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B O N N E V A U X

Incarnating the Vision

Serving the Mission for the Future



WCCM International Office, St Marks, Myddelton Square, London EC1R 1XX, United Kingdom

A New International Centre of The World Community for Christian Meditation



The spirit of love reminds us on a daily basis that to be healthy we must be whole and that as we grow through healing into wholeness we begin to touch the edge of holiness. Our tradition teaches that contemplation is the work of love – the threefold work of receiving, releasing and returning. Our daily meditation and the community it creates reminds us that love is the universal foundation of human being, the essence of all personal and civilised values. Without the spiritual we cannot be sane.

Laurence Freeman



INTRODUCTION

Incarnating the Vision and Serving the Mission

This year – 2016 – is the 25th anniversary of the formal establishment of the World Community. This is a milestone moment of the work first begun by John Main who started the first Christian meditation centre at his monastery in London in 1975. Since then the seed of meditation has grown into a global monastery without walls. In order to support its growth into future generations the community has seen the need to establish an international centre and home which will also be a centre for contemplation and peace in our troubled era.

After long consultation with the Guiding Board, Executive Committee and Trustees, our Patrons and our National Coordinators, we began a search for the right property. This has led us to the place we now all feel is the right one that has been waiting for us. Bonnevaux is a beautiful site near Poitiers in France, which still retains parts of the original monastery built there in 1123. It gives space, a spirit of deep peace and beauty and the buildings necessary for us to develop a stable home we need at this point in our story.

For thirty years I have travelled widely serving the growth of the community. Last year I visited twenty-three countries.

But with the evolution of the national community structure throughout the WCCM and the emergence of a strong faculty of teachers, my travel now can and should be reduced. Although I will still make personal visits as necessary, I have decided to spend at least half of my time in Bonnevaux, where I will write, teach and support the growth of meditation globally.

We have now received donations enabling us to purchase the property. But to bring it to its full potential – by stages – we need help, your help. In the following pages you can see and feel what Bonnevaux will be for; and at the end of the book, you will find out how you can help. I hope this book will inspire you to feel a part of this new adventure in faith in our mission.

Laurence Freeman OSB

Director, The World Community for Christian Meditation

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WHO WILL BONNEVAUX SERVE?

The Community and the Scholarship Fund

The meaning and purpose of Bonnevaux affects many constituencies. It will therefore bring very broad benefits both to the World Community and the world at large.

It will firstly be the permanent home and retreat centre for The World Community for Christian Meditation. It will incarnate the vision of the Community by its way of life as contemplation empowering service. National communities within the WCCM have enthusiastically endorsed and supported the vision of such an international centre.

The community is present in a hundred countries and is unified by the simple essence of its teaching, by the practice of meditation and by the mission of sharing the gift of meditation generously and widely. The internet, a quarterly newsletter and publications, retreats and seminars and especially the travel and personal presence of Laurence Freeman and other teachers have all contributed to the

growth of this multi-cultural reality we call the WCCM. It is not a church, not merely an organisation, but a community of faith containing many kinds of Christian identity.

We feel collectively that the time has come to have a central and stable physical home which can provide the additional kind of unifying energy needed for the community as it moves beyond the 'founders' era and reaches a new level of maturity.

Support for it reaches far down into the grass roots. Each weekly meditation group will contribute, according to their means (an average of €100), to a Scholarship Fund. This will be used to send individuals and small groups to Bonnevaux to participate in its life and its programmes. The sense of unity and common purpose within the community will thereby be strengthened and deepened.





Society at large

As the work of WCCM matured in its Christian roots it also began to respond directly to the spiritual needs of the secular world around it. With the generous support of a major benefactor we began Meditatio – our outreach to the world which allows us to share the fruits of meditation beyond religious perimeters.

In a number of fields we have been able to touch, dialogue and engage with the major social institutions and with society's problems both local and global.

