



# Stillpoint



Stillpoint is the official magazine of the New Zealand Community for Christian Meditation  
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### Websites to visit:

[www.christianmeditationnz.org.nz](http://www.christianmeditationnz.org.nz)  
[www.wccm.org/content](http://www.wccm.org/content)  
[www.wccmmeditation.org](http://www.wccmmeditation.org)  
[www.christianmeditationaustralia.org](http://www.christianmeditationaustralia.org)  
[www.christianmeditation.org.uk](http://www.christianmeditation.org.uk)  
[www.theschoolofmeditation.org](http://www.theschoolofmeditation.org)

## Meditation with Children – the Ongoing Story

by Fr Peter Murphy

Just recently I attended the biannual Directors of Religious Studies (DRS) Conference for the Auckland Catholic Diocese. I have worked with these teachers over a number of years now but such is the nature of the position and the pressure of work that there is a high turnover. I am finding that with the practice of meditation in primary schools, if it relies primarily upon the DRS, it doesn't really develop; the whole senior management team need to be behind it. Primary schools, especially faith schools, present a unique opportunity for establishing the practice in children's lives. I made the point that we are offering children a gift for life, and that it is a disservice to deprive them of the opportunity, such is the value of the practice.

Our DRS from Papakura gave an account of how the daily practice is benefiting the school. In Papakura children meditate for five minutes after lunch. The Principal has noticed improvements in behaviour, especially since the school took on the daily practice which is for over two years now. Children naturally offload their anxieties or anger in meditation. She mentioned she has to deal with playground issues often after the morning break when they do not meditate. Perhaps it might be useful to introduce the practice then too. One significant benefit has been among the autistic children of her class.

Teachers these days have significant challenges that were not so pronounced among earlier generations, especially with the widespread break up of families and the emergence of conditions such as foetal alcohol syndrome. One teacher, a committed meditator, commented how at her school she had to spend time re-establishing "the purity of the practice." She was newly appointed but what had crept into the school were different forms of meditative practice aimed more at relaxation. Such practices only take you so far, and leave you with the question, "What's next?" For us it is a form of prayer and it will take you home. We are in a tradition, not just taking up a new fad. I would like to see the practice established across the school system but have to be content at this stage with relying upon the goodwill of those willing to take it up. ✠

# Christian Meditation

The Path of Contemplative Prayer for Contemporary Men and Women  
NEW ZEALAND COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

**Retreat**  
**26 - 28 July 2019**

**Meditation**  
**and Becoming Human**

Led by  
**Father Peter Murphy**

ST FRANCIS RETREAT HOUSE,  
50 HILLSBOROUGH ROAD,  
HILLSBOROUGH, AUCKLAND

**Meditation and**  
**Becoming Human**

A Christian Meditation live-in Retreat  
with Fr Peter Murphy

#### Times

Friday 26 July 7.00pm  
to  
Sunday 28 July 3.00pm

There will also be extended periods of silence  
which the retreatants will be asked to observe.  
Sunday Eucharist is also included in the programme.

#### Costs

\$270 or \$230 early bird paid by Friday 5 July  
with accommodation (Meals, Linen & Towels  
provided).

Full payment by 21 July.

Concessions offered—Please email:  
ctolich@me.com or write to  
**Charmaine Tolich**  
24 Lemonwood Place,  
The Gardens, Auckland 2105



Accommodation (includes meals, linen and towels)

Cost \$270 (limited to 25). **Early Bird \$230**

Plus donation to assist others \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Payment \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Dietary needs: \_\_\_\_\_  
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#### Send Registration to:

NZCCM  
c/o 24 Lemonwood Place  
The Gardens  
Auckland 2105

Full payment and registration required  
by 21 July (Early Bird 5 July)

#### Please make cheques payable to:

NZCCM General or Direct Payment  
NZCCM 38-9003-0812910-01

#### Reference:

**your Name and Auckland Retreat**

## The basic commitments of an Oblate:

# Stability

by Hugh McLaughlin



The three basic vows of the Benedictine Rule, Stability, Obedience and Conversion, are principles of life to which the Oblate makes a commitment of heart and mind.

Being an Oblate is not a legalistic undertaking. The Rule of St Benedict is a highly flexible document that demands to be interpreted and indeed has received very diverse interpretations throughout its history. In the same way the life of an Oblate is not bound by a set of rules and regulations. The Rule is a yardstick, a way of seeing the straight in the crooked. It is not in the Benedictine spirit to have a book of rigid rules. In this article, the first commitment of Stability is developed.

*"Stability does not mean merely physical stability, but an inner fidelity to the community one has joined. But this stability is given meaning by the commitment to the deeper stability of one's inner being, calmness, peace of mind and an ever-growing rootedness in the spirit"* (L. Freeman).

Benedictine stability promises to meet life head on. It deals directly with centredness, commitment and relationships. The purpose of stability is to centre us in something greater than ourselves so that nothing lesser than ourselves can possibly sweep us away. Stability says that where I am is where God is for me.

*"When the monastic makes a vow of stability, it is a vow designed to still the wandering heart. When I rush from job to job, city to city, relationship to relationship, I never really discover all the aspects of each. I never find the rhythm of life. I never get stretched beyond myself. I never become bonded to others. I never become something new. Stability is what gives me time in life, time for God and time for others. Stability is the willingness to continue to grow where I am, the willingness to be changed. Stability is what enables me to live totally in God and totally for others."* Sr. Joan Chittister ✠

A certain elder said: Apply yourself to silence, have no vain thoughts, and be intent in your meditation, whether you sit at prayer or whether you rise up to work in fear of God. If you do these things, you will not have to fear the attacks of the evil ones.

The Wisdom of the Desert: Sayings from the Desert Fathers of the Fourth Century, page 47  
translated and introduced by Thomas Merton

## Auckland Christian Meditation Community Day

held Saturday 23rd March 2019

a report from Charmainne Tolich

Auckland Community Day held on 23rd March was led by Caryl Hayley and hosted by Tim and Rosemary Auld in their country residence in Kumeu. Such a popular topic and gifted teacher meant that it was a full house with over 60 meditators attending.



Caryl Hayley

Inspired by a recorded talk given by Fr. Laurence Freeman OSB on the Desert Fathers, Caryl thought it would be interesting to trace the practice of meditation in the Christian tradition from the Desert Fathers and Mothers to the present day. Her research has traced the unbroken tradition from the third to the twenty-first centuries through the voices of men and women who lived extraordinary lives. Caryl, a treasure from the Manly Meditation group, traced the tradition of the Desert Fathers and Mother who were willing to go to any length to be close to God.

