



Stillpoint

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

christianmeditationnz.org.nz

wccm.org

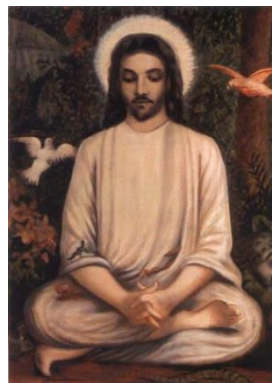
wccmaustralia.org.au

christianmeditationorg.uk

bonnevauxwccm.org

DEALING WITH PAIN AND ANGUISH DURING MEDITATION

Jane Hole and Damian Robertson



'I said what about my eyes?

"Keep them on the road."

I said what about my passion?

"Keep it burning."

I said what about my heart?

"Tell me what you hold inside it."

I said pain and sorrow.

He said:

"Stay with it." - Rumi

The practice of meditation can be hampered by people's experience of pain, whether it be physical, mental, relational, circumstantial, spiritual - even financial. This article aims to point meditators towards some proven ways of coping with painful experience, whatever its source. Hopefully it will encourage all those who are struggling with the issue to discover that there is a way forward. The challenge of meditating when suffering pain or anguish is one which is shared by many. Turning your face into the wind of distracting and miserable pain during meditation may be your starting point. Gentle acceptance could offer you a way of living peacefully and compassionately with your pain, the accompanying anxiety and the variety of psychological distresses which arise from life itself.

Not being alone in this challenge is one part of the solution; knowing there are practices and ways of being which help to minimise suffering is another; learning from the experiences of others is yet another. So is understanding that your pain is not the same as anyone else's pain. You may need to adjust elements of your practice according to your individual needs without denying the essentials.

For many years, Christian meditators have drawn on the wisdom of Australian meditator, Marie O'Leary, whose original purpose in meditating was spiritual. She explains: *'Ten years ago my doctor remarked that I had been given a raw deal in life. I agreed wholeheartedly. To experience constantly intense pain throughout one's body, and to know there is at present no cure for this pain, and that it will increase, is so cruel. Yes, it was easy to feel sorry for myself...*

But after I had been meditating for a while, I started thinking – no hang on, that’s wrong. Everybody has some sort of pain. Someone might look fine, but they might have terrible worries... Meditation teaches you to be much more aware ... of other people, and how they are in pain... One’s own pain can become a blessing, as in compassion one sees and hears the pain of others... And I learned that when you’re in pain, don’t fight it, don’t be angry with God, try and befriend it... It’s no good being angry if you are in pain; that just makes it worse. It’s much better to be relaxed and calm, and meditation is the way to do it. And my pain and my body teach me such a lot. My pain helps me all the time. It will say, ‘Sit up, do this, do that’ (in order to be more comfortable). You have to befriend your pain, and your body – no matter how misshapen or diseased it is.’

Fr Laurence Freeman suggested to Marie that pain could make a person very self-centred, hugging the pain to oneself and, ‘even if people are trying to help you, you know they don’t feel the pain as you do.’ Marie’s response makes sense of the paradox of pain. *‘Something that can be extremely hard to bear, when one is sick and in pain, is the feeling that one has been abandoned by one’s loved ones. However, I have come to see that those who love me are themselves suffering from my pain. They find it so very hard to cope with my pain, they can think of no way to help me, and that is why they so often stay away and fail to make contact with me.’*

Another person who has learned the power of meditation in managing pain is Vidyamala Burch, a New Zealand born resident of the UK, who began her journey with relief of her suffering as the primary purpose. Her story of severe injury and pain suffered in her early life began in New Zealand and led her to teach and write with enormous wisdom and kindness for others whose lives have been and are detrimentally affected by pain. Vidyamala was introduced to meditation as a last resort by Auckland Hospital’s chaplain when medical, surgical and palliative treatments had failed to have any positive impact on her crippling pain. That wise chaplain led a 10-minute silent meditation with her, which began her pursuit of Buddhist meditative practice. Vidyamala’s severe and constant pain is ongoing, and she has used her knowledge and experience to write books and establish courses and treatments which enable countless people worldwide to relate differently to their chronic pain.

Marie and Vidyamala came to meditation from different angles, but they both learned to **face** the unpleasant realities of painful experience without **reacting** to them. Vidyamala advises: *‘Gently facing pain in meditation, rather than remaining trapped in cycles of avoidance and unawareness and feeling overwhelmed, is a heroic act. Each moment of awareness is one of being true to your experience and taking a step toward living a fulfilling and creative life... If your attitude is one of wilful striving, you’re bound to create tension, resistance and stress, and this won’t be helpful in the long run... People with pain are prone to restless and wriggly states of mind, and we can use our pain as an excuse to fidget... The art of meditation includes distinguishing between the pain you need to listen to and the pain that comes from restlessness... Through meditation practice not only do you transform your relationship to illness and pain, you also become a more considerate and benevolent force for good in the world.’*

