



The World Community for Christian Meditation Australia

History of the WCCM

The World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM) is a global and inclusive contemplative family with its roots in the desert tradition of early Christianity dating back to the 4th century. The Desert Fathers and Mothers teach a Christian spirituality of powerful relevance for those today who want to live their discipleship to Jesus in a radical and simple way.

In 1975 John Main, an Irish Benedictine monk (1926-1982), started the first Christian Meditation Centre in London. At the *John Main Seminar* in 1991, led by Bede Griffiths OSB, meditators from around the world came together to shape the future direction and organization of the community as a 'monastery without walls'. They named it The World Community for Christian Meditation because it was not only formed and nurtured by the practice of meditation but existed to share this gift with others.

The symbol of the Community

Two birds resting on the chalice, one looking out, the other drinking from the water, representing the union of the contemplative and active dimensions of life.

Meditation is a universal spiritual wisdom. It is a practice found at the core of all the great religious traditions. Meditation leads from the mind to the heart. It can be practised by anyone, wherever you are on your life's journey.

Meditation in Christianity:

In recent times, there has been a major recovery of the contemplative dimension of Christian faith and prayer. The tradition of contemplation, the prayer of the heart or 'apophatic prayer, is transforming the different faces of the Church and revealing the way the Gospel integrates the mystical and the social.

John Main, and the community he inspired, have had a major role in this contemporary renewal of the contemplative tradition. His own introduction to meditation came to him from the universal wisdom, but led him to recognise and then go on to teach it as a way of prayer that is rooted in the Gospels and the Christian mystical tradition.

The WCCM is now present in over 120 countries. In Australia there are over 500 groups.

See the website WCCMAustralia.org for activities; groups and contacts

Individuals, weekly groups and meditation centers share the peace and compassion that are the spiritual fruits of meditation. Groups meet in homes, parishes, schools, offices, hospitals, prisons and universities. There are groups for the homeless, for those in recovery from addiction and a special emphasis of the community is to share this gift of meditation with the poor and marginal. Christian Meditation centers, such as the John Main Centre at Georgetown University, help to share the teaching. There are also online meditation groups.

Because meditation is a universal wisdom, contemplative dialogue with other faiths is a priority. The relationship with the Benedictine monastic family is especially valued and a WCCM Oblate Community grows within the larger community of meditators.

On its 20th anniversary, WCCM opened its Meditatio outreach program in crucial areas of social concern, technology, environment, leadership, healthcare, education and the training of young meditators for the next generation of leadership.

Meditation and Environment

The Christian Meditation Community is committed to care for creation including the urgently required response to climate change. Our community believes that action is best when it arises from a contemplative consciousness. Through our Meditatio outreach we are working to raise awareness of the need to act.

(see wccm.org/Meditatio/Meditation and Environment)

Australia has produced 2 newsletters for WCCM/Meditatio/Environment at wccm.org



Australia has had a significant role in advancing the Meditation and Environment outreach beginning with a major seminar in Sydney in 2016, followed by annual community days on Earth Days, and retreats and events around the meditation community across Australia with an environmental focus. It has included 2 Wilderness retreats in Mt Field National Park in Tasmania; and pilgrimages to Daly river in the NT, to learn from Miriam Rose Ungermer the art of dadirri.

Meditation and the Environment Seminar, Ecology. Economy and Meditation “Healing Ourselves, healing the earth” Sydney 2016

See <https://meditationenvironment.blogspot.com> for activities and resources.

Quotes from Fr Laurence Freeman, osb, Director, WCCM, now at the new Centre for Peace, Bonnevaux France.

LF “Contemplative prayer awakens our sense of connection and responsibility for and to the wondrous creation we are part of. Because meditation heals the excessive individualism of our culture and restrains its inherent self-centredness we can truly see the relevance of a deep spirituality to the healing of our wounded environment”

“The potential of meditation to open up the common ground of humanity in our divided world - because it is a universal wisdom - is a source of hope. It is one of humanity’s great unifying elements on the way to wisdom.”

