



# WCCM

*Newsletter of The World Community for Christian Meditation*

Registered Charity No. 1182213

## WCCM Academy Opens

A TWO-YEAR STUDY AND PRACTICE PROGRAMME GROUNDED IN CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITION IN THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY (P 8)



*An ancient tree at Bonnevaux, which will host the residential component of the Academy*

*“The vision of Metanoia shines like the sun of the true Self”*



In his reflection on *Meta-noia: let your minds be remade*, the WCCM theme for 2023, Laurence Freeman sees that by allowing ourselves to be changed we change the world (p 2-5)

*This issue*

**6-10 News & Articles**

An overview of the 2023 WCCM programme and ways of deepening metanoia

**11 In Focus**

The personal story of Kenzie Knight finding meditation at the John Main Center

**12 Events & Projects**

United for the Future: how you can help to share the gift of meditation this Spring

Leaver friends,

## A letter from Laurence Freeman OSB

'*Metanoia*: Let your minds be remade.' Our theme in the WCCM for this year. A few days ago, the first of the year's ten online speakers in the monthly series showed us just how urgent – and deep – this task is. It leads into both peace of mind – (peace rather than pleasure is the meaning of happiness) – and into the global peace needed to survive.

Like me, you probably find that our daily mind is as turbulent as the wintry weather here on Bere Island where I am writing this letter. Atlantic storms have been drenching us almost constantly since I came here for a personal retreat. Then, today when I woke and drew the curtains, I looked out on a calm, sun-soaked landscape, a cloudless sky and brightly joyful colours. 'O, what a wonderful world, I head somewhere'. Even knowing how brief such epiphanies can be, we can fully enjoy the gift of them. Mental weather is like meteorological weather. I will say shortly, mind and world, like mind and ego, are inseparable and both are constantly changing.

Our mind finds peace only when we fully accept what we experience, uncomplainingly or unpossessively, depending on whether they are painful or pleasant. Only acceptance teaches us how to be real by rejecting denial and fantasy. Reality then teaches us that all experience is one. Rain or sunshine, pain or pleasure, failure or success, losing or finding, death or life. No experience stands alone. Everything is connected in the single seamless experience of reality. Seeing this is *metanoia's* gift.

I asked Barry White, the first speaker in the *Metanoia* Series, to start off with a memorable summary of the year's theme. So, he memorably did: '*Metanoia* is recognising the path and following the path with a commitment that is not less than everything – every thought, word, action and moment – with a sense



of urgency and appreciation that time is limited'.

Ordinarily, when we speak of changing our mind, we think of altering a decision we have made or an opinion we hold. Changing opinions or decisions, however, are often just signs of how restless and insecure the mind is. To hide this weakness and appear 'strong-minded' we can also stubbornly refuse to change a position we have taken. For this reason, the Russian leadership is frightened of changing its mind about its assault on Ukraine.

*Metanoia* is different. Letting our minds be remade means more than changing mental positions or opinions. It is seeing the world bathed in the sunlight of God. Sometimes blindingly, as St Paul did in his conversion experience.

\*

Considerable time and effort are required to achieve that victorious surrender when *metanoia* transforms us, in the sunshine of reality, by burning off ignorance and delusion. It's not easy, but

it's easier than not making the effort. It is life's journey and every step opens us to a deeper level of peace.

Mind is restless, resistant, and ever caught in a web of delusion. This is the first of many humbling discoveries awaiting the new meditator. We need to be encouraged: 'don't be afraid, don't give up letting go.' Seeing *my* own mind for what it is, is step one. Meditation makes us daily more aware of the ego-mind's stratagems for survival and its repertoire of tricks. Then, one day when you sit to meditate and the curtains of the mind are drawn open, you find a clear sky-consciousness, with no cloud-thoughts: except the thin, wispy thought whispering 'O, this *is* great. Success, finally! Cling to it'. After being caught like this many times, you learn that the only thing *not* to let go of is letting go, until there is no more to let go of. Mind *is* thought. Until we are mindless, we are not free. The Buddha once advised how to stabilise practice: 'never over-rate what you have received'. Nor does Jesus short-change us about the radical simplicity of the narrow path of *metanoia*: 'Whoever finds



their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it’.

Letting go means losing-everything.

Meditators acquire a taste for this wisdom by their daily practice. Each daily meditation is part of one experience. For those on our path, the mantra reveals the powerfully unobtrusive presence of Christ, guiding us like a personal trainer, into ever deeper metanoia. Gaps appear in the cloudbanks of delusion. By training the mind we see it for what it is and learn to see inwardly. Gradually clearing those obstacles of ignorance, formed by forces of fear or desire in our early life-story or acquired in our cultural formation, the eye of the heart opens. We no longer look for God as something to be found. We see that God *is* the light by which we see. When the mind *is* clear what is *not* God? Metanoia restores clarity of vision with the bonus of the courage to risk more.

The most important task in life is to live it to the full. Our potential for creativity is to respond fully to the gift of our existence. This means to respond at the point of our origination within the spirit of God. (*John Main, Door to Silence*)

\*

Meister Eckhart calls this ‘point of origination’ the ‘divine spark’ present in our deepest, most mysterious centre. Metanoia is the path to uncovering it. It draws us into the kind of paradox that unremade minds find terrifying but that to the clear mind is exciting. We let go, until there is nothing more to let go of; then we find not only everything we have lost but everything it was ever part of.

This wisdom, passed down through history, is also the core narrative of every

human life. It needs to be told and re-told, and never more so than in our amnesiac time. The greatest contemplative schools have done this and often came into existence in the worst of times. In 14<sup>th</sup> century Europe, for example, people were tormented by plague (without vaccination), by social and economic chaos, by a divided church in shameful spiritual decline. The mystical teachers of the period (like the author of the Cloud, Mother Julian, Meister Eckhart and Ruusbroek) exposed the church’s failures but did not abandon it. Each of them was a unique manifestation of wisdom, with their own style and thought, to which church authorities often reacted hostile-

or opposition. ‘Every image of God is an idol’, Gregory of Nyssa says. Bonaventure discovered, as each of us will, that ‘we must suspend all the operations of the mind to enter this sacred mystical experience (which) cannot be understood by anyone unless they surrender themselves to it’.

Metanoia is the victorious surrender of the mind, letting go of the ego-mind’s double-act by removing attention from thoughts, including thoughts about ourselves. This is the mystical tradition of the church, truer to the gospel than mere theological orthodoxy or enforced morality. Theology – as the new WCCM Academy launching soon will show – is



ly. In their very diversity, however, we can see a profound unity of vision.

The vision of metanoia shines like the sun of the true Self, our ‘point of origination’ or the ‘divine spark’. The mind is remade through steady practice and peaceful bursts of self-understanding arising from silence and stillness. Mind and ego are the same. Like the moon that shines with the sun’s light, mind-ego reflects the light of being, of the God-Self which absorbs all counterfeits

most powerful when it recognises its own limits.

Metanoia *is* the contemplative journey. It allows us to interiorise the words of Jesus which we cannot do when the mind remains caught in second-hand opinions and boundaries. For example, ‘the Kingdom of heaven is within you’, is an essential saying of Jesus: it is the experiential insight created in metanoia that our deepest centre is with and in God. Finding this point of origin allows

us to know directly, as God knows, and to know ourselves by knowing that we *are known* (and loved) by God. Metanoia also leads into another mystery of ourselves described by mystics as early as St Paul: we are known by God in eternity before we exist in the flesh: ‘chosen by God... before the foundation of the world’, echoing the prophet Jeremiah ‘before I formed you in the womb, I knew you’.