Beginning with Anthony the Great and his extreme ascetic practices, Caryl spoke about Syncletica, Sara and Theodora, (Desert Mothers), Pachomius who served in Constantine's army before his conversion; Palladius who compiled the Lausiac History; John Cassian whose writings were an inspiration for John Main (the founder of WCCM), Christina Markyate who escaped from a forced marriage and became an anchoress, the author of the Cloud of Unknowing, and Julian of Norwich and Ancrene Wisse both also anchoresses.

The delight with which Caryl shared her research captured all who attended. She gave context and character to the Desert Fathers and Mothers, intertwined with witty scandal, leaving us all wanting to know more. Caryl is clearly a brilliant teacher. She shared with passion her knowledge of the humanity of ordinary folk leading extraordinary lives. We all look forward to part two of the *Unbroken Tradition* from our gifted presenter Caryl. ✠

# Praying with the Masters Today:

## Origen

by Bernard McGinn

*We pray in different ways – petitionary, thanksgiving and other kinds of prayer – but the goal is always toward theoria Theo, contemplation of God, contemplatio Dei.*

This first series deals with contemplative insights from early Christianity. I will look at four authors briefly – Origen, Evagrius Ponticus, John Cassian and Gregory the Great – as representing what I call the Christian contemplative tradition.

The person who really first gives us the theology, in a way, of Christian mysticism and contemplative wisdom is Origen. Origen was born in Alexandria. He was from a Christian family. His father died a martyr and, you know the story about the young Origen, he wanted to be martyred too. He wanted to run out to proclaim himself a Christian, but his mother hid his clothes so he couldn't be martyred. But he grew up to be the Catechist of the Alexandrian Church, which was the official teacher. The Bishop of Alexandria was the liturgical leader, but the Catechist of the Alexandrian Church, who was Origen, was the official teacher. His dedication was to the study of Scripture, the study of the bible and the preaching of the bible and commentary on the bible, sort of a kind of introduction to theology, (what he called *On First Principles*) was a systematic theological view of Christianity.

Origen wrote a treatise on prayer, somewhere around the year 233 or 234 (*Peri Euches* in Greek). Origen's Treatise on Prayer is the first treatise that really tries to treat contemplative prayer in a deep way. To Origen it is important because he insists in this treatise that prayer is not just petition; it's also contemplation. It never rules out petitionary prayer – that is obviously very, very important – but he insists that prayer is primarily contemplative practice. Origen insists that all Christian prayer is Trinitarian. I'll give a quotation:

Therefore the discussion of prayer is so great a task that it requires the Father to reveal it, the first-born Word to teach it, and the Spirit to enable us to speak rightly of so great a subject.

So, Christian prayer is always Trinitarian. We know that liturgical prayer, particularly as understood in the ancient Church, was always Trinitarian as well. It's directed to the Father, through the Son, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. That's the essence of liturgical prayer.

But what Origen is saying here is that all prayer, not just liturgical prayer, Eucharistic prayer, but that all prayer has a Trinitarian dimension and it is incumbent on Christians to recognise that if you pray as a Christian, you're praying in a Trinitarian fashion.

Origen talks about the benefits of praying. He talks about the distinctions of kinds of prayer. He talks about what we should pray for. But this is where he lays out his fundamental teaching that prayer is contemplation. Again I quote:

For the eyes of the mind are lifted up from earthly things and from their being filled with the impression of material things. And they are so exalted that they peer beyond the created order and arrive at the pure contemplation of God.

That's the goal – the pure contemplation of God, and conversing with him reverently and suitably as he listens to us. So we pray in different ways – in terms of petitionary, thanksgiving and other kinds of prayer – but the goal is always toward *theoria Theo*, contemplation of God, *contemplatio Dei*.

Origen is very much concerned with the issue raised by 1 Thessalonians 5: *how can you pray all the time?* How is it possible to pray all the time? We have lots of other things in life that we have to be engaged in. His answer is that if you have the proper attitude, your whole life is a prayer. Let me quote the text again:

And he prays constantly, who unites prayer with the deeds required and the right deeds with prayer. For the only way we can accept the command to pray constantly (as referring to a real possibility) is by saying that the entire life of the saint, taken as a whole, is a single great prayer. What is customarily called 'prayer' is then a part of this prayer.

Then he goes on to say *prayer in the ordinary sense ought to be made three times a day* and he cites also some scriptural quotations from both the Old Testament and New Testament, from figures like David and Peter and others praying in the morning, praying at midday and praying in the evening. So there are specific times for a particular prayer, but the point of praying constantly is that the whole life of the Christian, the whole life of the Christian saint, should be a prayer, if it is indeed conducted according to God's will and according to the proper attitude'.

So that is how you pray constantly, although you also set aside particular times for prayer. You can see kind of

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the beginning of the Christian doctrine of the times of prayer; he also mentions of course that some places in scripture, they talk about praying in the middle of the night. So you can see the kind of beginnings of the courses of prayer that monks later adopted. But his major point here is the point that we have to see these particular acts of prayer as part of an entire life. If we get into that mind frame, we can indeed pray constantly the way that Paul is advising us.

This relatively short treatise of Origen is a coherent doctrine of prayer related to the major scriptural texts that I have already talked about and organised according to the Trinitarian core of Christian life. His understanding of prayer is as much Christological as it is Trinitarian. Christ is the guide to mystical and ineffable contemplation.

So prayer is Trinitarian. It is also Christological. Prayer can be constant if it is properly understood and practised. That's Origen.



Emptiness is the beginning of contemplation. It is not a fruitless emptiness, a void without a meaning; on the contrary, it has a shape, a form given to it by the purpose for which it is intended.

It is the emptiness like the hollow in the reed, the narrow riftless emptiness which can have only one destiny: to receive the piper's breath and utter the song that is in his heart.

It is the emptiness like the hollow in the cup shaped to receive water or wine.

It is the emptiness like that of the bird's nest built in a round warm ring to receive the little bird.

