



WCCM

Newsletter of The World Community for Christian Meditation

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Rediscovering oneness

LAURENCE FREEMAN REFLECTS ON UNIFIED CONSCIOUSNESS: ONE MIND ONE HEART AND INVITES US TO A JOURNEY TRANSCENDING ALL DIVISIONS



View from the cloister at Bonnevaux (Photo by Mila Jourdes)

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Dear Friends

A letter from Laurence Freeman OSB

I am sitting at my desk in Bonnevaux looking at the computer screen but also looking around it through the window at the sunlight playing on the surface of the lake. I am sorely tempted to get up and go for a walk rather than sitting indoors starting this newsletter. Why, you may ask, do I waste your time telling you this? Just to get this letter started? Maybe also because I want to write about the WCCM theme for this year – Unified Consciousness: One Mind One Heart. The Guiding Board wondered if this might sound a bit abstract. Embarking on anything new can make you feel pulled in opposing directions. Stare at the blank screen. Or go for a walk?

This tension between options shows how unified consciousness is anything but an abstraction and why it matters that we understand it and develop it. It is about incarnation, embodiment in the here and now. It is being becoming fully sustainably present. How often have you said something only to find a few moments later that your listeners were not listening? How many times have we tuned out when we should have been paying attention? We practice in daily meditation to face our divided minds and to reunite them.

John Main put it with the genius of simplicity:

If you want to understand what is involved in unity, relationship and interdependence, take a good look at one of your hands. You might be tempted to think of your hand just as four fingers and a thumb but if you look closely at it you will perceive it to be a miracle of beautifully coordinated interdependent relationships. (*The Way of Unknowing*. p.66)

He says that the great problem of our time is that the sense of unity has been lost from so much of our life. We are divided into ever smaller segments polarised competitively against

each other. Over-specialisation is one consequence: a way of knowing that tries to understand everything about something and ends up knowing nothing about everything. In medicine the splintering of medical science into ever more specialised areas erodes the real meaning of health, wholeness and healing. No doubt there are medical specialists today who know everything there is to know about thumbs but if you're all thumbs you will find it hard to put your finger on anything.

In this divided consciousness, John Main continues, we have lost the essential unity, the brotherhood and sisterhood of the human family, the personal sense of oneness that is intrinsic to what

Through oneness love drives out fear

it means to be human. As an example he cites an effect of the loss of unified consciousness that has become even more extreme since he wrote, the lost awareness of our oneness with the environment. Forty years ago, John Main said that 'we are living on the edge of an ecological disaster' created by human beings primarily because we have 'somewhere and somehow lost that realistic sense of unity and oneness'. Driven by a sense of urgency, he dedicated the last part of his life to teaching meditation, because

In meditation we seek the way towards the basis of all perception of unity, which is the essential oneness that each of us is. Meditation is utter simplicity.

*

Our theme for 2022 may sound abstract but it's already a matter of life and death affecting the survival of our species along with all that earth has achieved in millions of years of evolu-

tion. If we don't reconnect with the wisdom of unified consciousness, seeing all the human family as interdependent and coordinated, extreme suffering will ensue affecting rich and poor alike but, most immediately and grievously, the most vulnerable. Covid has given us a taste of what simultaneous, globalised suffering and disruption could be like, similar to a world war or global economic crisis. For most of us, lacking first-hand experience of war or famine, it is a hard challenge to our complacency. This is the particular moment in history we share and we cannot evade it. However dire it seems, it can unite us for the better. In a crisis comes opportunity. In a dark night comes dawn.

This is why the WCCM Guiding Board felt that this theme would be a timely way for our community and friends to investigate how the inner journey of meditation relates to harsh external forces and to the commandment of love, our solidarity with others. Contemplative practice cannot protect us in a safe bubble. It pops all bubbles. It propels us into an ever more inclusive mind – the one mind, one heart unity that is ever-expanding. Through oneness love drives out fear. Through connection love ends isolation. If meditation does indeed create community, then this is the time for contemplatives to prove it and declare it openly. However, we need both to meditate together and then to converse and act together. This unity comes through direct, personal practice and a shared listening to each other's experience of unified consciousness as it grows and changes us. Then, from personal experience we will see what it means for us all as a human family. But let's begin the investigation into unified consciousness by saying a word in praise of division.

