

the Journal



Baptist Union Retreat Group

Winter 2012

THE RHYTHM OF WORSHIP

Where is stillness and quiet to be found in our frantic world?

If you join the congregation worshipping in one of our Baptist churches which has embraced modern worship full-heartedly, you will find a ninety year-old singing lustily to the rhythms of the music group and following the words shining from the video projector.

"I know that this is what the younger generation likes," she will tell you, "and I want to encourage them all I can. So I come every week. But if I feel like something quieter and more traditional I'll slip into evensong at the cathedral later in the day."

How loving and understanding of her but wouldn't it be better if she could find times of quietness within the fellowship to which she has belonged most of her life?

There is nothing wrong with new expressions of worship. Indeed it is to be encouraged. Worship needs to be contemporary and it is right that worship should be expressed out of our own culture. In Africa you expect the music and rhythms of Africa to be the medium through which they worship in church. So by all means let us be up-to-date.

We need moments for quiet reflection

Yet where is the stillness and the quiet to be found? In the bustle and the noise of this increasingly frantic world we need moments for quiet reflection more than ever.

If you listen to a great musical opus as well as the beating of the drums and the blasting of the trombones, there are rests and pauses. There are soft and thought provoking slow movements as well as exciting crescendos which take over the whole body.

Shouldn't an act of worship be like that? So often every moment seems to be filled with words or music. Even times of prayer are often accompanied by the strumming of a guitar. It is almost as though we are afraid to listen - to listen to the voice of God.

We believe that BURG still has a vital part to play within our Baptist family. Yes one of our tasks is to arrange retreats for our members, offering days of stillness and meditation and in this *Journal* you will find advertised several retreats for 2012. However, through our BURG membership, shouldn't we also be encouraging local churches to look again at the rhythm of their worship? How can we do this? What do you think? Please let us know.

Have you ever thought of arranging a quiet day for your church, or local group of churches? Why not ask the local Churches Together group to hold a week of guided prayer?

There are so many possibilities and BURG is here to help.



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The Baptist Union Retreat Group is a Founder Member of the Retreat Association.

All views and opinions expressed in this Journal are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of BURG or of the members of the Committee.

QUOTES

If I had not suffered
I would not have known the
love of God.

If many people had not
suffered
God's love would not have
been passed on.

If Jesus had not suffered
God's love would not have
been made visible.

Mizuno Genzo. Japan

We know
that God's arithmetic
is somewhat
odd.

When you subtract
by giving away,
you get more.
When you seek to hoard,
somehow
you seem to lose out

Desmond Tutu

We have all knowN
that moment,
some time or other,
when,
if we ask another question,
it might mean
that we will be
let in for something,
so it is better not to risk it.

Florence Alls horn

As you grow older
you are more likely
to find
that there are things
you have believed
that are no longer
true for you.
So,
do you leave faith behind
or move forward
into new dimensions
of faith?

Anon

GOING WITH THE FLOW

Finding a way to pray and to meditate which suits you.

My mother taught me to read. 'Far, far away on a rock,' we read, over and over again. I forget what was on the rock. Magical creatures of some sort. But this was the beginning of a passion for reading and for books.

My interest had already been awakened by bedtime stories and a tale about stone-age children read by our primary school teacher. I found myself not just listening to words but entering the story, part of the narrative and completely caught up by the action.

This total absorption in a story became more intense when I was able to read. I would forget where I was – in a chair, in bed, in the garden, and travel around the globe. It was easy to identify

A great stimulus to the imagination

with
the

characters and to become transported by them into a different space and time. Reading became a great stimulus to the imagination.

At another point in life I had a go at painting – oil colours and water colours. Although I'm no Eddy Askew, here the same thing happened: a total absorption in the activity and actually entering the painting. Hours would flash by as in a moment. It was a lovely calming experience in a life which was, then, full of frantic activity.

Author, Lynne Hackles, described this as 'entering the zone'. According to her it happens when both reading and writing. "This is when we are in our element, in the zone. You forget you're at the keyboard or sitting with pen in hand because you're in the story, article, novel or poem. It's a magical transformation from writing to living the words..."

Is this what spiritual meditation is all about? When we read scripture, when we spend time in prayer how easy is it to enter the

***Do we enter into the word
pictures of the gospels?***

zone? Do we enter
into the word pic-
tures of the gospels

to become absorbed in the account of our Lord's life? Are his words as alive to us as they were to those who first heard them? Are we part of those who stood around him, waiting, expectant, wondering? Can we hear their murmurings?

It is difficult for those of us who have not steeped ourselves in Ignatian spirituality and practised all the exercises.

In the early days of my ministry I remember one ministerial conference and retreat at Grange over Sands led by the late Dennis Lant. We spent time learning about Orthodox spirituality and then we were sent out for a time of quietness and reflection. Sitting on a sea wall I dutifully went through the process of meditation only to be distracted by the sound of gulls, people passing by and the breeze ruffling my hair. Just about anything but spiritual thoughts entered my mind.

