



The World Community for Christian Meditation

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Earthquake in New Zealand (full text by Jane Hole)

Christchurch Earthquake, February 22, 2011

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Photo: NZ Army Engineers repair water mains at Burwood Hospital after Christchurch Earthquake (NZ Defense Force, released)

We thought the earthquake last September would be remembered as Christchurch's big one. Goodness knows it roared loudly enough, but streets, offices and shops were mercifully empty in the small hours of that day and the quake's own depth muted its power. This one was different; this time the earth arched its back sharply close beneath the midday city, less powerful on the scale but shallower and more deadly by far in its effect.

The Christchurch meditation community has a strong heart, but this earthquake has devastated many of our meeting places. Three groups have lost their homes, and are temporarily in recess. Meditators will find new gathering places, but must first deal with the disruption to their homes and jobs. My own home and therefore that of our northwest city group has been spared. Travel is difficult in the city, so there are several faces missing; others have left Christchurch. One of our meditators, Brendan, who was without power and water for several weeks, comments only that he's glad he is so used to camping, and that he has a wife

with a positive attitude. But we know just how tough it has been, and still is, for him and so many others. Another group, just Dorothy and I, will not meditate together again, but through no fault of the quake. Before we met, she had meditated faithfully on her own, thirty minutes twice a day, for ten years—not knowing that anyone else in our city practised Christian Meditation. ‘I don’t know where I’d be without meditation’ she once said. How often we meditators have heard that, and felt it. I saw her the day before the earthquake—she was frail—and three weeks later, aged 87, she slipped away peacefully—a woman of spiritual dignity who treasured her meditation practice and gave me a model of faithfulness.

Later in the year we will find the right place and the right time to hold a meditation community day, to revive the spirits of our shaken community. Beulah from Brisbane has, in her warm feeling for us here, already promised her support and presence on that occasion.

After the earthquake, I first texted Sally, a meditator and postulant oblate who lives in a pole house in Lyttelton, at the epicentre of the quake. ‘Fine’ she replied ‘I’m still under the table.’ I checked with her again a little later. She texted back: ‘I’m reading such a wonderful passage from “Community of Love”’, presumably still under the table.

On the Thursday two days after the earthquake, I didn’t expect to see any of those who usually come to our group; they have a distance to travel and we’d been asked to leave the roads clear for essential services and emergency vehicles. So at our meeting time, I went instead to exchange stories and vegetables with a neighbour. When I arrived home, Margaret was sitting on my doorstep, waiting for our meeting to begin. She’d walked to my place—and we did together the work that we must do, earthquake or no earthquake.

Last week, I looked after my small Christchurch grand-daughters while their parents went out for a well-earned break—the first time I’d put the children to bed in their home since it had taken on an earthquake lean. They and I often meditate together, sometimes peacefully, sometimes with sighs, wriggles and the occasional experimental whistle. That evening, they asked if we could meditate. Not wanting to leave them alone in the house, in our aftershock-rocked city, I suggested that—rather than collect the usual props from my car across the road—we could meditate without them.

“No, Gran. We want to do the whole thing. Please get your stuff’.

So I dashed across the darkening road and grabbed the ‘candle’ (battery-powered), the meditation timer CD and player, and the five cards—saying all we really need to say about Christian Meditation— created by our Hugh McLaughlin for children who meditate.

They sat cross-legged on their mattresses that are, for the present, on the floor beside their parents’ bed, while the dog sat guarding them from her own bed.

We meditated together in surprising silence and stillness.

‘Who’s God’ they asked afterwards, as they always do.

So I told them again what I think, finishing with ‘and I believe God loves everyone and everything He made, and looks after them all’.

Given what’s been going on here recently, I expected some questions about the last bit, but they lay down peacefully and pulled the covers up round them.

As I turned out the light, the six-year old said firmly: 'I believe in ALL the good things'.

So do I, and we've still got plenty of those things in Christchurch...but, oh, we think of Japan with love and such sorrow.

* Jane Hole is New Zealand National Co-ordinator



Earthquake in Japan,

*By Brian Redmond (bredmond69@yahoo.com)

Photo: aerial view of damage to Wakuya, Japan following earthquake.(U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Alexander Tidd/Released)

*The bed I lay on gave a little jump, a twitch.
Then slid from side to side.
Oh, no, I thought, it's not an earthquake, is it?
But it was.
It was indeed a quake that built and built until I swayed from side to side
within the bed.
And then it shook.
It shook the earth, the bed and me most violently, most viciously,
most unrelentingly, and
Shaken like a puppy thrown against a wall,
I leapt and scrambled for the door, and saw
A wild, unnatural dance of telephone poles, and waving wires,
And trees that threw their heads against the sky.
While down below, the earth itself had set my parked car bouncing up and down.
As if in fear to be so near this elemental power;
But where to go?
There's nowhere you can go, and nothing you can do,
Until the earth relents and lets you go.
Relent it did. At last the swaying stopped, and gingerly,
I stood to go back in the house, where crockery lay smashed upon the floor,
And books were strewn across the room, and mirrors smashed.
What can you do when God does this?, I thought.
Did God do this? If God is what creates all things, then God made this.
And God made me, who see and sigh,
Who bending down, pick up a book to put it back.
And start again.*

Meditatio News

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