Both women also recognised that effective meditation for sufferers of pain meant, in Vidyamala’s words, *‘coming to terms at the deepest level with the aspects of pain you can’t avoid and making peace with the situation... Becoming a “human being” rather than a “human doing” is a wonderful way of describing the spaciousness you can contact through meditation... Meditation isn’t about manipulating life to get it on your own terms or to get rid of painful experiences... You need to make peace with any residual pain or difficulty by resting in the experience of the moment, whatever it contains... **Rather than trying to move OUT of the body in a vain attempt to escape pain, the answer seems to lie in moving toward it, going more and more deeply INTO the body.**’*

So, where to from here? First, if anyone feels they are in pain, any sort of pain, and knows that the pain is a problem when they meditate, there is wisdom already shared by Marie and Vidyamala. Second, there’s no attempt here to ‘water down’ the discipline of Christian meditation and therefore lose what it

can offer. What each meditator needs is to find realistic ways to be faithful to the practice in their own particular circumstances. Here are some points to consider:

Purpose	Whether your aim in meditating is spiritual or for relief of suffering, it's important to engage consciously with the reason for your meditation. Knowing what you are aiming for is essential if you are to achieve.
Mental Attitude	Pain and suffering are a natural component of human life. Learn to practise a loving response to your pain. Kindness towards your body's experience is vital. Awareness of your own experience will give rise to sensitivity to the pain of others. Respond rather than react to your experience. Be honest.
Pay attention	Be clearly aware without pushing away unpleasant aspects of your pain experience. Encourage a kindly awareness and acceptance of the emotional or primary physical pain, thus avoiding the secondary suffering of anguish.
Identify reality	<p>An intrinsic element of awareness of pain experience is understanding what kind of pain is being experienced. There is huge individual variation in pain experience. Emotional pain arises from non-physical sources. Acute pain is short term and results from injury. Chronic (persistent, long-term) pain is experienced for 3 months or more. Neuropathic pain occurs in the nervous system, sometimes caused or triggered by nerve or spinal cord injury. The nervous system responds to pain experience by increasing its capacity to process pain signals, causing over-sensitisation. Pain signals become confused in some way.</p> <p>The biopsychosocial model of pain suggests all three aspects of an individual's life influence that person's way of dealing with pain.</p>
Expectations	Have none. Allow the practice to do its work in you. Effort needs to be gentle, open and receptive.
Environment	Set up a pleasant, peaceful space for meditation. Pace daily activities as much as possible to avoid agitation prior to meditating. This requires honest awareness of the body, sensations, emotions and thoughts. Try to identify a pleasant sensation you are experiencing to be loving towards. Avoid blocking or drowning feelings. Accept their reality.
Posture	In placing the body for meditation, notice how it feels. Identify and adjust it to avoid pressure points. Notice the body's reaction, then choose your response. Awareness should be intentional, experiential and non-judgmental.
Breathing	Awareness of breath helps to bring awareness of the body as a whole. If pain is inhibiting your breathing, try directing breathing towards the pain. Note what breathing does to the back as well as the chest. Use breath to soften resistance and blocking.

Finally, if this article has left you with questions or a need to talk to someone, feel free to ask them via damian51950@gmail.com. If there is sufficient interest, it may be possible to schedule an online discussion or similar forum in the future. Please let Damian know if you are interested in this.

*'Your grief for what you've lost lifts a mirror up to where you're bravely working.
 Expecting the worst, you look, and instead, here's the joyful face you've been wanting to see.
 Your hand opens and closes and opens and closes.
 If it were always a fist or always stretched open, you would be paralyzed.
 Your deepest presence is in every small contracting and expanding,
 The two as beautifully balanced and coordinated as bird wings.'* - Rumi

Vidyamala Burch references are all from 'Living well with pain and illness – the mindful way to free yourself from suffering'.

Online Series - The Space Between Words: How to read the Bible and Other Sacred Texts

25-30th September 2023 – Online series with Laurence Freeman

More information and registration at <http://wccm.org/events/space-between-word/>



Christchurch Meditation One day Retreat (1st July 2023) **"Ocean Deep, Ocean Wide"**

The Rev. Silvia Purdie was the facilitator for a one day retreat on the importance of the oceans in God's creation. Historically they have been plundered and polluted without any consideration of the consequence. It is an issue which ecotheology seeks to address. We have a false belief that the oceans are a limitless creation. We need to care for them and be thankful for them and acknowledge that we are, in fact, people of the sea (moana). Our forebears came from across the oceans. We can all act locally.