*

The human mind likes to take things apart and analyse them, to contrast

light with dark, sweet with bitter, good with bad. To understand what good means we try to understand what bad is. Even when we have tasted oneness, we continue living in a world of dualities. We listen, agree and then say 'and yet..'. Coping with contradictions and the dangers of division occupies a large part of the human condition. Making good judgements. Deciding what to do in a complex situation. When to emphasise mercy and when justice.

After the separation of light from darkness, when the Word was spoken in the eternal beginning and all that came into existence appeared, Genesis describes the great separation that has never stopped replicating. After the primal unity came an intoxicating diversity in nature. 'The earth yields fresh growth' and 'the waters teem with countless creatures and birds fly above the earth across the vault of heaven'. When God saw all this, did He say 'O no, what a complicated mess I've made' and rewind back to primal unity? No, God gazed lovingly and 'saw that it was good'. The cosmos is the primary self-revealing of God.

Little children learn arithmetic and one of their first lessons is division. I remember the change of perception that pushed me into another level of awareness when I discovered how division and multiplication work. The power to divide is of practical importance for a child as it ensures that each child at a birthday party will get an equal slice of cake. There will be loud cries of protest if it is not divided equally just as the prophets of all times protest when the wealth of nations is distributed unjustly. Division is a sign of equality and supports the sharing that reinforces community.

Through divided consciousness we come to understand unified consciousness.

But it's not so easy. What happens when you divide one number by another and there's something 'left over'?



However we may try to computerise human relationships there's always the 'remainder', the human factor. This serves as a reminder that we are created in God's image and likeness and we are not clones off an assembly line. Like snowflakes we are each unique. This awareness of universal uniqueness is the basis of justice. The first Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) proclaims that

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

After this, the most repeated word in the document is 'everyone'. It is a moving expression of the unified consciousness that has been taking shape more strongly in modern times than ever before. The Declaration grew from a century of appalling, inhumane violence and insane division awakened by the trenches of the First World War and the extermination camps of the Second.

Harmony and beauty can be awakened by dissonance and horror. When I first started listening to Bach's music I fell in love with its beauty, vitality and sense of creative order and pure play. Initially, when I heard passages of extreme dissonance, I thought the recording was damaged or the musicians had fallen asleep.

Why would he have deliberately spoiled such perfectly pleasing soon by interfering with the tonal range? This puzzled his contemporaries and still makes us wonder. Yet it takes the attentive listener deeper into Bach's majestic world of unified consciousness. It elevates and frees us from division through division. He shows how division has its uses.

So also, in the darkness of the Easter Vigil we hear 'O Felix Culpa' (O Happy Fault) expressing the magical insight that a greater good is coming out of the worst evil. Julian of Norwich, too, penetrated the darkness to discover that 'sin is behovely'. This means necessary and inevitable. Whenever we feel cast down by our failings or the dark forces in humanity, we should recall the wisdom of this theology or listen to one of those disturbing disharmonies of Bach as he uses it to reclaim a higher beauty and joy.

*

Nevertheless division, divided consciousness, demands response because while it reigns it causes misery and destruction. It is because of it that we wrestle so painfully with our present contradictions and polarisation. Look at our political world today, our economic system or the social divisions created by Covid. Look at the countries, families and friendships divided by Trump or Brexit.

As his life drew to its close, Jesus saw in the mounting forces of division, deception and violence that the 'prince

of this world is coming'. But he added 'he has no power over me'. In the divided consciousness of the dualistic world he entered his Passion still centred in the unified and unifying consciousness that he had discovered in this life. His oneness with the Father exposed his unity with all. Transformed in this union he found in its fullness on the other side of this life, he returned as promised in the new dimension of reality we call the Resurrection.

Contradictions and divisions in the dualistic world have to be dealt with endlessly. They need to be controlled because they can never be eradicated. So, we need statesmen, spiritual leaders and politicians who have been enlightened, to some degree, by an authentic personal discovery of this oneness. One of the tasks they will then be equipped for will be to identify and expose the false unity proposed by unscrupulous or misguided parties such as we see in populist movements and false news media. St Benedict, one of these leaders who is a master of conflict resolution, warns against giving a 'false peace', peace 'such as the world gives' as Jesus called it. Benedict handles this issue at the community level by creating a structured art of living, a daily way of life, with a Rule that has many moderating exceptions. Being flexible without breaking, the Rule requires the kind of discipline and mature discretion that meditation develops.

