

Promoting Retreats

The Newsletter of the Association for Promoting Retreats | Autumn 2023

APR Autumn retreat
Page 4

Our new website
Page 5

50 years of retreat-making
Page 6

Looking to the future
Page 9



Letter from our President, the Rt Revd John Stroyan



'In the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high shall break upon us' (Luke 1.78)

This is the Spirit-filled prophecy of Zechariah heralding the coming of Christ. How often do we reflect on the tenderness of God? Perhaps we should do so more. God wants us, however, not simply to reflect on it, but to experience it. But do we? Perhaps through the bumps and bruises of this life we have lost touch with the tenderness within us and have allowed our hearts to be hardened or calloused. The Scriptures warn us of this danger, and exhort us to 'harden not your hearts' (Ps. 95.8, also Hebrews 3.8; 4.7).

God longs, and this is the work of the Spirit, to soften our hearts, or, in the words of Ezekiel, to 'take away our hearts of stone and to give us hearts of flesh'. Hard hearts can neither receive nor share the tender love of God. For this reason, St Irenaeus of Lyons (c 130-202 AD) writes 'keep your hearts soft and tractable, lest you lose the imprint of his love.'

Tenderness is an expression of the mercy of God. As those who have experienced and know our need of the mercy

of God, we are called to reciprocate in our relationships with others. As Paul writes, 'Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven you' (Eph.4.32).

God says through Hosea, 'I will woo my people into the wilderness and speak tenderly to their hearts'. Retreats give us the opportunity to let down our defences with God and to allow ourselves to know and experience the tender love of God. God longs for us to know that each of us is a beloved and uniquely precious child, called by name. May we find space both to receive and to share the tender love of God. Let us give thanks for all who work in retreat houses for offering such spaces for the renewal and refreshment of so many.



+ John

Letter from our Chair, the Revd Carol Smith



And Jesus said to [the scribe], "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matthew 8.20).

It is said, 'there is no place like home'. An expression perhaps most commonly used when one's been away then returned to one's own bed. No matter how enjoyable the travels, there really is no place like home!

When I reflect on the Retreat Houses that I have stayed in, I realise these are places where I quickly feel 'at home'. I might list a warm welcome, gracious hospitality, an atmosphere of peace, and some green space as contributory factors to this sense of at-homeness.

Since vacating a vicarage and moving into our own new-build house I have been enjoying home-making. There have been many eureka moments. One was disposing of the last empty packing box! And another when the final furniture delivery was made: a new guest bed for whoever may come and stay.

This sense of completion occurred on a beautiful sunny day so I celebrated by taking

a walk along Herne Bay seafront. The Coastguard Station has a sea-facing alcove at ground level. Currently it is crudely cordoned-off by red and white tape, presumably to keep intruders out. But a mattress, bedding, clothing and other paraphernalia evidences one or more people having made this space 'home'. It struck me that as I've drawn my new bedroom curtains at night, the occupant(s) of the alcove sleep facing an unpredictable sea! Our worlds are so far apart. I don't imagine the homeless dwelling is entirely through choice, although I do wonder who feels closest to God?

Saint Anthony springs to mind. Probably the most well-known of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, Anthony left behind the trappings of a wealthy lifestyle and ventured out into the Eastern Desert seeking after a life of humility, solitude and



Herne Bay seafront,
image ©Colin Smith

spiritual reflection. He made his home in a small cave where he lived ascetically. Many sought him out for his wisdom. His followers built the Monastery of Saint Anthony, which I understand is one of the most prominent in Egypt and still attracts pilgrims.

Reflecting as I am on the concept of 'home' and where

we might meet God, I wonder what Anthony would make of our world today? I also wonder what retreatants most commonly look for from a Retreat House? *(If you'd care to respond, perhaps APR could share your collective wisdom in the next newsletter.)*

Carol Smith



'Encountering God': APR Autumn Retreat at Shallowford House

Book now for one of the last available places on our 2023 autumn retreat, which will be led by Bishop John from 31 Oct till 2 Nov at Shallowford House in Staffordshire!

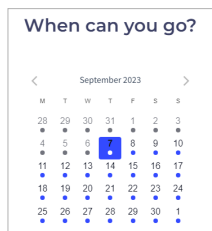
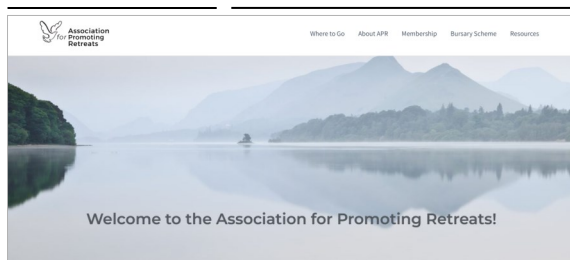
Entitled '*God who comes to meet us - Encountering God*', Bishop John says, 'The Church is not about the church: it is about God and the world for which Christ died. In this retreat we will be reflecting on God's desire that we should know him, not simply know about him. Drawing on the Scriptures and the wisdom that the Church of the East can bring, and also

on the arts in their various dimensions, we will explore how we might deepen our relationship with God and the world which God so loves.'

Set within 9 acres of secluded gardens, Shallowford House is just 4 miles from both the M6 and Stone railway station, so is easily accessible from all parts of the country. The retreat will cost £250 per person which includes all your meals; all rooms have en suite facilities. Booking forms are available on our website, promotingretreats.org, or we can post you one - just ring us on (01395) 272243.



Visit our new website: *promotingretreats.org*



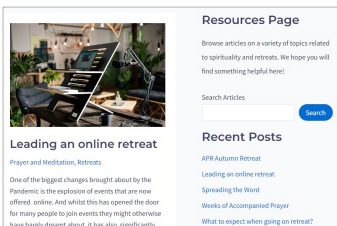
Have you explored the new APR website yet? It's clear and easy-to-use, with all the information you might need directly accessible from the home page.

Where would you like to go on retreat? Explore our interactive map, where you can find listings of around 70 APR member houses, each with colour photos, information about their accommodation and/or events, contact details and links to their own website so you can find out more.

When can you go? Compare the gaps in your own diary with more than 200 Quiet Days and retreats listed in our online calendar, with helpful links to book your place!

Have you heard about our **Bursary Fund**, and want to find out more? Maybe you are facing financial challenges, and need help funding your retreat? Or perhaps you would like to donate to the Fund, and help others find the prayerful space that they might desperately need?

If you need to **renew your subscription**, or want to take out a new membership, you can choose to do this through the website using a simple online application form, and pay via Paypal.



And finally, there is a useful **Resources** page, with a range of regularly-updated articles to encourage your own spirituality and support your retreat-taking experience.



Reflections on a lifetime of retreating *by Rachael Williard*



Rachael Williard first joined the APR in the early 1970's and has been a member ever since. We are very grateful for her varied reflections on almost half a century of retreat-making.

A historic image of Abbey House, in Glastonbury



I grew up in an Anglican home and also met Methodist and Quaker influences. My Quaker headmistress included a short time of quiet in daily assemblies which I grew to love. The Anglican chaplaincy at London University deepened this appreciation.

I recall an early experience of going on a parish 'preached' retreat at **Abbey House Glastonbury** as feeling somewhat austere and radiator-hugging! Another 'preached' retreat was at either **Alresford House** or **Catherington House**.

My earliest memory of a silent retreat, as an undergraduate, was with the Sisters of the **Community of St John the Evangelist at Clewer**. Memories of post-war austerity stands out, and the leadership was still with

ordained men, for whom special residential arrangements were made.

During this period my cousin became an Anglican Sister with the **Community of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Wantage**, and it was there that I had my first and compelling taste of an individually guided retreat (IGR), offered by one of the Sisters.

I was married in 1973 and in 1987 we moved to inner-city London. Following my 'taster' IGR, I did the Ignatian Exercises (in daily life) and a then a workshop on Open Door retreats (led by a Roman Catholic (RC) Sister), which enabled me to introduce this basic Ignatian dynamic in groups at various homes and also retreat houses.

The workshop was at **The Royal Foundation of St Katharine** in Stepney which then seemed rather dark and old-fashioned. Although I haven't returned there since, I know it has been beautifully modernised and offers a lively programme engaging with the city in which it is set. At this time I met a very wise (Anglican) sister from the **Society of St Margaret** in Queensbridge Road, Hackney.

*Wychcroft Retreat
Centre (far right)*

We worked together running Open Door retreats, and later, Weeks of Accompanied Prayer.

My first 8-day IGR was in at **Grayshott**, a life-changing experience led by ecumenically-minded RC Sisters. Here I became an advocate of offering and receiving scriptural 'individual guidance'. I went several times to **St Beuno's** in north Wales, as it specialises in this particular work. I was gradually 'trained up' and became a member of the team offering IGR's at **Glenfall House** in Cheltenham twice yearly. Many mourned its closure by the Gloucester Diocese in 2013. This house, a favourite venue, was grand for some tastes, but the comfort and above all, the isolated setting, gardens and panoramic views, especially from the Chapel, made it a memorable and beautiful place to be in silence.

*Part of the gardens
at Launde Abbey*



Wychcroft, the Southwark diocesan centre, at the **Retreat House at Pleshey** and at **Bishop Woodford House** in Ely. I had the privilege of working in IGR teams at **Nympsfield** near Stroud and also at **Brownshill Monastery**, where a community of Bernadine Cistercian nuns run a retreat house. The warm relationship between Anglicans and RCs is a welcome feature of the last 50 years or so.

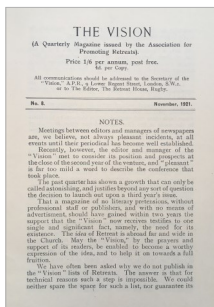
I have been privileged indeed to make a retreat most years, usually an IGR, and have had positive experiences at them all: at **St Peter Bourne** in north London, at **Compton Durville** with the Anglican Franciscan sisters, at **Launde Abbey**, and at **Ty Mawr** near Monmouth.

I look forward to my annual copy of *Retreats*, and give great thanks for all these opportunities to explore God's abundant love, for those who set up and run Retreat centres, and, of course, for the part played by the APR.

Some fun facts and figures from the APR archive...



An early edition of *The Vision* from the APR archive, dated November 1921



The APR was founded in London in 1913, by a group of ladies and clergy, who hoped to arrange retreats for 'working women from a Friday evening through to a Monday morning'. They were an enthusiastic group with high ideals, attracting funding from sizeable private donations, and later through generous legacies too. They purchased a large house in Chiswick for women's retreats, followed in 1920 by one in Hendon for the men.

Whilst the APR's original aim was to organise and run 'short retreats for busy people' at these houses, they soon adopted a wider remit, namely, to 'popularise the idea of retreat' and become 'a central place of information with regard to retreats.' As the houses became increasingly costly to run (and were eventually sold), promoting retreats became the APR's primary role, and thanks to their work, retreat attendance in 1966 was reported to be 20,500 nationally!

The APR has always been a membership organisation, with the original Constitution of 1919 stating that, 'Members of the Association

pledge themselves to pray regularly for the APR and for the retreat movement: to give a minimum subscription of 2/6 a year: to make an annual retreat, if possible'.

Members had to be formally elected to the APR at Executive Committee meetings; by 1917, there were over 300 paid-up members, almost half of whom were clergy. New subscriptions continued to flourish, with, for example, a further 140 new members joining in 1920, and 208 in 1921. The APR later also welcomed group subscriptions from religious communities and other retreat houses.

From the start, the APR produced a quarterly magazine known as *The Vision*, a publication that continues today in its revised and modernised form, *Retreats*. Members could receive their own copies in the post for an additional 6d.

In November 1921, it was reported that there were more than 500 subscribers to *The Vision*, and by 1924, the (all-female) volunteers in the APR office urgently sought some 'paid assistance' as their work was 'increasing so rapidly'.

... and some changes as we look ahead

Membership Category	Current subscription	Subscription from 1 April 2024
Individual	25	30
Concession	20	25
Newly-qualified Spiritual Director	15	20
Group	35	35
Friend	50	50
Small House (less than 6 beds, or non-residential)	30	40
Medium House (7-19 beds)	50	60
Large House (more than 20 beds)	100	100
Retreat Leader (in-person or online)	-	50

However, financial management seems not to have been one of the first Committees' strongest points, and Minutes from their meetings frequently record the Treasurer's frustration that the bank account was overdrawn *again*. Having said that, he/she was then invariably rescued by donations, sometimes of several hundred pounds (£200 in 1920 is around £7,500 in today's money), from one or other of the Committee Members to cover the deficit!

Today, the APR is blessed with a more shrewd group of Trustees, a sound Treasurer and meticulous auditors, and our budgets and accounts are all closely monitored.

Nevertheless, increasing overheads as well as a significant rise in the wholesale price of *Retreats*, mean that in recent years our expenditure has started exceeding our income. Thus, for the first time in a decade, we will be increasing our subscription rates from 1st April 2024. For most of you, this will mean an increase of just £5 or £10 each year (see the table above).

Please can those of you who pay by regular Bankers Order contact your banks directly to increase your yearly payments.

APR Annual General Meeting 2023

The 2023 AGM will be held at 2pm on Thursday 2nd November at Shallowford House, in Staffordshire, following Bishop John's retreat there (see page 4); it will also be accessible online via Zoom.

Everyone is invited to join us for the day, which will begin with a celebration of Holy Communion, led by Bishop John at 11.30am, after which we will share lunch together. For those of you attending in person, the day will cost £20 a head, to include food, and payable in advance.

Please contact the APR Administrator by Friday 21st October if you would like to attend, specifying whether this will be in person or online; the Zoom link will be circulated to those who have registered their interest nearer the time.