In education we are bringing meditation to children in schools, both faith-based and secular. At Georgetown University for ten years we have had an on-campus John Main Center for Meditation and Inter-Religious Dialogue bringing meditation to students and faculty. Meditatio is also engaged with many other universities and colleges in the first and developing countries.

In business and finance we have pioneered a Meditation and Leadership MBA Course which is now being offered in business schools in several countries. We also bring meditation directly into workplaces through seminars and six-week programmes. Well known financial and business leaders in the community have championed many of these initiatives.

In medicine, Meditatio is working in partnership with the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland to bring meditation into the medical profession through extended programmes and major clinical trials.

Meditatio Seminars have been held internationally on topics of global urgency such as the environment, mental health, science, inter-faith dialogue and ageing. In all these areas we aim to bring through dialogue an awareness of the benefits of meditation, a contemplative approach to our modern crisis.

Oblates

For many years some lay people meditating within the community and helping with its mission have supported and expressed their journey by becoming Benedictine Oblates of the World Community. They may be married or single, young or old. They take monastic promises adapted to their way of life and share in several of the spiritual practices of the monastic life.

Oblation is a traditional form of monastic life that appeals to many on a contemplative path today. Some of these oblates have formed

residential communities, such as in Meditatio House in London, and served the wider mission of the World Community in various ways.

Bonnevaux will have a resident oblate community that will provide a modern living link with the monastic tradition through which meditation has often reached society at large. The oblates will be joined by interns who may or may not follow the oblate path but will work together to give long-term stability to the whole project.



The next generation of teachers of meditation

Meditation is simple. But often teaching it in the modern world requires skills and knowledge that take time and discipline to acquire. Bonnevaux will provide a place where those already teaching or those wishing to start will be able to receive the training and personal guidance needed for the next generation of our teachers and leaders in the community at all levels.

The community is a volunteer-based organisation (group leaders, national coordinators are not paid) but in the central International Team a small group of full-time personnel receive a moderate remuneration.



The Inreach and Outreach of the World Community will continue to grow at and through Bonnevaux, while we also build a centre oriented towards global peace and mutual spiritual understanding

Contemplative centres have traditionally been centres of peace in society. Bonnevaux will contribute to reconciliation, peace-building and mutual understanding in our time of political conflict and social turmoil. As a contemplative centre rooted in the Christian tradition and open to all, it will work to show the potential of meditation for people of all ages, beliefs and backgrounds to unify minds and heal divided hearts.

Dom John Main OSB understood how today’s problems have a spiritual root. They are caused by a deep spiritual dislocation, giving rise to religious fundamentalism, the ecological crisis, unethical behaviour in business and extreme, unsustainable income inequality, mental illness.

Bonnevaux will contribute to a better world by serving individuals and communities energised by a contemplative discipline of daily meditation and encouraging new approaches to leadership in all fields.

By keeping our teaching simple and focused we have – over the past 25 years – been able to serve the WCCM Mission through ‘inreach’ into the Christian world and ‘outreach’ into society at large.

Inreach: Within all Christian denominations we have worked towards unity by deepening the contemplative dimension of Christian life. We have helped a now broad acceptance of meditation as part of our common prayer tradition to take place.

Outreach: But we also bring the fruits of meditation to the secular world, especially in the fields of education, medicine, social justice and business. Grounded in Christian faith in a ‘spirit of serving the unity of all’ (as our mission statement says) we are deeply committed to fostering friendship between different faith traditions.

The essential fruit of meditation that makes this possible is love – the spirit of other-centredness and concern for others.



“*John Main opened the way to the direct experience of God, of truth, of reality from within the Christian tradition. He was a man of great wisdom and above all of great love.*” **Bede Griffiths**



“ *The World Community which continues John Main’s mission is for me, as for many throughout the world, a taste of what a committedly contemplative Church might look like and feel like, with its intense fidelity to shared silence as well as shared belief and experience.* **Rowan Williams**



“

[T]his is the ability to live with our Christian history in a way in which we are not trapped by any past or present limiting framework. We can therefore be in a conversation with people from very different eras and also bring these voices together in ways that can be very fruitful for our time. This is something else that we have as part of the tremendously precious legacy of John Main: how, above all, we fit into the modern world’s spiritual traditions. How important it is that we carry on his work.