It is tempting to fix a divided, chaotic world in our heads, by imagining it whole and unified by excluding (or exterminating) anyone who won't play by your rules or who challenges you. Many crimes against humanity are committed in the name of imagined unity and order. This causes domestic violence, institutional dysfunction and state tyranny. Its most subtle and serpent-like form today is in the manipulation of minds through mass media. Rather than imagining a solution and imposing it, we need to

go directly into the experience of unity itself. This is the purpose of every true contemplative practice. Whatever reduces meditation to anything less, to just a short-term pain suppressant or distraction, pollutes the well of truth.

Meditation is the work that ordinary people do to find the peace and vitality of unified consciousness in their daily lives. Sharing the gift of meditation begins by reassuring a beginner on the path that their distractedness, the personal brokenness they will encounter and the ego's sense of failure or unworthiness are not the way to judge their practice or progress. Instead of a falsely imagined wholeness they will find the liberty, the goal-less goal of poverty of spirit. Then

*... this unified
consciousness of the reign
of God is always present
within us...*

the unified mind and heart see divine beauty manifesting in manmade ugliness, wholeness appearing through brokenness, God's power healing through weakness. Only in this paradoxical vision of a unifying consciousness can we begin to understand what redemption means.

This is the value of a daily practice of meditation. But in fact, if we are awake and get out into the real world beyond our fantasy life, we see that this unified consciousness of the reign of God is always present *within* us penetrating the veils of illusion surrounding us. It happens through beauty, good art, simple acts of service, reconciliation and care for those in need. In wisely balanced living, flashes of love, beauty, truthfulness and other-centredness bombard us like shooting stars in the night sky, small particles of matter entering our atmosphere and flaring before us. If we are fortunate

some flashes may even last decades in forms of faithful love and relationship. But even if they seem short-lived what we saw can never be unseen. We are daily saturated with the divine presence in which we swim like fish and 'live and move and have our being'. Once experienced, the oneness of unified consciousness continues to deepen until we become one with it.

But we need to become committed to breaking out of the bubble of our egoistic fears and desires that trap us in the habit of a divided consciousness causing us to see double.

*

Long before Covid I knew I needed new glasses. Recently I had my eyes tested and when the new lenses in their trendy new frames appeared, I tried them on eagerly. I have used multifocals for years so I was prepared for a period to adapt so that the brain can relate to what the lenses see. But after enduring them for some time there was no improvement and I was seeing double. The prescription was wrong, something I denied because I wanted to avoid the hassle of returning them.

It easily happens that we refuse to admit we are divided and what we see is a double version of reality. Even though we keep bumping into things or get too close to cars on the road we deny the evidence of our senses. St James saw this as a symptom of a mind plagued by uncertainty and division and

A person like that must not expect the Lord to give him anything; he is double-minded and can never keep a steady course. (Jms 1:7-8)

If we admit our double-vision, our double-standards and lack of being honest with ourselves we have truly begun the journey into the unity of all things and the peace of that union. To persevere on this journey requires the ever-deeper honesty and humility nec-

essary for self-knowledge.

Because the demand seems too great we are tempted to give up and we don't feel we have a special gift for the holiness of the star saints looking down on us from their pedestals. Provided we keep meditating this temptation can be very helpful as it keeps our ego from inflating. But if it worms its way into us too deeply and we give up, we relapse into seeing double. Meditation is the unconditional acceptance of the wholeness of reality including whatever we label good and bad. Learning to give up the divided consciousness habit of judgement prepares the way instead for the art of discernment and to seeing goodness at the core of everything.

When mind and heart are unified, we are clear enough to see with single vision the essential goodness of our own being despite all our faults and failings.

The eye is the lamp of the body.
If therefore your eye is single your whole body will be full of light
(Mt 6:22)

When the eye of the body and the eye of the mind are unified the third eye is opened. With this eye of the heart, we see why our sins are 'behoevly', and our faults happy.

