



World Community for Christian Meditation (South Africa)



Newsletter 4

December 2015

WELCOME

Welcome to the FOURTH newsletter of the World Community for Christian Meditation (South Africa) (WCCM-SA).

In this edition, we report on events held in 2015.



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THE NEW WEBSITE

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World Community for Christian Meditation (South Africa)



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HOW TO BE A POET **Wendell Berry**

Make a place to sit down.
Sit down. Be quiet.
You must depend upon
affection, reading, knowledge,
skill -- more of each
than you have -- inspiration,
work, growing older, patience,
for patience joins time
to eternity. Any readers
who like your poems,
doubt their judgment.

Breathe with unconditional
breath
the unconditioned air.
Shun electric wire.
Communicate slowly. Live
a three-dimensional life;
stay away from screens.
Stay away from anything
that obscures the place it is in.
There are no unsacred places;
there are only sacred places
and desecrated places.

Accept what comes from silence.
Make the best you can of it.
Of the little words that come
out of the silence, like prayers
prayed back to the one who prays,
make a poem that does not
disturb
the silence from which it came.



EVENTS 2015

A WAY TO PEACE: TEACHING MEDITATION TO CHILDREN



Dr Cathy Day and Mr Ernie Christie at a Johannesburg seminar

Dr Cathy Day and Mr Ernie Christie of Townsville Catholic Education in Queensland, Australia were in South Africa recently, offering a series of 9 seminars titled “A Way to Peace: Teaching Meditation to Children”. For the past 10 years they have been running a programme in their home diocese, introducing Christian meditation, following the teaching of John Main, to teachers and pupils alike. Due to the very evident benefits of meditation for young people, the practice has become an established part of the prayer life of their 31 schools.

Their work in Townsville has caught the attention of many in various parts of the world, including the USA, England,

Ireland, Poland, Singapore and Indonesia, where they have been invited to share their experience. With the encouragement of Fr Laurence Freeman, a Benedictine monk and current leader of the World Community of Christian Meditation (WCCM), Cathy Day and Ernie Christie were invited to South Africa by the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) which has been working for the past three years to introduce the practice to South African Catholic schools.

The nine seminars were given between 21 September and 1 October in Durban, Pretoria, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein and ending in Cape Town where the presenters spent a few days relaxing before returning to Australia.

At the seminars, participants were given an overview of the Townsville story and were invited to meditate together to get first-hand experience of this way of prayer. Through two short videos prepared for the seminars, they were able to hear from teachers and students in Townsville Diocese about the benefits of meditation and how teachers go about facilitating it among children from age 3 to 18. The presenters ended the seminar posing the question to all of what this introduction to meditation might mean for their personal lives and professional practice. The CIE would follow up on various requests for assistance in this regard.

2015 RETREAT AT GOOD SHEPHERD RETREAT CENTRE

Our annual Retreat was held in October at the Good Shepherd Retreat Centre near Hartbeespoort Dam. 17 members experienced the presence of God in silence, nature, the reading of an icon and Lectio Divina (Book of Esther).

Through our presence and actions in particular situations - created as opportunities by God - we can add value and contribute to the sense and meaning that others see and find in life. This theme was supported by the storyline of the movie “*Ida*” where a young nun on the verge of making her vows, unaware of her actual background, contributed to the lives of her aunt - lost in sorrow of her past, and a young man seeking for meaning in his life through music.

Similar to this, was the contribution and meaning that Esther brought to the lives of King Ahasuerus, the people in his palace, and to the lives of God’s nation by just being present and true to her values as child of God. She reacted to Mordecai’s message when he said to her: “If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. **Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?**” (Esther 4:13-14)

We invite you to join us next year on our retreat 21-23 October.



MEDITATION CHIMES

Produce good vibrations with a gentle tap of the wooden mallet on the single 15 cm metallophone. This solo tone rod emits a powerful tone that lasts for 20 seconds or more. It consists of one polished solid aluminium rod on a meranti holder with felt base. Handcrafted in Johannesburg. Available at R100 + plus postage

Contact Paul at paulf@cie.org.za

The art of prayerful reading

- The reading of the icon “When a Child is born” by He Qi¹

To move past the focus on the rational reading of the Bible is not as easy as we think. We always want to understand and figure out what the text is saying. The text wants to draw me into a relationship with the Father. In silence we want to “practise” this relationship. Icons open a window to heaven from where we can reflect, in silence on this relationship with the Father. An icon then becomes a spiritual text that can lead me into the silence. It opens up a window where I can experience the presence of God in a new way.



Let us now read the icon “When a Child is born”:

On a first level we can see that it is the text from Luke 2:8-20. We see the shepherds and their sheep, Mary and the baby Jesus, the Angel and Joseph holding a lamp.

Let’s look at the icon now on a next level to see how He Qi helps us opening the window to a spiritual understanding of the text. Look again at the sheep. Even they are looking up at the

proclamation. This reminds me of Ps 66:1-4 “Make a joyful noise unto God, all the earth: Sing forth the glory of his name: Make his praise glorious. Say unto God, How terrible are thy works! Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. All the earth shall worship thee, And shall sing unto thee; They shall sing to thy name.”

Jesus is holding an apple. Is He Qi taking us back to the story of the fall in Genesis 3? In a subtle way he is telling us that salvation has come! The Light of the world is here – look at the center of the icon; there is more light than in any other part of the icon. The light does not shine forth from the star, but from Jesus (John 1:5).



I now invite you to find the symbol of the fish in the icon. This was a very old Christian symbol. In Greek the word for “fish” is *Ichthus*. In a time of persecution, this was a “code” for others to now that there are Christians in this area.

¹ *He Qi is a professor at Nanjing Union Seminary in China and serves as an adjunct professor in the philosophy department of the University. His doctoral dissertation compared the presence of Buddhist art and Christian art in Chinese society. He was one of the first scholars to take up the subject of religion and art after the Cultural Revolution in China. This artist is deeply committed to the promotion of Christian art in China. For He Qi it is very important that Christian art and the Christian story be a presence in the Chinese culture. He’s work can be described as iconic. (He Qi © 2014 All rights Reserved <http://www.heqigallery.com/>)*

