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CHILDREN NATURAL MEDITATORS

By Roland Ashby

Director of Anglican Media and Editor of The Melbourne Anglican

Children love meditation and find it easy and natural says Charles Posnett, member of the WCCM Guiding Board and retired computer executive, who has been part of a team that has introduced meditation into 200 schools in the UK. He visited Melbourne last month, including St Mary's Primary School in Thornbury, where all children have been meditating in the John Main tradition since 2008 as part of the school curriculum.

Accompanied by ACMC State Coordinator for Victoria, Mirella Pace, who is also the ACMC national coordinator for meditation with children and young people, Charles met and meditated with several classes at St Mary's, before joining a school assembly in which the whole school meditated together. Meditation has now been introduced into over 150 primary and secondary schools in Victoria.

A Benedictine Oblate who has been meditating for 25 years, Charles studied natural sciences at Cambridge University and began his career selling computers to blue-chip companies. He says his experience of teaching children to meditate has confirmed the view that children are born to be contemplative. "The underlying belief of Sister Madeline Simon's book Born Contemplative is that children are born close to God, so they find contemplation very natural; but all we do in our current civilisation is persuade them to move further away from that fundamental belief."

He says it has been "a joy" to introduce meditation to children, partly because it has been part of offering service as an Oblate, and also because "children take to it very easily, much to the surprise of the teachers, and they do what are told when they are asked to sit silently and invite God into their hearts".

"They find that they enjoy the experience and they want to do more of it," he explains, "because they find it brings them peace and happiness." Meditation also increases the children's powers of attention and concentration, he says, which leads to better academic results, but a key benefit is that it helps to increase the Christian ethos within the school.

"You can put up mission and vision statements all round the school and come up with some rather highfaluting language that says what the school's aims and expectations are, but I think the acid test is how the children treat each other and treat the teachers, and how the teachers treat the children, for that matter. The effect of meditation is not only on the children but also the staff because they too find they are more considerate, more relaxed, and more able to cope with difficult situations in the classroom, which there will always be.

"So hopefully the overall impact is that the school becomes a better place for the whole community and the children grow up in an atmosphere of Christian love.

"Meditation tends to create a sense of community — children meditating together will demonstrate that and become closer as a unit, and more tolerant of their fellow human beings.

"I remember a little child called George, who when asked about meditation said, 'sometimes if I ask someone to do something before I meditate they won't do it. But usually after meditation they will.'I think that personified for me the degree to which God's love percolates into their lives through meditation."

He said he is very inspired by what he has seen in Melbourne, and also Townsville, which he visited in April, and where meditation has been introduced into all the Catholic schools. "It's quite tangible the improvements that have been made, the general feeling within the schools, and the progress that is being made as a result of meditation being part of

(Contd next page)



Charles Posnett and Mirella Pace meditating with children at St Mary's Primary School, Thornbury, Melbourne.



Charles Posnett with Mirella Pace (left) and Dorothy Hughes, Children and Families ministry co-ordinator, Anglican Diocese of Melbourne.

the curriculum. They are even planning to set up a contemplative school, which is a very exciting development." Meditation with children has been introduced in many settings across Australia not only in schools but also in parishes, hospitals, in homes and places where children are present.

Each State has personnel responsible for assisting you to introduce this beautiful silent prayer of the heart to children if you would like further information on introducing meditation with Children and Young People please contact: Mirella Pace

National Coordinator Meditation with Children 0408470114 or mirellapace49@gmail.com

RADICAL SIMPLICITY: MEDITATION AND ECOLOGICAL CARE

From a presentation by Deborah Guess to the Victorian ACMC earlier this year.

(Deborah Guess teaches and researches ecological theology at the University of Divinity in Melbourne and has been involved with the Christian Meditation Community for 25 years.)

After so much coverage in the media, we might well feel that we are "over" the topic of climate change and are ready to move on to the next exciting, or tragic, news event. Yet climate change remains, as Kevin Rudd said, the great moral crisis of our time. It could be added that it is also an unprecedented existential crisis. For the second time in history (the first was the proliferation of atomic/nuclear weapons in the 1950s) we are living with the awareness that human beings have the power to destroy the entire world. Yet unlike the nuclear threat where a choice not to press the button seemed to guarantee a future for life on earth, a changing climate is already underway and is to some extent, at least in the shorter term, irreversible.