LF (NL Feb 2004) “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”

LF NL (Nov 2018). “the great teachers in our tradition all call us to see that contemplation is seeing and so that the contemplative response to the challenges of our time is the best contribution we can make can make to go forward with hope.”

LF We are often prisoners of our own convictions...freedom knocks when we are challenged by new perceptions..but it takes effort, courage and grace to be open to listen and test it (in our own experience)

L.Freeman On meditating with children

“If we seriously expect to save the environment, we must prepare the next generation now.Of course they need cultural and scientific education and skills but above all they need to see things differently from the way their parents and grandparents perceived things. Nothing changes our perception more radically than the contemplative experience. Silence and stillness open the eye of the heart, the eye that allows us to see things as a whole. Children are born contemplative. They have a natural capacity to meditate and they do it easily and simply.”

Reflections from group leaders in Australia

Meditation is a form of action in and of itself and provides the basis for action which is contemplative. Meditation, as contemplative practice, reminds us of who we are and how to live in a way that may preserve the interconnected community of creation. It heals our aggression and exploitative tendencies. The practice of meditation is a path of self-knowledge. Through it we understand ourselves as spiritual beings in need of more than material wealth to live fully. Meditation enables sustained and non-violent action. Through our global network we are spreading the message that in all we do we must consider the common good, reduce our emissions and care for the whole earth community.

Rev Linda Chapman OAM is an Anglican priest, presently Rector of the parish of Moruya. Linda is also founder of Open Sanctuary at Tilba a place of contemplative gathering of community with a commitment to earth care. She has served on the Diocesan Commission for the Environment and is a local advocate for the environment. Linda is also a retreat leader with a particular emphasis on eco-spirituality

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Christian meditation is the work of paying attention, of presence. Also known as contemplative prayer, it is the prayer of stillness and silence; the prayer of the heart.

I, and others who nourish a contemplative spirituality through a daily practice of meditation, testify to a shift in consciousness over time. This new consciousness includes a deeper awareness of who we really are and our connection to the whole earth community.

From this can flow a greater sensitivity to the needs of the other-than-human community, a desire to live in communion with nature, not dominate it, to live more simply, more sustainably and to take action against policies and practices that degrade the earth.

Through this sense of connection, and the work of paying attention, meditation can be the catalyst for ecological conversion and provide energy for ongoing, sustainable action for the environment.

Pope Francis, writing in *Laudato Si*, repeatedly makes the link between a contemplative consciousness and ecological conversion.

“Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life. Nature is filled with words of love, but how can we listen to them amid constant noise, interminable and nerve-wracking distractions, or the cult of appearances?” (Laudato Si, 225)

Pope Francis and others say the environmental crisis is part of a wider spiritual crisis marked by over-consumption, waste, narcissism, disconnection from the natural world and each other and that a contemplation spirituality would be a helpful antidote.

A contemplative consciousness challenges the labels of ‘producer and consumer’ and leads to a deeper awareness of our true identity and inter-connection with all things. I believe the practice of silence, stillness and simplicity can transform the way we live as individuals and a whole society to a way that is more attentive, loving and sustainable.

It inspires my actions for the environment: a concerted effort to live more simply and reduce consumption to the ‘hardly anything new’ stage, investing in retro-fitting my house to ensure it’s more energy efficient, completing permaculture training to repair degraded soil and grow food ‘working with nature, not against it’.

[Donna Mulhearn, Blue Labyrinth Retreat centre in the Blue Mountains is an activist, meditator and practitioner of sustainable living](#)

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Excerpts from Experiencing God in a Time of Crisis

[By Rev'd Dr Sarah Bachelard, a theologian, retreats leader, priest, and founder of Benedictus Contemplative Church in Canberra. Speaker for 2019 John Main Seminar, Canada.](#)

“The paradox of both the contemplative life and a time of crisis is that by taking us deeply into ourselves, meeting and learning whatever is painful, unresolved or illusory within us, we are empowered to move back into the world with a radically deepened sense of connection”