Charles Taylor



The World Community has grown as a 'monastery without walls'. This allows a combined sense of local and global identity to integrate individuals and society through community. Bonnevaux will be rooted in a daily rhythm of life based on traditional wisdom, grounded in local realities, but also developing a contemplative approach to globalisation and social issues

Daily Life at Bonnevaux

As in its original Benedictine foundation in 1123, the mission and programmes at Bonnevaux will be underpinned by the qualities of stability, simplicity and silence.

The daily life of the community and guests – which we hope to begin in 2017 – will be founded on the ancient monastic wisdom of *ora et labora*, the essential monastic rhythm of work, study and prayer, hospitality and service. It will live this wisdom in contemporary forms and styles.

Individual meditators will be welcomed to deepen their personal journey.

A resident community will maintain this life and all guests and visitors will be invited to participate in it.

A programme of events will run through the year.

The day will be nourished by set times of prayer and meditation and spiritual study. During these times the work of the conference centre and teaching will rest and move into silence.

There will be a daily discussion of the Rule for community and guests and shared times of spiritual reading.

All will be invited to share in the daily running of the centre.



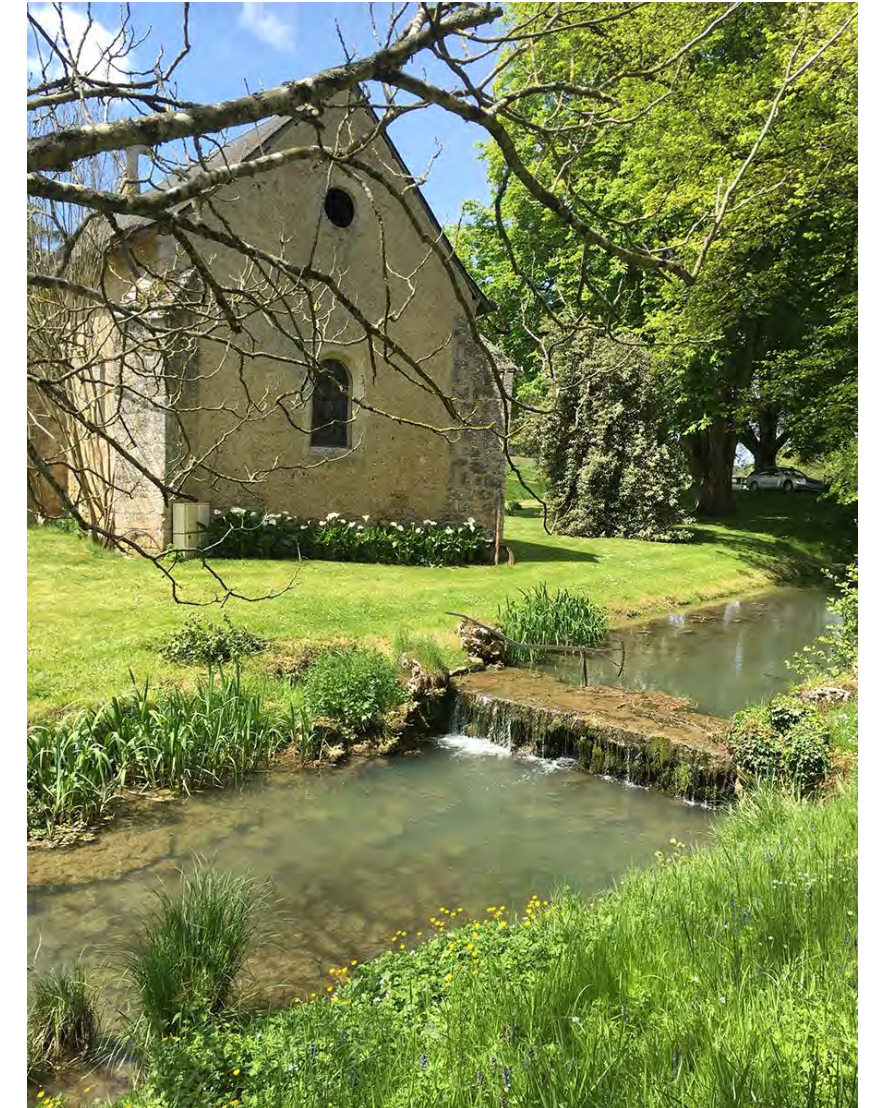
WHAT WILL THE NEW CENTRE BE LIKE?