There are many possible responses to

our present crisis. Fr Laurence said in the Meditatio event in Sydney last year that one aspect of the present environmental crisis is that it is so complex that the only thing that can begin to deal with it is a radical simplicity. If ecological decline is a result of the accelerated pace of human activity and of rapid economic growth, then one relevant response is learning the art of being still and silent, from which, Laurence suggested, we might see emerging a new consciousness which could be defining for our self-understanding and for our future environmental behaviour. This idea is echoed in the 2015 Encyclical Laudato Si' in which Pope Francis makes the very salient point that: "The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast." The simple practice of meditation

provides a strong contrast with the complexity, speed, and busyness of our lives today. Sometimes reality is of course complex, and ambiguous, but in our culture the tendency to overthink, to make things too complex, can be a powerful temptation. As John Main said, our society teaches us that complexity is attractive and desirable, and in comparison, meditation: "seems to lack sophistication or cleverness". Yet for Christians an orientation towards simplicity is an important response towards climate change because it lies at the heart of the Christian tradition. From Jesus' teaching that the Kingdom of God requires a childlike way of being, to the Desert Monks fleeing society in search of a plain way of living, to the disciplined and ascetic Christian monastic tradition, to the practice of our own community, there is a powerful urge for a spiritual path which is uncomplicated.

The simple practice of meditation can bring about a change of heart, and that is crucial because as Laudato Si' says: "the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion." But that conversion is also meaningless if it remains in the

heart and is not expressed in specific ecological action and in a simpler way of living. As Richard Rohr insists, contemplation and action belong together. Mary and Martha represent two aspects of the one person.

Members of this community know it can be challenging to develop the habit of meditating twice a day: changing other habits also has its challenges. Why should I be the one to go to the inconvenience of washing up cups saucers and plates instead of using paper or plastic ones, buy food that is locally produced instead of shopping at supermarkets, use public transport instead of the car, and so on? Being Green is not always easy or convenient. But in the world we now live in, a simpler way of being and living may be our best option.

Virtue and love are the springboards for ecological action:

Only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment. A person who could afford to spend and consume more but regularly uses less heating and wears warmer clothes, shows the kind of convictions and attitudes which help to protect the environment. There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle. Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings ... Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity. (Laudato Si' paragraph 211.)

NATIONAL COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Our National Silent Retreat is almost here my thanks to the NSW community for their wonderfully generous contribution as they have worked with national to bring together our retreat. We have 155 registered I know it will be a time of blessing and encouragement for us all

Following the close of the retreat Fr Laurence will fly back to London where he is to receive an Honorary Senior Fellowship of Regent's University London for his work. Our congratulations have been passed on to Laurence.

Each year the National Council meets to plan for and discuss the Australian Community. The National Council is made up of the national executive (national coordinator, secretary, treasurer, minute secretary and 2 mentors), those with an international and national role, state and territory coordinators and a second representative from each state and territory, 28 people in total. This year we will meet for 2 days following the retreat. On Saturday Richard Cogswell and Judi Taylor will lead us through a day of reflection and discernment with the morning taking time for reflection on scripture and in the afternoon reflecting on the Australian community. On Sunday we will meet to discuss what has been happening in the community during the past 12 months, share plans and ideas and make decisions for the coming years. Our Australian community is very blessed to have so many gifted and passionate people willing to take on leadership roles.

Recently Kath Houston, Director of Liaison with National Coordinators, asked the Australian community if we could offer financial assistance to Josefa Vegas, one of the national coordinators for Venezuela, to have the opportunity to attend the John Main Seminar in Texas. In Kath's email to us requesting support for Josefa she mentioned the Venezuelan community is experiencing a very difficult time but their work continues to grow even as the political situation worsens and the streets in many parts become more dangerous. Most of the schools in Caracas are meditating but sadly schools in the most violent areas cannot be visited at the moment.

It is wonderful that not only the Australian community but New Zealand and America have had the opportunity to contribute to Josefa and Susana's costs enabling them to attend the seminar and retreat.

Our ability to give occasionally to assist other community leaders is because of your donations to our National Appeal. If you haven't already contributed this year please go to our website or fill in a National Appeal brochure to donate.

With my love Jan

Jan Wylie National Coordinator

ACT REPORT

The ACT meditation community will hold its annual silent retreat at The Abbey, Jamberoo on the weekend 20-22nd October 2017. The Abbey is a Benedictine community of nuns – a few hours drive north of Canberra. Bookings are now being accepted, and further information on costs, etc will soon be distributed and will be on the ACMC website. Phone 0401 731 918 or email: act@christianmeditationaustralia.org

Over the last few months, a group of ACT meditators who form a core committee within the Canberra Christian meditation community have met to reflect on future directions of the local Christian meditation community. This was in response to suggestions from the ACMC National Council and other state committees who have similarly met to discuss future directions. In Canberra we have not yet had an opportunity to canvass these questions more widely with the ACT meditation

community but would like to do so, and hence we invite any interested to be in contact. If you'd like to offer your thoughts, email: act@ christianmeditationaustralia.org and we can provide a précis of some thoughts collated so far on the future directions for the local meditation community.

Blessings from Susan & Rod Page

The following are contributions by a couple of members of the Christian Meditation community in Canberra, Hilary Harris and Glenys Wimmer.

Community in meditation

Faithful followers gather hearts desiring community, stillness, sacred presence. Loving Creator awaits.

The vehicle: meditation Ears tuned, wisdom words washing over and within. Silence, invitation prevails. Individuals in community meditate, waiting, inviting sacred presence deep within. Almighty Love upholds.

Thirty precious minutes each experience a unique, blessed gift.

Sustained for life.

Praise, gratefulness, joy acknowledgement that prayer, dreaming, faithfulness provided anointed sanctuary.

Faithful quietly depart carrying the love of God in their hearts blessing the world.Lord, bless your dedicated servant who birthed this dream here and the faithful who walk in Amen.

Glenys Wimmer

(Regular Christian meditation practice has been ongoing for me for 29 years. Two years ago I joined a weekly group of WCCM in the chapel of the Centre for Christianity and Culture in Canberra and value this devoted group and the world wide Community. I am relocating to Victoria and looking forward to being part of WCCM in the Anglican Cathedral Parish there. Meditating in community brings a deeper enrichment to my life.)

Reflection

Meditation at Holy Covenant Anglican Church in Cook ACT was begun by our minister a few years ago. At that time we used reflections from books and some music.

WCCM was introduced and has continued following the simple method given to us. It is now a small group who enjoy the Monday reflection email read by one of us.

20 minutes silence and then the short poem. We meet in the side chapel at 12.30 and end at 1pm. On Tuesdays people arrive 10 minutes early to catch up and be ready to begin.

We light a candle for God's presence and colour up with flowers and leaves or whatever.

Hilary Harris

(My connection to WCCM is through our Tuesday lunchtime group. Fr Laurence Freeman has been to Canberra for events and I have been to the last two. I continue to read emails of wisdom and teachings.)

VIC REPORT

John Main often said "meditation creates a community of love" and I feel very blessed to say that has been my experience from the moment I was part of the ACMC Victoria and National Meditation Community.

I feel I have been enveloped by an incredible, dedicated community who work tirelessly to proclaim and live out Fr. John's vision and like him in silence, are loving to all.

The group leaders day and our recent Quiet Day with Roland Ashby are testaments to this loving presence, so it is with great confidence that I hand over the leadership to Clara Rizzi and Mary Hartwig, two beautiful faith-filled women who will continue leading and growing the Community with zeal and enthusiasm, supported by a Committee that are generous of their time and talents.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the Victorian Committee; Trish Martin, Karien Dekker, Ros Harris, Mary De Bono, Michael Hedger, Debra Guess, Mary Hartwig, Clara Rizzi and Susie Hii for their support and dedication in particular to my two executive teams of Kathy Gillespie, Trudy De Louise; Joan McKeegan and Pam Dawson during my time as Coordinator and also to Ruth Fowler in her mentoring role and Evelyn Reinher and Fay Gravenall as Oblate Coordinators.

Our first Community day in the West is fast approaching and it is the third of the goals that we had set out to achieve at our discernment day.

- 1. Visiting groups
- 2. A Community day in regional Victoria
- 3. A community day in the West.

Karien Dekker is doing a great job with our YCMers; Trudy De Louise has the Meditation group in hand at the Austin/Mercy Hospital; there is a Christian Meditation group at ACU Melbourne led by Fiona Bradley; Diane Craig and Kathy Bailey lead groups in Prisons and Meditation with Children is growing here in Victoria.

Clara will facilitate a group in August at McAuley Community Service for Women.

In July we travel to Sydney for the Silent retreat which will give everyone nourishment and renewal as we listen to our leader Fr. Laurence Freeman and also share the fruits of our Community with others.

Over to Clara and Mary!

I wish you all the best in the future as I take on a more quiet presence at our community days.

I look forward to continuing our close friendships and journey together.

"We begin in faith. We continue in faith. In faith we arrive. Our opportunity and our responsibility is to be self-emptying disciples of our Master. (John Main MWW: Returning home.) With much

love Mirella

NT REPORT

Alice Springs, June, 2017

The Christian Meditation Community of Alice Springs held 'A Weekend of Prayer and Meditation' at Campfire in the Heart, over the weekend of the 2nd – 4th of June, 2017. The Retreat was led by Kath Houston with Celia Kemp and Sue Woods. The theme for the Retreat was:

'Come, Rest and Wait in the Wilderness, Listen and See with your Heart'.

Words by Trish Watts.

Retreatants were invited on the Friday evening to 'Come, Rest and Wait. At night prayer, Celia used a quote from Richard Rohr:

'People who empty themselves in the wilderness always meet a God who is greater than they would have dared to hope.'

Kath talked about the gift of Christian Meditation and the process of being relaxed in body, mind and spirit, to let go and to let God. To wait, to empty oneself.

Over the next few days Kath's talks and our times of prayer, meditation and sharing were indeed blessed.

Kath's quoted John Main, from Moment of Christ.

"We are used to dwelling in a world with thousands of mirrors, seeing ourselves, seeing how others see us, constantly.

Meditation is a definite smashing of all the mirrors.

It is looking not at reflections of things, not at reflections of yourself.

It is looking into the reality that is God.

And, in that experience, being expanded into infinity.

That is liberty of spirit."

There are a number of Retreats being held here at Campfire in the Heart in the second half of this year:

'Wide Skies Open Hearts' Retreat 10-16 September, 2017.

'Into the Desert' Retreat led by Celia Kemp, David & Sue Woods, 6-12 August,2017

'Desert Retreat for Body and Soul' led by Susanna Pain, 24-29 September, 2017.

Dates and regular programmes are on our website:

www.campfireintheheart.com.au With every blessing to you all,

Sue Woods NT Co-ordinator

NSW REPORT

On Saturday 22nd April, Earth Day, we held a community day at Del Monte School Strathfield. During the morning Br Kevin McDonnell spoke with us about "The Radiant Tapestry of Being" in the afternoon we shared the experience of a cosmic walk and a Mandala of our interconnectedness. Thank you to Sr Jill Shirvington and the Strathfield community for their hospitality.

The Newcastle community held an introductory session on Saturday morning 6th May with the theme "What is Christian Meditation/How do we Meditate"? Thirty two gathered to hear group leaders Gail Doolan and Judith North reflect on John Main's teachings and answer questions. There were a couple of people new to meditation and some who had done an Introductory Course a long time ago and came for a refresher.

On Saturday 1st July 40 from the community came together again to join Sr Carmel Moore as she led a discussion on "The Cloud of Unknowing".

The groups in the Illawarra area gathered on Saturday 20th May for a Community Day where they explored "Managing Conflict Creatively". Heather McAlpine, Couples Therapist and Relationship Consultant spoke about different ways to manage conflict creatively and Peter Carroll MSC, prisons chaplain, spoke about meditation as a way of life promoting peace and harmony.

Our Contemplative Book Club continues to meet on the first Saturday of the month following the 9.30 meditation at Kirribilli. The book chosen for the group is "The Gift of Years – Growing Older Gracefully" by Joan Chittister. Each person has a turn to read a paragraph, reflectively, then

a period of sharing concludes their time together.

We are looking forward to Fr Laurence's visit to lead our National Silent Retreat. Thank you to so many from the NSW community for their time and expertise given so generously to plan and prepare for this event. Before the retreat Laurence will be joining Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr at the Australian Catholic University (ACU) to have a conversation about Christian Meditation and Dadirri, the deep inner listening and guiet still awareness. Laurence and Miriam-Rose will also speak at the ACU conference "Awakening the Sacred through Literature and the Arts".

I look forward to catching up with many from the local community at the retreat.

With my love -- Jan

SA REPORT

God of peace,

Let us your people know, that at the heart of turbulence there is an inner calm that comes from faith in you.

Keep us from being content with things as they are, that from a central peace there may come a creative compassion, a thirst for justice and a willingness to give of ourselves in the spirit of Christ. Amen.

This prayer from A New Zealand Prayer Book was the inspiration for the title of our Silent Retreat Day, "From Inner Calm to Creative Compassion". The Very Rev'd Frank Nelson, Dean of St Peter's Anglican Cathedral, in North Adelaide led our day. In his reflections Frank spoke on the three markers of Benedictine Spirituality— Obedience, that is, to listen; Stability and Continual Conversion. Frank suggested that it is really "all about the balance". We were invited to take some time to consider our own Rule of Life and the Sabbaths that we keep. Perhaps the most impressive time of the day were our times of silence and reflection. All of the fifty people present naturally entered the times of silence, and so gifting each other with their deep companionship.

Our next event in this year's calendar will be our Leaders' Afternoon for all group leaders, committee members, helpers at events and those who have attended an Essential Teaching Weekend. The afternoon will be held on Saturday 19th August 2017 from 12.30—4.00 pm at St Clement's Church Hall, 354 Main North Road, Blair Athol. Our afternoon of reflection will begin with a shared lunch.

But first, a number of us are looking forward to coming to Sydney in July for the National Silent Retreat.

With love and blessings

Dianne Schaefer, SA State Coordinator

QLD REPORT

Many of you will know the scene in the movie when Crocodile Dundee is threatened by a New York hoodlum wielding a flick knife. Dundee scoffs, "That's not a knife," and he pulls a huge machete-type knife from his boot, saying "That's a knife."

Recently, the national coordinator, Jan Wylie, rang me to say she would be coming to the Gold Coast. She asked if we could meet and I could put her in touch with the Gold Coast coordinator, Paul, because she hoped to attend at least one of the local meditation groups during her stay. When I rang Paul, he noted what a great opportunity this was. In about the time it took Crocodile Dundee to pull the knife from his boot, Paul had sent an email to the eight groups in the region suggesting a lunch time gathering next week. "That's a community."

We have a Community Day planned for the weekend, June 10th. Our next scheduled gathering is a Quiet Day at Oxley late in October. However, this could be changed if the retreat venue becomes available and we are able to offer the community a short weekend retreat. There are several other gatherings being considered for the regional areas in the meantime. It

is wonderful to have the anchor of our meditation to prevent our busyness making us lose sight of the "silence and stillness in every season".

I recently came across the work of a contemporary Brisbane poet. Her name is Margaret Clifford and she has kindly agreed to my sharing these two poems from her most recently published collection, which is called Stitched Pages.

Choice

I could spend this morning focussing on that email fuming at its intent deconstructing its content itemising the errors feeding my anger composing the perfect response adding to the angst

or

I could just sit here
listening to the morning
birdcalls
smelling the salt of the sea
watching the pelicans glide by
letting the morning beauty
wash over me and through me
allowing this radiance and
serenity

Walking

in 1969 the world stopped and watched

to settle into my soul.

a man walk upon the Moon

today i will walk upon planet Earth and i will stop thinking and pay attention and feel every miraculous step i take on this living, breathing fragile Earth.

Love and blessings, Gabby

Gabby Nelson Qld Coordinator.

TAS REPORT

Recent months have been quiet ones for our community in Tasmania, with regular group meetings continuing but no larger gatherings.

Three of us met for an oblate day in June; thanks to Viv Luke for her preparation. Danielle will be overseas for the coming three months and quiet time will continue until the Spring. Our annual retreat will be in September from 8th-10th, at the Emmanuel Centre in Launceston, led by Penny Sturrock.

Blessings Danielle Pacaud Tas Coordinator.

WA REPORT

At the beginning of June we had planned a Community Day led by Fr Pasqual Kearney on "Testing Spirituality". Sadly Fr Pasqual was called back to Ireland to be with his dying brother, and our thoughts and prayers have been with him and his family.

John Coleman stepped in at short notice and led us in a very interesting look at The Fruit of the Spirit for Every Day Life. He began with a quote from Teresa D'Avila: "Listen to the touches of God in your life".

We then looked at the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience/forbearance, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control

Throughout the day John invited us to discuss the topic in small groups

of 2 or 3, and the "buzz" in the room at these times indicated this topic is still of great relevance. We were asked to look at where these gifts were growing in our lives, and where they were not. To identify which gift we needed, and to focus on that.