During the lunch break we walked by the ocean and picked up a seaside memento and a piece of rubbish. The retreat was a shared experience and the presentation by the facilitator was much appreciated.

by Bill Black

Photo- Left to Right Janet Chambers, Paddy Walker, Silvia Purdie, Bill Black, Lesley Allen, Annette Reinheimer(seated)

Contemplative Prayer (Part Two) – Saturday 7th October 2023

To be held at St Francis Retreat Centre, Hillsborough

Fruits of the Journey. The metaphor of prayer as a journey to the Heart of God has long been used when describing meditative prayer. However, the journey is never linear and invariably involves a confrontation with the false-self. Hear what the mystics have to say about how contemplative prayer can lead us to a new way of being in the world, a way of transcending everything in the world, without leaving it. Presented by Vincent Maire and Mary McLister. **It is not necessary to have attended part**

one of the series to attend part two. Book online at <https://www.stfrancisretreatcentre.org.nz/retreat-programmes/> Early bird \$65, standard \$80.

AND Two Auckland Community Days are planned before this year ends. While dates and venues have yet to be decided, the events will include a report from Kitty Chiu on her pilgrimage experience in France and from Fr Peter Murphy on his three months in Bonnevaux. The other event will be a talk from meditator Jeffrey Robinson on his work teaching mindfulness in Auckland prison. Keep an eye on your in-box for details.

Julian of Norwich

By Cat Jehly

Presented at a Waikato/Bay of Plenty Community Day, 2023

Part 1 (Part 2 will be in the December Stillpoint)

Julian of Norwich was a 14th century mystic theologian, spiritual writer and anchorite who was born in Norwich in 1342 and died around 1416, which makes her a contemporary of the author of The Cloud of Unknowing and the mystic Margery Kempe, who visited Julian for spiritual advice.

Julian was born into a tumultuous period in England's history. It was the time of The Hundred Years War with France, the 1381 'Peasant's Revolt' which saw violence across England (including the assassination of the mayor of Norwich) and the 40 year Papal Schism which produced three popes. There were also multiple waves of the Great Plague (or Black Death), the first of which killed about 7000 people in Norwich, or half the population.

There is some difference of opinion about whether Julian was a Benedictine nun or a lay person, but in her writing, Julian refers to the death of a child and because of this some conclude that she may have been a mother. So, it was a time of intense uncertainty, upheaval and loss in which Julian lived.

In May 1373 when Julian was 30 years old, she became very sick and had a near death experience. During that experience, starting in the early morning hours and into the next night, God's unconditional love was shown to her through a series of 16 revelations in the form of visions and locutions - or what

she called showings, centred around Christ's Passion. Soon afterwards, she made a full recovery and began writing an initial account of each vision, which is known as the Short Text.



Julian then entered contemplative life by becoming the first anchorite in Norwich in 80 years. She enclosed herself in a small anchor-hold or cell that was attached to St Julian's church in Norwich and took the name of the church as her own (her actual birth name remains unknown). Julian's cell had a window opening into the church, another window through which her maid brought supplies, and a window opening onto a main road where she could interact with the wider community who would come to her for spiritual advice. *[She kept a cat to keep vermin away]*. We know that by the time of her death she was very well known as a spiritual guide.

While living in her cell, over the course of twenty years Julian integrated and reflected on her revelations, and this work resulted in an extended manuscript called the Long Text. Together, the initial Short Text and the Long

Text comprise Julian's work titled *Showings, or Revelations of Divine Love* and they form the earliest surviving English work by a female writer.

Her writing then went underground for centuries until being rediscovered in the early 20th century, and she has since become recognised as one of the greatest mystics of the Christian tradition, particularly in the Anglican Church. In the Catholic church she has been beatified but not officially canonised. Although researchers have attempted to uncover the details of her personal life, these have largely remained hidden - and some might say that this is how she would have wanted it. As Julian wrote: *'You shall soon forget me - and do this so that I do not hamper you - and behold Jesus who is the teacher of all.'*

Julian's revelations

As a child Julian had asked God for three gifts: to see and understand Christ's Passion, to experience illness so that she could loosen her hold on earthly life, and finally to receive the wounds of repentance, of suffering as Christ suffered and of seeking God with all her strength. It was only after receiving these gifts later in life that Julian remembered she had asked for them as a child. Julian had been seriously ill for about a week when a priest was called to give her the Last Rites. As he held a crucifix in front of her, the pain left her, and she experienced the following revelations:

- 1 As Julian looked at the crucifix the room became dark, except for the cross which was glowing with light, and she saw Christ's blood start to flow from under the crown of thorns. Then she saw a tiny object, which Julian compared to a hazelnut, in the palm of her hand. She understood that she was being shown the whole of creation - so small, but so cherished and held in God's love. Julian saw that all things come into being by the love of God, and that if she clung to any part of creation, she would not be united with him.
- 2 In the second vision Julian saw more details of Christ's Passion and his suffering.
- 3 She then saw God as the still point at the centre of everything - and that there is no other doer except him. He has made everything that exists, and his hand is in everything that happens.
- 4 In the fourth showing Julian saw Christ's body being whipped and the blood flowing out and washing sins away.
- 5 She then saw Satan discouraged because he knows that what he does actually helps us in our growth, and that we are saved through Christ's Passion. She wrote: *'I saw the Lord scorn the devil's malice and expose his lack of power - and he wills that we should do so, too.'*
- 6 In the sixth showing Julian received gratitude for her efforts and she saw the joy that will be rewarded to those in heaven.
- 7 In the next she experienced alternating feelings of bliss and happiness and then deep sadness, over and over: *'...bliss is lasting and pain is passing, and shall come to nothing for those who shall be saved... It is not God's will that we should linger over pain and sorrow and sadness, but that we should pass quickly through it to joy without end.'*
- 8 In the 8th showing Julian experienced a very detailed vision of Christ dying on the cross. She was filled with grief at this vision, and knew that when he was in pain, all of creation suffered alongside him. Julian admitted that she had asked to share in Christ's suffering but wrote that if she had known what it was like she would not have asked for it. But her experience of grief soon turned to joy when she realised that his - and our - suffering in this life is *nothing* compared with the experience of God's love.

- 9 Then Julian was shown three heavens, corresponding to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. She wrote of the joy that the blessed Trinity has in our salvation, and that we should rejoice as much as we can in Christ's sacrifice, while we are here on earth.
- 10 Christ then showed Julian the wound in his side, which she saw as large enough for all human-kind. She was shown his heart, broken in two out of love. Christ said to her: *'Look how I loved you. Look and see that I loved you so much before I died for you that I was ready to die for you, and now I have died for you and suffered of my own free will. All my bitter pain and agony is turned into endless joy.'*
- 11 Christ then showed Julian three visions of Mary: one before she gave birth, one as she was grieving at the foot of the cross, and one in her present joy and delight. He expressed that his mother is the greatest delight that he could share with her.
- 12 In the twelfth showing Julian saw Christ in a more glorified state than she had seen before, and she understood that our souls never have rest until we come to him. She was shown innumerable manifestations of God - too many to remember or understand. She urged that we come to our own understanding of this, through God's grace.
- 13 Julian was then shown how all of our failings will be turned to honour, and that all things, including sin, will be made well. She saw that there is no blame or judgement other than our own, and that *this* is the cause of our pain.
- 14 Julian then recognised that God is the ground of our prayer - and she stressed the importance of rightful prayer, gratitude, and trust in God. She wrote: *'Sometimes it seems we have been praying a long time, and still do not have what we ask. But we should not be sad. I am sure that what our Lord means is that either we should wait for a better time, or a better gift.'*
- 15 In the fifteenth showing, Julian had been reflecting on her longing to leave this world to be in heaven, when she heard the words: *'Suddenly you shall be taken from all your pain, from all your sickness, and from all your sorrow. You shall come up above and you shall have me for your reward. And you shall be filled to the brim with love and happiness.'* Julian understood that the challenges of this life are a brief moment in time, and that when we are taken into bliss we will see the pain as nothing.
- 16 In the final showing Satan tried to attack her and she drew strength and comfort from her trust in God and in everything that had been revealed to her. Julian went on to write: *"Flee to the Lord and we shall be comforted. Touch him and we shall be made clean. Cling to him and we shall be safe and sound from all danger... To be exactly like our Lord is our true salvation and our perfect bliss. And if we do not know how we shall do this, we must ask our Lord - and he will teach us."*
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Five-day Contemplative retreat in May 13-17 2024

Join us for a rejuvenating 5-day contemplative retreat at the St. Francis Retreat Centre in Auckland.

Indulge in a tranquil escape designed to nourish your spirit. Immerse yourself in the beauty of daily meditations – three opportunities each day to find stillness within. Let the gentle embrace of nature guide you as you explore artistic activities, take leisurely walks, or simply unwind in the way that resonates with you.

Discover the power of presence in the heart of nature as you relax and recharge. This retreat offers the perfect balance between structured sessions and free time, allowing you to craft your own experience. Whether you're seeking inner reflection, creative expression, or moments of quietude, this retreat caters to your unique journey.

More information will be available soon. Contact Raymond Eberhard, celebrantraymond@gmail.com

Waikato and Bay of Plenty Community Day (NZCCM) 16 September 2023

Mini retreat – a day of personal and Gospel reflection based on Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 18:31-43

Saturday 16 September 2023, 10:00 am to 2:30 pm

St Mary's Catholic Church Hall - Corner Ranolf and Seddon Streets, Rotorua

At this Community Day we will be guided by Zita O'Neill and Damian Robertson, as we explore the implications for each of us arising from a new look at the stories of the paralysed man who was lowered into Jesus' presence through the roof by his friends and Bartimaeus, the blind man who shouted from the roadside for Jesus' attention. Both were healed after making direct contact with Jesus, much to the indignation of his usual crowd of followers.