Over time Bonnevaux will be developed as a space comprising:

- A core community of twelve members
- Self-contained guest rooms
- Retreat 'cells' each with a small garden
- A Meditatio Conference Centre
- Hermitages
- Outside space for young visitors in the summer

The atmosphere of the centre will be contemplative, simple and beautiful. Solitude will be respected along with a sense of connection, social responsibility and local community – shared in times of meditation, meals and in all the teachings, programmes and seminars based in the Bonnevaux conference centre.

“ *In the reception of the poor and of pilgrims the greatest care and solicitude should be shown, because it is especially in them that Christ is received; for as far as the rich are concerned, the very fear which they inspire wins respect for them.* Rule of St Benedict



WHO WILL BONNEVAUX WELCOME?

Bonnevaux will be for all members and friends of the WCCM and for everyone of any faith or background with whom we can work to share a contemplative approach to the problems of our world.

Individual meditators will be welcomed to deepen their personal journey.

WCCM leaders and national groups will come for retreat and for special courses or programs, taking back to their national communities enthusiasm and commitment to new initiatives.

Professional and social leaders will meet in peace to clarify and renew their commitment to social change.

WCCM Oblates will join a core group of resident oblates who will be a key part of Bonnevaux's Benedictine spirit.

Interns who may be mid-age, third age, university gap year students or young professionals will reside and work with the core community.

The Oblate Novitiate year which has been tested in London for several years will be developed.

Partners in other faiths and organisations will be welcome.

Those called to periods of solitude as way to deeper service of others will be welcomed and helped to fulfil their call.

Passing pilgrims will be 'received as Christ himself'.



“ *Meditation creates community*
John Main





So to many, for whom the institutional church is unattractive, we can offer an entry into Christian community. This allows us to see that to teach meditation today, in Christian faith and out of a Christian tradition, is a contemporary form of evangelization. As we come to understand this better we will sharpen our vision of what we are here for and how we can fulfil our mission. **Laurence Freeman**

THE BONNEVAUX PROGRAMME

The annual programme of events will serve the needs of the global community and engage in dialogue with social institutions. It will reflect a holistic and inclusive view of human needs and potential – physical, intellectual and spiritual. It will be built in collaboration with the National Coordinators, the Director of the School and the Chair of Meditatio.

The School is a programme and faculty overseeing all aspects of our work of teaching meditation. Meditatio is a programme and council coordinating the outreach of the community in the fields of education, medicine, business and finance, leadership, social justice, the environment and interfaith dialogue. All of this work is inspired and motivated by the aim of raising contemplative consciousness by teaching people to meditate and how to sustain their daily practice.

Weeklong introductions to Christian Meditation.

Retreats for the School Faculty reflecting psychological, cultural, theological and social issues.

Roots of Christian Mysticism courses during the year.

Interfaith conferences and retreats.

Formation for WCCM leaders.

Intensive retreats.

Art and music events.

Understanding the body, movement and our psyche.

Guest spiritual and intellectual teachers.

Contemplative Leadership Courses.

Programmes for those in medicine, business, education, art and those in the caring professions and working with the marginal and people in recovery.

Events focused on young people and students.

Retreats for the socially marginalised and those with physical and learning disabilities.



Without men and women of contemplative vision and spiritual depth, our hopes for building up the kingdom of God's love are destined to be based in the shifting sands of passing fads and momentary movements. What will last must be founded in the vision of the past and must look to the dreams of the future. Only the contemplative spirit of the old and young together can provide such a pathway for contemporary people. **John Main**

LIVING TRADITION

An impression of the 12th century abbey of Bonnevaux - and its future form



We have received the generous gift of *pro bono* professional architectural support and also of some building materials. The material fabric of the buildings and the life-style will be modest and simple.



Through Meditatio, the World Community is already contributing to the formation of new kinds of 'inspired and other-centred' leadership. In Bonnevaux these principles will be lived in the governance of a local community that will also be a home and heart for a worldwide family

The World Community governance structure is based on a Constitution, a Guiding Board of eighteen members who shape the vision and priorities that are then implemented by the WCCM Director, an Executive Committee, Trustees, an International Office and a group of directors responsible for specific areas of the community's mission.

Our governance structures and leadership are well established and work well together.

As in all organisations succession is something to be always kept in mind and planned for. As a permanent home for the WCCM, Bonnevaux will allow succession to happen in the right time and way. The kind of leadership we need will be nurtured by experience of community and study and teaching. In the core community younger committed leadership can be trained. The formation of our national communities will be a major priority for the Centre.