Without a unification of mind and heart, the two main centres of consciousness that yearn to become one, we not only cannot see our core goodness, we cannot even like ourselves. We see this derelict condition of humanity in one of Shakespeare's great tragic characters, Richard III. Physically deformed from birth, he grew up as the butt of jokes and knew himself to be repugnant to those around him. His cruel, unloving childhood shut his heart and twisted his mind, igniting the megalomania of the archetypal cruel tyrant found throughout history. In his final words before his death in battle, he sees his own tragic dividedness for the first time, his ignorance of his true self and the nightmarish conse-

quence of this double vision. He says, to himself, 'there is no creature loves me and if I die no soul will pity me'; and then asks himself why anyone should pity him as he finds in himself no pity for himself.

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The individual consequences of divided consciousness are devastating. It is easier to be nice to the healthy and good-looking. But if even they or the disadvantaged, whose misfortunes often make us fear them, grow up unloved their humanity can be permanently disabled. Don't be surprised when they act inhumanely. In our divided world, mounting mental illness, loneliness and alienation are the inevitable results of a divided state of mind, filled with unresolved conflicts

No one is incapable of experiencing the healing of the single eye

and polarised points of view. When external conditions deteriorate and ordinary life becomes harder, as during Covid or a financial crisis, these mental states can become a pandemic and a new norm.

Division breeds isolation and loneliness which shatter the kinship (and kindness) we instinctively feel for others. Solitude – which is the self-acceptance of our uniqueness – is what we find in meditation and it is the medicine for this poisonous state. Solitude is the uniting force of community. Individuality, as we usually think of it, means being separate and independent. This meaning is in fact illusion. The word *individual* itself originally meant indivisible, inseparable. How did we drift so far in the opposite direction? Meditation restores lonely individuals to community and if enough feel this healing it will restore society as well. Polarised politics and radicalising media are fed by divided hearts and have widely eroded trust in democracy.

The contemplative mind is the unified consciousness of mind and heart. It restores health to society because with a single eye we see beyond dualities and polarities. As we look across the great divide at people with whom we can no longer converse, we begin to see and feel differently about them.

The most secure common ground is found not in politics, however, but in the spiritual dimension. No one is incapable of experiencing the healing of the single eye. Anyone who experiences it knows it as a grace of omnipotent tenderness that melts all divisions.

The 2022 WCCM reflection – Unified Consciousness: One Mind One Heart – was opened at the seminar with the Dalai Lama on 1 December 2021. The first in the year-long online series is on January 18th. The speakers cover a broad, stimulating spectrum of wisdom and faith traditions. As with the health series last year, this year's series is an opportunity to grow in personal insight and hope. Interaction with the speakers is part of each session. Between sessions there will be discussion groups that you can join to listen to the thoughts of others and share your insights. It will build the special friendship that is created in every pilgrimage. I look forward to experiencing this again with you as we travel together in this series through the coming year. Apart from being an enrichment to those of us on this journey, it will be a contribution to the general rediscovery of oneness and warm-heartedness that the human family needs today.

Let us be confident that in finding what we have lost we arrive at a new point of growth where we can celebrate as friends who transcend all divisions.

With much love



News

The Dalai Lama: “If you have a warm heart, you will have peace of mind”

HIS HOLINESS GIVES OPENING REFLECTION ON THE WCCM THEME FOR 2022

A few minutes before 9AM on 1st December, His Holiness the Dalai Lama entered the room in his residence in Dharamsala, India from where he now speaks to the world via webcasts. He waved, sat down and then spoke to the camera with his usual smile: “Good morning, Tashi Delek!” (a welcome greeting).

“Since we’ve known each other for so many years, I’m extremely happy to have this opportunity to talk to you again,” His Holiness continued.

Fr Laurence, from the Barn, the Bonnevaux Conference Centre in France, replied also with a smile, and mentioned the joy of meeting again with an old friend. Because of the time zone difference it was much earlier in the morning for him.

This meeting was the beginning of an online session on the WCCM theme for 2022, *Unified Consciousness: One Mind One Heart*. The dialogue was followed by reflections from meditators from many parts of the world, some who had been present at past events with WCCM and the Dalai Lama such as the *Good Heart* John Main Seminar (in 1994, London), and the *Way Of Peace Series*, hosted in subsequent years, in Italy, India and Belfast. The bond of friendship between his Holiness and WCCM began in the 80s, when he visited John Main and Fr Laurence in Montreal.

In the December 2021 online meeting, the Dalai Lama emphasised that he sees education of the heart as a key point whenever we speak about Unified Consciousness: “Education is of univer-



sal value. Up to now modern education has focussed on developing the brain, the intellect, rather than the heart. If you have a warm heart, you’ll have peace of mind, but if you’re preoccupied with a sense of competition and the frustration that comes with it, you won’t.”

