

Letter from Beth Roberts, our new national president



**Our small
group reunions
are vital**

Dear Cursillistas,

It is with much trepidation that I embark on writing under the heading of “President”, I am in awe of the task that you have handed me. However, following the moving commissioning service when the Bishop of Ely was kind enough to join our AGM to thank Trevor and “decommission” him I was reminded of the power of your prayer, and that of so many others, that upholds us all, so surely I cannot be worried about this new venture.

Already I have been encouraged by the ways different dioceses are learning and engaging with technology as you have all had to consider new ways of maintaining contact within Cursillo, your churches and amongst friends and family.

The change of pace that has been enforced on many of us this year has provided the opportunity to review our own priorities, and it may be appropriate to revisit any notes that you have following the first talk on the Cursillo Weekend that you attended. Do you remember considering what your ideals were? Many will be reprioritising their relationships and involvements, but I trust all Cursillistas remember the benefits of this movement.

For myself I would struggle without the discipline of Group Reunion. Nothing else provides me with the opportunity to voice and recognise my progress (or lethargy) as to how I live out my faith. Group reunion and local 4th day community meetings provide the inspiration and springboard to go forward and to engage further

in my prayer, study and action. And so whilst it was proposed that this was an introductory letter I did not want to waste this opportunity by repeating the content of the profile that is on the website ([See profile page](#)) but have opted instead to provide a review as if I was in Group Reunion with you.

Prayer: I meet with a local Julian group, currently meeting remotely but all simultaneously considering the same introductory commentary and then spending time in silent prayer. A recent session started with the poem "The Bright Field" by R.S Thomas (see page 3). This provided me with the reminder to take time to stop and be alert to my surroundings whether at home or out and about. God provides us with such wonderful imagery whether the coffee mug, the thoughtful gift that a friend gifted some years ago, a unique cloud formation above us, or something else, it can all lead us to a reminder of God's love for us and that can prompt us to serve him with renewed enthusiasm.

Study: A collection of assorted studies started for me with Luke 17 verses 7-10 which seemed very harsh as the parable talks of the master not appreciating the work of his servants but rather that the servants need to acknowledge that they are doing no more than their duty. The notes accompanying the passage reminded me that whatever we do for God is our simple and meagre response for all that he has done for us in providing our undeserved access to him.

I receive a daily email which includes a reflection and at about the same time as the other study there was the reminder that we need to work hard at our faith and practise it every day. So again, I was reminded that I am asked to give a life of complete service.

This seemed too large a task and I was struggling with my own inabilities so was encouraged when I received these words from yet another source "We don't need self-confidence, we need God-confidence". Now that is something to remember. Trust in God.

Action: I generally find this is the challenge but on this occasion, it takes me back to the start of my notes. Here I am starting out as National President of Cursillo. Like so many others struggling with the different regime now imposed on us, I may have to use different ways of engaging with your activities.

I am happy to be invited to any meetings, although these will necessarily only be online in the immediate future. In the first ten days of my tenure I was invited to 4 diocesan AGMs with Ultreyas. Unfortunately, three of the four invitations were for meetings at the same time on the same day, but I could at least make two of the four meetings. Do keep the invitations coming and for the time being I shall try and get around the dioceses even if it means I don't necessarily leave my study. I shall however look forward to the time next year that we can meet again in person, it'll be good to then join your various events and get to see people in 3D, although some of us (I write of myself) may be more 3 dimensional than we were at the beginning of this year.

As President I hope to be a listening ear for the BAC Secretariat and Council and to be of assistance wherever I can, so please do contact me.

I would add with the reminder that Cursillo and all Cursillistas have a role to play as a movement of the church. So as we all consider how we continue to look out and serve our community, let us make sure that our diocesan and local Cursillo groups maintain their own strength by continuing to support each other, and as Stephen says in his article, the foundation of this is our Group Reunion.