Metanoia awakens profound and transforming self-knowledge. But, some will say, what has this got to do with my problems or the price of heating my home? Does it make any difference to how well I live in the world and the direction the world is travelling?

It makes a difference. How we think about ourselves shapes how we think, act and feel. If we see ourselves as cannon-fodder (like the Russian conscripts) or consumer-algorithms (as people lining up all night for the new Apple phone), where is the wonder of life? Where is the love that springs from the wonder of self-recognition? Where is the wonder of recognising ourselves in others and to see one divine value and equality in everyone? How we know and understand ourselves matters because it determines how we vote, see the difference between lies and truth, work, play and love. Our love for others, for the world and for God are one experience springing from the cry of self-recognition in one of the most beautiful poems in the Bible: ‘I thank you, Lord, for the wonder of my being.’ (Psalm 139).

However and whomever we love, love has one source and purpose. When we meet someone and fall in love, or when we let ourselves be mastered by compassion for those in need, we are experiencing God. We are beneficiaries of God’s most intimate self-revelation. Pushed into new depths of self-understanding,



*Blessing of the John Main Meditation and Icon Room in Balally (Photo: Balally Parish archives)*

the wonder becomes richer and our capacity for love grows. Rumi says, ‘Lovers don’t finally meet somewhere. They’re in each other all along’. Loving, romantically or compassionately, recognising another person, not as the embodiment of one’s fantasy, but as a wondrously unique manifestation of God, changes us to our depth. It frees us from delusion, by awakening us to our self in them. It too is part of metanoia.

Experiences of this kind are rare, authentic expressions of the ‘giftedness of life’ as John Main described it. They are worth waiting for. Our daily spiritual practice prepares us for them. When they appear, they are like a bonus-boost on the path of metanoia which we are following every day of our life.

\*

Religion that forgets this mystical wisdom, of revealing the divine in the human and the human in the divine, is either irrelevant to the human path or hostile to it. But when religion is infused with this wisdom it is a global force of

healing and progress.

It is hard today to feel optimistic about institutional religion: until you see it renewed by communal metanoia, transforming itself in a traditional form like the parish. I saw this recently, for example, in the Parish of the Ascension in Balally, Dublin. Fr Jim Caffrey, a meditator in our community, his predecessor the theologian Fr Dermot Lane, and an energised team of parishioners are evolving into a new kind of contemplative parish (‘meditation and service’ it proclaims on a banner) expressing a deep spirituality in active service. It is marked more by depth than just novelty. I celebrated a contemplative mass with them on the Feast of the Epiphany, full of human warmth and the *koinonia* of a diverse, inclusive community nurtured by shared interiority and a common purpose. For me it was a sign of what the church, with enlightened leadership, might yet become globally.

But why does it always seem so hard to commit to the path of metanoia and stay on it? We may have moments, even long moments, of clear sky bathed in the

sunlight of love which feel so powerful that they will never stop. Even if we were to lose them, we would never forget. But weather changes, the mental sky clouds up with thoughts and delusions, storms can delete memory. The pain of loss and doubt can then undermine what was once unforgettable certainty. We are creatures of time.

Life's weather being so unpredictable is why we should fix the roof while the sun is shining. Even if it leaks again, in storms, damage is reduced. Meditation builds resilience. It is a part of our life we don't have to think about but, if we miss it, we quickly feel the lack. We meditate 'in prosperity and adversity' as the desert teachers put it. Whatever the weather, we turn up uncomplaining, grateful that it is part of our life. We learn the wisdom of not evaluating temporary, partial experiences in meditation and stay instead in the whole experience.

One of the hardest lessons to learn is to accept the gift, when what we have been waiting for appears, and to practice detachment from the beginning. All attachment forms imperceptibly and leads to possessiveness and fear. Seeds of new pain and loss are sown. Metanoia is built into the need for continuous detachment. Never give up, never stop letting go. Consciousness of metanoia is released to help the ego-mind by the practice of meditation. It enters in all relationships and activities whenever we slip from gratitude into entitlement by clinging to a gift. The path of metanoia prevents this. It reverses the slide into delusion. It saves us from the trap of possession and restores us to the freedom of gratitude.

The external world manifests our ego-mind. If the mind is is unaware of its egotistical nature, the world becomes a mentally constructed playground of the ego. To the degree that our mind embrac-

es metanoia, helping us to recognise the difference between the ego and the self, the whole world becomes a 'point of origination' for the divinely-human.

This is the ultimate goal of meditation. We change the world by being changed. And as we see our mind for what it really is, the ego, we see that the only mind free of ego is the mind of Christ. 'We possess the mind of Christ', is the astonishing announcement.

Understanding the path of metanoia uniting inner life and external events is the healing, the wholeing and the divinising of the human condition. Because it makes this obvious, meditation is commitment to metanoia. And yes, it makes a difference. For years we go around in circles, repeating mistakes in different ways, searching for answers and explanations. Meditation frees us from this cycle of self-made *samsara*. We often ask, 'what is the best way to go?' The answer is 'the way you have already taken'.

Metanoia is not about novelty, changing opinions or getting more knowledge. It is shedding illusion as it arises by seeing what is real in every form of experience, periods of sunshine or storm. The mind begins to be remade as soon as we start to tame its restless activity. In stillness we let go and, seeing the priority of Being, all our doing changes.

\*

Time shows that metanoia itself is gift. Metanoia is Being's miracle of self-healing for the mind and ego through what is free of the ego-mind. It remakes the mind, retaining its useful qualities but disconnecting the mechanisms of attachment and illusion that make it self-harming. Ramana said that many 'i's (many deluded, false selves) are



A figure of contemplation, Notre-Dame de Paris

formed every moment. In the deepest centre of our being, where we meet infinite depth, where silence consumes thoughts and images, we enter peace beyond understanding. Here, finally and for ever, we recognise that we are recognised.

Rather than acquiring new ideas or opinions, metanoia removes false identities and illusions. The simple obviousness of self-recognition is what best describes progress on the human path. It is Jesus saying 'Mary' and Mary, in the same instant of recognition, replying 'Rabbouni'. It is the drop merging with the ocean and the ocean simultaneously merging with the drop.