His Holiness added that a smile is an important sign to communicate warm-heartedness: “Whoever I meet, I smile. People love it. Even dogs respond to a smiling face with a wagging tail. If you frown at them their tails droop. We must make every effort to promote warm-heartedness, which is something all religious traditions can contribute to as well.”

The event’s participants included three members of the Community who asked questions of His Holiness: Rev Sarah Bachelard (from Australia), Nick Scrimenti (from the USA) and Angelene Chan (from Singapore). Giovanni Felicioni, Bonnevaux Associate Director,

asked for a blessing for the WCCM International Centre and to the global Community. The Dalai Lama replied: “Certainly, I feel a special connection to my Christian brothers and sisters. I pray that those who really try to put the message of God—compassion and forgiveness—into practice will be effective.”

This latest chapter of the friendship between WCCM and His Holiness concluded as he said good-bye, and expressed a wish to meet Fr Laurence again in-person. The event was a moving introduction to the theme of *Unified Consciousness* (see more about our special online series on the theme on page 7). It included a real touch of warm-heartedness, even though it was held online, the option made necessary for our gatherings in pandemic times

ONLINE: Watch the full session with the Dalai Lama here:
<http://tiny.cc/hhdILFvd>

Programme 2022

Unified Consciousness: One Mind One Heart

A SPECIAL ONLINE SERIES OF 10 SESSIONS WITH TEACHERS FROM DIVERSE FIELDS OF WISDOM

Unified Consciousness is the WCCM theme for 2022. The essential reality of the consciousness of mind and heart is a shared insight of all spiritual traditions as well as of the greatest scientists of the modern era. In a series of talks throughout the year, spiritual teachers, social leaders, and thinkers and writers of contemplative wisdom will explore its meaning for us today.

Each monthly session will be hosted by Laurence Freeman who will also facilitate discussion between the speakers and the audience. Additionally, a chat room for further reflection among the participants will be made available be-

tween the regular sessions.

The pace of climate change, like Covid 19, is helping humanity to awaken to its unity by showing how we can act for the common good, overcoming dividedness with one mind and heart. At the same time, an upsurge of nationalism and blind greed resists this crucial moment of evolution. The series of talks will inform and support the contemplative mission, which calls us all beyond our self-created obstructions. A critical mass of contemplatives is needed to represent human diversity and realise the common mind needed to deal with our global crises. In discovering one-

ness within themselves, these contemplatives will pilot a new way of seeing, thinking and acting.

Different expressions of wisdom in this series will show why unified consciousness is both our top priority and a thrilling opportunity for human evolution. If you subscribe to the whole series, you will receive a special rate, and if you miss any of the live sessions, you may watch them later at your leisure. Over the year this unique series will build an enlightening, hopeful perspective for the future of humanity. As soon as conditions permit, Bonnevaux will host an in-person conference on the topic.

Schedule of Dates & Speakers



Rowan Williams



Cynthia Bourgeault



Mary McAleese



Alan Wallace

18 January: Laurence Freeman -
Uses - and Dangers - of Division

15 February: Rowan Williams -
Making it Simple: Contemplation, Simple Life and Focused Mind

22 March: Prof. Darwin Absari -
Sufism: Humanity's Primordial Tradition

5 April: Cynthia Bourgeault -
Contemplative Presence in a Traumatized World

17 May: Rupert Sheldrake -
Minds Beyond Brains

26 July: Herman Van Rompuy -
How Can Meditation and Meditators

Contribute to a More Humane World?

27 September: Mary McAleese -
Inalienable Human Rights: God's Gift to his People

25 October: Alan Wallace -
Where Do Theism and Non-theism Converge?

8 November: Alex Zatyryka -
Mesoamerican Expressions of the Unified Consciousness

13 December: Marco Schorlemmer -
On the Scientific Inquiry into Consciousness and Intelligence

More info & Registration:
Unified Consciousness
special online series

18 January - 13 December, 2022

10 sessions
£140 for all sessions (get 3 free)

Register: <https://wccm.org/events>

Programme 2022

Further online series: Seeing What St Paul Saw, Future of Intelligence and Evening Talks

In the series *Seeing What St Paul Saw* (28 March - 28 November, 4 sessions), Laurence Freeman will connect the earthy mysticism of Paul with our own inner journey, and explore how it changes the options we face about how we live. The old and the new self, the mind of Christ, death and resurrection, liberty of spirit, the fruits and gifts of the Spirit, human relationships and life in community – these are some of the threads of Paul's exuberant and profound vision of living our life as it can be lived.

Future of Intelligence is another online

series, starting in April, which will have a new interactive format designed to stimulate and broaden our horizon at regular intervals during the year. The contributors, bridging the realms of science and spirituality, will be confirmed shortly.

The *Evening Talks series*, starting in March, will comprise four sessions during the year led by: Jane Williams, Jenny Scott, Martin Laird and Robert Kiely.

For more information and registrations for all series and other events, visit: <https://wccm.org/events>

Other events

Some events, scheduled for January, are continuing from the 2021 programme:

22 January: *Wisdom Living & the Joy of Connection: Who Do You Say I Am* – the last of a series of monthly talks by Fr Laurence for Younger Meditators.

27 -30 January: *Levels of Consciousness and the Fruits of the Spirit – Retreat 8: The Heavenly Jerusalem*, closing the National Communities online retreat series led by Fr Laurence, this time highlighting the UK Community.

Bonnevaux Retreat Centre opens to the world



The Bonnevaux Retreat Centre is preparing for its first events. The official opening is planned for Spring and below are the retreats scheduled for the first months of 2022:

05 - 13 February - *Intensive Silent Meditation Retreat*, led by Laurence Freeman;

16 - 19 February - *From Russia With Love: Three Spiritual Journeys*, led by

Nicholas Colloff;

01 - 06 March - *Lent Retreat: Nothing To Fear about Being Free*, led by Laurence Freeman and Giovanni Felicioni;

09 - 17 April - *Holy Week Retreat – the Secret of Easter, Becoming One*, led by Laurence Freeman;

The full 2022 Bonnevaux pro-

gramme includes much more; "Teachers in Residency" (with Charles Taylor, Alan Wallace and others), a retreat with Dr Barry White (following the 2021 Health Series), National Communities Pilgrimages, retreats in French as well as other events. You can check the full programme by visiting the Bonnevaux website: <https://bonnevauxwccm.org>

Outreach

Reflections from COP26

TALK BY LAURENCE FREEMAN IN GLASGOW AVAILABLE AS A BOOKLET

Laurence Freeman gave a talk at COP26 in Glasgow in the beginning of November, speaking on the theme of *Inner & Outer Ecology*. The event was part of the Co-Creative Reflection & Dialogue Space (CCRDS). During his reflection, he invited everyone into the Presence which is contemplative consciousness, our true identity and the basis for any meaningful collective action in response to the Earth's current crisis. The talk is in the booklet *Inner Ecology Outer Ecology - Reflections from COP26* published by Meditatio and available through Medio Media (<https://mediomedia.com/>).

The United Nations Climate Change Conference has inspired a rich



programme of reflection and activities: meditation sessions for the care of the Earth, talks, and new resources. You can watch talks by Laurence Freeman, Jim Green, Liz Watson, Linda Chapman

and discover more about the online course *Contemplating Earth* and other resources by visiting the (Nature and the Environment) page on the WCCM website here: <http://tiny.cc/WCCMne>

Meditation in Schools Council

BY PAUL TRATNYEK *

The summer of 2017 left a watermark on Meditatio's outreach journey of teaching meditation to children and young people. Nick Scrimenti was commissioned to interview international leaders of meditation with children. His work culminated in a report with a list of recommendations that we have been working on with greater focus these past two years. One of the recommendations was to create an executive body for Christian meditation with children. In response, we have reached out to leaders of meditation with children and are forming an international council for meditation in schools. Although the council will address the needs and support for meditation in schools, it will also include supporting parish, clubs,

home, and other contexts.

The new Meditation in Schools Council will have representatives from each region and three co-chairs: Enrique Lavin (Mexico), Carina Conte (Uruguay), and Helen Bramanathan (Australia). I will provide support in the coming year as part of transitioning to the new council that will be meeting quarterly.

Below is a summary of the council's main role.

* to implement the recommendations from the report mentioned above, as well as to ensure that teaching meditation in schools becomes standardized

*increase organizational structures through networking by providing resources and materials to coordinators and schools, coordinating retreats and

events, distributing newsletters and organizational information, facilitating communications between distant members of the community, etc.

