

WCCM-USA

UPDATE AND NEWS

Vol 46 No. 1, October-November 2022

A Letter from our New National Coordinator

Dear Friends,

It is a joy, and something of a surprise, to greet you as the new National Coordinator for WCCM-USA.

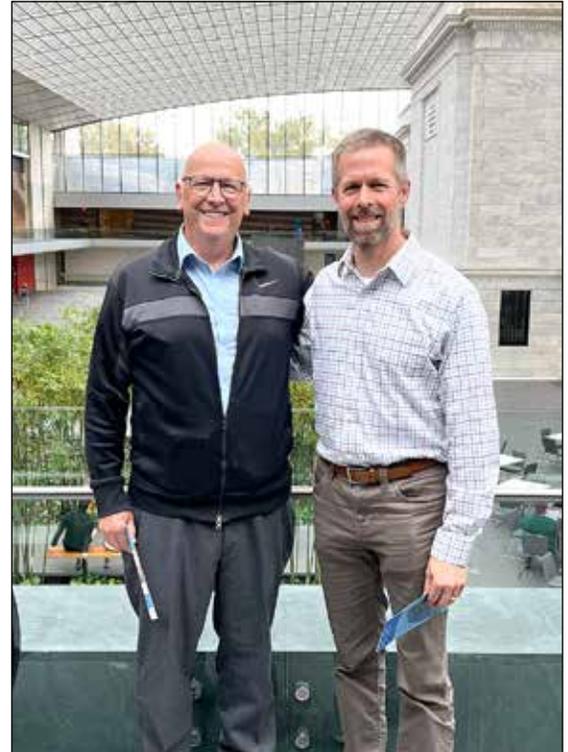
Though I didn't realize it at the time, my first contact with the WCCM was in 2005 through a book of then Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. As a new Presbyterian pastor and father, I was devouring Williams' writing for spiritual nourishment. (My beard is now grey; I have one kid in college and one a high school junior—two inches taller than me. I have been married 23 years to my wife, Heather, and I need such nourishment more than ever!) The book, "Where God Happens: Discovering God in One Another", explored the community the Spirit created among the Desert Fathers and Mothers, and was the publication of Williams' 2001 John Main Seminar talks.

When ten years later I again took up "Where God Happens," it wasn't just Williams that drew me in but two Benedictine monks with whom I was unfamiliar: John Main OSB and Laurence Freeman OSB. I followed www.wccm.org to learn more and tripped headlong into a community that has since deepened my life with God and given me great joy.

From my initial inquiries about oblate life in 2017 to my discovery that online meditation actually "works" and does create community, to my encounters on retreats with meditators that knew John Main, to my July 2021 reception as an oblate alongside others from across the world, I have repeatedly been struck by the gift that the WCCM has been to such diverse people. My contact with the wider US community while organizing Fr. Laurence's latest US visit in October 2022 has further deepened my appreciation not only for our devotion to the practice of Christian meditation, but also for our understanding of the gift that meditation may be to others.

At the recent retreat held at the Jesuit Retreat Center in Cleveland, Ohio, a member of my parish meditation group shared a testimony of her six-year journey as a meditator: she told of the establishment of her meditation practice, the inner healing she has received through meditation, and how the transformation learned in meditation has graced her work as a physician. Her story told what we discover across our lives: that to meditate is to receive God as Life and Gift, God who gives himself beyond our grasp or control.

I was surprised by Fr. Laurence's invitation to serve as the next US National Coordinator. Frankly, I didn't sleep much the night I told him "I'd like to sleep



on it." I said, "Yes, I will, with God's help." partly in trust that meditation leads us beyond ourselves. But also, because the WCCM has been such a gift to me, and I wish to be part of its growth to become a gift to many others.

I believe that God does will our community to be a gift to many more, especially in a time of such uncertainty and tumult. I look forward to working with you to strengthen it, receiving in these emergence-from-COVID days what John Main called, "a fresh setting-out on the pilgrimage beyond self, beyond limitation into the wonder of God," anticipating the gift that, by the Spirit's leading, our community has further to become.

Grace and peace,
Matt

Events in the US with Fr Laurence

The last time we were able to host Fr Laurence Freeman in person was 2019, and this year, we have been able to host him for events held in the western portion of the US. It has been a great inspiration for us all as he shared his teachings, an update on Bonnevaux and new outreaches in the coming year.

San Damiano Silent Retreat

From October 2nd to 7th, 2022, nearly 70 meditators from around the United States gathered at San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville, California to participate in a WCCM silent retreat.

