



Christian Meditation with Children

OUR JOURNEY : FROM WORDS . . . TO SILENCE . . . TO ACTION.

In this issue of the WCCM newsletter I would like to continue with two further topics in the series of six topics which started in the July issue. Each topic considers different aspects by which we, as a community, can help each other in the work of Christian Meditation with Children; whether we are teachers, clergy, chaplains, governors, grandparents, parents, children or just interested in education in some other way.

3. TEACHING THE TEACHERS:

There's not much you can teach teachers about teaching (and we certainly wouldn't dare try) – but we can give teachers some useful tips and stories about Christian meditation with children and help them along the way.



As one head teacher said to me "It's a very simple process because it easy for the teachers to meditate in silence with the children and once they do that then God does the work. Inevitably we adults try to complicate the process but it really is as simple as introducing children to a friend, and once they know Jesus they are friends for life."

Jesus often referred to himself as a teacher **"You call me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, that is what I am"** (ref John ch 13 v 13) Certainly much of his teaching was through parables and stories which illustrated the point he was teaching. This method let his listeners draw their own conclusions about themselves and those around them. It strikes me that Christian meditation is a bit like that – a sort of story without words – in which we get to know ourselves better and in doing so we get to know God better too.

So teaching Christian meditation to children is mostly about providing the right opportunity and environment for them to do the "work" of meditation. It is simply a question of leading them gently into that silent room in their own hearts, where they can experience Jesus directly and become friends.

It is clearly very useful if the person teaching meditation has made that short, but sometimes difficult, journey themselves – the journey from the head to the heart. Then they can empathise with the children and be a good role model as they invite them to cut out all the distractions around them and simply sit in silence saying the mantra. The wonderful thing in all this is that it has fruits and benefits not only for the children, but for the teachers too.

Fortunately children are far better at cutting out distractions than adults. What at first sight might appear difficult is actually quite easy for them. This was evidenced recently when I was talking to a head teacher in a primary school who was telling me how she had looked out of her office window

during a noisy playtime to see about 10 children sitting in a circle in the playground meditating silently and completely unaware of the mayhem that was going on around them.



Most teachers are apprehensive at the start, but when they have spent a few hours at an in-service training day, hearing case studies from other teachers, head teachers and, most importantly, children and actually tried it themselves they are usually very supportive. They quickly realise how worthwhile it will be for the children and they are usually very happy to try it with own class and even with their own children at home.

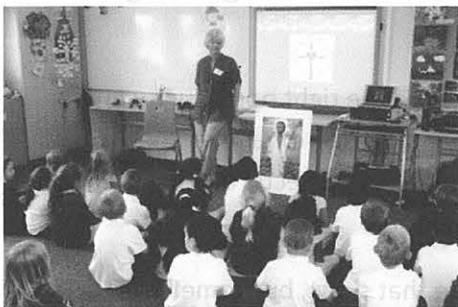
In fact, the children usually lead the way and we have been amazed and delighted that those children who learn to meditate in school are often more than happy to teach their parents or siblings at home. We even had some year six children who were discussing the fact that they were moving up to a new school where Christian meditation was not yet part of the school curriculum who quickly realised that there was nothing to stop them "being the teacher" and starting a Christian meditation club themselves!

So let's put our faith in Jesus the teacher. **"We know that you are a teacher who has come from God"** (ref John ch. 3 v.2).

4. ADOPTION:

We are used to thinking about adoption in terms of children, but not necessarily in the context of ideas or schools.

Adopting an idea as your own is an important part in the cognitive learning process. There seems to be a point in the cycle when we move from simply absorbing knowledge and being able to regurgitate it, to a deeper understanding in which we "adopt" that knowledge as part of our own way of working or belief system.



"Learning by doing" is one way in which we can make that as simple and painless as possible and when combined with "learning to be" it can readily be applied to Christian meditation. However chaos is an integral and unavoidable part of change and introducing Christian meditation in a school is no different to any other initiatives, in that there will be times of doubt and disillusionment as the somewhat novel and unfamiliar practice of meditation is introduced.

Our ability to persevere in making change happen is frequently linked to the benefits that we expect to gain, but the strange situation with Christian meditation is that we can have "no expectations" and it is only afterwards that we can look back and see the benefits and fruits that have accrued as a result of this regular and silent time with Jesus and with each other.

So how can we facilitate the way in which Christian meditation becomes a new and valuable part of the school curriculum?

Firstly, it is good to talk to those have already gone ahead, blazed a trail and come out not only alive, but full of peace and joy.

Secondly, it is good to have colleagues and friends along the way – other schools in the same cluster or neighbourhood who are at a similar stage of the journey and willing to share experiences and best practice.

Thirdly, some of the teachers might like to join a local meditation group or form a meditation group of their own. The local regional WCCM coordinator can certainly help with this.

Fourthly, it might be helpful to have local meditators, from local Christian meditation groups, to come into the school to meditate with the children and the teachers. These "adopters" of local schools can provide gentle help and support, and forge a very valuable link with the rest of the meditation community.

Last, but not least, prayer really helps. Local WCCM members should pray for the children who are experiencing Christian meditation for the first time. We can all pray that they will meet Jesus in this simple prayer of the heart; that they learn the value of that friendship; and that they persevere in the practice of Christian meditation beyond the classroom and into later life.

As with most new things, the most important and most difficult thing to do is to start doing it. So it is encouraging to know that the vast majority of the schools who have had in-service training are now meditating on a very regular basis – mostly daily. So if they can do it there's a good chance that it can work in your local school too.

If you would like to find out more about any aspect of our Christian Meditation with Children program please do not hesitate to contact Charles Posnett Tel: 01525 873536 or by Email: charles@posnett.entadsl.com