Caryll Houselander, Emptiness  
from *An Inner Music* by Fr Craig Larkin sm

# My Journey of Discovery

*a testimony from David Strang*

I first experienced meditation two nights after my wife's funeral. The flat was empty, I was tired, angry, and in tears. What now, where to from here? A book I had been reading came to mind. It described Centering Prayer, but it seemed too fanciful, it seemed to be a new walk-on-water thing. With nothing better to do, and the Lord telling me to give it a go, and that he would guide me through it, I decided to do just that. The next twenty minutes changed my life for ever! Wow!! A never before feeling of inner peace filled my mind and body. I apologised to the Lord for my anger, unbelief, and lack of faith, and rededicated my life to Him. Following this first solo experience, I joined a Wanaka meditation group that helped me understand how to meditate on a regular daily basis. I have to say though it is not as easy as I had imagined.

Last September a Community Day was held at which our guide for the day was Rev. Yvonne Smith of St Ninians, Christchurch. Yvonne introduced us to forms of Contemplative Practices that may reflect our own individual personalities, bringing deeper meaning to our lives. It was a very worthwhile day. A further milestone for me was the Silent Retreat in Hamilton this year at which we meditated and learnt from Fr Lawrence Freeman what the Word has to say about a truly Christian walk with the Lord. The silence aspect troubled me a little, in so far as I could not discuss with others the finer points of what Fr Lawrence had been saying!

About this time, I began to experience some dark times and emptiness. Where was this coming from, and what was its significance? From what I have read, and been told, it marks a time of



purification of our being that allows us to grow closer to God, and all that he stands for during our Christian Journey. What it signified I do not know, but a lack of faith is my guess.

After the 15 March in Christchurch I experienced a dreadful downturn in my whole Christian faith. That day I could not compose myself enough to meditate properly. I am a church organist, and I could not even be bothered playing on the Sunday following the horror. With the Lords help I calmed down and played lovely funeral music that helped, and which the congregation appreciated.

Life certainly has its challenges, but thanks to meditation I feel calmer, gentler, quieter, and more in control of life. So what does the future hold? Another Community Day is planned. I am looking forward to that, and to the October Essential Teaching Weekend in Rotorua. I would like to put something of myself into meditation because of what others have done for me, it seems a natural progression. The Journey of Discovery is continuing.

*Love and Peace*  
*David Strang*  
*Wanaka*



# *Listening to the daily news with a contemplative heart:*

## **Poverty and Redemption**



*The sixth talk in a series of talks by Glenda Meakin given at a Silent Retreat held in Canada, March 2010.*

From Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*:

The more we are content with our own poverty, the closer we are to God. For then we accept our poverty in peace, expecting nothing from ourselves and everything from God.

**P**overty is the door to freedom. Not because we remain imprisoned in the anxiety and constraint which poverty of itself implies, but because finding nothing in ourselves that is the source of hope – we know there is nothing in ourselves worth defending, there is nothing special in ourselves to love – we go out of ourselves therefore and rest in Him in whom alone is our hope.

Our own life is so often a microcosm of the daily news – our own unfaithfulness, pride, hypocrisy, dishonesty, injustice, prejudice, envy, waste, pollution. We become so aware of own poverty, our need and longing, that we are so thankful to move to the words of Psalm 51 and so anxious that they become real for us:

Create in me a clean heart, Oh God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from your presence  
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.  
Give me the joy of your saving help again  
and sustain me with your bountiful spirit.

Listen to those verbs which signify God's action in our life: create, renew, cast me not away, keep me with your Holy Spirit, give me the joy, sustain me.

*Prayer*, says John Main, *is the experience of our own poverty and our own redemption*. I want to say that again because it is such an important teaching that John Main gives us: *Prayer is the experience of our own poverty and our own redemption*.

Our prayer is not a rejection of the world, the world within us, the

daily news within us and outside of us. It is not a turning away from the daily news and the pain of the world. In meditation, says John Main, we do not reject the world or construct a false opposition to it. So we are not saying that's a very bad world out there and we're going to make another one. That is not what meditation is about and Jesus reminds us that God so loves the world; God does not condemn the world.

I think that you and I are able to acknowledge our own poverty and need for God because in the silence of meditation we first come to the realisation that it is first made real for you and me, the depth of God's love, the extent to which you and I are enveloped, immersed in the love of God. And it is in the light of that love that you and I have the courage to acknowledge our own poverty, our own part in the daily news, and our inability to do what is good without God. In the light of God's love you and I have the courage to recognise the illusory nature of so much of our daily life. How we place so much importance on the shifting sands of personal autonomy, independence, of popularity and of power.

It is only in the silence of meditation that you and I realise how poor we are. The experience of poverty we come to in the silence of meditation is the condition of spiritual development, says John Main. We need that understanding, the experience of our own poverty if we are going to grow, for it is there in our poverty that we turn to God.

There is a wonderful bible story that I think illustrates that so well. In Luke Chapter 8, the story of Simon, a good, religious Pharisee invites Jesus to dinner. And I think Simon is very open to Jesus. He wants to know more about him. And so he asks Jesus to dinner and invites some of his friends as well. And an uninvited guest turns up, and this is the woman whose name we don't know. She is only called by Simon and his guests as a sinner. She comes uninvited to the dinner party and stands behind Jesus and begins to weep, because in his presence she is aware of her own poverty. But she is also aware, in being in his presence, of the love that is coming towards her, of the total acceptance. So she bends down to kiss his feet. She returns the love. And then she takes probably the one thing of value that she owns, this jar of ointment, and she anoints Jesus with it.

And you know Simon and his guest are sort of clucking away and saying, "Well what is he doing having anything to do with her?" And Jesus asks Simon: "You know Simon, if someone owes you \$500 and someone owes you \$50 and neither one pays you, which one owes you the greater debt? Well of course the one who owes so much. And Jesus says, "and you know Simon, I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, you did not greet me with a kiss. Yet this woman who so recognises her own poverty and her own need for God, is able to give me

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her penitence in her tears. In fact she washed my feet with her tears; she is able to give me her affection with her kisses; and she is able to acknowledge me with that anointing." And Jesus turns to the woman and says, "Go in peace."

The story invites us to see the way in which when you and I acknowledge our poverty in the silence of our hearts, when we acknowledge our need for God, how we are so much more open to the love of God, to God's compassion, to God's goodness towards us. If we are the self-sufficient Pharisee, and he is a good man, the story is not trying to set up good and bad but just helping you and me to see the ways in which we can ignore the need to acknowledge our own poverty and therefore the condition for our own spiritual growth, and our growth into the fullness of our own life.