With much love

*Lawrence*



## News & Articles

# Six Opportunities to Let our Minds be Remade

TAKE A LOOK AT OUR LIST OF EVENTS, PROJECTS AND NEW RESOURCES TO HELP YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY IN 2023

## I - Metanoia series and Scripture series (online)

The WCCM 2023 theme of “Metanoia” is a call to let our minds be remade - to change our perception and direction. As has become the custom in recent years, we are offering this as an online series with 10 speakers from different fields, reflecting on and helping us to go deeper into this theme of change. With contributions from the fields of religion, science, politics, economics and technology, this series will be a year-long discovery of hope and fresh insights into our future. The first session in January was led by Dr Barry White on *The Science & Art of Healing*, and the themes and speakers for the forthcoming sessions are as follows:

- 28 February – Education. **Diane Tolomeo**: *Teach Me What I Cannot See*
- 21 March – Philosophy. **David Egan**: *Animals and Us - A Multi-Species Community*;
- 25 April – Embodiment. **Giovanni Fe-**



Matthew Fox

**licioni**: *In My Flesh I Come Face to Face with God*

- 30 May – Global Politics. **Mark Medish**: *Reflections on Human Scale*;
- 13 June – Religion. **Matthew Fox**: *Letting Our Minds Be Remade About Religion*;
- 25 July – Scripture. **Jane Williams**: *Metanoia: How Scripture Remakes Our Minds*;



Jane Williams

5 September – Technology. **Marco Schorlemmer**: *Humanity in a Techno-Scientific World*;

21 November – Culture. **Jane McAuliffe & Dennis McAuliffe**: *Contemplation and a Culture of Encounter*;

12 December – Economics. **Mark Carney**: *Value(s) for Building a Better World for All*.



## The Space Between Words: How to read the Bible and other Sacred Texts

**Laurence Freeman** is leading a nine-session online series (starting in September). A unique journey discovering how the inner experience described in sacred texts is the same as what we discover in ourselves on the contemplative path. Relearning how to read these texts is a priority for a world where the connection between the inner and outer dimensions has been lost.

To learn more about all our online series, visit [wccm.org](http://wccm.org)

## News & Articles

### 2 - Retreats and Pilgrimages

As well as coming for personal retreat and sharing life with the community at Bonnevaux, our international centre offers a programme of special retreats and events:

16-25 February: Deepen your roots – plant trees and meditate at Bonnevaux

3-4 March: The Wisdom of the Desert: Freedom to Change – Lent Retreat (online) **with Laurence Freeman**

7-12 March: A Benedictine Wisdom School with Cynthia Bourgeault (Teacher in Residence)

1-9 April: The Easter Mystery is all about Being Remade - Holy Week Retreat (hybrid) with **Laurence Freeman and Giovanni Felicioni**

2-7 May: Risking Delight, with **Sarah Bachelard** (Teacher in Residence)

6-11 June: Radical Regeneration: Christ Consciousness and Sacred Activism with **Andrew Harvey** (Teacher in Residence)

1-6 August: Stability and Plasticity:



Meditation session in the Barn during the John Main Seminar 2022

Embracing Life's Changes - Young Adults' Retreat with **Laurence Freeman, Giovanni Felicioni** and others.

7 - 11 November - Yoga and Meditation Retreat (TBC) with **Giovanni Felicioni**

14-19 November: *Good Measure*,

*Pressed Down and Overflowing: How Contemplation Shapes our Action* with **Rowan Williams** (Teacher in Residence)

For more information visit [bonnevauxwccm.org](http://bonnevauxwccm.org)

### Monte Oliveto Retreat



Seeing is Believing is the theme for this year's Monte Oliveto Retreat (24 June - 1 July) in Italy, led by **Laurence Freeman and Giovanni Felicioni**. We may look at something but still see only what we imagine is there. We can have an experience and miss the meaning. Loss, grief, disappointment take their toll in life but can also be transformed by seeing what is really there. This retreat has been held in Monte Oliveto for 30 years and participants have said it leads them into deeper and lasting peace.

Visit <https://wccm-int.org/moretreat23>

### Holy Land Pilgrimage

**Laurence Freeman** is leading a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with an optional extension to Jordan, 2-13 October. Visit the sacred places where Jesus walked and taught, was born and died and where the church began. With daily meditation, this pilgrimage deepens faith and strengthens the interior journey – especially through the fellowship among the pilgrims.

For more information visit <https://wccm-int.org/hland23>



## News & Articles

### 3 - The WCCM Academy Opens



We are excited to announce the opening of the WCCM Academy!

The Academy is an interdisciplinary programme grounded in the Christian contemplative tradition and inspired by meditation as a universal and unifying source of wisdom. We believe that contemplation generates peace and wisdom which are the necessary foundations for justice, and that this peace and



wisdom can be enacted and applied across all of human life and society.

The Academy, which is based on ecumenical, interfaith and inclusive values, is committed to passing on the contemplative practices and teachings of John Main and Laurence Freeman to a new generation of students. Whether you are new to contemplation or an experienced practitioner; a student of theology,

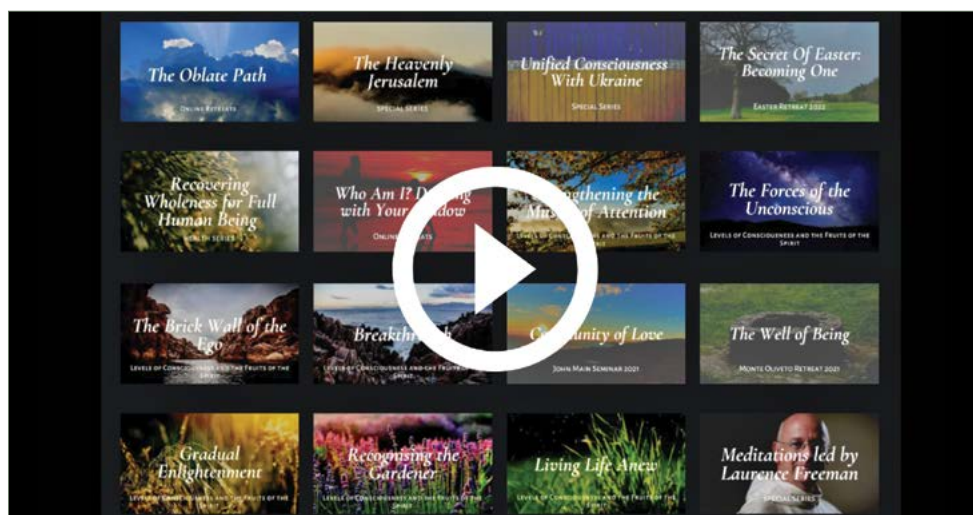
philosophy, psychology or another discipline; or simply one who would like to delve deeper into the path of meditation, the Academy provides a unique opportunity to explore the transformative power of contemplation and how it can be applied to your own life and work.

With a richly diverse faculty of teachers and personal tutors, a combination of online courses, retreats and in-person seminars, the Academy offers an immersive educational experience that deepens our understanding of contemplative wisdom in all traditions. The Academy draws on a global community of teachers and practitioners committed to fostering a sense of inclusion, connection and mutual support among its students.

We hope you will join us on this journey of discovery and growth. To learn more about the programme, please visit the WCCM Academy web page: <https://wccm.org/academy/>

### 4 - Our video streaming platform

At the end of 2022 we launched WCCM+, our video streaming platform with more than 300 hours of recordings of talks, retreats, meditation sessions and major events. We invite you to subscribe as a member in order to support your personal journey while also supporting WCCM in its mission to spread meditation to the world and “to serve the unity of all”. You can do a 7-days trial before you subscribe. For more information please visit: [wccm.org/wccm-plus](https://wccm.org/wccm-plus)





## News & Articles

# 5 - Meditatio WCCM's Outreach

BY KATE MIDDLETON, DIRECTOR OF MEDITATIO

Meditatio WCCM's outreach which includes work in prisons, as well as in the realms of health, social justice, education, business and, importantly, the climate crisis. By connecting and networking via Meditatio webinars, events, resources and offering teaching on meditation, WCCM aims to bridge the gap between the contemplative experience and key areas of modern society, educating, inspiring and informing meditators and non-meditators alike. The Meditatio Centre in London (which is celebrating its 10th anniversary in March) offers a physical space for dialogue and learning, and represents a kind of microcosm of the huge amount of work that is being done globally.