Then the sound of the familiar voice of my college principal: "How do you like being a Trappist monk, David?" Evidently he was finding quiet meditation difficult as well, so I no longer felt so bad. Yet I still needed to find a way that worked for me.

I tried keeping a journal of my spiritual life, such as it was, but I wasn't disciplined enough for it to work for me.

Eventually, almost by accident, I discovered something that did work. It was early on a Sunday morning. The service and the sermon were prepared. 'I am the bread of life,' was the theme.

Reading through all that I'd prepared I sensed that something was missing. I skimmed through books for anything on the subject – a prayer, a poem, a quote from some learned theologian: nothing.

The Bible on my desk was still open at John 6. I read it through again then slipped a piece of paper into my typewriter. “The Bread of Life, Lord?” I typed tentatively. “Not bread, Lord, it's so ordinary!”

Then the words began to flow:

*The Bread of Life, Lord?
Not bread, Lord, it's so ordinary!
We queue for bread in the shops,
jostled by this one and that,
each asking for the family choice;
a sliced loaf; a crusty loaf;
a wrapped loaf; a brown loaf;
a long loaf; a short loaf;
a milk loaf; a nutty loaf,
and a whole-wheat loaf.*

You the Bread of Life?

Why bread, Lord?

Bread is so ordinary...



And so it went on. I'd found my way. I knew how to enter the zone in a way that worked for me.

Writing keeps me awake More than forty years later it is still working.

Writing keeps me awake. It helps my concentration. It focuses my attention on the bible passage or subject before me. I am taken up by the flow.

One day in a week of guided prayer I was given the story of our Lord's baptism, recorded by Luke, as the focus for my meditation:

*...And Jesus, my Lord, my friend, what were you doing
that day in Jordan's water,
baptised by John for the repentance of sin-
you the perfect one who had no sin?*

*Was this day you felt
the weight, the burden
of the world's pain and suffering?*

*Was this the day
when lowered into the flowing river
you plunged into the confused and swirling currents
of human anguish,
of all misdeeds?...*

Art has never worked in the same way. I can understand and appreciate good art, both traditional and modern, yet I am not pulled into the situation of the picture in the way that I am with words. But it does work for many others.

Entering the zone is personal and we each need find our own way. Have fun in discovering how you can enter the “zone.”

DEP

DIGITAL PHOTOS

If you can't write or draw or paint use a camera. Perhaps photography is the answer.

Digital cameras are now widely available and images can easily be transferred to laptops.

On a quiet day or retreat they could be linked to video projectors.

Listen to a Bible story. Go out. Take pictures in places where you could imagine that story being enacted today.

How does the story speak to you set in today's landscape and time: at a wedding, in a market place, by the sea-side? Experiment.

*Sometimes Lord
we forget
why we do
things
and our worship
our organising
become
vain rituals
ends
in themselves
no longer part
of your mission
of love
your reaching out
to those
who seek justice
who are
weighed down
by
life's sorrows
and burdens.*

*So
help us
to maintain
that vision
of who
you are
and what you have done
in love for us
and what you
expect of us.*

ANOTHER YEAR ANOTHER RETREAT

Looking forward to a New Year with BURG.

We have several retreats planned for 2012. The Lent Retreat will be held at Ivy House, Warminster. Chris Ellis has chosen the title: "Picturing the Passion: Art and Spirituality for Holy Week". You will need to book very soon for this retreat which takes place from the Friday 30 March to Sunday 1 April.

An autumn retreat is once again to be held in Yorkshire, at Scargill House, from 1-4 October. This 'Yorkshire Retreat' has proved popular in recent years. Make sure that you don't miss out by booking too late

From 3-6 December we have arranged a Group Individually Guided Retreat to take place at Holland House. Further details will be available later

These are all advertised elsewhere in this *Journal*. Gill Roberts is hoping that they will all be 'sold out' so please get your booking forms to her quickly. Please note that Gill has a new email address. It is: gill-roberts@live.co.uk

A reminder that the BURG AGM in 2012 will be held during the Retreat Association Conference at Swanwick, Derbyshire on Wednesday 16 May at 4 pm. At previous conferences there has been a good number of BURG members present and we hope a number of you will be able to attend in 2012. The dates are the 14 to 17 May.

If you are arranging quiet days or retreats locally we would be pleased to hear about them and, if possible, we will advertise them in 'The Journal'.

Also it would be good to receive news of what BURG members and groups are doing in their local areas. Sharing news will inspire others in their search for new ideas for quiet days, guided prayer and retreats.

AN UNKNOWN SOLDIER IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

I asked God for strength,
that I might achieve;
I was made weak,
that I might learn humbly to obey

I asked for health,
that I might do greater things;
I was given infirmity,
that I might do better things.

I asked for power,
that I might have the praise of men;
I was given weakness,
that I might face the need of God.