It is in our poverty that we are turned to God, what we call conversion. It is there we begin the lifelong journey of discovering that everything is found in God. In God is our joy, our happiness. And what the silence of meditation teaches you and me is it makes this truth real. ✠

One of the elders said: Poverty, tribulation, and discretion: these are the three works of the hermit life. For it is written: If we but had with us these three men: Noe, Job and Daniel, (see Exechiel 14).

Now Noe represents those who possess nothing, Job represents those who suffer tribulation, Daniel those who discern good from evil.

If these three actions are found in a man, then God dwells in him.

*The Wisdom of the Desert:  
Sayings from the Desert Fathers  
of the Fourth Century, page 26  
translated and introduced  
by Thomas Merton*

# L'Arche/WCCM Interaction

*Nurturing the contemplative lives of both communities  
by sharing meditation among people  
with and without learning disabilities*

*"What is it that we need most in the world?"*

*It is not to be normal, but to be loved.*

*We need to know that there is someone who believes in us,  
despite all of our weaknesses and failings,  
and respects our personal secret.*

*This recognition is a communion, an encounter, and a presence  
that is carried through the flesh and through tenderness.*

*The deepest joy is that which comes from feeling loved  
and recognized just as I am, in communion with another."*

**Jean Vanier**, founder of L'Arche

"What is it that we need most in the world?" If Jean Vanier's answer is the essential one, we may ask what puts us on the path of loving and of being loved. L'Arche/WCCM Interaction offers an answer to that question. The international network of L'Arche homes bring together those with and without intellectual disabilities, to live in a community of transformative relationships. The international network of Christian Meditators practise a contemplative tradition, a meditative practice of selflessness that is inclusive, disciplined, and other-centered.

In the words of Jean Vanier and Laurence Freeman, in the introduction to our Interaction workbook, *Silence And Encounter: Meditation in L'Arche*:

*"The friendship and collaboration between L'Arche and the World Community for Christian Meditation . . . can teach us much about the essential values needed to rebalance our turbulent world: interiority and relationship, contemplation and service.*

*"We are both contemplative communities. We would add, we are also both active communities. We approach the center from different angles but there, in the heart of the human, we find a love that always shares itself. L'Arche represents the transformative power of compassion released by caring for the dignity of those who are marginal in this world. The World Community represents the power of love, touched in stillness and silence that overcomes the fear and isolation that block compassion and so keeps us from enjoying the fullness of life with others.*

The L'Arche/WCCM Interaction working group includes people from both communities from around the world. Our working group meets and meditates together weekly online. The fruit of our recent endeavors is the writing and publication of *Silence And Encounter*, as well as its distribution to communities in Canada, the US, the UK, France, and the Czech Republic, with more countries to come. We are focussed on encouraging and supporting people who are using the workbook to facilitate Christian Meditation groups in their own communities.

To find out more about L'Arche/WCCM Interaction, how to join our weekly online meditation sessions, or to obtain a copy of *Silence And Encounter: Meditation in L'Arche*, contact Mary Kelly Robison [larche.interaction@wccm.org](mailto:larche.interaction@wccm.org) ✠

# Giving Up Without Giving Up

## Meditation and Depressions

by Jim Green



**W**hy did you decide to write a book on meditation and depression? What was the intention? Why this title?

**Jim:** The idea for the book had been around for some time. A few years ago I wrote a small booklet, *Meditation & Mental Health*, which proved very popular. Laurence Freeman also mentioned to me just how many people he was meeting who wanted to talk to him about meditation and depression. It seemed clear that something more detailed was needed to support people dealing with these difficult issues. Hence the current book. Its title - *Giving*

*Up Without Giving Up* - reflects something central to the way in which we might respond to frightening (sometimes seemingly unbearable) times in our lives. There is a hidden invitation within the incapacitating experience of depression or anxiety. We are invited to find a way of letting go of old, unhelpful strategies and ways of thinking about ourselves; but without giving up completely on the possibility of new growth and a deeper understanding of who we really are.

It seems to me that meditation is a very helpful vehicle for doing just that. In the practice, we explicitly set out to disengage from the exhausting and punishing agenda of the ego, while remaining open to - what? There are many ways to describe it: presence, grace, healing, love. Beyond description, the best way is to sit and be open to the experience, without capturing and labelling it.

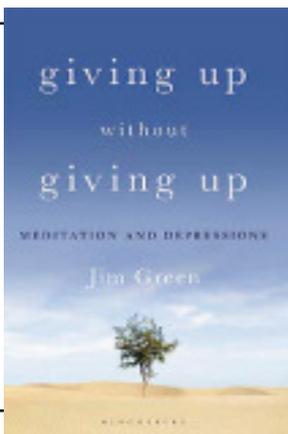
The sub-title, *Meditation and Depressions* is in the plural (depressions, not depression), because I wanted to gently challenge the readiness with

which we use that word. Depression has become almost a cultural and diagnostic cliché. Every experience of anguish, terror, grief, loss of vitality and purpose is unique and needs to be attended to as such. Every era and every culture has its different ways of describing and responding to these experiences. I wanted to honour the richness and the healing potential within that insight.

**W**hat did the process of writing this book teach you, or change in you?

**Jim:** It reminded me that there are no easy solutions; that meditation is not a cure for what we call depression; that there is much unavoidable pain that we must face and go through in this life. But I also had my faith strengthened that the practice of meditation (and the friendship of meditators) can sustain us as we patiently learn to heal. It can help us to respond with our whole being to Goethe's wonderfully challenging words:

*And so long as you haven't experienced  
This: to die and so to grow,  
You are only a troubled guest  
on the dark earth.*



### Giving Up Without Giving Up

Meditation and Depressions

by Jim Green

More information and order online: <http://tiny.cc/GvUpJG>

*"If it is true that all human griefs have their roots in our inability to sit quietly in our own company for five minutes, this spare, candid and calm introduction to meditative practice will be a life-saving gift for many living in or on the edge of the darkness that regularly overtakes us in this uncontrollable world."*

Dr Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury.

reprinted with permission from Meditatio Newsletter April 2019

# Jean Vanier

1928 - 2019

by Fr Laurence Freeman OSB

With a heavy heart the world is facing the reality of Jean's absence. At first it seems a lonelier place as we feel the desperate need for a spirit, as civilised and humane like his in our so often brutal world. But to have the heart touched even in this painful way is to be more awakened to our human capacity for love and wisdom. Across decades and continents, his life, words and actions and his way of looking at you, seeing you, achieved this awakening. So, sadness, yes, but also the beginning of resurrection in a sense of thankfulness. Because such a gift cannot die.