Meditatio is made up of an incredible network of expert volunteers working to bring meditation to different areas of society. 2023 will be a time for recruiting and training more volunteers. COULD THIS BE YOU?! Meditatio wants to encourage and train you to be fully confident in talking about your practice in different contexts. We have already begun by producing guidelines to leading meditation with children and now, Mary Devane, Meditatio International Coordinator, is producing a toolkit to support meditators to 'break in' to their local prison and have the skills to teach meditation to prisoners or their families. The work in trauma-related meditation is ongoing with Tim Kelly in the USA, and we are looking to start some online support groups for people in the margins: refugees, people coming out of prisons, those in recovery from trauma and addic-



Coming soon: *Breaking into Prison - A Toolkit for Meditation* (Photo by Dimitris Vetsikas/Pixabay)

tion. We will train you to lead a group like this, either online or in person, in your neighbourhood. We want to support you to go out and seek the people who need meditation most. The Earth Crisis Group was formed last year to look at how meditation can redress the climate balance. This is of the utmost importance and, as meditators, we need to be engaged and informed. We are currently forming a global network of meditators involved in climate work. To learn more about this, look out for our Earth Crisis Forums which will be happening regularly.

Terry Doyle, the Meditatio International Coordinator for People on the Margins famously says, "have mantra, will travel". By this, he means we need only our word, and we take that to where it is most required. But, of course, confidence is needed to do this. Some groups are unknown or challenging to us. What language

should we use? Are we allowed to mention God? Can we say we are teaching Christian Meditation? These are questions that come up regularly for us all, I am sure. While we do not hide the faith dimension of our own practice or inspiration, we must of course reassure the audience that we are not trying to convert or win them over to any belief system. So in 2023, Meditatio aims, through webinars, events, online teaching programmes and meditating together, to encourage and support what we all want to do: share this amazing gift with as many people as possible! If you are interested in getting involved in any of the areas of outreach mentioned above, please get in touch on [meditatio@wccm.org](mailto:meditatio@wccm.org).

To explore all the Meditatio initiatives, go to: <https://wccm.org/outreach/>.

Be a part of the social transformation of consciousness in 2023. Metanoia, let our minds be remade - and maranatha!

## News & Articles

# 6 - New online courses will help group leaders, outreach and the delivering of the Essential Teaching

BY PHIL ROGACKI, WCCM DIRECTOR OF ONLINE LEARNING

Online Learning is releasing several courses in the first half of 2023. They will align with a contemplative approach to our current crisis such as the challenge to democracy and healing from trauma. Others, will focus on a deeper investigation of the transforming of consciousness which flows from the practice of meditation.

There will also be courses on

developing leadership and the personal gifts of teachers of meditation. This will include a Meditation Group Leaders' course and a course for presenters of the Essential Teaching Workshop, which has been a WCCM in-person favourite for more than 20 years, based on foundational Christian teaching and spirituality. For more information visit [wccm.org/courses](https://wccm.org/courses)



## The first John Main Seminar at Bonnevaux

Herman Van Rompuy was the keynote speaker at the John Main Seminar 2022 on the theme "The Challenge TO Democracy: The Challenge OF Democracy". The Seminar and pre-seminar retreat (led by Fr Laurence) were hosted for the first time at Bonnevaux in November 2022. Resident participants were at capacity and several hundred joined online. Herman Van Rompuy spoke wisely and challenging and enjoyed a robust dialogue both with seasoned meditators and younger ones, with a passionate concern for the environment. The 2023 John Main Seminar will take place from 11-17 September and details will be released soon.



## Contemplation in Action in Trinidad & Tobago

A meditation group in Trinidad, led by the National Coordinator Sandee Bengochea, put the idea of "contemplation and action" into practice in a project to help women refugees from Venezuela. For eight weeks (starting in September 2022) they gave migrants English language lessons,

taught them work skills, and provided mental health support. The whole project was centred around the meditation practice. "It was really beautiful to see the women calming down during the meditation, very often there were tears. I think what we did was to provide a space for them to heal, to just be and to

really exhale and try to find themselves again. The *Contemplation Leading to Action* project meant so much for our group. And in fact, we are all waiting to do another round of the programme," said Sandee.

ONLINE - watch the full interview here: <https://wccm-int.org/intvtrind>



## In Focus

# Kenzie Knight, USA



My meditation experience began when I was a nervous first-year student at Georgetown University. Feeling overwhelmed, I would find myself at the John Main Center for Meditation & Dialogue (JMC) seeking silence, simplicity, and stillness. At first, meditation was an escape from the hecticness of college. I was looking for a moment of rest in the midst of such a huge transition. What I did not realize at the time was the invitation to which God was calling me.

Through my experience at the Center and exploration of the teachings of John Main, Laurence Freeman, and

many others, I learned that meditation is a call to prayer and to find rest in God. Meditation can be summarized for me in the phrase “mutual gazing,” as Fr. Martin Laird, O.S.A. beautifully expressed it – reflecting the meeting between God and me.

I have deepened my practice this fall as the JMC Fellow for Christian Contemplation for 2022-2023, which is generously sponsored by the Trust for the Meditation Process. My biggest observation has been the nonlinear

*The invitation of meditation is to find rest in the restlessness, to embrace the difficult nature of letting go*

nature of the practice. That is, I have noticed sometimes distractions are constant and at other times I can be attuned to God’s presence so clearly. I sometimes experience both on the same day!

I discovered that I have brought expectations of a perfect practice to meditation. I assumed my meditation practice would be a linear progress with

distractions becoming less and less as I meditated more. But this has not been the case. I have noticed distractions are frequent still after years of practice. And I am learning to be okay with that -- that God is not asking me to be perfect but just to simply be.

Even still, this nonlinearity can be frustrating and disheartening at times. So, I am learning how to sit with this frustration and my distractions in meditation, welcoming them as guests rather than seeing them as intruders, because accepting the presence of these feelings is as much a part of the process of the practice as finding stillness is. I remind myself of the words of Jesus: “Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest.” The invitation of meditation is to find rest in the restlessness, to embrace the difficult nature of letting go. It is not about perfecting the practice but is a way to be with the messiness of life. It is about reorienting the way we think about our relationship to God, ourselves, and others.

Meditation is simply the invitation to meet God within us and recentre on that love – to sit in mutual gazing. No matter how the practice unfolds, God and you are there in the present moment – and that is all that matters.