The day will provide a gentle blend of meditations, short talks, personal reflective activity and fellowship, with capacity for each person to choose their means of expression in word, mandalas or other artistic expression.

Morning tea, coffee and biscuits available from 10.00 am. Meditators and people new to meditation are most welcome.

PLEASE BRING Your lunch, Koha (suggested \$10), \$2 for a book raffle raising funds for World Community Support, your own journal if you wish, credit card or cash if you'd like to buy Pleroma books.

If you have any queries, please contact Raymond Eberhard on 07 5495329, celebrantraymond@gmail.com

Mid-Canterbury Mediation Group

by Jan Harrison's group

Our meditation group has been running for 10 years and was initiated by Janice Harrison, who still takes the group today. We meet every Wednesday after 9am Mass and follow the readings and teachings of John Main and Laurence Freeman. We have around 6-8 regular members with the odd visit from fellow out of town meditators.

Our sessions begin with a short reflection, the opening prayer, then 20 minutes of meditation, the closing prayer then sometimes followed by a brief discussion and/ or coffee at a close-by café. We have formed a very close group who all look forward to our weekly gatherings to enhance our faith and draw us closer to God through our silent togetherness. We are all very grateful to Janice and her wonderful commitment and dedication which has kept the group strong and going this long.



The photo is of some of the Christchurch meditation community who joined the Ashburton community who meet at the Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Tinwald on Wednesday 9.30am. After meditation we went to Lushington's for morning tea and more community time.

From left - Annette Reinheimer, Jane Hole, Margaret Moore and Jan Harrison



Q. What is the best way to learn to meditate?

The best way to learn is through a teacher. John Main makes the point in his talk on Reverence in the *Way of Unknowing* how he learnt more in 30 minutes from his teacher than all the books he subsequently read. He recognised he was in the presence of a very holy man. For a young Catholic man in the mid-1950s that was a huge step, for in the eyes of most in the Church at that time true holiness was only to be found in the Catholic Church. It was only in the 1960s the Second Vatican Council officially recognised the sacredness of the teachings of other religious traditions.

I myself began to meditate in the mid-1970s through reading *The Cloud of Unknowing*. At least that was a start for there weren't the teachers of Christian meditation in the Church then that there are now. Meditation taught at that time was a very cerebral practice. It was only later in the early '90s that I met my teacher. Prayer practice such as meditation in those days was largely taught on a person to person basis and that is still the best way to teach it. Teachers like John Main and Thomas Keating have broken new ground by detailing and outlining a method, and that is primarily because of the need in today's world. John Main used to joke that you could outline the teaching on a postage stamp, it is that simple, but the real learning is in the presence of others or another, for it is both an individual and a community practice. These days we have introductory courses on Zoom. What we have to be aware of when using technology is that we are not just passing on a technique. There are techniques of meditation that offer deeper experiences. With us it is a discipline. You just have to *do* it and it is in the *doing* that you learn. Then the discipline becomes a gift.

Q. Do I need a spiritual director?

There is a saying attributed to St Bernard; "The man (sic) who is master of himself, follows a fool." A director or companion can be particularly helpful in starting to meditate. I have heard the story of a meditator who was experiencing *acedia* or dryness in her prayer and was told by her director that this was a good indication that the practice was not the right one for her. That was not sound advice. If you study the weekly teachings, and all leaders of groups should be familiar with these (they are on the website), you will know that such dryness is normal in meditation practice. Usually when one begins one finds great fulfilment in the practice but soon the novelty wears off and the work really begins. This is where one does need help and here the group can meet that need simply by offering encouragement. The darkness is a darkness in faith, not of faith. A director or spiritual companion at least needs some understanding of this process.

Above all experience is the teacher - as distinct from experiences. John Main frequently says that if anything happens during meditation, ignore it. It is fidelity not success that is the rule. The experience of most when they begin to meditate is failure - begin and fail, begin again and fail better. It is moving past this hurdle that is usually the biggest step. In the main trust your experience.

Peter Murphy

Our journey with the book, “The Hunger for Depth and Meaning (Learning to meditate with John Main)” Edited by Peter Ng.

by Mary Carshalton

Our meditation group started as an Essential Teaching Workshop with Raymond Eberhard on Zoom. At the end of this Workshop, some of us continued to meet and have grown as a community.

Starting in January 2022, we have worked our way through "The hunger for depth and meaning. Learning to meditate with John Main." (Edited by Peter Ng). Peter used John Main's spoken teachings and converted them into print. Following John Main's theme the book is divided into 69 extracts which are grouped into 8 sections.

Each week, prior to meeting, Raymond sent us one extract (chapter) for example: “Leaving the Ego behind”. In preparation for our weekly meeting we could listen, reflect and meditate on the words from John Main. Many of us had purchased the book so had this as extra input. Thus, come Tuesday night we were better prepared to meet together and share our thoughts and insights. Each week our 'Zoom' gathering started with a short reflection or blessing, followed by listening to the previously provided track, and went into 20 minutes of meditation. After this, Raymond pulled out some of the main points, we would then discuss our personal thoughts on the lines of Lectio Divina.