In a world dazzled and deluded by materialism and mechanicalism Jean's genius was to show the unconquerable power of weakness, where the sacred really resides; not in pomp and celebrity but in the ground where we meet each other in truth and humility. Like Jesus his master, he spoke with authority, accurately seeing all the forces at work in people and situations but restraining judgement. To see everything without judging is the benchmark of holiness – as with God so with us.

The lodestar of Jean's life was the simple acknowledgement, taught him by the most vulnerable members of any society, of the need to love and to be loved. To forget that, he realised, is to diminish our humanity. This is therefore our greatest vulnerability and our greatest strength in daily life and throughout our lifetime. We never lose this need – as with us so with God.

On Tuesday morning at our daily meeting, I shared the sad news of Jean's passing with our new community forming here at Bonnevaux. We took a time for silence before resuming. As I walked outside in the fresh morning air under a clear spring sky I sensed how Jean's spirit, was now released from the mortality which had taught



Jean Vanier and Fr Laurence Freeman OSB

him about God. And I thought with a surge of confidence stronger than loneliness, that it would soar. It will grow in the space prepared but still not filled by the spirit of Jesus, his lifelong master and friend.

I was always struck by Jean's intense emotional sensitivity and his lack of sentimentality; by the way he prioritised the human but recognised the need for structure. He advised and accompanied our community worldwide for thirty years and contributed not only his wisdom and care but a practical genius for organisation. When I asked him if he thought that we should proceed with our new international centre he replied he was sure we should. I said "France?" and he said "yes". Then he added "make sure it's beautiful".

In 2016 Jean led his second John Main Seminar from Trosly. Here at Bonnevaux we are going to listen again to his talks online. I was moved then by his insight in merging the vision of l'Arche and of the World Community. From the wisdom of l'Arche he saw that meditation, too, is not about self-sufficiency but inter-dependence, not about being superhuman but fully human. I pray that our two communities, complementary ways of manifesting the human capacity for love and simple kindness, will continue to be guided and grow closer through his spirit now expanding around us. ✠



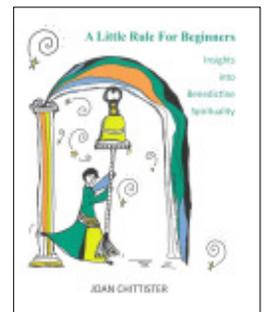
The John Main Seminar 2016 hosted by the L'Arche community in Trosly

## New on Pleroma Shelves: *by Shirley Duthie*

### **A Little Rule for Beginners: Insights into Benedictine Spirituality - Sr Joan Chittister**

The author entered the Benedictine Sisters of Erie at the age of 16 and tells us that every day since then she has heard the Rule of Saint Benedict read aloud. The text is divided into dated reading segments to allow for the complete rule to be read aloud, at prayer, at least three times a year. This is the practice in her community dating from the earliest days of Benedictine life. Sr Joan says that for this book she chose one phrase or line from each Chapter of the Rule that revealed a new understanding, or raised a new question, about God in her life. She has recorded her brief reflections in this delightful book that is exquisitely illustrated by Marcy Hall. This will be very, very, popular. **160pp \$19.99**

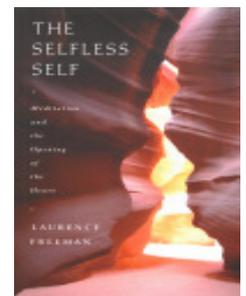
<https://www.christiansupplies.co.nz/product/9781890890810/a-little-rule-for-beginners/>



### **The Selfless Self: Meditation and the Opening of the Heart - Fr Laurence Freeman**

This is one of the classics of Christian Meditation for which Pleroma now has the rights to sell in New Zealand. In it, Fr Laurence Freeman describes the essential dynamic of contemplative prayer. Silence, stillness and simplicity are the keys that open the cave of the heart. Ideal reading for those early on the contemplative journey. **165pp \$25.99**

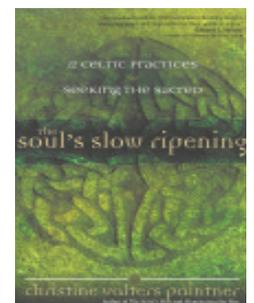
<https://www.christiansupplies.co.nz/product/9781853119835/the-selfless-self/>



### **The Soul's Slow Ripening: 12 Celtic Practices for Seeking the Sacred Christine - Valters Paintner**

The author is abbess for Abbey of the Arts, and uses reflections, stories, guided activities, prayer experiences, and a variety of creative arts, to help the reader patiently and attentively listen to God's invitation. These activities are based on Celtic spirituality which the author distils into twelve practices that focus on the environment rather than the intellectual focus present in other forms of discernment. Experienced meditators may find the material enriching and very helpful. **169pp \$33.99**

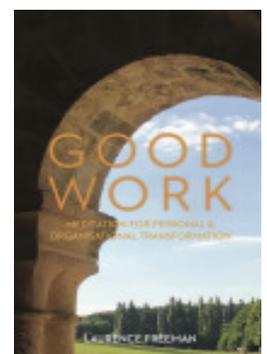
<https://www.christiansupplies.co.nz/product/9781932057102/the-souls-slow-ripening-12-celtic-practices/>



### **Good Work: Meditation for Personal & Organisational Transformation - Fr Laurence Freeman OSB**

Fr Laurence Freeman defines good work as “work that brings out the best in the people who do it, and brings enduring benefit to those who are influenced by it”. This book is about how meditation helps to make work good work, while transforming the workplace environment through more humanly rich and enjoyable encounters. The first part concentrates on the fundamentals of meditation – as a universal and inclusive practice found in all wisdom tradition. It then shows how the experience enriches the experience of work itself with meaning. In the second part of the book, successful leaders from the corporate world who practise meditation speak from experience about the value of a contemplative approach to work and leadership. The emphasis throughout is on practice rather than theory. The language is inclusively secular. The approach is wisdom-based rather than a merely physical or psychological one. The spark for this book came from a series of talks Fr Laurence Freeman gave to the staff at DP Architects, Singapore in January 2017, where they now continue to meditate every morning before work begins. **192pp \$23.50**

<https://www.christiansupplies.co.nz/product/9789811401664/good-work-meditation-for-personal-and-organisational/>



Go to the links below each item for further information.

Order at [www.christiansupplies.co.nz](http://www.christiansupplies.co.nz) telephone 0508 988 988 (toll free) or email [order@pleroma.org.nz](mailto:order@pleroma.org.nz)

# Questions & Answers:

by Shirley Duthie

**Q:** *I've been told that meditation can have all kinds of physical benefits. Is that really true?*

**A:** If you've been combing the internet you will have come across some incredible claims, eg insomnia, tooth decay, you name it! These are best left just where they are. In his book *30 Questions and Answers about Christian Meditation*, Paul Harris gives the best summary I have read about this question.

He says:

It is estimated that more than 1,500 research papers have been published on the health benefits of meditation. Scientists have done countless clinical studies on meditators that indicate lower oxygen consumption during meditation, decrease in serum lactate levels (relaxation), reductions in systolic and diastolic blood pressure, lower hearbeat, a relaxation of muscle tension, immune system enhancement and reduction of anxiety. Since we are one entity – body, mind and spirit – these bodily side effects of meditating can be accepted graciously, with thanks. However, what is important to keep in mind here is that any physiological benefits of meditation are secondary – one might say these are signs rather than the essential meaning of meditation.<sup>1</sup>

**Q:** *Is it alright to pray in tongues during my time of meditation?*

**A:** Laurence Freeman often uses the analogy of the spokes of a wheel to clarify the value of various types of prayer. All valuable, all leading to the hub that turns the wheel. If you have the gift of Tongues then using it during praise and worship, or even in private prayer is appropriate. During meditation we are instructed to *pray the mantra*. John Main says it is very simple “*just keep your attention on the mantra*”<sup>2</sup> and if at any time you realise you are not praying the mantra, simply return to it.

<sup>1</sup> Harris, Paul, *30 Questions & Answers about Christian Meditation* (Novalis 20180). Used with permission.

<sup>2</sup> Main, John, *Fully Alive*, p36

**Q & A** - A place for your questions relating to Christian Meditation - no matter what! The **Q & A** Convenor, Shirley Duthie, will answer or find an expert to tackle any question relating to your daily practice, your CM Group or Community Days, parish difficulties related to Christian Meditation, Christian Meditation history or writings about Christian Meditation and related subjects.



Send questions to  
[sjmduthie@gmail.com](mailto:sjmduthie@gmail.com)

Sender's name not disclosed without permission

## Christian Meditation Community Day Whangarei

**Saturday 29th June 2019**

**9.30am – 3.00pm**

**33 Owhiwa Road**  
(Val and Andrew Land's place)  
in Library/Chapel.

**Theme:**

**A Day with Thomas Merton  
(1915 – 1968)**

We will spend time reviewing the major steps of Thomas Merton's life.  
We will reflect upon/listen to comments of people who knew or corresponded with him.

We will especially reflect upon his own words.  
He was a person who touched so many through his writings.  
He was a person who learned to dedicate himself to prayer and to dedicate himself to humanity.

*No matter what mistakes and delusions  
have marked my life,  
most of it I think has been happiness  
and as far as I can tell, truth.*  
Thomas Merton Vow of Conversation.

The Dalai Lama said that the most striking thing about Merton was:  
*the inner life he manifested. I could see he was a truly humble and deeply spiritual man. This was the first time that I had been struck by such a feeling of spirituality in anyone who professed Christianity ... It was Merton who introduced me to the real meaning of the word "Christian".*  
Freedom in Exile Pg 207

There will be two periods of meditation.  
Newcomers to meditation are most welcome.

Bring your own lunch. Small koha appreciated.  
Please let me if you are intending to come.

**Contact:**

**Michael Email: [md1@outlook.co.nz](mailto:md1@outlook.co.nz)**

**Phone: 09 436 5663**

# Bay of Plenty/Waikato Community Day

held Saturday 30th March 2019

*a report from Maureen Eberhard*



Our first Community Day for 2019 was held at the Catholic Church in Waihi, with meditators coming from all over our very large district. The local groups were well represented with 21 people attending in the morning, and an additional two for the afternoon session, four of whom were new meditators.

Joan Kenington gave us a very moving perspective of her journey to meditation, from her earliest days of childhood to the present.

Raewyn Blair led the day and shared two presentations from Thomas Keating. The morning session was about his work in Centering Prayer. A spontaneous discussion followed, with differences and similarities to John Main's work being compared. This was followed by the first of our two meditations.

After lunch we heard another presentation from Raewyn on Thomas Keating, this time Transformation in Christ according to St Therese of Lisieux. Keating presented Therese's view of four parables, each one highlighting a different aspect of spiritual transformation.

The Pleroma Christian Supplies table yielded sales of \$199.49. One of Pleroma's books was raffled, with much enthusiasm! After expenses, we were able to bank \$95.00 koha into the NZCCM General Account and \$86.00 into the Friends Account.

As always, it was a blessed day of meeting and welcoming new meditators to our group, and reconnecting with old friends in our thriving Bay of Plenty/Waikato community. ❖

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## Unlearning and Unknowing

*by Ross Miller*

The first problem for all of us, men and women, is not to learn but to unlearn. That was said, among many other things she said, by the American feminist and activist, Gloria Steinem. Whatever she meant by it, I think she is right. Contemplative prayer and life is very much about unlearning.

One of our greatest spiritual classics - and we don't know who the author was - is entitled *Cloud of Unknowing*. In that title are two deliberate images - the image of a cloud, rather than any image of clarity and certainty; and the strange word "unknowing", divesting, dispossessing ourselves of perhaps cherished assumptions and props. To a lot of people this seems not at all what they thought religion was about.

If you consult what Jesus teaches about prayer, you find that prayer is to happen in an inner room with the door shut. The Jews of his day, the people to whom he spoke, did not have inner rooms or doors. This, rather, is how Jesus refers to inwardness. He describes the importance of being still and silent. He also says we are to shed anxiety. Anxiety is pandemic. I can think of people who seem anxious that if they shed their

anxieties there would be nothing much left. Worry is their default response to life. Prayer is the way we set it aside, says Jesus.

Prayer is the relinquishing of possession and of our illusion of control of our lives, or of events, of other people, of doctrine and belief ... and, we must add, our control of God. A most basic part of that is that we come to terms with our own mortality.

