



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



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www.burg.org.uk

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baptistunionretreatgroup.blogspot.com

The Journal

The Magazine of the Baptist Union Retreat Group

Autumn 2017

'I'm so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers!'

I recently attended a Ministers' Breakfast. Sixteen Baptist Ministers from all over Buckinghamshire were there, seated around a big table tucking into the granola and croissants! There was lots of friendly banter and it was a lovely occasion.



After sipping my orange juice I was in full flow describing my holiday to a colleague I much respect when I found myself just being a touch negative about the accommodation. 'Oh Ian', she said, with a smile upon her face, 'Just shut up and be grateful!'

Now, you can only speak like that to a good friend!

She was right – absolutely right. We had spent a super two weeks in a lovely part of Britain, in a very nice flat, with very reasonable weather. It was 98% perfect – so why did I slip into moaning about that 2%?

I suspect we all do it: 'Lovely dinner, but what a shame they served instant coffee instead of filter afterwards!'

Call it 'finding fault' or simply 'missing the point' – the truth is that, by and large, most of us have far more to be thankful for than to grumble about.

Words matter.

Recently the Daily Telegraph published a blank page. It looks really odd – a page without words. It was a protest really, a statement by the journalists saying they'd prefer to print no words than sentences of 'fake news'.

At the Ministers' Breakfast I was gently and wisely reprimanded for using my words in complaint rather than gratitude.

Developing and sustaining a thankful, grateful heart is probably one of the keys to good, healthy living. It's part of the reason behind that Ignatian tradition of the Examen at the end of the day; an opportunity to look back and be grateful for the surprises, challenges and blessings that have come our way.

David Steindl-Rast's book, *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer*, is a wonderful read on this subject and one I return to often.

So, as we leave the days of summer and enter the year's end, instead of regretting the change of seasons, perhaps we should take a lead from Anne of Green Gables and say, 'I'm so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers!'

Ian Green

THE BURG COMMITTEE



At the AGM in June, Tim Mountain was appointed our new Chairperson, with Christine Hutt reappointed as Secretary and Bill Carpenter as Treasurer.

Janet Boyle, Gill Roberts and Pauline West were reappointed onto the Committee and Ian Green co-opted as Journal Editor and Heather Andrews continues to serve.

The Committee meets in February at Sarum College, Salisbury for a residential and in September, usually in Abingdon

BURG AGM: 24th June 2017

The AGM was held this year at Amersham Free Church.

After the usual business session, Tim Mountain spoke of his research amongst Baptist as to the meaning and practice of Spiritual Direction.



We were joined by Allison MacTier of the Retreat Association. Alison thanked BURG for the small gift we had given to help with her recent Sabbatical. She also told us of next year's Retreat Association Conference being held in Swanwick

between 18th - 21st June 2018 entitled '*Sounding The Silence*'.

Further details and a booking form for this can be found on the RA website:

www.retreats.org.uk

BURG Bursaries are available for the RA Conference next year—please enquire to Gill Roberts (contact details on back page) if you would like to discuss this as being appropriate for you or a friend.



BOOK REVIEW *by John Rackley***Something more***John Pritchard*

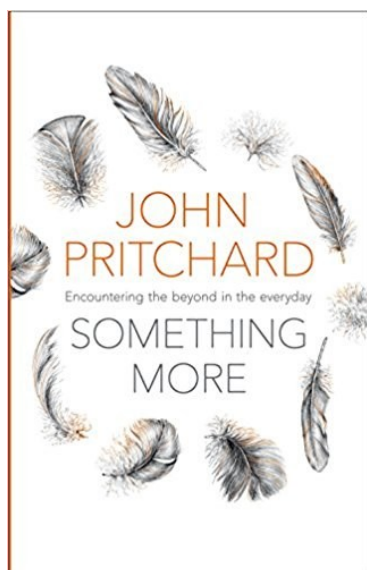
SPCK

ISBN 978-0-281-07352-8

John Pritchard is a retired bishop in the Church of England and is a prolific author. He writes accessible and unfussy books about the core beliefs and practices of Christian Faith. His chapters are succinct and follow a similar pattern – contemporary reference, a reflection, helpful quotations concluding with scripture and ways to follow-up the theme.



'*Something More – encountering the beyond in the everyday*' to give it its full title, has been for me a wonderful experience.



He writes for people for whom the familiar theological words and themes of Christian believing have lost their meaning. Moreover he is writing for others for whom they never had any meaning and need to be introduced to God in language which is not ecclesiastical in-talk.

It is a book about spirituality not religion. God is rarely mentioned. He talks rather about the divine and the transcendent. What he believes is that God has laid a trail of divine scent in the experiences joyous and horrid which the seeking and desperate can find. He illustrates this by a story any dog-lover will cherish.

He has a gift for chapter titles so 'Is that it?' a sense of completeness or 'Tell it slant': the disturbing beauty of the arts or 'Darkness at noon': the sudden collapse of our world or 'He hath a daily beauty': the influence of special people.

I found this a refresher course in the raw materials of prayer and living by faith. It neither drew me toward church nor took me away. It simply, to use a title from Barbara Brown Taylor introduced me to the many 'altars in the world'.

The book is worth the front cover design alone and this wonderful quotation from Rowan Williams; which sums up why Pritchard wrote it.

*Spirituality is the cultivation of a sensitive and rewarding relationship
with eternal truth and love*

Silence and Honeycakes

It deserves a reading retreat but may well reduce you to silence.

*John Rackley is living in Leicestershire near Launde Abbey and continues a ministry of spiritual direction. He will also be leading a holiday retreat **From Here to Eternity** in Italy in September 2018. Using the writings of Henri Nouwen, he will explore what it means to have a mature faith and the different ways in which the spirit moves us at different times of our lives*

For more information: www.umbrianretreats.com 01733 552535 / 07702 341041

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BURG NEWS...

The BURG ARCHIVES

These have now been lodged at the
Angus Library at Regent's Park
College, Oxford and includes
reports, accounts, minutes and
occasional papers dating back to
1989.

The BURG BLOG

We started the Blog during Lent
with weekly meditations and these
are still available. Further
meditations will be posted
throughout Advent 2017

baptistunionretreatgroup.blogspot.com

Christine Hutt reflects on **Encountering Difference in Others and in Ourselves**

This was an experiential day led by Gavin and Jo Knight at Cuddesdon College in July 2017. The speakers complemented each other; Gavin gave a theological focus, whereas Jo gave a psychological one.

We began with each of us taking a stone, telling of our hopes for the day and building a cairn. A thought-provoking video 'love has no labels' was followed by a theological reflection on 'walls' and posed the question: do we treat people in an I/thou relationship or an I/it one?

In small groups we considered how Jesus included those on the margins of society. Being a hot day it was lovely to eat our lunch in the grounds of the College and catch up with other people. The after lunch 'grave-yard' slot was led by Jo with a psychological reflection on empathy, which started with an audio clip of a baby crying. This made sure that we did not fall asleep! We were reminded that empathy is the ability to imagine what it is like to be another person (a 2-way process) as Atticus in 'To kill a mocking bird' said – 'climb into his skin and walk around in it'.

An exercise where we chose 2 pairs of shoes from pictures on the floor, one pair that we were drawn to and one pair that unsettled us, led us to meditate on who owned them, where they had travelled and what it was like to be the person that wore them.

The day finished with a Godly Play session on the Good Samaritan. During the discussion following, everyone went very quiet and looked towards one end of the room where there sat a tiny mouse which had come in from the fields, it was picking up crumbs from the floor and eating them. Everyone stared for some time, but the mouse was not bothered about the people there. Eventually someone got a piece of paper and a sandwich wrapper and carefully returned the mouse to the fields. Certainly an experience of dealing with 'otherness'!

The final session saw us collect a stone from the cairn and say what we had gained from the day. It is certainly a day that I will long remember; it made you think, consider, meditate, and use all of your senses in encountering difference/otherness.