Having the text in front of us made a tremendous difference. We were able to jot down our thoughts, drawing from our life experiences which meant we were able to dive deeper into the meanings of the many points that John Main's words portrayed. The better understanding of John Main's thoughts, our own reflections and input from the group, helped all of us gain a deeper understanding in how meditation is allowing growth in our personal lives, our ability to listen in silence and our personal relationship with our Lord.

The following reflection from Henri J. M. Nouwen shows a small part of the growth we have taken:

The Still, Small Voice of Love

Many voices ask for our attention.

There is a voice that says, “Prove that you are a good person.”

Another voice says, “You’d better be ashamed of yourself.”

There also is a voice that says, “Nobody really cares about you.”

And one that says, “Be sure to become successful, popular and powerful.”

But underneath all these often very noisy voices is a still, small voice that says, “You are my Beloved, my favour rests on you.”

That’s the voice we need most of all to hear.

To hear that voice, however, requires special effort; it requires solitude, silence and a strong determination to listen. That’s what prayer is. It is the listening to the voice that calls us “my Beloved.

Book study and meditation evenings

Commencing on Tuesday 7th November, an **online** study of Peter Ng’s compilation of John Main’s talks in his book, ‘A Hunger for Depth and Meaning’. This weekly book study will run for approximately 18 months with Zoom. Participants will be required to buy the book, which is available from Pleroma. Each session will start at 7:30pm and will comprise listening to a recording of John Main presenting one of the talks, followed by a meditation, and concluding with discussion. If you plan to join us, please let me know and order your book in good time! Raymond Eberhard celebrantraymond@gmail.com

Mediation & Metanoia: Wellington Community Day by Anne Cave

On a Saturday in late June, 33 men and women met in a beautiful new church in Paraparaumu, Our Lady of Kapiti, to meditate together and reflect on how change comes about through meditation.

The day was led by Nick and Linda Polaschek in a well-balanced duo: Nick leading from the head, Linda from the heart. Nick started with a talk by Fr Laurence Freeman on Conversion, then explained these ideas more fully. Laurence suggests that in the process of seeking 'no mind' through meditation we are gradually given a 'new mind', a mind remade, loosened from, even freed from the habits, attachments and addictions of our old mind. He strongly affirms that external transformation of our lives and society only effectively follows inner transformation of ourselves. A selflessness found via meditation gives a new perspective and approach that is transformative of our entire lives.

Nick explored these ideas, explaining Fr Laurence's approach to metanoia. He concluded by saying: For us as meditators metanoia is not primarily at the level of changing our thinking on specific topics, but rather about changing our way of thinking, whatever the topic.

Linda explored metanoia by reading stories by Rachel Naomi Remen, from her book *My Grandfather's Blessings*, each of which was then discussed in small groups. At the end of the day, I introduced the Examen, developed by St Ignatius Loyola, explaining how I have found that it supports my meditation practice by sorting through my emotions, positive and negative, before my first meditation of the day. I then led the group through a time of individual Examen.

The feedback after the community day focused particularly on how well balanced the day's programme was: food for the mind from Nick, stories that spoke to the heart from Linda, small group discussions notable for the honesty of the sharing, three periods of meditation, the practice of Examen as a spiritual practice to take home, a shared morning tea and a full hour for lunch for individual chats, a long walk outside or time to sit in the beautiful chapel beside the church. The atmosphere was warm and supportive, with the many experienced meditators welcoming those from the local area who were new to meditation. This new Catholic church was an ideal size for our group, with lots of areas for quiet group sharing and lovely grounds outside.



On Saturday 20 May 2023 17 NZCCM members, including Linda and Nick Polaschek, met at Kopua Monastery for a Community Day. We were also joined by Father John of Kopua Monastery. This was the first Community Day the HB, Manawatu and Taranaki Region has had for two years and all relished meeting old and new friends over an initial cup of tea or coffee.

The focus for the Day was a presentation by Nick on “St Benedict and the Oblates” – the origins of monasticism, St Benedict and his Rule, how oblates relate to monks, how oblates fit into the WCCM, and how meditation relates to the oblate life. This was the content of the morning session, and it was

brought to life by showing several images of various monks and monasteries of different religions in addition to those from the Western Christian traditions. The takeaway was that the monastic tradition was a very human response and not restricted to any religion/tradition.



Fuelled by a bountiful shared lunch (pictured), Nick divided us up into 4 groups and gave each group two selections from the Rule of St Benedict for us to read out and discuss and relate to our own experiences. Coming back to the main group people spoke of their responses and the relevance of the Rule to the present day. Nick spoke more on the journey and place of the oblate within the WCCM, and an oblate present shared how initial scepticism of the Rule changed to providing the strength and guidance they now give in her everyday life. And to conclude Nick left us with a series of questions formed from the Rule for us to respond to from the context of our everyday lives; the first being “Where do we hear the divine Word to us in our daily lives?”

