

**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES AND  
UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE PERIOD 14TH JULY 2021 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2022  
FOR  
THE SCHOOL OF CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE**

Thomas Coombs Limited  
Chartered Accountants  
3365 The Pentagon  
Century Way  
Thorpe Park  
Leeds  
West Yorkshire  
LS15 8ZB

**THE SCHOOL OF CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE**

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FOR THE PERIOD 14TH JULY 2021 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

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# THE SCHOOL OF CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

## REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS FOR THE PERIOD 14TH JULY 2021 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2022

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<b>TRUSTEES</b>	R A Candlin (appointed 21/10/21) C Cooper (appointed 19/5/22) C I Whittington (appointed 14/7/21) N E Gillespie (appointed 14/7/21)
<b>PRINCIPAL ADDRESS</b>	53 Portland Street Cheltenham GL52 2NX
<b>REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER</b>	1195159
<b>INDEPENDENT EXAMINER</b>	Thomas Coombs Limited Chartered Accountants 3365 The Pentagon Century Way Thorpe Park Leeds West Yorkshire LS15 8ZB

## THE SCHOOL OF CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

### REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

FOR THE PERIOD 14TH JULY 2021 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2022

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The trustees present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the period 14th July 2021 to 31st December 2022. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

#### OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

##### Objectives and aims

The Objective of The School of Contemplative Life (SoCL) is to promote and protect emotional, mental and spiritual health for the benefit of the public by the provision of meditation and in such other ways as the Charity Trustees may decide.

The purpose of The School of Contemplative Life is to teach meditation as a simple pathway to peace and community - a new way of seeing for a new way of being. As we establish peace in ourselves, we become places of peace in the world.

Our aims are to:

1. Contribute to the restoration of contemplative practice as a way of life which purifies our motives and opens us to the oneness of being - the foundation of peace within us and between us, the deepest basis for our care of each other and our precious world.
2. Promote the inseparable relationship between interior transformation and social transformation.
3. Be an antidote to the fundamentalism which gives rise to so much conflict and violence in the world.
4. Nurture the common ground across faith traditions through teaching meditation within the Christian tradition as a simple and universal practice for people of all ages, beliefs and circumstances.

##### Significant activities

The main activities of the SoCL include:

- Hosting an online meditation group every Saturday morning which involves teaching, simple guidelines for the practice, 25 minutes of silent meditation and group conversation.
- Holding in-person and online events at regular intervals including day retreats, our first silent retreat and an online weekend retreat.
- Developing pilot programmes for audiences working in specific contexts including school-teachers.
- Providing spiritual counsel on a limited and pro-bono basis.
- Publishing regular blogs and podcasts.

##### Public benefit

In accordance with their duties pursuant to Section 4 Charities Act 2011, the Trustees have considered the Trust's objects and activities in light of the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit. 'Charities and Public Benefit'.

##### Volunteers

All programme activity during the financial period concerned was delivered on a voluntary basis by individuals employed elsewhere in demanding professional roles. This was necessary as we tested the appetite for and impact of our work.

## ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

### Charitable activities

The pilot activity delivered during this period demonstrated the appetite that exists for what we have to offer.

Much of this was developed and delivered during the Covid-19 pandemic which, in hindsight, created as many opportunities as it did challenges.

The highlights are set out below:

- Delivering regular in-person talks introducing people to meditation in the Christian tradition. We targeted the business community in Birmingham and drew approximately 40 people to each event.
- These talks drove the establishment of our Saturday morning online meditation group which now self identifies as a practice community. Having been introduced to the practice, people were seeking ongoing engagement, teaching and support. Over the period reported, the group's membership steadily grew to an average weekly attendance of about 45 people by the end of 2022. The diversity of our audience is of particular note, as is the fact that the majority of people who attend have heard about us through 'word of mouth'. In keeping with our desire to ensure that what we do is as accessible as possible to all, the online meditation groups are offered free of charge. Once we have an agreed fundraising strategy in place, we will ask regular participants to offer a voluntary donation, according to their means.
- A series of events were held during 2021 and 2022 including a three-day silent retreat in Oxfordshire in Wantage. This sold out in just over a week.
- A pilot programme introducing school-teachers, primarily within Chris' networks, to meditation was created and will inform the development of a more formal, scalable and programme from 2023. During the pandemic, we reached approximately 2,000 teachers including heads and MAT CEOs. Some were Christian, others were affiliated to different faith groups or none. Impact was reported by all.

Example testimonials for each of the activities above are included below. Countless others were received, often unsolicited, demonstrating similar impact. It is the quality and quantity of feedback we have received that warrants a strategic scale up of our activities from 2023 making the most of volunteers and without creating a burdensome and costly operating platform. One of the advantages of the model we are creating is its agility.

