

Hi Everyone!

Here are a few words on New Zealand...

Everybody, without a doubt, told me I would love this place. And the adjectives were so glowing that I came prepared to discount them by a hefty percentage. But no, every glowing word turned out to be an understatement. Take the incomparable rugged beauty of BC, the extraordinary sailing waters of Maine, the sassy, "in-your-face spirit" of pioneer America...and throw in the incomparably haunting presence of the Maori culture, and it's all good. And that's before we even start talking about the contemplative prayer work!

My host for the eleven-day adventure was the indescribable Pip Nicholls, who invited me out of the blue, having read my books, but brought a wealth of amazing connections as well as a strength of personal presence to her over-the-top hosting of me. She is a mature and adventurous spiritual seeker herself, with that gentle "winnowing fan" of a mind, able instantly to distinguish the real from the crap, and to speak truth with compassion and clarity.

It was a whirlwind tour: three public lectures (in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch), two retreats (Auckland and Christchurch) and a couple of hard hitting planning sessions with what will undoubtedly become the steering committee for a contemplative organization in New Zealand. Since both their temperament (independent-minded) and their actual circumstances (about equal presence of Christian Meditation and Centering Prayer practitioners) closely matches our own circumstances in BC, I encouraged them in their own strong initial inclination not to align with either of huge, international membership organizations (Contemplative Outreach, Worldwide Community of Christian Meditation), but instead to develop their own structure along the lines of the Contemplative Society, and perhaps even become a sister organization. I think that's what they will ultimately do. And we are all curious about how this smoldering volcano of Maori spirituality may erupt through all the white, North American structures in which contemplative prayer is predominantly packaged and turn it into a truly ONE WORLD phenomenon. My own sense is that this is New Zealand's vocation, and the potentially world-transforming role that they have to play here.

I am sure I will go back. Plans are already under discussion here. And I am hoping very much that Christopher and Heather Page will also find a niche in their schedule for a teaching and retreat trip to this so-symmetrical-to-BC corner of the universe. One of my most moving moments on the whole trip was to be able to visit the grave of Heather's Dad, Robert Fielding, in a cemetery in Wellington...

Anyway, it was the highlight of my spring, and I am deeply grateful to have had the opportunity for this wonderful new beginning.

Cynthia