One of the council's first tasks will be promoting a new resource for teaching meditation in schools. The booklet includes a framework to introduce meditation in schools, guidelines for individuals or teams, guidelines for volunteers, and in-service sample programs.

As teaching meditation to children and adolescents becomes even more important, I am grateful for the emerging council reflecting the collective wisdom of the Trinity at work in our community and beyond.

* **Meditatio International Coordinator for Education**

News

Teacher/Leader Programme – Second Cohort

BY JUNIE NATHANI



Following the conclusion of the 2019/2020 Teacher/Leader Programme, we were so pleased to launch the second cohort of six participants and six mentors in late October 2021. Four of our participants (Mark Ball, Henriette Hollaar, Enos Mantoani and Geert Van Malderen) were at Bonnevaux in person and two (Catherine Charriere and Kit Lee) joined us via zoom. We were also able to have a special virtual session with the mentors. The programme evolved from discussions

about building leadership capacity and appropriate training for transmitting the essential teaching at all levels of the community. We learned a great deal from the first programme, especially the benefits and value of creating a real cohort with the participants, through periodic meetings to share ideas and talk about their own projects.

During our time together, the participants introduced themselves and talked about the text they will select and the cre-

ative programme they will develop. They also each gave a short talk on their experience of the pandemic, including changes in their personal, professional and/or spiritual life. Each person addressed how they see the pandemic affecting the world in which we teach meditation.

We had a wonderful group meeting with mentors and mentees and during the programme, enjoyed hearing from the three members of the first cohort about their experience of the programme. Each day concluded with an Emmaus Walk in pairs.

During our time in Bonnevaux, we felt part of the community, joining in the daily meditations and meals. On the second day, the group cooked dinner together. Going forward, the participants will have regular meetings with Fr Laurence and their mentors and we will convene a meeting of the participants and Fr Laurence approximately every six weeks, to share progress and ideas.

We are planning to meet for a mid-programme event in Bonnevaux in April 2022 and a concluding event in November 2022.

A new section of book reviews on the WCCM website

The WCCM website recently launched a special section for book reviews. These in-depth and long-form reviews will be published monthly, and in reflection with the WCCM's theme for 2022 of *Unified Consciousness*. The first two reviews were: May Ngo on *The Power*

of Words by Simone Weil and Sarah Bachelard on *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*, by Pope Francis. The review team is open to suggestions about books or themes you would like us to explore. Visit the book reviews section here: <https://tiny.cc/wccmbrv>

The Meditatio Centre London programme 2022

The programme of events and activities (online and in-person, January – August 2022) at the Meditatio Centre in London is now available on its website:

<https://meditatiocentreondon.org/>

In Focus

Aungkie Sopinpornraksa, Thailand



In 2020, Thailand has a population of 66.19 million. 94 percent of the population is Buddhist, 4 percent Muslim, 0.8 percent Christian (all denominations). Groups that together constitute 1.2 percent of the population include animists, Confucians, Hindus, Jews, Sikhs, and Taoists.

Ursuline sisters first introduced God to me, and I was baptized when I was a primary school student. At Vasudhevi School, I was a leader of Y.C.S. (Young Christian Students) group. Later, I read and studied some courses on the Bible with some priests and sisters.

While working with the World Vision Organisation, I served as one of the leaders of Catholic Charismatic Prayer Group in Bangkok. Since 2004, the Ursuline sisters have invited me to join the

WCCM Prayer Group at Mater Dei School. We had weekly meeting and meditation every Wednesday evening. I used to attend WCCM seminar in Singapore with Sr. Theodore and Emilie Kethduthat. Sr. Theodore accompanied me and some other members to meet and talk with Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (one of the very famous Thai Buddhist meditation monks at Surajthani province, in the South of Thailand). Meditation and prayer are universal and we deeply feel prayer with God.

I had opportunities to practice and gain more experience of meditation and prayer with Franciscan, Jesuit and Redemptorist priests, and Ursuline sisters. I take at least two opportunities a year for spiritual group retreats and personal retreats. These retreats give new depth to my appreciation of scripture and the liturgy and have transformed my relationship with God. It is a journey of faith, hope, and love.

