs, 7 November**, 10am - 3pm  
The Emmanuel Centre, Launceston  
Contact Joy Hayes, Ph 03 6331 2704  
Email [joyhayes77@gmail.com](mailto:joyhayes77@gmail.com)



# Meditation and Environment

*"Great shifts in consciousness need to be worked out at the individual as well as the communal level – we need to transform ourselves before we can change the world for the better."*

Laurence Freeman (NLFeb 2004)



By Janet O'Sullivan

## **This year WCCMAustralia has become a member of ARRCC- Australian Religious Response to Climate Change.**

ARRCC is a multi-faith, member-based organisation of people from around Australia who are committed to taking action on climate change, bringing together representatives from all the major faith traditions to work together in addressing climate change.

See [www.arrcc.org.au](http://www.arrcc.org.au)

As governments, environmentalists, scientists around the world are declaring that we are facing a climate emergency and calling for action, a programme, *Living the Change, faithful choices*

for a flourishing world which ARRCC is engaging in with a global interfaith community, seems an outreach we can all engage in at a grassroots level bringing to it our contemplative dimension.

*Living the Change* was initiated at the UN Climate Conference in 2017 by the US-based multi-faith organisation, GreenFaith, *Living the Change* is a globally-connected community of religious and spiritual institutions working together with sustainable consumption experts to foster sustainable ways of life.

Their website is:

<https://livingthechange.net/>

Several of our meditation groups are now trialling *Living the Change conversations* as part

of our contemplative outreach and action in this critical area. If you have meditation groups, or possible contemplative outreach areas, you may be interested to participate in offering these conversations, as a contribution from our contemplative community to raise consciousness around the challenges we face.

Details can be obtained from

[janetos239@gmail.com](mailto:janetos239@gmail.com)

As part of the WCCM Meditatio /Environment Outreach Australia has made a significant contribution since our 2016 Seminar in Sydney and we welcome input from any of our WCCM Aust. events relating meditation and environment.

Past Australian related events are archived at

<https://meditationenvironment.blogspot.com> and global events

can be viewed at

[wccm.org/meditatio/environment](http://wccm.org/meditatio/environment)

We hope each State will have a representative in this area so we can expand our activities and share our resources.

## **Naiyu Pilgrimage** – from page 15

The three days were intense. Sensory overload. I was challenged by the amount of pain and sorrow the community endures and yet we only touched the surface. I felt uncomfortable with how little money or material things everyone had (and how much I have in comparison) and was moved by their grace and dignity. One lady had 26 cents to her name. I was also challenged by the reality of straddling two worlds – a white person (of English heritage) in an Aboriginal community. However, since returning, both meditation and reflective silence plus acknowledging the profound sacredness in nature has led me to appreciate our deep spiritual connection to each other. Our 'pilgrimage' has also triggered a renewed interest and commitment to the Uluru Statement from the Heart <https://www.1voiceuluru.org>



Our Meditation Mob bonded through our conversations, what we saw and felt. Each day we began with meditation which helped process the reality of what was happening. We read poems or scriptures which encouraged us to tease out what was happening for us internally. And again, at night we would share our thoughts and feelings with honesty, humour and sometimes sadness.

We asked Miriam Rose what could we do? Her responses to 'overcoming' included: come and visit, share what you saw here with others, raise funds

for the [Miriam Rose] Foundation, support students who have left the community for a secondary education (Adelaide, Melbourne and Lismore). Watch them play footy, befriend them. Some of the group had creative skills such as film making. Use them! The Foundation, which liaises with many support groups, needs funds. <https://www.miriamrosefoundation.org.au/about-us/about-naiyu>

Our time in Naiyu was filled with deep respect and listening. We were all enriched as we travelled alongside each other and those in the community absorbing traditional knowledge through sharing story and song. Time and space are also needed to process and ponder the timeless wisdom we heard and saw, along with some inspired dreaming to help straddle the two worlds and to find peace with it all.

# Silent Meditation: A powerful experience

*"Set pools of silence  
in this thirsty land"*

James McAuley, Australian poet

by Lesley Newman

**I have come to value Christian Meditation and have found that the experience of sitting in silent meditation with a group can be so powerful. A community is created over time.**

I was first introduced to Christian Meditation in Melbourne in 1994 when I attended a Laurence Freeman retreat. In 1999 Christine Ritchie and I opened Siloam Centre in Cairns with the desire to provide a contemplative space in which spiritual direction and counselling in a Christian context could be offered. Not long after opening we discovered that Glenyss Argaet who came to reflection days at Siloam, had Christian Meditation CDs and meditated regularly at home. Christine and I with Glenyss decided to begin Christian Meditation at Siloam about 2001. A small group gathered weekly until mid 2015 when we left Cairns for the Atherton Tableland to establish Siloam Retreat on a one-hectare property on the outskirts of Atherton, 80 km from Cairns.

Silence is an important part of the DNA of this property. We offer small group reflective days into which periods of silence are woven. These include a monthly Silent Saturday morning retreat which is now in its third year. Each morning begins and ends with the group sitting in



silence together. Between these 'bookends' people have quiet time to be with the reflection material provided, to meditate, pray, walk the labyrinth, journal, spend time in the art studio or just 'to be' in the silence. It is a lovely experience of quiet companionship.