Linda in her capacity as National Coordinator talked briefly about her role and the structure that sits behind NZCCM. Appreciation was expressed to Nick for his presentation and what was really appreciated was the discussions in the small groups. What I was left with was that the monastic tradition, meditation, and all that flows from this is universal, the same thing but clothed differently.

Online meditation: Using Bells / timers

Thanks to Mary Ann Holtz, Online Meditation Chapel, for most of this information.

Zoom's noise cancellation software interprets continuous sounds — such as an electric fan, an engine idling, or your bell — as background noise, and electronically removes the sound. Thus your bell goes “clink” instead of “diiiiinnngg”. The tone is 'clipped', to use a techie term.

Here are two options for improving the sound of the bell:

1. Adjust "Noise Cancellation". Go to Zoom Settings > Audio and set "Suppress background noise" to "Low" or "Medium". I use "Low". For me, "High" or "Auto" causes clipping. You can also get to Audio Settings by clicking the little arrow next to the Unmute button.
2. If you would like to use an online bell with timer here are 3 options:

- <https://meditationtimer.online/?d=20> (you can slide to the number of minutes you want)
- <https://cp12stepoutreach.org/resources/meditation-gong-20-minutes-and-candle/>
- Singapore wccm [meditation bell](#) which also has a recording of Laurence Freeman saying the opening prayer.

If you use this method, click Share Screen, click Advanced, click Computer Audio. Then when you are ready to start the bell, simply start it from the online page you have ready in Screenshare, and you can relax and let it ring the bells and time it for you.

Poems by Alison Kerr

Stability, Conversion and Obedience - the three promises made by Benedictine Oblates

<u>Stability</u>	<u>Conversion</u>	<u>Obedience</u>
<p>Listen ... not to the news! Turn it off and Listen! listen to the rain, just a drop, now a few more, and more, a susurrations, a whispering, as I sit quite still and stare at the drops dancing on the table in the yard at the little rivers running down the windows drop chasing drop until they join to run together to pour down the glass in abandonment of self ecstasy of communion, of self-transcendence. I can only watch and wonder, holding my breath in awe Now breathe! Breathe in and inhale the subtle perfume of precipitation, transpiration, the greenness of it all. Watch and see how the nasturtium leaves have curled to form tiny tarns little cups of life-giving water Watch, and Wonder</p>	<p>Are you listening? Good! Now turn and turn and turn again Look, you've come full circle Now open your arms ... wide come home to your body, come home to your self listen to the music within you and dance! Take up the invitation to cast aside your dignity, let go of that lingering solemnity and dance, dance like a dervish, dance with the divine, dance with the whole earth. Just dance ... and join in the joyful, jubilant, universal dance!</p>	<p>Listen ... put your phone away and listen Take a photo if you must, but then put it away and just listen ... Listen to the gulls shrieking no holds barred, wings flapping necks outstretched, scrapping over some tasty morsel, or scrap of litter or just scrapping ... greedy, gullible, guileful gulls How like us ... Now soaring, sublime, wings outstretched, floating ... feathers on the breath of God Now earth-bound, almost human in their strutting, self- righteous stand-offs, their strident self-importance ... Listen, and watch, and know that we are all, all of us, yes, every one made of stardust, all holy, all blessed, all home to the One who gives us life and calls us Beloved</p>

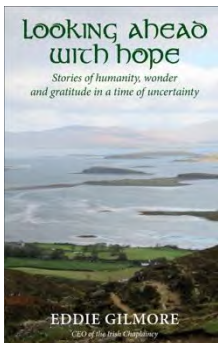


The Lord's Prayer for Everyone

James B Lyons

The Lord's Prayer [Our Father...] is the title history has given to the prayer of Jesus, the one he taught his friends when they asked for his guidance about how to pray. In this essential resource the author James Lyons has created not only a prayer tool but a rich resource offering multiple "versions" of this prayer. These include te reo, Latin, traditional, modern, modern alternative and personalised versions suitable for every age and stage of life. 119pp. \$19.99

<https://www.christiansupplies.co.nz/product/9780473646172/the-lords-prayer-for-everyone/>

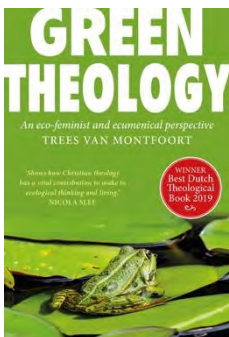


Looking Ahead with Hope

Eddie Gilmore

This is a collection of stories of humanity, wonder and gratitude that will particularly appeal to the Irish diaspora. At the heart of Eddie's book, which weaves together his visits to prisons, care homes, monasteries, events both in Ireland and overseas, are encounters with a host of characters. These are stories of wonder and reflections on faith and the human condition with a refrain of hope and gratitude. 191pp. \$29.99.