Working in human resources, finance, fund raising, and office administration in large non-profit organizations to serve many needy people, refugees, asylum seekers, etc. has caused some stress to me. Meditation and spiritual retreats can help me enjoy my life, be happier and be more peaceful. At present during the

COVID-19 pandemic, most of the time I stay and work at home. I Read the Bible daily, attend daily mass, and meditate twice a day. I keep praying during my morning walk exercise, working in my little garden and even cooking, etc. God is the center of what I do. I have also gained a lot of useful insights to help me in my work for the WCCM by reading books of Fr. Laurence Freeman and Fr. John Main, watching their YouTube videos and listening to some music.

At Holy Redeemer Church, Fr. Prasert Lohaviriyasiri has been the chairperson of the WCCM of Thailand. Dr. Suntree Komin and Wachara Navawongse are coordinators. In August 2021, I was appointed as a National Coordinator for Thailand, to communicate with the WCCM Centre and attend the monthly Asia Region Leaders Meditation Group Meeting. Four of us work as a good team to lead our community. Our community have a weekly meditation meeting every Saturday at 10.00 am – 11.30 am. God has His plan for us. We just have to be faithful and committed to the simplicity and humility of daily life. Our simple and attentive prayer of the heart, the invaluable mantra, now accompanies me wherever I go and in whatever I do. Meditation has changed my life. Maranatha!



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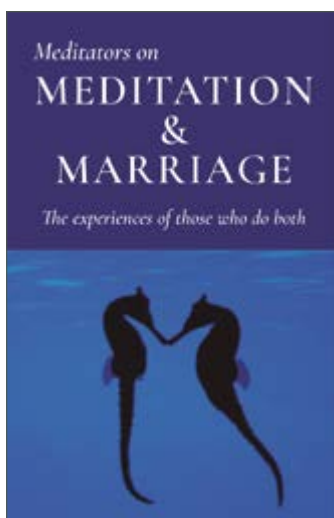
Would you like to contribute to the WCCM Newsletter? Our next deadline is 10 March.

Resources

Books

Meditators on Meditation & Marriage

By various contributors

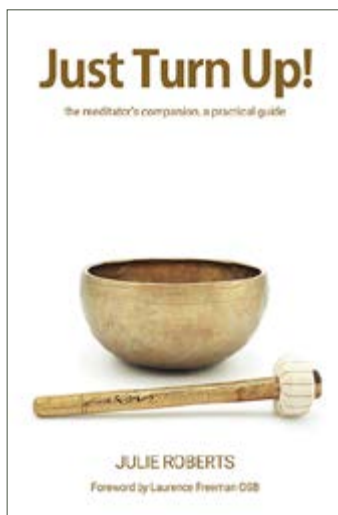


The contributors are people who follow a contemplative practice and have also entered into relationships of deep commitment with another person. They speak of the challenges and the sometimes difficult lessons that both of these pilgrimages can bring, as well as the surprises and inexpressible joy. What emerges is a moving series of portraits. The writers offer frank accounts of opening themselves to the risk of giving and receiving love, both in the intimacy of shared lives and in the silence of the

'prayer of the heart'. Not shying away from marriage breakdown and divorce, each relationship is revealed as unique; as a gift and an opportunity to grow, held by the stillness and simplicity of meditation – the work of love.

Just Turn Up!

By Julie Roberts



This book is a walk with an aspiring meditator who has begun the journey of meditation at an introductory programme and is now encountering road-blocks along the way. First, there are doubts and uncertainties that stem from a lifetime of conditioning. Then there are challenges that arise from life situations.

Julie Roberts accompanies the meditator with the gentle compassion and wisdom that flow from personal experience on her own journey. Her simple reflections reassure the meditator, and the practical questions that follow help the meditator to understand meditation as a journey calling for commitment. It bears fruit in its own time. All we have to do is to Just Turn Up!

Order *Meditation & Marriage* and *Just Turn up!* here:
<https://mediomedia.com/>

Audio

The Unconscious and Grace

Meditatio Talks Series 2021 D Oc-Dec

By Laurence Freeman OSB

The unconscious often is associated with darkness and fear, the force that prevents or blocks love. The practice of meditation helps to reduce fear by awakening our capacity to know God beyond language, thought or imagination. As fear reduces, we begin to live balanced lives in harmony with all aspects of our conscious and unconscious selves. Download & listen online: <http://tiny.cc/medt21d>

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