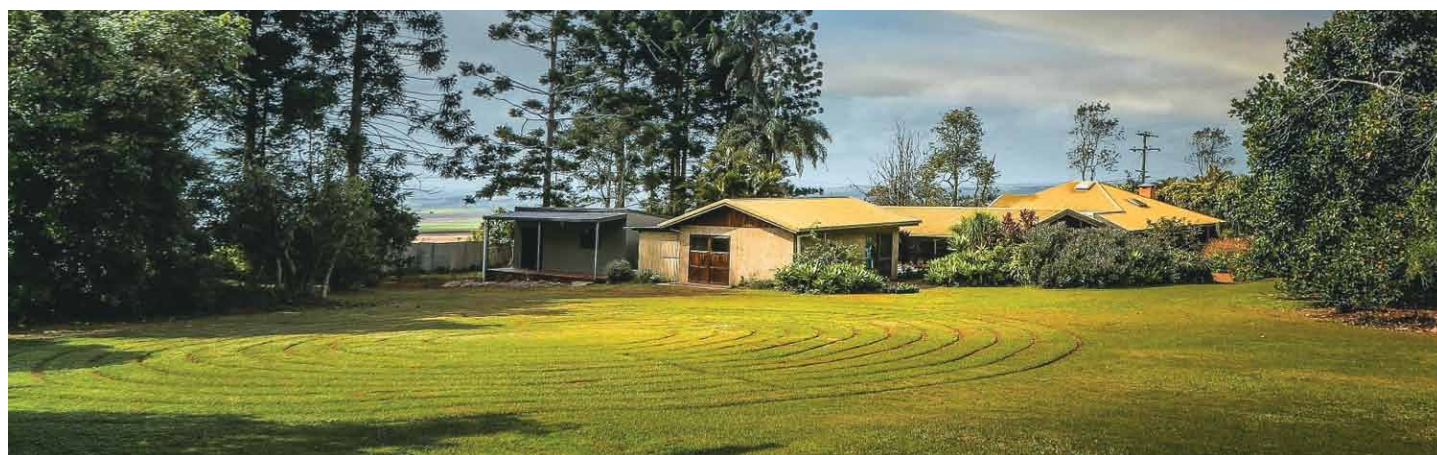
Our Christian Meditation group began earlier this year and is a natural addition to life at Siloam. Although we live in tropical latitudes only 1.5 hours drive from Cairns, Siloam Retreat is 800m above sea level. In the cooler months the open fire in our gathering space is not only welcome, but helps us drop into the silence of the gathering (see above).

A self-contained Hermitage for those who wish to make a silent retreat is set slightly apart from the other Siloam buildings and provides comfortable self-contained, one-

bedroom accommodation for one person. It looks towards a quiet corner of the hectare property populated with several mature bunya, kauri and black bean trees. Visible from the deck and picture window is an ever-changing rural landscape. On fine days the silhouettes of Queensland's highest mountains, Mt Bartle Frere (Aboriginal name *Chooreechillum*) and Mt Bellenden Ker, rise in the east above the Atherton Tableland.

At present our Christian Meditation group is a small one and still forming. However, we have already received much positive feedback not only about the meditation itself but also about the venue, the Retreat house and its fire. We all find that the fire is a wonderful companion and sign of the Spirit of the living God with us as we sit together in silence.

Visit [www.siloamretreat.com.au](http://www.siloamretreat.com.au)





# Discovering Bonnevaux

By Celine Bowman

**Now that I am in the middle of my busiest term at work, in a year in which I may have slightly over-committed myself, it is a joy to look back on my November 2018 visit to Bonnevaux – to recall, in mind and heart, the prayerful and simple rhythm and sense of community of the days spent there.**

I had planned to meet my daughter in France and was picking her up from her host family's home – less than two hours drive from Bonnevaux. What a perfect opportunity to make Bonnevaux a part of my itinerary! In truth, the chance to visit Bonnevaux was a good 50% of my motivation to go ahead with the trip.

Because of the time of the year – late November, heading towards winter – and the uncertainty of accommodation options due to renovations, I stayed off-site but spent my days and evenings at Bonnevaux. The resident community was small at the time – down to two, with a smattering of other visitors staying over the week that I was there.

I was warmly welcomed into the daily life of Bonnevaux – morning, midday and evening meditation and working to support the community. My support was



domestic – shopping, cooking, sorting the pantry, helping rearrange the kitchen because of upcoming building work.

Some highlights of my stay were:

- Being trusted with the community car as I headed off shopping, driving for the very first time in my 43 years of driving, on the right hand side of the road!
- Helping throw mulch around Thomas's newly established project of an organic permaculture market garden on a sunny Saturday afternoon (and having a not very successful go at trying to use some of my French with his friends who had gathered to help!)
- Walking all over the property to discover its natural and built

delights, including a tour around the Abbey itself (still under renovation at the time).

- Visiting the Benedictine Abbey in Ligugé, which was established in 361 AD, for Sunday Mass.
- Cups of tea and meals around a large wooden table in the big old country kitchen with a variety of local and international visitors. The kitchen was in the old farmhouse building, which is currently being gutted and remodelled into the guesthouse at Bonnevaux.

The greatest joys were discovering the beauty of the Bonnevaux property, being just a little part of the community that was helping to grow something special for the world community of Christian meditators and, of course, the essential centring on daily meditation and prayer. More than anything else, these daily community prayer times really consolidated my sense of feeling welcomed and a part of the community.





www.wccmaustralia.org.au

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Ivan Smith



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Card number

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