'For in him we live and
move, in him we exist.'
Acts 17:28

*Lord
when we hear
those words
our lives change
we no longer
see them
as our own
but
yours to take
and use
as you wish
for
your work
your Kingdom.*

*Even so
we confess
that we take
a lot of pushing
and shoving
and convincing
when your call
is
into uncomfortable
and
threatening
situations.*

*Lord
give us courage
to
follow where
you lead
knowing that when
you call
you also give
us what we
need.*

*Lord
flood us
with your light
that we may be
beacons
of hope
to all
whom
we meet.*



Browsing along a book shelf with Chris Redman

Do you have a favourite bookshop? One of my favourites is the bookshop at Sarum College, Salisbury. I can quite happily spend an hour or so browsing along its shelves, I don't always spend any money, but I usually do!

Recently, I was attracted by a little hard-backed book simply entitled 'Labyrinth' by Brian Draper. Initially, it was not the title that drew me to it, but the photograph on its cover of a labyrinth. I instantly recognized it, as I have walked its tiny winding path on several occasions on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly.

I bought the book and have discovered a little gem. It only takes a couple of leisurely hours to read and gaze over the beautiful photos which adorn every page. It is one of those books that I shall return to often. It is profound in its simplicity. The reader is invited to travel their own spiritual personal labyrinth, assured

Follow the path and you will always reach the centre that it is a safe journey to make, for unlike a maze, you

cannot get lost travelling along the paths of a labyrinth. Follow the path and you will always reach the centre and find your way back out again. So the journey began, 'a journey not to be missed and neither to be rushed' suggests the author.

Throughout the book there are encouraging words for the traveller as they encounter new scenery and offered thought provoking questions from the author at resting places along the way. They are reminded that this is not a fearful journey, so walk slowly, breathe slowly and travel lightly.

It is a journey of letting go, becoming unburdened of personal baggage, and moving into silence, 'into a space in which we can listen for the still, small voice, the voice of our conscience, the whisper of Spirit, the gentle call of God in our lives'.

And so after much twisting and turning and trusting the path, the centre is reached. It is a place to rest, to stand on holy ground and encounter God who is already there, awaiting our arrival and

A place to rest, to stand on holy ground and encounter God who is already there desiring to grace the traveller

with presence. There is the opportunity to consider the journey thus far, to discover God's presence and perhaps re-discover ourselves as we are held within the heart of God before moving on again, this time outwards, for the centre is not the end of the journey.

Fresh from encounter, the traveller moves on, back into the world from which they came, but back into a world that may seem new.

NOTICES

LENT RETREAT

“Picturing the Passion: Art and Spirituality for Holy Week”

at

IVY HOUSE
Warminster

led by

Chris Ellis

Friday, 30 March

to

Sunday 1 April 2012

AUTUMN RETREAT

at

SCARGILL HOUSE

Yorkshire

1 - 4 October 2012

Further details and bookings forms from Retreats Secretary, Gill Roberts:

31 Long Grove, Seer Green, Beaconsfield, Bucks, HP9 2YN

Tel: 01494 677281
Email: gill-roberts@live.co.uk

This is most definitely a book to be relished and read slowly; be prepared to be changed, travel with openness and expect the unexpected.

When I came to the end of this insightful little book, I was drawn to search the internet for a labyrinth outline, to make my own labyrinth walk at home in my armchair. I chose different colours to shade in my path, changing colour as my mood changed. Sometimes the path seemed very long and monotonous, sometimes the centre seemed very near



The labyrinth on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly

only to discover that the path drew me away for a while, at other moments the path seemed to become clearer and I was aware of different feelings.

This journey was a deep spiritual experience for me. May it also be for you too, it is worth searching your book shop for a copy.

'Labyrinth' - illuminating the inner path by Brian Draper, pub. Lion books



YOUR FAVOURITE BOOKS

Helping each other on our spiritual journeys

Heather Andrews had several appreciative comments about her book item in the autumn *Journal*. After reading the article, Chris Redman, a member of South Street Baptist Church, Yeovil, and also a BURG member, sent the above account of a favourite book of hers.

Do you have a favourite book which you feel other members of BURG would benefit by reading it? If so we would be pleased to receive an account of why you have found it helpful in your spiritual journey. If you find it difficult to choose one book, then tell us about the others as well. This is one of the ways in which we can help each other, as members of BURG, on our separate spiritual journeys.



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The Editor welcomes contributions, related to the retreat movement, in the form of articles, reports, prayers and poems but cannot always guarantee to include them.

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GROUP INDIVIDUALLY GUIDED RETREAT

at

HOLLAND HOUSE

3 - 6 December 2012

Further details and bookings forms from Retreats Secretary, Gill Roberts:

31 Long Grove, Seer Green,
Beaconsfield, Bucks,
HP9 2YN

Tel: 01494 677281

Email:

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THE MOUNTAIN TOP

*Heavenly Father
we all need
moments of vision
when we glimpse
the eternal
beyond
the temporal
moments
when we catch
the sight
of
something
which has
lasting worth,
beyond the concerns
of our world
moments
with our Lord
on the
mountain top
listening to him
preparing us
for your work
in the world
in the city
in every place.*

*Father
help us
to listen
to
your son.*