WCCM Newsletter is published four times a year by the International Office of The World Community for Christian Meditation, St Marks, Myddelton Square London EC1R 1XX, London, UK. Tel: +44 (0) 20 7278 2070

Editor: Leonardo Corrêa (leonardo@wccm.org)

Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano

**Would you like to contribute to the WCCM Newsletter? Our next deadline is 15 March.**

## Events & Projects

# Spring Appeal: United for the Future



WCCM is much more than an organisation: it is a community of people from around the world, committed to the mission of sharing the gift of Christian Meditation. We have come a long way over the past 30+ years of our existence. We now have National Communities in 63 countries and are present in more than 100. We have been teaching meditation in all sorts of conditions and spheres of society,

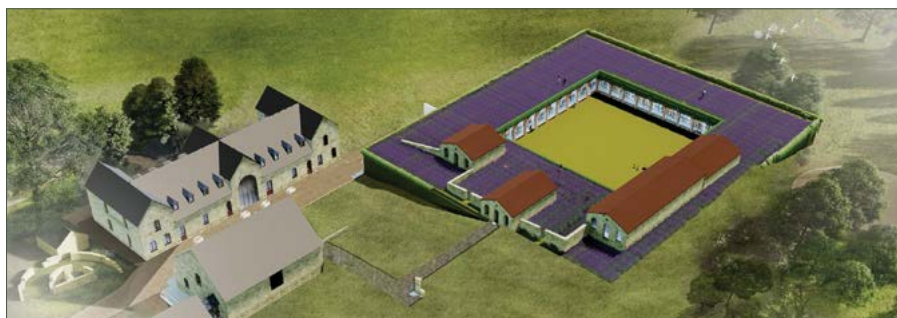
not only among Christians. Because meditation is a universal wisdom, everyone is welcome to join us. WCCM continues to expand and grow, and so our financial needs have also increased significantly.

Our Spring fundraising appeal will take place the week of 24-31 March 2023. Please tune in and give what you can. Details on ways of giving will be available on our website ([wccm.org](http://wccm.org)).

## Free Online series for Young Adults

*Fully alive: Make Contact with Our Own Centre* is a free online series of eight sessions, starting in February. This series has been created for the 16 – 45 age group and focuses on the questions they may have about society and the world we live in. Each session will be led by a meditator from the global community and will concentrate on a different aspect of meditation, including a general introduction, the benefits of meditation, the difference between meditation and mindfulness, and the balance between action and contemplation, among other topics. More info here: <https://wccm-int.org/yngs23>

## Bonnevaux next phase: The Contemplative Cloister



The next major step in the Bonnevaux project will be the Contemplative Cloister. Like the first version of this idea, there will be 26 new “cells” in a uniquely peaceful and beautiful environment. The new design is more economical, more ecological, and blends more harmoniously with the older buildings. To date Bonnevaux has been made possible by the generosity of meditators, friends, and foundations. We have taken no loans and our only debt is gratitude. With the same kind of support we plan to begin work on the cloister in early 2024.

Learn more: <https://wccm-int.org/ccloister>

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

UK and EUROPE  
[www.goodnewsbooks.co.uk](http://www.goodnewsbooks.co.uk)  
[orders@goodnewsbooks.co.uk](mailto:orders@goodnewsbooks.co.uk)  
Tel: +44 (0) 1582 571011

CANADA  
[www.mediomedia.ca](http://www.mediomedia.ca)  
[christianmeditation@wccm-canada.ca](mailto:christianmeditation@wccm-canada.ca)  
Tel: +1-514-485-7928

ASIA  
[mimi@wccm.org](mailto:mimi@wccm.org)  
Tel: +65 9661 0362

AUSTRALIA  
[www.wccmaustralia.org.au/store](http://www.wccmaustralia.org.au/store)  
[jopanetta@gmail.com](mailto:jopanetta@gmail.com)  
Tel: +614 0978 4357

NEW ZEALAND  
[www.christiansupplies.co.nz](http://www.christiansupplies.co.nz)  
[order@pleroma.org.nz](mailto:order@pleroma.org.nz)  
Tel: +64 6 85 68378

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







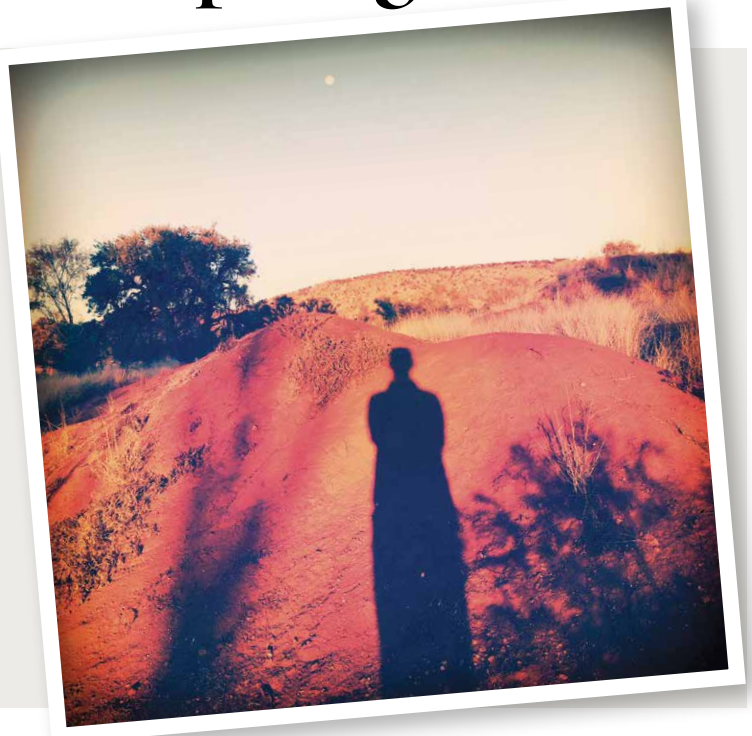
# Campfire in the Heart retreat centre Alice Springs

Christian Meditation has been part of Campfire in the Heart retreat centre, Alice Springs these past 20 or so years, you may recall Sue Woods' newsletter article about the place a while ago, a number of us have been on retreat there over the years.

When Sue and David needed to leave, an opportunity arose for Judi and Paul to take over the place, and set up a Not-For-Profit company to explore how our meditation retreats might draw people to the centre with its offerings around spirituality of land, and indigenous wisdom.

As well as a centre for locals, our hope is to hold retreats each year that will call meditators with a daily rhythm of prayer and meditation, and other contemplative practices, all in the context of the eastern MacDonnell ranges, a short walk out the back gate.

The younger meditators have welcomed the possibility and promise of the place, Sarah Bishop reflects on a time of retreat there ...



I spent about 6 weeks in the centre of Australia at a contemplative retreat centre called Campfire in the Heart. It was my first trip to this part of Australia. In a recent article, Fr Laurence speaks about Bonneveaux being a place of convergence, a place of common prayer, as the frame for one's life and that it is a joy that he wishes he could share with more people, and that also is my hope and intention for sharing about my retreat and about Campfire in the Heart.

This place was strange and beguiling to me – a place of paradox, mystery and hidden depths.

*"A gentle and disquieting exercise in patience and generosity with one another and with the land."*

Continued page 14.



# Campfire in the Heart retreat centre Alice Springs

● continued from page 13

We began our time of retreat by walking the labyrinth together, pilgrims from many different parts of Australia, coming together for the first time, and entering from many different contexts and with many expectations. As we slowly entered into the circular path, together and separately, I experienced the extraordinary presence of this strange and spare landscape, unlike anything that I had experienced before. Each one moving at their own pace, according to a rhythm from outside and within, and yet each of us giving one another space to release and allow. Giving up our schedules, priorities, our expectations of life to that point, and of what the retreat would give us. With each step we gave up what we thought we knew and what we thought we wanted and were going to get and we let go of all these things. A gentle and disquieting exercise in patience and generosity with one another and with the land.

We became open to the possibilities of the present moment and to the road ahead. The mysterious promise and hope that was embodied in the golden dusk, sensing, feeling, hearing the light crunch of ochre dirt beneath feet, aligning to the insistent and abundant evening birdsong. Slowly, gently, inexorably we entered the vast and ancient beauty that is at the heart of Australia.