I shall sign off with thanks for your support and ongoing prayer for the whole of BAC and look forward to seeing you soon,

Beth

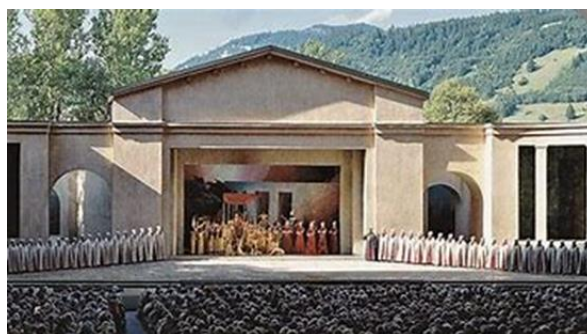


'The Bright Field'

by R. S. Thomas

*I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the
pearl of great price, the one field that had
treasure in it. I realise now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying
on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.*

A chance to see
the Passion Play
in Oberammergau



Would you be interested in joining a group of Cursillistas on a week's holiday in Austria next year, including a pilgrimage to see the Passion Play in Oberammergau in 2022?

Over 400 years ago when the bubonic plague raged in many parts of Europe it did not spare Oberammergau. After some deaths in the village they pledged to perform, every tenth year, the story of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. The villagers' prayers were answered with no further deaths, and in 1634 the first Passion Play took place. Whilst the 2020 the Passion Play had to be postponed due to the corona virus pandemic, the 42nd Oberammergau Passion Play will now take place from 14 May to 2 October 2022. The production involves over 2,000 performers, musicians and stage technicians, all residents of the village, and includes spectacular Old Testament tableaux as well as drama and choral pieces.

The trip would likely be arranged through McCabe travel and the cost would be in the order of £1,750, excluding single room supplement but including all travel with flights to and from Munich.

Numbers may be limited but in order to know if such a trip is viable would you register your interest as soon as possible. That would not be a commitment to travel but would ensure you received further information as it becomes available.

Please contact Beth: president@anglicancursillo.org.uk

Cursillo Leaders' Workshops

These weekends are open to all Cursillistas to learn more about the organisation of Cursillo and particularly for those who have recently taken on or are taking on a specific role within the movement.

Dates for your diary:

15 October 2021 to 17 October 2021

at Shepherd's Dene, Riding Mill, Northumberland, NE44 6AF

18 March 2022 to 20 March 2022

at Wistaston Hall, Crewe, CW2 8JS

7 October 2022 to 9 October 2022

at Shallowford House, Stone, Nr. Stafford, ST15 0NZ

For all other information regarding Cursillo Leaders' Workshops, please contact the CLW Convenor - Rev Judy Craig-Peck email: clw@anglicancursillo.org.uk

Or to book please contact the CLW Administrator - Mr Paul Thacker email: clwadmin@anglicancursillo.org.uk

Message from our Spiritual Director, Rev Stephen Bowring

Life under COVID?

Let's be positive!

We've learned

a lot!



Every article in every publication you read at the moment seems to start off by saying something like *"It's been a difficult year..."* or *"The pandemic has put a stop to our activities..."* so I want to break the mould. I want to start by saying *"Wow! Who would have thought that Cursillistas across the land would embrace new technology and find new ways to be a community in such a short time?"*

I'm not pretending that *Zoom* or *WhatsApp* or other conferencing software solutions are ideal, but when we stop seeing them as poor replacements for face to face meetings and evaluate them as a real gift that is very new to most of us we begin to realise that in some ways they may even have *advantages* over the format of gatherings we are used to. Let's think for a minute about two of our core activities: *Ultreya* and *Group Reunion*.

Ultreyas

Talking to secretariats and officers in every diocese and region I hear the same problems coming up again and again with ultreyas. *"Ours is a big diocese,"* (most of them are, actually!) *"and folks are unwilling to travel, especially in the dark evenings."* *"People have so many other meetings to go to."* *"We think we might do better with regional ultreyas in different parts of the diocese."*

Yes, if it takes an hour or more to get to a venue for an hour and a half's meeting followed by an hour home to be late for bed it's not surprising folks are easily put off. Internet ultreyas mean not having to get dressed up, not having to travel, and not having to lose a whole evening – hurrah! We can hold diocesan events – or even share with other local dioceses – and enjoy the benefits of drawing on the wider pool of expertise and experience at no extra financial or personal cost. If we have mastered "break-out rooms" then floating group reunion is easily organised with no wasted time finding a group and a place to gather where we aren't distracted by overhearing other groups, and for those with hearing difficulties – we can *actually hear* what we are supposed to hear!