Laurence Freeman says we shouldn't look for an outcome of our meditation, but one piece of evidence of the faithfulness of our journey is the fruit of the Spirit.

Paul speaks of the fruit of the Spirit as the personal transformation that gradually takes place if we are lead by the Spirit.

We then considered our understanding of the Spirit.

John Main says the Spirit is the prayer of Christ into which we are invited to continue in our hearts both day and night.

The Holy Spirit is the stream of love that constantly flows between Jesus and the Father.

John quickly looked at the Gifts of he Spirit- abilities provided to us by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body of Christ, and include wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues and interpretation of tongues.

Each gift has a corresponding service. If the gifts are growing strongly in us they will produce good fruit.

Finally we looked at what hinders us from growth in the Fruit of the Spirit, or the 8 deadly sins: gluttony, lust, greed, pride, despair, anger, vainglory, and sloth. We need to be self-aware to be able to achieve balance. John Main taught the first result of meditation is self-knowledge, and we proceed from there. Aids to help in our growth are Scripture and prayer.

The Gifts of the Spirit is not a once off gift, it is a lifelong journey.

Many thanks to John for this thought provoking presentation.

Jenni Berg WA Coordinator



Marie O'Leary

WCCM Oblate in Perth WA has passed to the Lord. Throughout her life she endured increasing chronic pain with an indomitable spirit of Joy and concern for others.









HOW TO MEDITATE

Open to all ways of wisdom but drawing directly from the early Christian teaching John Main summarised the practice in this simple way:

Sit down. Sit still with your back straight. Close your eyes lightly. Then interiorly, silently begin to recite a single word – a prayer word or mantra. We recommend the ancient Christian prayer-word "Maranatha". Say it as four equal syllables. Breathe normally and give your full attention to the word as you say it, silently, gently, faithfully and above all - simply. The essence of meditation is simplicity. Stay with the same word during the whole meditation and from day to day. Don't visualise but listen to the word as you say it. Let go of all thoughts (even good thoughts), images and other words. Don't fight your distractions but let them go by saying your word faithfully, gently and attentively and returning to it immediately that you realise you have stopped saying or it or when your attention is wandering.

Meditate each morning and evening for between 20 and 30 minutes.

HOW TO CONTACT US

ACMC NATIONAL COORDINATOR

Jan Wylie- 0418655291 -- janwylie@tpg.com.au

SECRETARY ACMC

Rod Page - 02 6281 2378 -- rod@rodpage.com

BENEDICTINE OBLATES OF THE WCCM

Terry O'Donnell - Ph: 02 4758 7683 Mob: 0430 209 415 -- tod42@bigpond.com

SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

National School Co-ordinator Kath Houston mob: 0407 020 448 -- kah164@outlook.com

MEDITATION WITH CHILDREN

National Coordinator Mirella Pace Ph 03 9458 4645 mob: 0408470114 mirellapace49@gmail.com

NATIONAL FRIENDS COORDINATORS

For Information and Contributions Judi and Paul Taylor - Ph: 02 9954 1037 palmy@ozemail.com.au

ONLINE MEDITATION GROUP

 $Shelley\ Romeike --\ shelleyromeike@gmail.com$

YOUNG MEDITATOR CONTACTS

NATIONAL AND NSW - Donna Mulhearn - 0422 749 319 - donnamulhearn@yahoo.com.au Queensland - Andrea Randall 0402 590 150 - andrearandall5@gmail.com Victoria - Karien Dekker 0435 627 641 - kariendekker@gmail.com

WEBSITE and NEWSLETTER DESIGN

Lee Milroy -- acmcnewsletter@gmail.com

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LIBRARY

Barbara Speed Ph 03 9439 0290 or Mobile 0409 235 670, bryanspd1@optusnet.com.au

To inquire about meditation groups, seminars or retreats in your region see contacts below.			
ACT	Canberra	Rod and Susan Page	02 6281 2378
NT	Alice Springs	Sue Woods	08 8952 6607
NSW	Sydney	Jan Wylie	0418655291
QLD	Brisbane	Gabby Nelson	07 37114227
SA	Adelaide	Dianne Schaefer	0413 633 905
VIC	Melbourne	Mirella Pace	03 94584645
WA	Perth	Jenni Berg	0429 177 242
TAS	Hobart	Danielle Pacaud	04583267828

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Vikki McDonough editoracmc@gmail.com

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