Being... surrounded and embraced, held.

Breathing. Breath taking.  
A return to childlike wonder.

Astonishing red ochres. The immensity of ancient trees. Endless skies revealed variously at sunrise and throughout each day – simple and innocent blue, until the muted rainbow descent to evening and the vastness and immensity of the desert sky ablaze with stars. The myriad and never-ending



*"All are welcome to share from the heart. To listen to what emerges from the sacred depths of self and other."*

cavalcade of brown and greens, fiercely and resolutely alive, stubborn and sublime. Life and death so intimately present and intertwined. So close – not hidden beneath layers of frivolous distractions. So close it hurt. Spiky, hard, vital.

We were sent by our retreat leader, Celia Kemp, out into the scrubby desert landscape to wander and reflect ... to just be present to what is. I slowly wandered out, looking, listening, feeling, smelling ... empty creek beds, dry grasses twitching, a big old river gum standing

sentinel, wind chasing round and about. A red sandy patch, still and safe and quiet. Slowly opening to the deeper places and inner spaces of land. Stop, letting the landscape speak, become known. All is connected. All is held. God is in this place – in all and through all – even to every atom and molecule. Held by and in the space between all things. Every element is held and known and loved. Loved without favour or prejudice. Simply loved. All part and parcel of the gift of life.

Meaning is the connection with all we have loved in life and with the whole that we belong to.

A small part and yet also a part that contains the whole.

Celia, our retreat leader, a local resident of Alice Springs and a fellow pilgrim ... practiced at seeing deeper, sent us to view the world with eyes of compassion. She guided us to become present to the space, to notice and to see with the eyes of the heart. One day we went to the town centre of Alice Springs. To be with, to notice ... not to interact or enter into dialogue with people. To be present ... Two hours of being present. A precious time to see anew. Revelation. Two worlds, together but deeply separate. Black. White. Divided. Sliding by like water and oil. Eyes unseeing ... Ears unhearing. Hearts encased in layers of pain and blame and





## Campfire in the Heart retreat centre Alice Springs

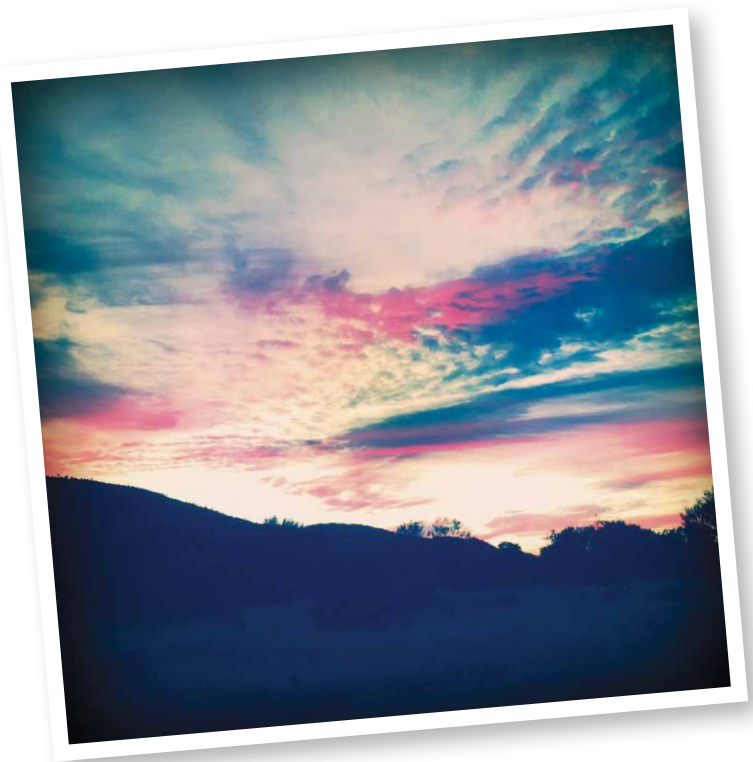
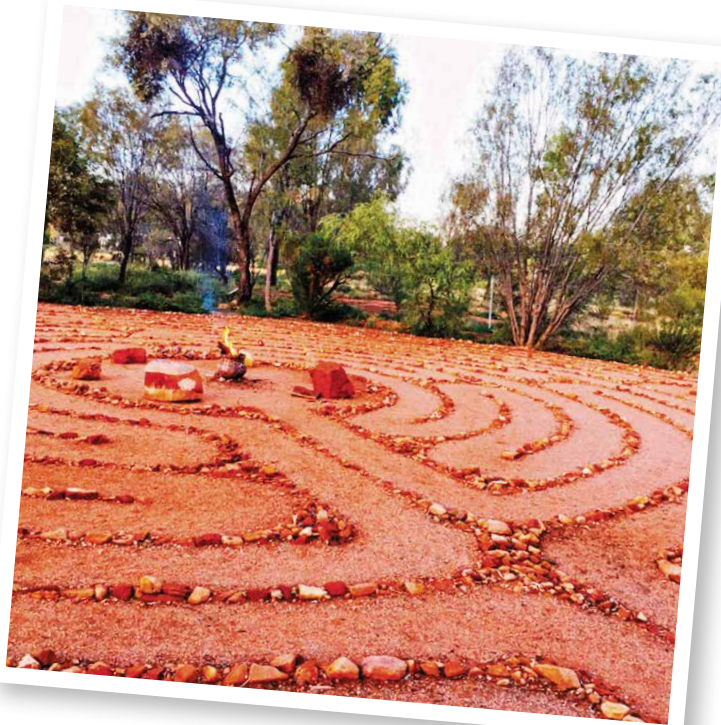
● continued from page 13

shame. Watching, waiting, noticing. Could there be a different way? Hearts awakened? Eyes shedding scales? Pain seen and felt and released and shared. Deep healing ... possible? Presence allows and creates a space for the possibilities of change, of transformation. Becoming truly, fully, wholly and holy present. A healing space and place. A place of the heart.

Another part of our retreat is the Wednesday night campfire. A central part of the weekly rhythm. An outworking and expression of the vision and values of Campfire in the Heart. All are welcome to come and share the light and warmth. A meal begins the time, everyone contributes to the table. Shared by all, and then a time of gathering around the fire. A question is put to the fire, to the gathered people. An invitation to reflect, to share, to listen. Memory, story, impression, experience. All are welcome to share from the heart. To listen to what emerges from the sacred depths of self and other. Life expressed and shared beneath the eternal canopy of stars and glistening lives. Together we are held by our humanity.

*"Becoming truly, fully, wholly and holy present. A healing space and place. A place of the heart."*

Amazing, surprising, difficult at times. The beauty and generosity of this place and time. I feel so blessed by the gift of being ... being there. The gift of being. Such deep community, connection to the life force of all beings, full of revelation –



*"In the wild, desert place I was given the glorious gift of seeing more clearly what was and is."*

darkness with hidden light, full of wisdom – eternal, ancient, grounded and full of insight. Inner seeing. such abundance and provision ... in all ways my cup overflows.

And in the wild, desert place I was given the glorious gift of seeing more clearly what was and is. The gift of space and time and perspective. The gift of choice. To venture forth into a new way of being. The invitation and offer to take with me gifts of seeing with new eyes, the gifts of being present in new ways. The gift of whole hearted presence. That place and time can seem far away from my life in Sydney, but gifts are given without condition. That is what a gift truly is. What else can do I do now but express my deep gratitude for the many, many gifts of Campfire in the Heart. And to live out my appreciation of the gifts.