Father Laurence Freeman, OSB spoke on the topic of “One Mind, One Heart: Unitive Consciousness”. Fr. Laurence eloquently spoke of how the discipline of meditation allows us to gradually dismantle the wall of our ego so that we may come closer to our true inner self. In so doing we live out the fruits of the Holy Spirit, are more able to see Christ in others, and ultimately become Christ to others. We welcomed newcomers and seasoned meditators. New friendships developed and ongoing friendships were strengthened.

The beauty of the retreat center in October added to the spiritual renewal all of us sensed. The changing colors of the leaves, the hills surrounding the center, and the central courtyard of the retreat center with the lovely fountain provided an oasis in our busy, hectic world. As we maintain our meditation practice may that oasis spread throughout our lives and the lives of others.

Claire La Scola

October 12 Talks at Cleveland University Circle

On October 12, following a three day retreat on “Seeking Unity in a Divided World,” Fr. Laurence led three talks in Cleveland’s University Circle area. The first, “Authentic Leadership,” invited business leaders to receive the gift of meditation as a means of leading from a place that is genuine and reliable—not the ego but the gift of God that is in each person. An afternoon talk for religious leaders on “Spirituality in a Secular Age” explored the thoughts of Charles Taylor, a Canadian philosopher and WCCM patron, revealing how meditation opens us to being with God in ways that go beyond “religious” thoughts and images. At an evening talk with students of Case Western Reserve University, Fr. Laurence reflected on the challenge of living in a stressed and divided world, and how meditation may promote inner unity and a peaceful heart even in painful and tumultuous times. In addition to these talks, Fr. Laurence met with local pastors and campus ministry leaders for dialogue on the place of contemplative Christianity in parishes and college communities.



Matt Reeves

A Day at St. Mel’s Catholic church in Woodland Hills, CA with Fr Laurence Freeman

Sometimes the Spirit finds a way! Arriving from San Damiano and before traveling to the Jesuit Retreat Center in Cleveland, Fr Laurence joined us for a morning talk. We were surprised but delighted that this could happen. Faith and trust were our companions as we planned the event. Through suggestions from west coast group leaders such as Ben Levine, we approached Fr. Francis Kim who had recently started a new meditation group at St Mel’s. He was delighted to host this event.

Fr Laurence spoke on “The Urgent Need for a Contemplative Mind” to an audience of 125 people, two of whom had driven from Nevada. Seeds were sown as some new meditators joined Fr Francis’s meditation group. It was a beautiful process of many people coming together to make it all happen. We gratefully accepted publicity help from Sharon in the Administrative office, books to be sold from Mary Ann Gould and Eugene Bebeau. Volunteers from St. Mel’s served coffee, helped with the registration, handled the bookstore and created a very welcoming gathering for all who attended. It was a blessed time watching



Shown left to right: Mary Ann Gould, Fr Laurence Freeman, Ben Levine, Patrice Jones, organizer, Fr Francis Kim

the community come together to support WCCM and most importantly to meditate together with Fr. Laurence. Our deepest thanks go out to all who helped to make this event an important and fruitful gathering!

Patrice Jones

Fr Laurence at the Jesuit Retreat Center, October 9-11 in Parma OH



In a beautiful fall setting within the Ukrainian Village area of Parma, OH (a suburb of Cleveland), WCCM-USA was pleased to welcome Fr Laurence Freeman for a three-day retreat. “Seeking Unity in a Divided World” was the title of the teaching as Fr Laurence conveyed a sense of urgency for our world in-crisis environmentally, politically and most especially individually. A question raised received many answers and further questions: Can Meditation Make a Difference?

Following are some responses and insights by attendees as to what they appreciated most:

I especially liked the periods of meditation. There was a feeling of unity and compassion among the group but also for the world. I hope that our prayers reached the people of Ukraine, Somalia, Iran and other parts of the world.

I loved the meditation time, the silence was peaceful, the community that we created, the sharing, the updating on Bonneveau presentation. I enjoyed the grounds very much; the large circular walk was a treat.

New WCCM Oblate welcomed at JRC event



Shown above left to right: Fr Laurence Freeman, Karen McNamara, Eugene Bebeau, Matt Reeves.

On October 11, Fr Laurence celebrated the oblation of Karen McNamara and accepted her as a new oblate within The World Community for Christian Meditation.



The program allowed time and space for reflection in addition to the meditations that were scheduled along the three day retreat. Father

Laurence’s teaching and talks about the practice were transparent on its challenges. He offered graceful acceptance of one’s own challenges with meditation, the time it takes and the self-judging that can flow from periods when the practice seems to yield little or no discernable outcome.

I also found it exceptional and quite wonderful that non-Roman Catholics were allowed—and indeed were invited—to share in the Eucharist Monday evening. That was not something I was accustomed to experiencing.