In the stillness we consent to God's process rather than our own. We unlearn, unknow much that we habitually assume - our reliance on some god who is our personal domestic idol, or the protector of our belief system, perhaps even fashioned in our own image - we start to unlearn our self-protection mechanisms, dismantling our propensities for looking for happiness in the wrong places.

We choose to pay attention to the God Jesus called "Father", and that is all. Like Mary of Bethany, we are simply to be present and pay attention.

*from Sharp Darts of Longing Love by Ross Miller.*

Reprinted with permission

❖

# John Main Seminar 2019

## Exploring the meaning of a Contemplative Christianity today

*The churches are almost empty or sold, as if they've reached their tipping point, and from the pulpits, god slid out.*

Lisa Jacobson  
*There Are Stones That Sing*



And it's not only the pervasive secularism of Western culture that's at issue here. Many of us who meditate also find our old ways of participating in the christian tradition coming under strain. As we grow in contemplative consciousness and leave behind tribal and dualistic forms of religion, we can struggle with how to believe and belong. In this Seminar, I hope we might begin to explore the meaning and embodiment of a contemplative christianity for our time. What is it in the Christian tradition, the practise of Christian

faith, the remains of a necessary gift for a world in crisis? How do we articulate, share and embody this gift? As we move to Bonnevaux and as our outreach to the secular world continues to grow, it seems an important moment to reflect on the significance of being a World Community for Christian Meditation. I hope many can join us.

*Sarah Bachelard*

### **John Main Seminar 2019: A Contemplative Christianity for our Time 5 - 11 August 2019**

*led by Dr Sarah Bachelard*

**Pre-Seminar Silent Retreat - Sources of Wisdom**  
*led by Fr Laurence Freeman OSB, Vancouver Canada*

**visit: <http://jms2019.org/>**

## **Meditation Retreat for Young Adults at Bonnevaux 24 July to 4 August 2019**

Bonnevaux will host a Retreat for young adult meditators (aged 18 to 40), led by experienced practitioners under the guidance of Fr Laurence Freeman. The first part of the Retreat offers times for meditation, silence and yoga, as well as creative activities such as pottery, writing, music and dancing. Participants will share in the life of the resident community. The second part of the Retreat, (optional) will be walking the Camino de Compostela.

For more information contact:

**[accueil@bonnevauxwccm.org](mailto:accueil@bonnevauxwccm.org) or visit: [www.bonnevauxwccm.org](http://www.bonnevauxwccm.org)**

During his visit to New Zealand, Fr Laurence stated that he is keen for NZCCM to send someone to the Young Adults' Retreat. If anyone is interested, please let Linda Polaschek know. NZCCM may be able to help with some funding.



## **Christian Ashrams and St. Thomas Churches**

**WCCM  
Pilgrimage to India**

**29 January-15February 2020**

This WCCM pilgrimage follows in the tradition of meditative visits of engagement to the sub-continent begun in 1998 with the first *Way of Peace* event. On this occasion our encounters will be in South India, which we last visited in 2015. Here, in the most Christian part of the country, the tradition goes right back to the visit of St. Thomas the Apostle.

St. Thomas is said to have founded eight churches, and we will visit several of them. Although the actual presence of St. Thomas is hard to prove, we will see clear relics of Christian practice from the fifth century.

At the heart of our pilgrimage will be visits to three important Christian ashrams – Shantivanam, the “forerunner” of Shantivanam known as Kurisumala, and the Aanmodaya ashram. We will all stay at Shantivanam. The other ashrams can accommodate smaller numbers, and some will stay in local hotels in these cases. All participants will have the opportunity to stay in at least two of the ashrams if they wish.

We will also visit fabulous Hindu temples, ancient mosques, remains of the Jewish presence in South India, and World Heritage religious rock carvings. We will enjoy scenic road, rail and boat trips, and may even find time to enjoy some of South India's beautiful sandy beaches.

# Events Calendar: (more details available in Events Calendar at NZCCM website)

- June 22**            **Hawkes Bay, Manawatu & Taranaki Regional Day**  
Southern Star Abbey, Contact: Shirley Duthie, sjmduthie@gmail.com
- June 22**            **Auckland Community Day**  
St Mary's Church Hall, Papakura,  
Theme - *Exploring Sufi Meditation*  
Contact: Charmainne Tolich 09 266-7651 or ctolich@me.com  
or Vincent Maire 09 424-2293 or vincentmaire12@gmail.com
- June 29**            **Whangarei Community Day, 33 Owhiwa Road, Whangarei**  
Theme - *A Day with Thomas Merton*  
Contact: Michael Email: md1@outlook.co.nz Phone: 09 436 5663
- July 20**            **BOP/Waikato Community Day**  
St Mary's Catholic Church Hall, Ranolf Street, Glenholme, Rotorua.  
Theme: *Contemplative Reflections*. Leader Damian Robertson.  
Contact: Damian Robertson, dae.pete@outlook.com
- July 26-28**        **Auckland Retreat, St Francis Retreat Centre.**  
Contact: Charmainne Tolich, ctolich@me.com
- July 29**            **Auckland, NZCCM AGM, St Francis Retreat Centre.**  
Contact: Linda Polaschek, nandlpolaschek@gmail.com
- August 17**        **Christchurch Community Day,**  
10:00am - 3:00pm, Methodist Church hall, cnr Chapel Street and Harewood Road.  
Contact: Chris Wilson, cwilson@expensereduction.com
- August 31**        **Introduction to Meditation in the Christian Tradition**  
presenter Vincent Maire. Vaughan Park Anglican Retreat Centre, Long Bay, Auckland.  
To register visit [www.vaughanpark.nz](http://www.vaughanpark.nz)
- September 28**    **Hawkes Bay, Manawatu & Taranaki Regional Day**  
Southern Star Abbey, Contact: Shirley Duthie, sjmduthie@gmail.com
- October 4-6**      **Essential Teaching Weekend**  
Tyburn Monastery near Rotorua. Contact: Damian Robertson, dae.pete@outlook.com
- October 26**      **Christchurch Community Day**  
1:00pm - 4:00pm, Methodist Church Hall, cnr Chapel Street and Harewood Road.  
Contact: Chris Wilson, cwilson@expensereduction.com
- November 2**     **BOP/Waikato Community Day**  
St Andrew's Anglican Church, Titiraupenga Street, Taupo.  
Theme: *Thomas Merton* Leader Lesley Cotterill.  
Contact: Damian Robertson, dae.pete@outlook.com

## Newsletter - help please!

I need your help towards putting the School of Meditation's new quarterly newsletter together. For one of the sections, we would like to profile meditation groups from around the world, with particular emphasis on "how do we deepen our experience of meditation in our group?"