Thanks be!

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

# The National Appeal

**The National Appeal invites us to think carefully about giving back to our community here in Australia for the gift we have been given, the gift of Christian Meditation.**

Your donations help us to continue to share our tradition with the wider community in many ways and support the large number of groups meeting every week across Australia.

As we start this new year with our 'new normal' way of living, holding events along with our weekly groups I am thankful to each of you as you have continued to find new ways to keep in touch with each other and draw

our national community closer together.

This gift of meditation we have received is priceless and it is our wish to continue to share it.

*"The Peace, the stillness, the harmony that we experience in meditation becomes the basis for all our action."*

*John Main OSB*

I would encourage you to support the community by giving to our National Appeal.

With my love and grateful thanks,

**Jan Wylie**  
WCCM Australia  
National Coordinator



## Donations by Credit Card

Go to our website – [wccmaustralia.org.au](http://wccmaustralia.org.au)

Click on Support Us then National Appeal



## For EFT payments

NAB  
Australian Christian  
Meditation Community  
BSB 083-166 A/C No. 835586812  
Reference: NA and your full name

## How to Meditate

**Open to all ways of wisdom but drawing directly from the early Christian teaching John Main summarised the practice in this simple way:**

Sit down. Sit still with your back straight.

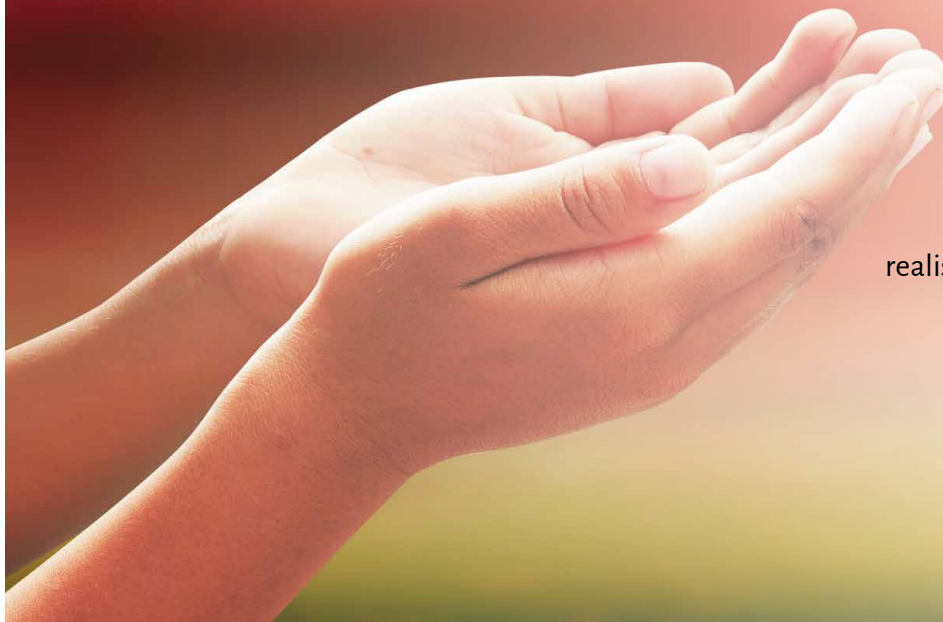
Close your eyes lightly.

Then interiorly, silently begin to recite a single word – a prayer word or mantra. We recommend the ancient Christian prayer-word *Maranatha*.

Say it as four equal syllables. Breathe normally and give your full attention to the word as you say it, silently, gently, faithfully and above all – simply. The essence of meditation is simplicity. Stay with the same word during the whole meditation and from day to day. Don't visualise but listen to the word as you say it. Let go of all thoughts (even good thoughts), images and other words.

Don't fight your distractions but let them go by saying your word faithfully, gently and attentively and returning to it immediately that you realise you have stopped saying it or when your attention is wandering.

Meditate each morning and evening for between 20 and 30 minutes.







# Douglas Park Retreat

by Peter Yuile

**I was surprised, chuffed and a little fearful, all at the same time, when the ACT WCCM Planning/Core Group approached me about speaking at the retreat they were planning for November, 2022.**

I had done the *Soul Space* training program through Barnabus Ministries with Sue Dunbar, Sarah Bachelard and Neil Millar. I had facilitated some *Quiet Days* and attended many. I am also part of the group at Benedictus Contemplative Church who have been facilitating our on-line meditations. This has helped to build more awareness in me about what is required to enable and hold a space for companions to slow down and meditate together – but I had not been on a silent retreat, let alone facilitated one.

We have an ‘embarrassment of riches’ in Canberra with many very capable and experienced retreat leaders – so why me? It seemed a big step and yet I was attracted by the topic. It was put to me that on the one hand, there was an awareness of the difficulties of the past few years for us all and that this was a time, at last, to get together; and on the other, a realisation of the challenge of ‘walking into the future’ with the

possibility, or perhaps likelihood, of difficult times and big issues ahead.

I agreed to mull it over. The usual doubts and fears crept in; and there were sleepless nights reflecting on possible themes for the talks, possible music that might be used; as well as some possible additional elements to the program, such as an introduction to Tai Chi/Qi Gong practice.

The planning group was very open and receptive to the ideas I suggested for the talks. They responded positively to my desire for a ‘shared leadership’ of the weekend – with different people taking responsibility for introductions and welcome to the weekend; prayers and meditations over the course of our time together; music; and activities such as a labyrinth walk.

And so we proceeded with preparations.

It was a great team to be part of, and



everything ran smoothly – at least as far as I could see. The saddest aspects were that Heather Olley couldn’t join us because of some health issues; and Chris Clarke tested positive to Covid on the first morning of the retreat and missed the weekend from there. Chris had been the one who had carried the administrative burden of managing registrations and liaison with our hosts at Douglas Park to get us to the starting line! So we were deprived of his company and his beautiful harp music.

For me, a standout aspect of the weekend was the care, support and encouragement that the planning team freely gave over the course of the weekend. The other standout was the quality of participation from all who joined us for the retreat. I expressed my hope for participants on the weekend in a closing prayer on Friday evening:

*Lord, catch us off guard this weekend, surprise us with some moment of beauty so that at least for that moment we may be startled into seeing that you are here in all your splendour, always and everywhere, barely hidden, beneath, beyond, within this life I breathe.*  
(Frederick Buechner).

From the feedback I have received, God honoured our prayer.



# Tasmanian Happenings

by Pip Rego, State Co ordinator

The Tasmanian Community remains a happy and holy cohort. All the groups have now been practising silence for many years and enjoy a constancy, connection and commitment. The groups have resumed meeting in person at their various locations weekly.

However the pandemic has called forth lifestyle changes, including the need to find new ways of forming bonds, staying connected and dealing with uncertainty. The response of some meditators has been to join online groups for the regular support of others. Some continue to utilise this as their primary source and others still do so in addition to their local group gatherings.

Another response to COVID was the introduction of many events becoming available online. By necessity we are all embracing electronic means of communication and are better equipped to join the conferences, retreats and presentations provided by WCCM and our own Australian communities. This has made a significant difference to our small community here in Tasmania where we have limited opportunities



*Meditation in the Stables*

locally and travelling can be difficult for some in terms of cost and convenience. With all this in mind, and a “glass half full” approach, there have been some upsides to COVID.