<https://www.christiansupplies.co.nz/product/9781913657420/looking-ahead-with-hope-stories-of-humanity-wonder-and/>

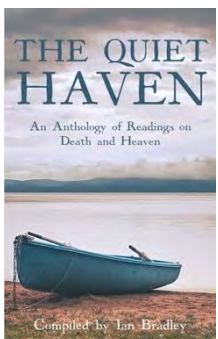


Green Theology

Trees van Montfoort

Green Theology is an urgent, far-reaching Christian theological reconsideration of the relationship between God, creation, nature, and human beings. Trees Van Montfoort demonstrates that ecological theology is not a sub-discipline of theology but a rediscovery of theology, focused not only on God and people, but all of creation. Drawing on the perspectives of eco-theologians from around the world, this is a ground-breaking book that redefines the scope of theology for a world in urgent need of answers. Endnotes. Biblical Index. Index. 265pp. \$59.99

<https://www.christiansupplies.co.nz/product/9781913657284/green-theology/>



The Quiet Haven

Compiled by Ian Bradley

This unique hardback anthology of biblical and other sacred religious texts, sermons, essays, poems and hymns offers a rich collection of perspectives and beliefs on what lies beyond death, and is designed to bring encouragement, comfort and reassurance. Ian Bradley is a much-respected UK writer, broadcaster and academic, and a former Church of Scotland minister. He offers a short commentary on the facing page of each reading, providing context and observations. Index of sources. 144pp.

<https://www.christiansupplies.co.nz/product/9781913657307/the-quiet-haven-an-anthology-of-readings-on-death-and/>

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To contact our treasurer email: treasurer@christianmeditationnz.org.nz

Planning for next year – 2024

Events 2024

May 13-17th AUCKLAND 2024

5 day retreat at St Francis Retreat Centre. Contact: Raymond Eberhard, 07 5495329 or celebrantraymond@gmail.com

June 1st – 22nd & July 6th 2024

Online Introduction to Christian Meditation (and Refresher Course) This free 5 session Zoom based course is on Saturdays 3 - 5pm. Contact: Raymond Eberhard, 07 5495329 or celebrantraymond@gmail.com

July 19th-22nd 2024, AUCKLAND

RETREAT at St Francis Retreat Centre, 50 Hillsborough Road

August 3rd – September 7th 2024

Online Essential Teaching Workshop - Saturdays 3 - 5pm using zoom. Contact: Raymond Eberhard, 07 5495329 celebrantraymond@gmail.com

October 11 – 17th 2024 AUCKLAND

7 day silent retreat. St Francis Retreat Centre. Contact Linda Polaschek, 020 4797955, nandipolaschek@gmail.com

EVENTS 2023

September 16th ROTORUA

Retreat Day with Damian Robertson & Zita O' Neill. St Mary's Catholic Church Hall cnr Ranolf & Seddon streets, 10am – 2.30pm. Contact: Raymond Eberhard, 07 5495329 or celebrantraymond@gmail.com

September 19-26th SEVEN DAY SILENT RETREAT, Featherston, Wairarapa.

An opportunity to go deeper. Contact Linda Polaschek, nandipolaschek@gmail.com

Saturday October 7th AUCKLAND

Meditation Beyond the Beginnings, St Francis Retreat Centre, 50 Hillsborough Road. Led by Mary McLister & Vincent Maire. To register go to <https://www.stfrancisretreatcentre.org.nz/retreat-programmes/>

October 14th WELLINGTON

Community Day. Home of Compassion, Island Bay. Led by Jo Ward. Contact: Anne Cave annecave@gmail.com, 022-097 2939.

October 21st CHRISTCHURCH

Community Day, 9.30am – 3pm. All Souls Church, 30 Church Lane, Merivale. Contact: Annette Reinheimer, 0212075122

November 4th NELSON

Community Day. 'Meditation for Everyone' Led by Karen Moynagh and Marie Shepherd. 10.00 - 2.30pm. Venue TBC. BYO lunch. Morning tea provided. Contact Marie mlshepherd54@gmail.com 027 865 8032

November 7th

ONLINE weekly book study and meditation evenings. 7.30pm. We will study Peter Ng's compilation of John Main's talks in his book, 'A Hunger for Depth and Meaning'. This book study will run for approximately 18 months with Zoom. Contact: Raymond Eberhard, 07 5495329 or celebrantraymond@gmail.com

November 11th ROTORUA Community Day

10am – 2.30pm St Mary's Catholic Church Hall, Cnr Ranolf and Seddon St. *Meditation and Metanoia* with Nick & Linda Polaschek. Contact: Raymond Eberhard, 07 5495329 celebrantraymond@gmail.com

*Stillpoint is the official Newsletter of the New Zealand Community for Christian Meditation.
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