In addition to external facing activity, we worked hard on developing the systems and processes needed to underpin a scalable mission and well-functioning organisation. This included developing our board, website, comms, database, policies and procedures.

It's important to note that all activity during this period, as we tested our proposition, was delivered by part-time volunteers who held senior positions at other organisations.

We are grateful for our talented trustees and support volunteers who have graciously offered their time and expertise to the SoCL at this important moment in our development.

### Testimonial 1 - Secondary School headteacher who participated in our pilot programme for schools

Career pressures have, in the past, left me completely broken. Where medical therapies have proved useless for me, talking therapies were my only support option and got me back on an even keel and working again. Returning to school leadership has been a joy, though not without its stresses and strains, particularly in the era of the pandemic.

I was invited to an introductory workshop on meditation in the Christian tradition led by Chris as a support for headteachers during the exceptional COVID challenges. Being secular in outlook and with a science background, I was sceptical to say the least. I did not go in expecting to gain much. But I was immediately struck by the simplicity of the practice and glimpsed for the first time how meditation might help me to deal better with my everyday challenges.

I started to attend the weekly online sessions of the practice community and it soon became obvious that I was being helped to find and retain a sense of calm through these troubled times. Within a month I was meditating every morning and evening and I am learning more about the practice all the time.

**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES  
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It is hard to express the significant difference the practice makes. Apart from feeling calmer, when discussing whether I should arrange a session for my whole staff team I asked a colleague whether they thought the practice was having any effect on me. I was genuinely shocked by their reply - that in the 10 plus years they had known me, they had never seen me so calm and balanced despite us facing the toughest challenges we have ever faced.

Furthermore, they said my calmness was becoming infectious across the organisation. Subsequent discussions across my senior leadership team, staff and students confirm this as being a noticeable change in me since I started the practice.

It is difficult to see these things for myself, but that has given me encouragement to continue the practice. Having introduced the idea to staff already, The School of Contemplative Life will soon be working with my academy to explore how the practice can help us as an organisation across all staff and students. We are especially keen to see how we can use the practice to support some of our most vulnerable children, who desperately need healing and support.

I do not begin to understand how the practice of silent meditation is proving to have such a positive effect on my relationships, but I feel more at one with those around me and with God than I have ever experienced before. My continued practice is therefore inevitable as calm relationships are the only way I will get through these troubling times.

I and many of my colleagues have discovered a simple pathway to mental peace. It has been revolutionary. Rather than skilling us up, it has started a movement. I have come through the toughest of years with a smile in my heart.

**Testimonial 2 - A young black woman who attends the weekly online meditation group and struggled with processing her feelings around the murder of George Floyd**

I wanted to get in touch and say 'thank you'.

I was sceptical, though I know that in theory, mediation will at the very least provide a time of quiet and space. What I couldn't really understand is how this can be used as a form of prayer, that silence in its essence is prayer. I think at an intellectual level I still don't understand, but I have had such a positive time in practicing meditation (and by practice, I mean still very much learning) that even if my brain doesn't fully grasp the discipline and merit of meditation, my soul and spirit does.

I was finding it very difficult to switch off those negative, repetitive arousing thoughts. The following evening after we spoke, I tried to meditate. I sat, focusing on only the prayer phrase and to my great surprise, the anger that had overtaken my thoughts for days disappeared immediately and was replaced by a sense of peace, and calm that followed very quickly afterwards.

I was so amazed that I found it almost non-sensical. How could just sitting still (whilst fighting off the distracting thoughts) be as effective as prayer? I don't have the answer to that, but I do know that it works.

I feel sitting quietly before God is transformational. It almost seems like this is a secret weapon. Thank you Chris, thank you for dedication, your commitment, your knowledge and willingness to share your valuable time with us.

**Testimonial 3 - An ordinand who attended a residential retreat in 2022**

Twenty months ago, we received the devastating news that my husband had inoperable cancer.

As I've journeyed with my husband over these months, the sense of heartache has been overwhelming at times. It was through an encounter with the hospice chaplain that I was introduced to mindfulness. However, at the end of the course I asked where God is in mindfulness meditation. I felt vulnerable in silence with all my thoughts and worries. It was at this point that the chaplain introduced me to The School of Contemplative Life.

Despite being brought up in the Church, a committed Christian since the age of 13, actively involved in the Church for over 35 years, and now in the final year of theological training to become a Methodist minister, I knew very little of the rich Christian tradition of contemplative prayer. Therefore, with little familiarity with silent prayer and a personal fear of silence, I was fearful of whether this was the right thing for me. Silence, particularly at night, was difficult as my mind felt weighed down with thoughts and worries about what the future would be like.

