

# What are the characteristics of a Christian Meditation group?



The mission statement of The World Community for Christian Meditation is:

*“To communicate and nurture meditation as passed on through the teaching of John Main in the Christian tradition in the spirit of serving the unity of all.”*

When does a meditation group belong to the World Community for Christian Meditation? The answer to that in a nutshell is: when the justification for the silent prayer, which is the most important part of a meeting, is founded on the teaching of John Main OSB and Laurence Freeman OSB. The weekly meeting is an opportunity to absorb the teaching more deeply. They give us a spiritual boost each week: part of the food we need for the journey.

The meditation group is different from the ordinary prayer group. Although meditation does not exclude other forms of prayer it is, for meditators, the foundation of their spiritual life. Therefore the weekly meditation group does not focus on vocal prayer, petition or praise.

Any one is welcome to join a group. Questions are never asked about their religious or spiritual affiliations. If people make it known that their roots are in another discipline they are encouraged to enter and maintain the silence in the way they were taught and are used to. But the focus of the group never wavers from John Main's and Laurence Freeman's teaching. Newcomers will soon find how universal this teaching is, an inspiration for anyone on the spiritual path.

Some people keen to start a meditation group may well start by attracting others by offering yoga and meditation or tai chi/chi kung and meditation. These disciplines are an excellent physical preparation for meditation. But it is important to emphasize that the meditation we teach is a spiritual discipline, not just a way of relaxation and dealing with stress. It is perfectly possible to use meditation purely for its health benefits as a body and mind altering relaxation technique and stop there. But that would be a missed opportunity; there is much more to meditation than its physiological effects on the body. It is a discipline on the way to personal transformation, to clarity of vision and total awareness.

Let me remind you of the format of a Christian Meditation group: The shape of the Christian Meditation meeting follows the following format:

- A short introduction – not more than 10 – 15 minutes – including a reminder of the basic discipline.
- Clear indication of the start and finish of meditation by sounding a gong; perhaps some gentle music to help people to settle down.
- The introductory prayer of the Community: *Heavenly Father, open our hearts to the silent presence of the Spirit of your Son. Lead us into that mysterious silence, where your love is revealed to all who call. Maranatha, Come Lord.*
- 25-30 minutes of meditation
- Final prayer
- Opportunity for questions

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