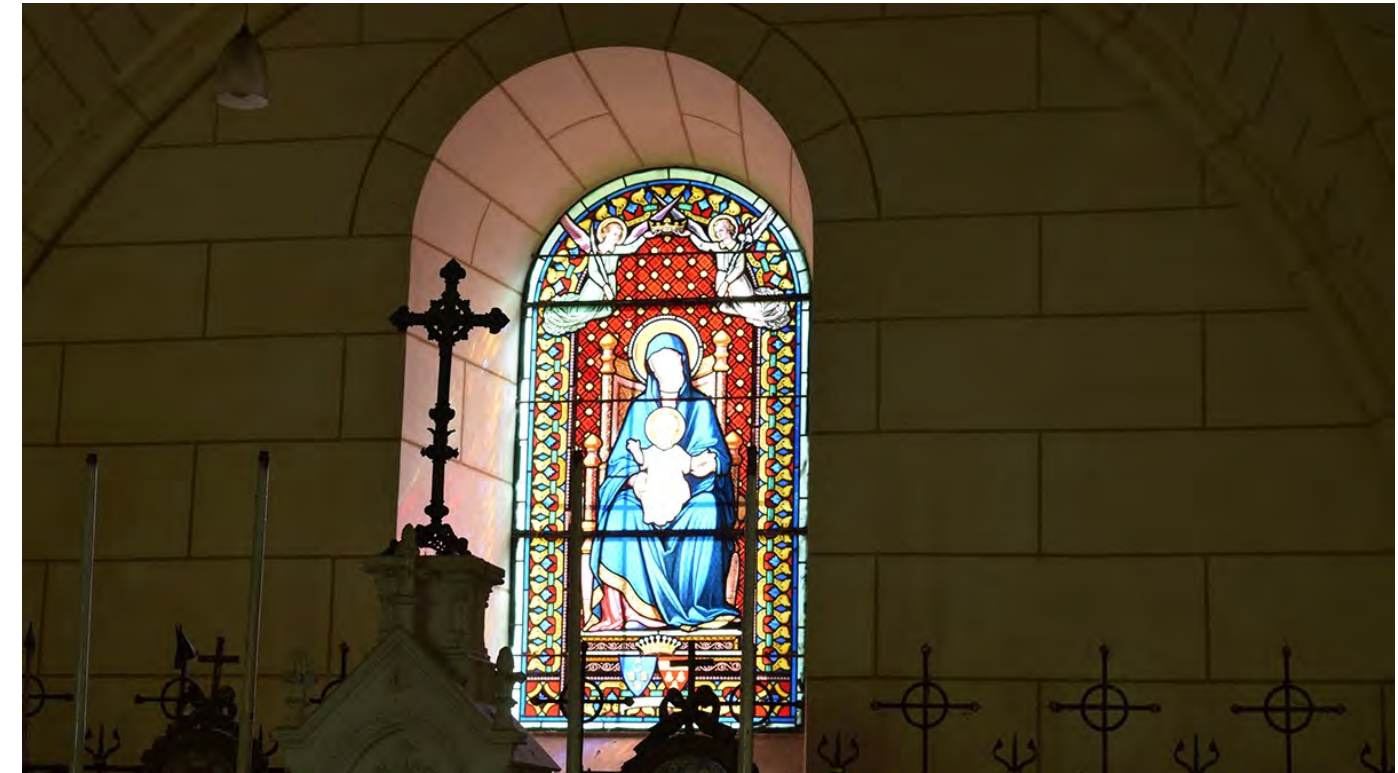


WHO WILL RUN BONNEVAUX?

Laurence Freeman OSB, the WCCM Director will be resident at Bonnevaux. The centre's organisational and financial administration will be in the hands of a strong team which Fr Laurence will work closely with and to whom he will delegate practical responsibilities. The Centre team will also consult regularly with the Director of the School and the Chair of the Meditatio Council (inreach and outreach).

The Centre team, in which several key positions are already filled, will include:

- A Director and general manager of the centre
- Directors responsible for programmes and publicity
- Coordinators for the grounds, house maintenance and hospitality
- A core community, including resident oblates.



Visitors to a contemplative community often come with unclear or mixed motives. They often do not know how to begin the next phase of their journey. Yet they have felt its call. So, what they first experience often surprises them. They think they will find God as they have been imagining God till then. But instead they find themselves recognised, known and inexplicably loved. This experience changes their expectations. They no longer seek a God of their own imagining. Feeling known, they now realise that God is seeking them. They need simply to be still. All this is something only experience can teach, yet a loving community provides the context for the discovery. John Main



HOW WILL BONNEVAUX BE FINANCED?

The fundraising committee consists of the following:

Bertrand Bouhour, Chair, WCCM Trustee, Washington DC

Peter Ng, Executive Committee, Singapore

Sean Hagan, Executive Committee, Washington DC

Catherine Goodman, Artist, WCCM member, London

The aim is to raise 2.5 million Euro for the initial phase of renovation and building to bring Bonnevaux to its full, wonderful potential.

The work will proceed by phases – supported by the WCCM membership, individual donors, Trusts and other bodies.

Each meditation group in the World Community is contributing an average of €100 towards a Scholarship Fund which will allow individuals or groups of limited means to come to Bonnevaux and return home to share the experience with their own community.

We invite contributors to become:

FOUNDING BENEFACTORS - €500,000 and above

ANCHOR BENEFACTORS - €100,000 to €500,000

BONNEVAUX PATRONS - €10,000 and above

BONNEVAUX FRIEND - €1,000 and above

You may wish to consider a smaller monthly contribution to the Bonnevaux Centre Fund:

€100 for 3 years; €50 for 3 years

€10 for 3 years or any amount of your choice for 3 years.

If what you see in this book seems to be inspiring and worthwhile and you wish to find out more or how you can contribute to the Bonnevaux Centre fund please do not hesitate to contact us.

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Patrons of The World Community for Christian Meditation

Abbot General Diego Rosa, OSB, Monte Oliveto Maggiore

Abbot Michelangelo Tiribili, OSB, Monte Oliveto Maggiore

Abbot Thomas Keating, Colorado

Archbishop Rowan Williams, Cambridge

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