## THE SCHOOL OF CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

### REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

FOR THE PERIOD 14TH JULY 2021 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2022

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It was at this point that I met online with Chris and he introduced me to the practice of contemplative prayer. The starting point for me was a gentle invitation to trust that God meets us in the stillness. To trust in a place where there were no words was difficult and only possible through being part of the weekly Practice Community on a Saturday morning, being offered regular spiritual guidance and suggested guided reading. It was Chris's openness and ability to reframe my questions which encouraged me to explore the answers that enabled me to grow in understanding and to have the confidence to explore the early Fathers and Mothers of contemplative practice within the Christian tradition.

The turning point for me was going on a weekend silent retreat run by Chris. The gift of being with community members of The School of Contemplative Life and meditation practice over the weekend was transformative. At times the silence was intense and I cried many times. But I came to understand that healing occurs through the tears in the silence. All that God asks of me is to be present and rest in God's love.

I continue to feel vulnerable, because I am facing loss each day as I slowly watch my husband cope with his treatments while gradually becoming weaker. However, being part of The School of Contemplative Life community has encouraged me greatly to continue to walk forward. The effect of contemplative prayer has been and continues to be transformative. During the last year, the theological framework I previously held has been shattered and replaced by a place of Love - God's love - in which I can rest and from which I boldly challenge the theological constructs which I once held tightly to and am being set free from. I am learning to live in the presence, to "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). I am seeing that the Kingdom of God is here now, within us, and have the confidence to walk forward in peace knowing that while God is ultimately unknowable, he loves each one of us unconditionally.

My situation of heartache has not changed. I continue to care for my husband with terminal cancer. What has changed is my relationship with it. I sense a peace in the silence which words cannot express. I have learnt to reduce my suffering by not focusing on the what if's and/or how awful our situation is. My awareness of these thoughts is still there, but I am learning a new relationship with them and not to chatter with them. This has given me space to breathe and enabled me to be in control of my responses any given situation. The gift of space to be, and to learn a new relationship with my thoughts, has enabled me to experience a wholeness and peace in the midst of heartache that I believe has only been possible by the grace of God.

### FINANCIAL REVIEW

#### Financial position

Income of £14,219 generated during this period is largely reflective of revenue associated with tickets purchased for events. It is encouraging that the majority of people purchasing tickets opted to make a small donation to support the charity on top of the ticket price. Other than what's stated above, we did not actively solicit voluntary donations during this period or have a grant-funding strategy in place.

Expenses during this period of £5,347 were largely associated with venue hire for events. This paints a slightly unrepresentative picture for two reasons:

- 1) Other one-off expenses, such as food for events, were paid for by those involved in the start-up of the charity
- 2) Time, whether teaching or administrative, was provided on a pro-bono basis, again, because this period was focused on testing and learning.

#### Principal funding sources

During the financial period concerned, the primary source of funds was from ticket sales supplemented by donations.

#### Reserves policy

As a start-up we have limited reserves, however a priority is to build these up from 2023. At the year end, reserves held totalled £8,872.

#### Going concern

We have ambitious growth plans and a strategy to develop unrestricted and restricted income. However, this does not affect our going concern - activity and impact generated during the financial period concerned demonstrates our ability to deliver significant impact with minimal cost.

## THE SCHOOL OF CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

### REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

FOR THE PERIOD 14TH JULY 2021 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2022

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#### FINANCIAL REVIEW

##### Principal Risks

The top three principal risks identified are shown below and reflect where we are in our lifecycle:

- Over-reliance on Chris Whittington as the primary teacher;
- Limited unrestricted funds available for investment in growth opportunities;
- Low awareness of our brand.

Each has an associated mitigation strategy in place.

#### STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

##### Governing document

The charity is controlled by its governing document, a deed of trust and constitutes an unincorporated charity.

##### Recruitment and appointment of new trustees

Trustees are appointed by the Members. All trustees are required to have a personal meditation practice and have proven skills which complement those of their fellow trustees.

##### Organisational structure

At present, the charity relies wholly on volunteers to deliver its purpose. This equates to a minimum of 2,000 volunteer hours or 285 days during the reporting period.

##### Induction and training of new trustees

As well as an induction, all new trustees are provided with the Charity Commission's guidance entitled 'The Essential Trustee'. This guidance explains to each trustee, their important role in a sector that contributes significantly to the character and wellbeing of the country through the delivery of public benefit.

##### Key management remuneration

The key management personnel of the charity are the trustees themselves.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 24th May 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

*Carla Cooper*

C Cooper - Trustee



## INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE SCHOOL OF CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

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### Independent examiner's report to the trustees of The School of Contemplative Life

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of The School of Contemplative Life (the Trust) for the period 14th July 2021 to 31st December 2022.

### Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

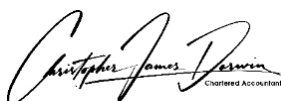
I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under Section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

### Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by Section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

  
Chartered Accountant

Christopher Darwin FCA  
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales

Thomas Coombs Limited  
Chartered Accountants  
3365 The Pentagon  
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24th May 2023

**THE SCHOOL OF CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE**

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES  
FOR THE PERIOD 14TH JULY 2021 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

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	Notes	Unrestricted fund £
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM</b>		
Donations and legacies	2	<b>316</b>
Charitable Activity Income	3	<b>13,903</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>14,219</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON</b>		
<b>Charitable activities</b>	4	
Event expenditure		<b>5,347</b>
<b>NET INCOME</b>		<b>8,872</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<b>8,872</b>

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The notes form part of these financial statements

## THE SCHOOL OF CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

### BALANCE SHEET 31ST DECEMBER 2022

	Notes	Unrestricted fund £
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash at bank		<b>9,772</b>
<b>CREDITORS</b>		
Amounts falling due within one year	8	<b>(900)</b>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>8,872</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>8,872</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>8,872</b>
<b>FUNDS</b>	9	
Unrestricted funds		<b>8,872</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>		<b>8,872</b>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 24th May 2023 and were signed on its behalf by:

*Carla Cooper*

C Cooper - Trustee

The notes form part of these financial statements

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

**Basis of preparing the financial statements**

The financial statements of the charity, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice' applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Charities Act 2011. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis under the historical cost convention, modified to include certain items at fair value. The financial statements are presented in sterling which is the functional currency of the charity and rounded to the nearest £1.

The significant accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all years presented unless otherwise stated.

**Income**

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

For donations to be recognised the charity will have been notified of the amounts and the settlement date in writing. If there are conditions attached to the donation and this requires a level of performance before entitlement can be obtained then income is deferred until those conditions are fully met or the fulfilment of those conditions is within the control of the charity and it is probable that they will be fulfilled.

Income from trading activities includes income earned from fundraising events and trading activities to raise funds for the charity. Income is received in exchange for supplying goods and services in order to raise funds and is recognised when entitlement has occurred.

**Expenditure**

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

**Taxation**

The charity is exempt from tax on its charitable activities.

**Fund accounting**

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objection at the discretion of the trustees.

**Debtors and creditors receivable/payable within one year**

Debtors and creditors with no stated interest rate and receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price. Any losses arising from impairment are recognised in expenditure.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued  
FOR THE PERIOD 14TH JULY 2021 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2022

2. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

Donations	£ <b>316</b>
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3. CHARITABLE ACTIVITY INCOME

Ticket sales	£ <b>13,903</b>
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4. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES COSTS

	Direct Costs (see note 5) £	Support costs (see note 6) £	Totals £
Event expenditure	<b>3,681</b>	<b>1,666</b>	<b>5,347</b>

5. DIRECT COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

Retreat costs	£ <b>3,681</b>
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6. SUPPORT COSTS

	Management £	Governance costs £	Totals £
Event expenditure	<b>766</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>1,666</b>

Support costs, included in the above, are as follows:

	Event expenditure £
Postage and stationery	<b>150</b>
Bank charges	<b>616</b>
Independent examination	<b>900</b>
	<b>1,666</b>

7. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

There were no trustees' remuneration or other benefits for the period ended 31st December 2022.

**Trustees' expenses**

There were no trustees' expenses paid for the period ended 31st December 2022.

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued**  
**FOR THE PERIOD 14TH JULY 2021 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

**8. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR**

Other creditors	£ <b>900</b>
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**9. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS**

	Net movement in funds £	At 31/12/22 £
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>		
General fund	<b>8,872</b>	<b>8,872</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<b>8,872</b>	<b>8,872</b>

Net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>			
General fund	<b>14,219</b>	<b>(5,347)</b>	<b>8,872</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<b>14,219</b>	<b>(5,347)</b>	<b>8,872</b>

**10. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES**

There were no related party transactions for the period ended 31st December 2022.

**THE SCHOOL OF CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE**

**DETAILED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES  
FOR THE PERIOD 14TH JULY 2021 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

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£

**INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS**

**Donations and legacies**

Donations 316

**Charitable Activity Income**

Ticket sales 13,903

**Total incoming resources 14,219**

**EXPENDITURE**

**Charitable activities**

Retreat costs 3,681

**Support costs**

**Management**

Postage and stationery 150

Bank charges 616

766

**Governance costs**

Independent examination 900

Total resources expended 5,347

**Net income 8,872**

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements