



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



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# The Journal

The Magazine of the Baptist Union Retreat Group

Autumn 2016

## BURG at Iona

*BURG member Hazel  
Richardson reflects  
on this summer's visit*

It may have got off to an inauspicious start, with several people's journeys being disrupted as a result of the previous night's storms, but isn't it said that the challenges and discomforts of the journey are an important part of any pilgrimage? Fortunately, however, we all arrived in Oban in time to spend the night there before travelling on to Iona.

There's an old Gaelic saying meaning, "Those who come to Iona will come, not once, but three times", and this was indeed the third week I have spent on this tiny and beautiful island – but it was my first experience of staying in the Abbey as a temporary part of the Iona Community, which was a special joy.

After a warm welcome with short-bread and tea, we were shown to our shared rooms and allocated our tasks for the week – an excellent way to become part of the community and get to know the other people who were sharing the Abbey accommodation with us. Hospitality is a big feature of the Iona Community's ethos and, as well as its delicious



vegetarian food, a great benefit of this wonderfully ecumenical and open community is the chance to get to know people who make the journey to Iona from all over the world.

Barbara and Bill had selected an Open Week for our visit, allowing us freedom to choose how to spend our time. The inspiring morning and evening services in the Abbey Church always reflected the Community's well-known focus on justice and peace. Various sessions led by the staff and members of the Community were also on offer: "Inner Pilgrimage" incorporated a powerful meditation by the German Benedictine Anselm Grün, highlighting the transformative nature of pilgrimage; "What are we Singing?",

*continued on p.2*



**There's an old Gaelic saying meaning, "Those who come to Iona will come, not once, but three times"**

## **BURG at Iona** *continued*

invited us to reflect on the words of some of our church music, perhaps especially older hymns, and how they may come across as exclusive or somehow inappropriate in our time and culture, and introducing us to some of the Wild Goose songs; and a beautiful young and vibrant Ugandan woman, part of the Macleod Centre staff, gave us a truly inspirational presentation describing how her childhood dream, of installing accessible and hygienic toilets for disabled children in Uganda, is now coming to fruition, thanks to her vision and perseverance.

We benefited greatly from our Member in Residence for the week, David Coleman, a URC minister from Greenock whose creativity, imagination and sense of fun were a great delight. He illustrated his presentation about the Iona Community with a lovely animated film of his own making, and amazed us with his spontaneous film of the stunning double rainbow that appeared right above the Abbey one evening – not just the rainbow, but the joyous response of everyone rushing out to see it and photograph it. "By the way, it's Ok to say 'Oh my God' at this moment," he called out as he filmed!

We also much appreciated David's sensitive introduction to the powerful Service of Prayer for Healing, which was held one evening during the week.

The Pilgrimage Walk around the island that takes place every Tuesday, weather permitting, was one of the highlights of the week. Weather

was more than 'permitting' – it was a sparkingly beautiful day! We had a choice of a shorter road walk or a longer off-road hike, both including pauses at spiritually significant points, where we were led in reflection, prayer and song before continuing on our way, encouraged to share conversation with other pilgrims as we walked, enhancing our sense of community and mutual support. Both walks met at the half-way point, where the Community's van appeared with delicious home-made flapjacks and very welcome mugs of tea to keep us going!

Some of us spent a wonderful afternoon on an expedition to the tiny island of Staffa – even spotting a minke whale; others enjoyed walking quietly around the island, simply enjoying the beautiful seascapes and watching the animals graze contentedly in the fields; a few found the energy to climb Dun I and enjoy an even more spectacular view from the top; some energetically joined in the ceilidh; I think all of us appreciated the range of books, crafts and paintings in the village's tiny shops and galleries – not to mention the teas in the cosy cafes! – and at the Guest Concert was an evening of laughter and fun. Whatever ways we chose to spend our time in this amazing place, I am sure it was a week we will always treasure in our memories. Thank you so much, Barbara and Bill, for organising it for us.



## Upcoming Retreats organised by BURG

### Advent Retreat 2016 at Holland House, Cropthorne

25th-27th November 2016  
led by the BURG Committee

### Lent Retreat 2017 at Buckfast Abbey

31st March-2nd April 2017  
led by Barbara Carpenter  
and Simon Woodman

### Autumn Retreat 2017 at St Cuthman's, West Sussex

20th-22nd October 2017  
led by Tim Mountain



Do remember that we love to arrange times of INDIVIDUALLY GUIDED RETREAT  
Please contact Gill Roberts if you are interested.

Booking forms for any of these retreats are available from  
The Retreats Secretary, Mrs Gill Roberts

# THANK YOU!

We express our thanks to Revd David Pountain who, after many years of service, has retired from editing The BURG JOURNAL.  
Our best wishes go to David and Dorothy.



We were saddened recently to hear of the death of Mrs Edna Markwell—a much respected member of BURG over many years.  
Our prayerful best wishes go out to Edna's family

## The Baptist Union Retreat Group

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## My Journey—with Ignatius of Loyola



The Revd Geoff Colmer, Central Baptist Association Regional Minister and BURG member, was our speaker at this year's BURG AGM.

He shares with us a reflection on his journey with God using the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises.



*'I beg your pardon,' said the Mole, pulling himself together with an effort. 'You must think me very rude; but all this is so new to me. So—this—is—a—River!'*

*'The River,' corrected the Rat.*

*'And you really live by the river? What a jolly life!'*

*'By it and with it and on it and in it,' said the Rat. 'It's brother and sister to me, and aunts, and company, and food and drink, and (naturally) washing. It's my world, and I don't want any other. What it hasn't got is not worth having, and what it doesn't know is not worth knowing. Lord! the times we've had together!'*

For me, this episode from Kenneth Graham's *The Wind in the Willows*, is a reminder to ensure that in my relationship with God, I don't, as it were, stand on the banks of the river, but enter its flow. For all of us, we can become so preoccupied with the activity of ministry and mission, and in the process 'grow weary in doing what is right' (Gal. 6.9), that we fail to get wet!

What has helped me recently has been a journey I began in 2013 with Ignatius of Loyola. More accurately, the journey was with God but in the company of this sixteenth-century saint in the form of his Spiritual Exercises.

Initially it lasted about ten months, as I committed to praying each morning and evening for set periods of time and to meeting with a guide each week to reflect.

The aim of the Spiritual Exercises is 'to help a person to grow in spiritual freedom in order to respond to the call of Christ'. Put another way, they are to enable an individual to experience personal encounter with God and make a response. In our sort of language, we're talking about Christian discipleship.

They have a structure which, using Scripture, begins with a foundation established on God's unconditional love and upon which the entire Exercises are constructed. They continue with a challenging reflection on the sinfulness of humanity before engaging with Jesus in his mission through gospel contemplations on his life and work. This moves into considering the cost of following Jesus through meditations on Christ's suffering and death, and culminates in an experience of the joy and hope of Christ's resurrection. The Exercises conclude where they began, with a 'Contemplation on the Love of God' which provides the context for 'finding God in all things'.

What I most appreciated was the growing sense of intimacy through spoken and silent prayer, and through reading and meditation on Scripture which was the means of personal encounter. There was a real sense of being with Jesus through all the events of his life but also Jesus being with me, here and now, in all the events of my life. I relished the emphasis upon 'finding God in all things', not denying the fallen-ness of the world but recognising that the world is still God's good creation and that God loves it and is in it. I valued the emphasis upon contemplation, but also on mission, rooted in the phrase 'being contemplative in action'.

And I could go on!