When we can start meeting again 'in the flesh' I do hope we don't lose what we have been forced into finding. Why not adopt a 'mixed economy' of perhaps one or two *physical* ultreyas each year and however-many-other *virtual* ones?

Group Reunion (GR)

I wonder how many of us have read the recommendations about running Group Reunions, or discussed this topic on a Cursillo Leader Workshop? All too often the groups I drop in on are very *happy* groups, but their meetings are a long way from what I believe our founders envisaged. Some have become indistinguishable from parish house-groups, and some have even amalgamated GR with house-group or Bible study group. Let me just spend a moment revisiting the GR format.

A group of (ideally) no more than six meet and follow the order given in the cards provided: begin with the invocation and Lord's Prayer as we settle into a prayerful mind together; then take clearly identified turns to speak if you wish for up to two minutes without interruption or comment on each of the three aspects of our Christian journey – piety, study, and action; it may then be appropriate to spend a few moments in prayer, before drawing the formal reunion to a close with the thanksgiving on the card. The whole thing should fit comfortably into twenty minutes or at the most half an hour, after which there can be as much general discussion and chat as participants want (although I do recommend setting a fixed finishing time!) The discipline of identifying all three aspects and looking both back **and** forward in our Christian lives in this way is at the very epicentre of GR, and when it is 'fudged' for convenience or simplicity it loses the very purpose of its being.

Using video conferencing makes it much easier to have a group meeting of people who are geographically widespread, but may have historical or practical connections. Reading early literature on Cursillo introduced me to the idea that there can be three types of GR: (1) the familiar 'regular' group who know each other well, (2) the 'floating' groups we encounter at ultreyas and the like where we meet with people we don't normally group with, and (3) – the one nobody has ever heard of – the 'targetted' GR made up of either a team with an immediate purpose or mission or a group with a common interest – ministers, nurses, plumbers, mothers or whatever. Video conferencing makes this last form of GR a much more achievable idea, and it would be great to hear from any groups who are thinking of trying this.

Using the set format for GR gives an instantly recognizable shape to the video conference, and there's a good chance that even if we experience internet 'drop-outs' or other interruptions we will soon pick up again where we left it. It also revolves around one aspect of GR that seems to be the hardest to uphold: the principle that only one person speaks at a time!

And finally...

Let's not forget that a number of our Cursillistas have mobility challenges, either because of ill health or geographical factors. When the time comes that we all take off our masks with a sigh of relief that we can 'go back to normal,' it may be worth reflecting that if in doing so we ditch the technology altogether we will be discriminating against those with such problems. To borrow a catchphrase from recent Cursillo history, let's *catch the vision* of what more we can do with a new mixed economy of ways of doing and being. Ultreya!



Cursillo is a movement of the Church providing a method by which Christians are empowered to grow through prayer, study and action and enabled to share God's love with everyone.

ULTREYA

Exciting plans for our movement

Alongside supporting the Ultreya GB (which is due to be held in Norwich on 4th September) and running Cursillo Leaders ' Workshops, here are a few examples of the things with which BACC is currently engaged.

SHORTER WEEKEND FORMAT

As you already know, in response to several ideas and requests following increased costs and difficulties of booking venues, a shorter format for the Cursillo "weekend" has been piloted and it is wonderful that a programme can now be made available. As usual it will not be a detailed "one size fits all" as each diocese and venue has its own accommodation and time challenges. But please do ensure that your diocese is well represented on the webinar planned for Saturday morning **13th February** to hear more details and ask any questions.

In the first instance there will be three spaces available per diocese, but it is hoped that the presentation will also be recorded and can then be available to share more widely later. Keep your eye on the website for more details.

Perhaps the time has come to refer to the "weekend" as just a Cursillo, after all, the translation of the Spanish word is actually "short (intense) course" and it may not always actually be held over a weekend. To distinguish the two formats that will be available in the future the shorter version can maybe be referred to as a concise Cursillo, but after all each is a true Cursillo and neither is superior to the other.

WEBSITE PLANS

Steven Riddle, our webmaster, is still looking for your ideas as he is designing our new "window" for the world to see what Cursillo offers. He is considering the layout of the new BACC website, so if you have seen any particularly well laid out websites recently, or if you have any views and preferences for the content, then do please email him and let him know. Also please help by reading and keeping our current website up to date by getting your events and any planned Cursillo (weekends) on there by sending the details to Steven at website@anglicancursillo.org.uk

PILGRIMAGE PLANS

And look out for details of the exciting prospect of a Cursillo Pilgrimage in 2022 that could travel beyond these shores.

Beth Roberts

A big THANK YOU from

ex-president

Trevor King



At the recent, much delayed, 2020 BACC AGM I was finally able to hand over the Presidency of British Anglican Cursillo to Beth Roberts (Chester Diocese). The last three and a half years have been a wonderful experience. I am so thankful to the Lord for giving me this opportunity to serve this movement that means so much to me.

It has been a great pleasure to have met so many interesting, dedicated folks in our various Cursillo dioceses. I have managed to visit nearly all of the active dioceses (sorry Durham and Southwark), been to all corners of the country, attended some excellent weekend events, heard lots of inspirational witness talks and made a lot of new Cursillo friends. So many people are doing amazing things for their churches and communities in the name of Christ. It's the BACC President's job to support and encourage the membership but I've received far more encouragement, support and indeed love from you all. Thank you so much.

In particular, I want to thank the various Standing Committee members and BACC officers with whom I've worked: in particular Cynthia and Stephen the National Spiritual Directors, Treasurers Jane and Cheryl, and Linda and Richard the Secretaries. I'm very proud that we seem to have achieved quite a lot in three years:

- We've revised and updated the **Resources Manual**.
- We've revised the **BACC Constitution** and the various **Policy & Guideline documents**.
- We've produced a **promotional video** that's available on our website and on YouTube.
- BACC has approved an alternative **2-day 'condensed' format for the Cursillo Weekend**
- Our Cursillo Leaders' Weekend Convenor Rev Judy Craig-Peck has completely reviewed and updated the content of the **CLW talks and activities**.
- We are now encouraging all dioceses to start using the latest 2018 edition of the **Lay and Clergy Talk Workbooks** which are available on the BACC website.

I'm aware that I have handed over to Beth at a very difficult time for Cursillo, the Church and society as a whole. Covid-19 restrictions have meant that Cursillo events and activities have stopped almost completely for what will probably turn out to be 12 months or more. We're going to have to work very hard to re-establish a pattern of regular Fourth Day activities so that folk can get back into a habit of attending them.

But equally I'm sure that there's going to be pent up demand for what Cursillo has to offer and the next few years are going to be a period of great opportunity for Cursillo to grow and to produce a rich harvest for Christ and His church. Beth is in for an exciting time I'm sure.

Finally, I must thank my wife, Anna, for her love and support and for allowing me to disappear off to far flung places to meet with strange people who like dressing up in bright colours.

It has been a huge honour and privilege to serve as your President. Thank you.

BOOK REVIEW

SOUL FUEL by Bear Grylls

Recommended for personal study by Gill Appleton, of Chester Diocese.

The author, Bear Grylls, is a remarkably interesting person. He is currently Chief Scout. He has been in the SAS, climbed Mount Everest and crossed an ocean in a small boat, as well as being in many TV programmes.

It is easy to see his successes without realising all the struggles and fears he has had to overcome along the way. Bear has been influenced in his life by personal friendships with Nicky and Pippa Gumbel of Alpha and Charlie Mackesy, the illustrator. I had no idea that Bear was such a committed Christian until I read this book.

The book is divided in two ways:

Firstly into 11 different themes: Hope, Purpose, Determination, Relationship, Vision, Wisdom, Faithfulness, Courage, Forgiveness, Freedom and Risk.

Secondly each theme is divided into 30 different areas.

So, you can

Read a different one every day.

Dip into which theme appeals to you

Or just read bits when you feel inclined.

Each of the areas has a deep meaning but they are written so simply that even someone really new to Christianity would understand them. They encourage us to follow the way Jesus taught with bible passage suggestions for you to read.

It never says "Go to church" or "Which church to go to". It just helps us to behave like Jesus in any situation that we find ourselves in.

Having finished it I look forward to reading it again!



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Thank you to all our contributors for this issue.

Deadline for our Spring issue: March 20th 2021.

If there is anything you would like to contribute to the next issue, any thoughts, prayers, study recommendations or action tips that you would like to share please send them (preferably by email) to me:



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