In Launceston planning is underway for an event in March 2023 titled *Time in the Cloister*. Inspired by the WCCM theme

*Metanoia*, and with peace in mind, the intended subject is “Metanoia – let your mind be remade for Peace”. The aim is to immerse participants in the Divina’s – Lectio, Visio and Musica.

We look forward to continuing into next year as a strong and dedicated community.



*Walker, your footsteps  
are the road, and nothing more.*

*Walker, there is no road,  
the road is made by walking.*

*Walking you make the road,  
and turning to look behind  
you see the path you never  
again will step upon.*

*Walker, there is no road,  
only foam trails on the sea.*

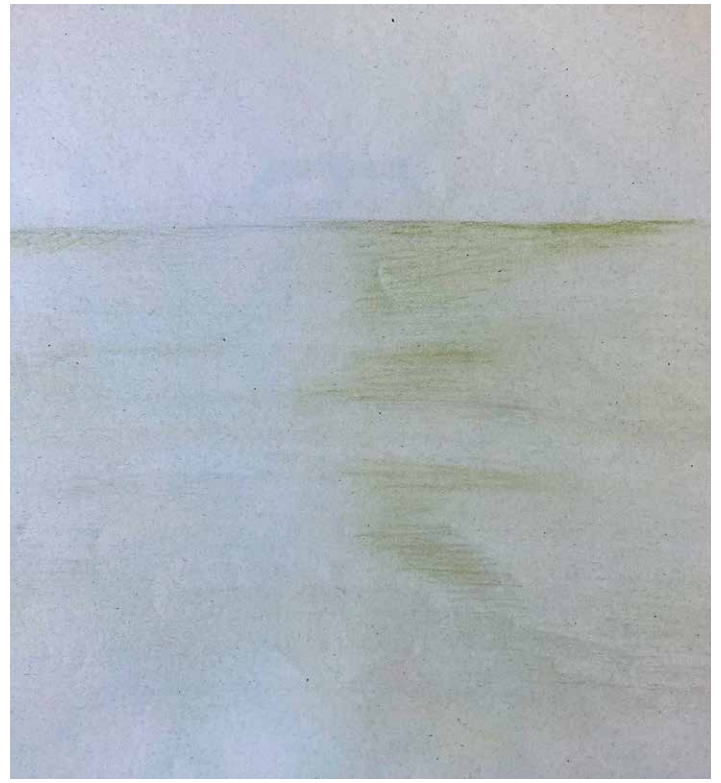
*Antonio Machado*

*The poem that Peter Yuile used as a focus for the retreat at Douglas Park.*





A dying patient's first image—A bushfire burning fiercely.



His second image—The landscape barely visible.

# Visio Divina – Art Therapy

by Josephine Pretorius

**I have been asked to offer a few thoughts on Visio Divina, and so I do, not as someone with any particular expertise, but rather as someone who approaches imagery through an art therapy lens. I began training as an art therapist not long before discovering meditation and found both paths had deep and unexpected resonances.**

Sarah Bachelard said recently on *Benedict's Well* (24.10.22) that Poetica Divina is a riff on Lectio Divina, a way of reading poetry contemplatively. Coupling poetry and scripture, she said, allows a conversation to develop between them and speak meaningfully into our everyday life experience. Reading imagery in the light of scripture is a well established tradition. Fra Angelico's frescoes on cell walls in the Dominican convent in San Marco, Italy depict scenes from the Bible. In her book, *The frescoes by Angelico at San Marco*, Magnolia Scudieri tells us they were intended to be "objects for meditation, valuable in expressing and eliciting mystical emotion, the joy of prayer."

What I am speaking about,

however, is making an art response to scripture or wisdom texts, or even to our everyday life experience more broadly. Working as an art therapist in palliative care I have found that the dying sometimes lack the words to describe the liminal space in which they find themselves. I was sitting with an elderly nun some years ago and she

*"Painting has the capacity to ... allow our bodies to ... speak from a place of unknowing and mystery."*

was painting a single flower. I noticed there was a 1-2 cm gap between the flower and the stem which surprised her when I asked about it and, taking the paint brush, she carefully joined them. She died peacefully a day or two

later. 'The body never lies' is a common refrain amongst therapists. Painting has the capacity to take us into our bodies and allow our bodies to speak from a deeper knowing, or perhaps more accurately, to speak from a place of unknowing and mystery.

A young man I worked with in hospital attended a weekly art therapy group during his final months. His first image was of a landscape with a bush fire burning fiercely along the horizon line. Gradually over the weeks the vibrancy and intensity of colour in that first image faded and emptied out. In his final week he spent the full hour painting a landscape that was barely visible on the page. His interior journey was palpable in the images he produced and shared with me. Though he never spoke, his presence moved me deeply.

Images we create sit on the borderline between inner and outer landscapes, between an inner and outer spaciousness we come to recognize as the same space. They have a capacity to travel within and without, thereby contributing to an experience of union. As Laurence Freeman says, "we are the desert we enter."



www.wccmaustralia.org.au

# Our People at WCCM Australia

<b>National Coordinator</b>	Jan Wylie 0418 655 291 · janwylie@tpg.com.au
<b>National Secretary</b>	Joan McKeegan
<b>National Coordinators for Younger Christian Meditators</b>	Sarah Bishop Deanna Klobas
<b>School of Meditation</b>	Kath Houston
<b>Meditation with Children and Young People</b>	Penny Sturrock
<b>Oblates of WCCM</b>	Gloria Duffy
<b>Friends</b>	Judi and Paul Taylor
<b>Bookshop</b>	Joe Panetta
<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	Vikki McDonough · editoracmc@gmail.com
<b>State and Territory Coordinators</b>	
Queensland	Johanna Lawrence
New South Wales	Jan Wylie
ACT	Heather Olley (ACT Contact)
South Australia	Dianne Schaefer
Victoria	Adele Mapperson
Tasmania	Pip Rego
Northern Territory	Vacant
Western Australia	Jenni Berg
<b>Newsletter Design</b>	Ivan Smith



## Subscription to Newsletter

Please complete this section if you wish to subscribe to the newsletter or if you wish to renew your subscription. Post to ACMC, PO Box 278, South Hobart, TAS 7004.

Cost \$20 to receive the newsletter by post       Cost \$10 to receive the newsletter by email.

To be registered to receive notification by email that the newsletter is online please email 'subscribe' to acmcdata@gmail.com before posting in this completed form to ensure that we have your correct email address.

### PAYMENT OPTIONS

For Direct Deposit and Online (please put your full name for reference so we can record it then please email Tim at acmcdata@gmail.com to inform us of your payment and email address.)

**Direct Deposit** – EFT Direct Deposit to NAB Account Name: ACMC (Australian Christian Meditation Community). BSB 083-166 A/C 835586812

**Cheque** (please make cheque payable to 'ACMC')

**Money Order**

**Credit Card**     Visa     MasterCard    Amount \$

Name on card (please print)

Card number

Expiry date  /

Your Signature

### CONTACT DETAILS

Title

Full name

Address and postcode

Phone

Email

**Privacy Policy:** Your contact details will only be used by the WCCM Australia for News and Events information by Newsletter and State Coordinators