Cathy and I would love you to contribute articles of no more than 300 words on your work and experience of meditation within your local settings. It would be great if you could include a photograph of your local meditation group. If you any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Regards,*

*Tina Gotla-Aluri*

**Administrator- School of Meditation**

St Mark's Myddelton Sq London EC1R 1XX Tel: 020 7278 2070 Zoom ID: 623-865-3659

Skype: [contact@theschoolofmeditation.org](mailto:contact@theschoolofmeditation.org) [www.theschoolofmeditation.org](http://www.theschoolofmeditation.org)

usual working days are Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday

Connect with me on: [www.linkedin.com/in/tinagotla-aluri](http://www.linkedin.com/in/tinagotla-aluri)

# NZCCM National Council Members

**National Co-ordinator - Linda Polaschek**

12 Everest Street, Khandallah, Wellington 6035

Phone: 04.479.7955 Email: nandlpolaschek@gmail.com

**Northland Co-ordinator - Michael Dougherty (ex officio)**

Shantigriha, 735 Owhiwa Road, RD1 Onerahi, Whangarei 0192

Phone: 09.436.5663 Email: mdl@outlook.co.nz

**Auckland Area Co-ordinator - Charmaine Tolich**

24 Lemonwood Place, Manurewa, Auckland, 2105

Phone: 027.4800.418 Email: ctolich@me.com

**Waikato-Bay of Plenty Co-ordinator - Damian Robertson**

117 Ranolf Street, Glenholme, Rotorua, 3010

Phone: 07.347.2087 Email: dae.pete@outlook.com

**Hawkes Bay/Manawatu/Taranaki Co-ordinator - Shirley Duthie**

2A Knorp Street, Otane, Central Hawkes Bay, 4202

Phone: 06.856.8110 Email: sjmduthie@gmail.com

**Wellington Co-ordinator - Elspeth Preddey**

39 Anne Street, Wadestown, Wellington 6012

Phone: 04.472.3369 Email: elspeth.preddey@xtra.co.nz

**Meditation in Schools National Co-ordinator**

**& National Oblate Co-ordinator - Hugh McLaughlin**

9 Somerset Crescent Kapiti Village, Paraparaumu, Kapiti Coast 5032

Phone: 04.298.9370 Email: hugh.mclaughlinnz@gmail.com

**South Island Co-ordinator**

**Annette Reinheimer, 2 Percy Lane, Wanaka**

Phone: 021 2075 122 Email: annettere852@gmail.com

**Nelson Co-ordinator - Marie Shepherd**

Email: mlshepherd54@gmail.com

**Christchurch Co-ordinator - Chris Wilson**

9A Camelot Street, Christchurch

Phone: 029.357.843 Email: cwilson@expensereduction.com

**South Island Meditation in Schools**

**Regional Co-ordinator - Jane Hole**

341 Wairakei Road, Bryndwr, Christchurch 8053

Phone: 03.359.9036 Email: holejane66@hotmail.com

**Friends Co-ordinator - Vincent Maire**

7 Motuora Road, Manly, Auckland, 0930

Phone: 09.424.2293 Email: vincentmaire12@gmail.com

**Treasurer - Ngaire McLaughlin**

9 Somerset Crescent Kapiti Village, Paraparaumu, Kapiti Coast 5032

Phone: 04.298.9370 Email: treasurer@christianmeditationnz.org.nz

**Trust Board Secretary - Damian Robertson**

117 Ranolf Street, Glenholme, Rotorua, 3010

Phone: 07.347.2087 Email: dae.pete@outlook.com

**School Co-ordinator - Fr Peter Murphy**

52 East Street, Papakura, Auckland 2110

Phone: 09.298.5134 Email: frpetermurphy64@gmail.com

**Webmistress - Clare McGivern**

Email: cmcgivern@hotmail.co.nz

**Newsletter Editor - Margaret Paton (ex officio)**

29 Coulthard Terrace, Papakura, Auckland 2113.

Phone: 09.298.4409 Email: margaretpaton@xtra.co.nz

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I would like to start a meditation group or have someone run an introductory course in my area yes/no

Please return with payment to:

*Treasurer - Ngaire McLaughlin*  
9 Somerset Crescent Kapiti Village,  
Paraparaumu, Kapiti Coast 5032  
treasurer@christianmeditationnz.org.nz

*Stillpoint* is the official magazine of the New Zealand Community for Christian Meditation. It is published quarterly to provide a forum for sharing and teaching within the NZ Christian Meditation Community and to keep members informed of events, past and future. Publishers: New Zealand Community for Christian Meditation, c/o Linda Polaschek, 12 Everest Street, Khandallah, Wellington 6035. Phone: 04.479.7955 Email: nandlpolaschek@gmail.com Editor: Margaret Paton. Articles for publication may be sent to margaretpaton@xtra.co.nz or the National Co-ordinator Linda Polaschek, Email: nandlpolaschek@gmail.com The opinions expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the attitudes and views of the editor.

**Chris Braddock**, artist and writer, is Professor of Visual Arts at AUT University, Auckland. He co-leads the Ph.D. and M.Phil. programmes and the Art & Performance Research Group. Chris has deep connections with the Anglican and Islamic traditions. He has long been interested in spirituality and has been involved with Sufi meditation for just over a decade.

- \* Please bring your own lunch
- \* Please bring a koha
- \* There will be two periods of meditation
- \* People new to meditation are most welcome

**Zain Ali** is a teaching fellow at the University of Auckland where he teaches an introductory course on Islam. He has lived in Auckland for almost 30 years, and has three children who are proudly Kiwi. Zain has a deep interest in spirituality and has practiced Sufi meditation for a number of years. He also has close connections with the Hospice community in Auckland.

For more information contact:

**Charmaine Tolich**

09 266-7651 or [ctolich@me.com](mailto:ctolich@me.com)

**Vincent Maire**

09 424-2293 or [vincentmaire12@gmail.com](mailto:vincentmaire12@gmail.com)

# Auckland Christian Meditation Community Day

**Saturday 22 June 2019**

**St. Mary's Catholic Church Hall  
52 East Street, Papakura  
10.00am to 3.00pm**



**Turning to the Heart  
Exploring  
Sufi Meditation  
with Chris Braddock & Zain Ali**