I enjoyed the introduction to meditation and learning from Fr Laurence! I appreciated the welcoming attitude for non-Catholics.

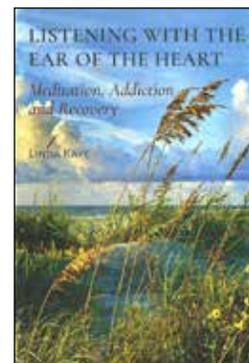
WCCM Center at Neptune Beach Celebrates 14th Anniversary

On September 15, we celebrated the 14th Anniversary of the WCCM Neptune Beach Meditation Center’s beginnings. Held on zoom as a fund raiser and celebration, many participants attended from all over the world and various walks of life.

From a weekly group organized over 19 years ago by Linda Kaye, now the director, the Center has become home for many Christian meditation groups weekly as well as an Addiction and Recovery Outreach.

<https://www.wccmneptunebeach.org/>

The recently published “Listening With The Ear of the Heart: Meditation, Addiction and Recovery” is now available through wccmneptunebeach@att.net Linda Kaye (904) 352-99770



UPCOMING EVENTS

November 28, 2022 Monday-Thursday during Advent
WCCM-USA Advent Poetry and Meditation via Zoom

January 28, 2023 — The second of 4 sessions
Special viewing and discussion of **The Good Heart JMS 1994**. Fr Laurence and the Dalai Lama discuss the gospel. Led by Paul Dunn and Gene Bebeau.

Save the Date:

December 5, 2022 — WCCM-USA Christmas Gathering online

WCCM-USA Events this year

CHANGE - An online retreat

During the week of September 19-24, a silent online retreat with the title “Change” was hosted by Gene Bebeau. We listened to Fr Laurence’s recorded talks from the 2016 Monte Oliveto gathering, shared times of meditation and discussed the teachings in small groups. The Monte Oliveto talks asked this basic question, one appropriate to our times: ‘How can we balance our fear of change with the need for change?’

Fr Laurence talked about how in the contemplative experience of silence and stillness we discover what is both ‘ever-ancient and ever-new’. Meditation as a work of love dissolves fear, restoring hope and joy to the celebration of life. There were twenty-seven in attendance.

Gene Bebeau

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August All Community Gathering

It was great to gather, to see old (or should I say familiar) and new faces, to hear the community news, to break into small groups and visit with the 50 plus meditators from all over our country who attended. Unfamiliar faces but somehow not unknown. John Main taught that meditation builds community, and our experience has given proof to his teachings. We are nourished by this community and in turn we nourish the community. Nourished that morning—even though we were not able to share some of our favorite homemade cookies and a cup of coffee together. Technology has only gone so far!

We hope to gather again as a community for an online Christmas party with caroling on December 5 exact time to be announced, watch the wccm-usa website for information.

Pat King

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Six Week Introduction to Meditation Course

This fall we were led to offer the 6-Week Course, as it had not been widely offered recently. We met on Tuesday evenings via Zoom in October and November. Many meditators, both new and experienced enjoyed the teachings provided. At least two group leaders, invited their weekly meditation group to this Zoom to share the experience.

Our practice was to listen to the teaching, meditate together, and

then share in observations, questions and conversation. Several folks who could not make either the dates or the time of day, asked for it to be offered again. Please watch for an invitation early in 2023 for a weekend group that will be feasible for all time zones.

DESERT DAY – Divine Office

A very committed group of meditators met via Zoom for a 14 hour day (!) to participate in the Divine Office. We listened to meaningful introductions for each of the seven hours from the writings of Br. David Steindl-Rast and Sr. Joan Chittister. In addition to the 7 times of prayer, we also shared in a worship service and meditation. Appropriate music for each office was also a part of our day.

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UPCOMING: Advent Poetry and Meditation to be offered

Once again during Advent, we will have an evening offering via Zoom. Our theme for Advent 2022 is “Poetry and Meditation”. We will participate in Lectio prayer using classic and modern poems that direct our attention to the season. Each evening will include a 30 minute group Meditation. **WHEN:** Monday through Thursday, 7:30-8:30 PM EST beginning Nov 28th. *Watch your email for the registration for this online event in November.*

Kathleen Weller

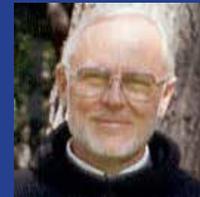
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NEWSLETTER
For article submissions,
please contact Sharon@
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<https://wccm-usa.org>



“The mantra is like the key unlocking the door to the heart to allow the pure light of love to flood in.”

JOHN MAIN OSB
The Heart of Creation