

## THE BAPTIST UNION RETREAT GROUP 2012/13 REPORT

The Baptist Union Retreat Group (BURG), formed in 1988 following the Revd Margaret Jarman's Presidential year where she took the theme 'Prayer and Action', and invited others to join her on retreat. Those early beginnings of experiencing 'retreat' led to the formation of BURG with the aim of making retreats accessible for others within the Baptist family. The focus on 'prayer and silence' has remained, whether the retreat is led by someone around a particular theme, or someone choosing an individually guided retreat with its focus on individual prayer, usually around a passage of scripture and supported by a daily meeting with an accompanier/spiritual director.

In the last year BURG has been able to offer both the above type of retreats. An autumn retreat was held at Scargill House exploring the theme 'In Search of Gold'. In the absence of the leaders who were unwell, the group offered to each other their own reflections on the biblical stories set out in the retreat programme, allowing them to speak into their own lives. A further retreat was held in December (3-6th) for those wanting to make an individually guided retreat. The venue was Holland House, Crophorne, and each person met with an accompanier, Mrs Heather Andrews, on a one to one basis as they made their own journey with God. The Lent Retreat was again held at Holland House and led by the Revd Geoff Colmer and the director of the Retreat Association, Alison MacTier, taking the theme, 'Songs in the Key of Life' exploring how music can express different experiences in our journey of faith.

The BURG committee consisting of seven people, plus those co-opted with particular skills or experience meet three times a year. On one of these occasions the committee met for a 48 hour gathering, not only to plan a BURG programme for the coming year, but to spend time in 'prayer and silence'. These occasions are also moments to talk or connect with each other's life stories. The Revd Ron Ayres, a founder member of the committee is no longer able to attend meetings due to failing health and we have greatly missed his presence amongst us.

The BURG AGM was held during the quadrennial Conference of the Retreat Association. The Conference held at Swanwick brings together over 300 people for a 4 day conference with a variety of different workshops and expressions of worship on offer. At the AGM the Revd Ian Green was re-elected as chair, Mr Bill Carpenter, re-elected as treasurer and the Revd Brian Howden as secretary, each to serve for one year. Mrs Heather Andrews was elected to the committee to serve for two years. The Revd David Pountain was co-opted to serve for one year with particular responsibility as editor of the Journal. Membership subscriptions were increased in 2012 and this may account in part to a fall in members to 118, down from 152 in 2012. The new BURG website <[www.burg.org.uk](http://www.burg.org.uk)> provides information of events and resources including retreat application and membership forms. Past copies of the Journal are also available to be downloaded as well as Occasional Papers addressing different topics of interest around retreats.

The Journal is published three times a year and includes a variety of articles, some reflecting on a particular topic e.g. in the Winter 2012 edition, the lead article explored the Rhythm of Worship, asking the question 'where is stillness and quiet to be found in our frantic world?' Other articles written by BURG members offer reflections of time on retreat or a particular experience of life. The purpose is to offer insights to nurture each others faith journey. The Journal is also a place to advertise forthcoming retreats with dates, venues and speakers. Contributions are always welcome by the editor.

BURG is a founder member of the Retreat Association - the RA not only organises a quadrennial Conference but publishes an annual booklet entitled 'Retreats' which gives details of many Retreat Houses around the country with details of their current retreat programmes. The Retreat Association office is the most likely first port of call for someone wanting to know more about retreats. The RA can provide information on training courses and links to people to provide help in finding a spiritual director. Also of value are a number of information sheets on a wide range of retreat type topics, which can be located through a link on the BURG website. The RA Office is shortly to relocate to the Clare Foundation in High Wycombe where it will operate alongside other charity organisations. The Revd Ian Green currently serves as a Retreat Association trustee.

BURG has been kept up-to date with developments in the Order for Baptist Ministry and the possibility of offering retreats to OBM members or acting as a link to other retreat possibilities.

As we look to the coming year we have planned an Advent Group Individually Guided Retreat (IGR) at Ivy House, Warminster (2-5 December 2012), a Lent Retreat at Buckfast Abbey, Devon (4-6 April 2014) and an Advent Retreat at Holland House (5-7 December 2014).

One final note, I will be stepping down as secretary at the 2014 AGM. Christine Hutt has recently been co-opted on to the committee and it is our hope, subject to members agreement, that Christine will take over the role of secretary next year, thus ensuring good continuity in the handover.

Brian Howden, Secretary,  
May 2013