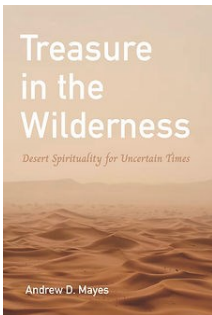
Morning Prayer from Urumqi:

by APR member, Revd David Goodacre



Demelza Henderson reflects on an enjoyable and useful book

Another new book to look out for is 'Treasure in the Wilderness', by former diocesan spirituality adviser, Revd Andrew Mayes, spiritualityadviser.com



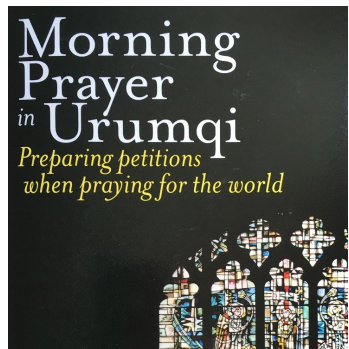
Morning Prayer in Urumqi is a fascinating book, written to encourage intercessors as they pray for the world.

Acknowledging that the world is a complex place, where it can be 'difficult to find the words to pray for a specific area or situation', Goodacre begins with a reflection on the theology of intercession, drawing richly from examples in scripture. He writes, 'Intercession is a spiritual exercise, which addresses the fundamentals of life; we are called to co-operate with God, that God's will may be done'. He also explores the question of why God might not answer prayer in the way we expect, or in the timescale we might hope for.

The majority of the book, however, is a series of 52 'vignettes' (one for each week of the year), each covering some area of the world. They include reminiscences, stories and associations (some of them quite personal), introducing the reader to the area, or highlighting a particular theme for prayer. Whilst the arrangement of the vignettes may seem a little haphazard geographically, their themes echo the liturgical movement through the Church's year.

Goodacre has clearly travelled extensively, and has a deep understanding of some of the concerns affecting countries and cultures around the world. His ministry in the north-east of England has also exposed him to the plight of asylum seekers and refugees, and some of his reflections are illustrated in poignant detail. Throughout the book, readers are encouraged to make connections with different areas and cultures, praying through individual people or problems to wider concerns.

Morning Prayer in Urumqi opens the art of intercessory prayer to everyone, and Goodacre's rich experiences as a spiritual director add colour and insight to it. This book deserves to be enjoyed by anyone who leads parish prayer; it is available from www.sacristy.co.uk.



Profile

The Living Well, Nonington



Revd Lorraine Apps-Huggins

The Living Well is situated in a rural setting just 10 miles south of Canterbury, in an Old Vicarage entrusted to the charity to particularly promote Christ's healing ministry in the diocese and beyond. In the main house there is a chapel with regular weekly worship, prayers for healing and anointing. Monthly *Deeper Healing Days* offer particular care and time to individuals by our wider team of volunteers and the Chaplaincy; the chaplaincy also offers supportive listening through pre-booked 'prayer appointments'.

There is an Upper Room, a well-stocked library, lounge and kitchen, and as well as our necessary admin offices, where much 'beaver away' happens in order to promote the prayerful peacefulness we know our guests experience, described often as 'spiritually profound'.

In the gardens there are 4 (heated) cabins for personal retreat, which can also be used on a group day as spaces to retire to for prayer and personal reflection. Clergy and laity find the cabin retreat spaces conducive to nourishing their own personal



journeys in faith as they serve in ministry – be that in the church or the workplace.

We are blessed to receive guests from many denominations and for a variety of reasons, and offer a warm welcome to all. We accept that for some guests need to come to a place of healing because of a sudden crisis or serious illness; for some it is for trauma that is historic, and for some it is just to be soothed from the anxieties, pressures and complexities of life today. Finding God in the busy-ness of life is pure joy, and Christ's presence made known to us is healing in itself.

Whilst we are non-residential, we can offer an overnight self-contained space if you are travelling from afar. My greetings and blessings to you, and I hope one day you may come and find us...

Revd Lorraine Apps-Huggins
Lead Chaplain

www.the-living-well.org.uk

Tel: (01304) 842847

A cabin and the chapel (below) at The Living Well, Nonington



Poem

The Reaping Blessing

GOD, bless Thou Thyself my reaping,
Each ridge, and plain, and field,
Each sickle curved, shapely, hard,
Each ear and handful in the sheaf,
Each ear and handful in the sheaf.

Bless each maiden and youth,
Each woman and tender youngling,
Safeguard them beneath Thy shield of strength,
And guard them in the house of the saints,
Guard them in the house of the saints.

Encompass each goat, sheep and lamb,
Each cow and horse, and store,
Surround Thou the flocks and herds,
And tend them to a kindly fold,
Tend them to a kindly fold.

For the sake of Michael head of hosts,
Of Mary fair-skinned branch of grace,
Of Bride smooth-white of ringleted locks,
Of Columba of the graves and tombs,
Columba of the graves and tombs.

From *Carmina Gaedelica*, Volume 1, no.89
by Alexander Carmichael (1900)