

## Ruth Fowler

...was the co-founder of the Australian Christian Meditation Community in 1985 and led the Community in its formative early years. She is the National Coordinator – Teaching Christian Meditation in Schools, within the ACMC. In this capacity Ruth introduces school leaders and teachers to Christian Meditation as a personal spiritual practice and offers support for them introducing students to Christian Meditation. She has given workshops in the Catholic Dioceses of Rockhampton, Sandhurst, Sydney, Melbourne, Auckland and Wellington, New Zealand and in Warsaw, Poland.



Ruth has degrees in Arts and Education and is currently completing a Spiritual Direction course. She was a Board Member of the School of Prayer in the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne for five years. Ruth was a secondary school teacher for nearly 20 years, a public servant in the area of adult education planning and policy for many years and has lived in western and eastern monastic settings.

## Mirella Pace

...was a Primary School teacher for more than 25 years which included 16 years as a highly respected Religious Education Coordinator. Since 1997 Mirella has been a Pastoral Associate at St Mary's Parish in Thornbury, including for 9 years at the sister parish in East Thornbury and additionally recently in St Anthony's Parish, Alphington.



As a Pastoral Associate, Mirella has worked in all aspects of parish life including developing and implementing the range of Sacramental programs and supporting staff development in Religious Education. Mirella has completed a Graduate Diploma in Religious Education from ACU Mercy, Melbourne and in 2008 completed a Certificate in Guiding Meditation with the ACU. She leads a weekly Christian Meditation group following the teaching of John Main OSB and has been actively involved in introducing Christian Meditation in a number of Primary schools. Mirella has given many workshops for teachers and parents introducing them to the practice of Christian Meditation since 2007.



**The World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM)** as a global spiritual community took form in 1991, continuing the 30 year long work begun by the Benedictine monk John Main. He recovered for modern day Christians a practice of deep prayer or meditation within the Christian tradition – restoring the contemplative dimension of Christian faith in the life of the church. The **Australian Christian Meditation Community** is part of the WCCM.

The Community is now directed by Laurence Freeman, a student of John Main and a Benedictine monk of the Olivetan Congregation. There is an International Centre and a Meditation Centre in London. There are also Centres in other parts of the world including in Sydney. The Community is a kind of 'monastery without walls', a family of national communities and emerging communities in over a hundred countries. The spiritual foundation is the local meditation group, which meets weekly in homes, parishes, offices, hospitals, prisons, schools and colleges.

The World Community is ecumenical and serves a universal 'catholic' unity in its dialogue both with Christian churches and other faiths. We encourage and support the daily practice of meditation as a way of prayer, knowing its power to change hearts and so to transform our world.



### Ruth Fowler

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# Teaching Christian Meditation to staff & students

*It is a fundamental task to teach people how to pray and how to learn to do so personally, better and better. Many seek meditation elsewhere because they think that they will not be able to find a spiritual dimension in Christianity. We must show them once again, not only that this spiritual dimension exists but that it is the source of all things ...*

**Pope Benedict XVI**

# Teaching Students

Teaching students a practice of Christian Meditation as a way of prayer is to give them a gift that they can draw on for the rest of their lives.

The approach that is taught is a simple one of saying a sacred word or mantra from the beginning to the end of the meditation period. It is a practice that is deeply embedded within the Christian tradition of prayer.

It is the same approach that has been introduced in all primary and secondary schools in the Catholic Diocese of Townsville by Bishop Michael Putney and the Townsville Catholic Education Office.

Students like to meditate and teachers report it having a very positive effect in the work and participation of the students at school. It is an inclusive practice which is suitable for all students.



*Schools in the Catholic dioceses of Sandhurst, Melbourne, Rockhampton, Sydney and New Zealand are introducing Christian meditation as a way of prayer to students*



## Formation for Teachers

It is important that teachers are formed in a Christian spirituality that connects with their lives and deep inner longing. It offers a way for teachers to enter, with grace, into the experience of the Spirit dwelling in the depths of their being. Because of this the practice of Christian Meditation and contemplative prayer in general is one of the key building blocks on which developing Catholic identity rests.

## Transforming Schools

The experience of many schools is that developing a regular and faithful practice of Christian Meditation throughout the week, gradually changes the quality of relationships in a school. It demonstrates what John Main taught that 'silence builds community'. One Principal described it as 'transforming his staff and transforming his students'.

## Linking With Parents

The school and parents can work together to encourage the students to meditate outside school hours. Parents frequently also seek to be taught to meditate because they see the effect it is having on their children when practiced on a regular basis. In a number of schools Christian Meditation is taught as a way of deep or contemplative prayer to parents as part of the Parish Sacramental Program.

*It is important that even the smallest children learn to be still and not just to be quiet. It is in their stillness that God can speak to their hearts and they can discover the love of God for each of them personally.*

*Bishop Michael Putney, Townsville*

# What Do We Offer?

We can tailor programs to meet the needs of schools. Schools may wish to combine for some activities.

- **Staff Spirituality Days:**  
Introducing Christian Meditation so that teachers may commence the practice of Christian Meditation for themselves and feel confident to go back to class and teach it to their students.
- **TWO Day Workshops:**  
These workshops provide a deeper formation in the teaching and practice of Christian Meditation. The days can be together or separated.
- **Retreat Days for Staff:**  
These days are designed to allow time for teachers who have been introduced to the practice of Christian Meditation to stop and be renewed in their spirituality through the practice of Christian Meditation.
- **Overnight Spirituality Workshops for Staff:**  
This covers the same material as for Staff Spirituality days in addition to understanding Christian Meditation in the context of Christian prayer.
- **Workshops for Leadership Teams:**  
Learning the practice of Christian Meditation can transform our capacity for leadership because it can transform our capacity to simply be. In learning 'to be' we lead from a deeper place of authenticity and compassion.

## CONTACT:

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## RESOURCES

*Coming Home – A Guide to Teaching Christian Meditation to Children* (Book & DVD) by Ernie Christie (contact Ruth Fowler)