

Oxon Fourth



Oxford Anglican

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The summer months have been relatively quiet for Cursillo, with just the Welcome Ultreya at Abingdon in May and the Diocesan Ultreya and Picnic at Church House in July, when unusually it did not rain and we could sit outside for Group Re-Union. Mary Willets and I attended the BACC "Catch the Vision" event and AGM in May; it is always good to renew acquaintance with officers from other Dioceses and compare notes. The theme for Catch the Vision was "Blooming where you are planted" and made us think about Re-Union Groups; the leader, the Revd Hugh Burgess, Spiritual Director St Asaph Cursillo, suggested integrating Prayer, Study and Action rather than dealing with them separately, so that you start with Action and show how it was backed up by Prayer and Study - an interesting and imaginative idea.

The Secretariat has been busy discussing the slightly changed programme for Oxford #12 proposed by Lay Rector David Atkinson in the light of the CLW he attended (see his article). They have also spent almost a whole meeting reviewing the Constitution of Anglican Cursillo in the Diocese of Oxford and making slight amendments which will have to be approved at the AGM in November.

Terry Pitt was greatly relieved to be able to hand over the production of the monthly Prayer Diary to Victoria Mort and Palanca to Sarah Smith; alongside those two tasks Terry was working hard on 4th Day activities and her persistence will be rewarded by a regular programme of Ultreyas in the future.

As we approach the AGM and retirement from the Secretariat of Secretary Hilary Derbyshire and Oxon4th Editor Barbara McGarry after completing their three year term of office, we hope you will all be giving serious consideration as to whether now is the time for you to offer yourself for nomination to the Secretariat.

I am fortunate that my successor has already been appointed and I will stand down in November looking back on three years when Cursillo in this Diocese has increased its profile considerably and grown significantly in numbers.

I have felt greatly privileged to have led Cursillo and thank everyone for their prayers, love and support.

Ultreya!
Alison Shaw

Autumn's Harvest

As the days shorten and the air becomes crisp we know that autumn is on its way and harvest-time is at hand. Churches and schools are the only places, it seems, where thanksgiving for the harvest still happens. The obvious and customary thanksgiving for the fruits of the earth is just the beginning of the rich theme of harvest from a spiritual point of view. To harvest is to gather-in with the aim of sustaining and nurturing life. As we do it to sustain our lives physically, we likewise need to harvest our human experiences and, as Christians, to do so in relation to our spiritual experience. Whatever has been seeded, nourished, and grown in the soil of our lives over one season or through many seasons may easily rot and come to nothing unless we intentionally seek to bring it to harvest. That means watching what's going on in life and experience so as to bring it into the stream of God's transforming grace. We need to attend to the Spirit's urgings to spot what is fruitful in life and to bring those aspects to the fullest possible fruition. It means, too, listening so that we can identify what aspects of life need nurturing toward fruitfulness and which aspects need chopping back or discarding altogether. Our lives, in other words, need tending if they're to produce the spiritual fruits of which they're capable. Mature discipleship will include such tending with an eye toward a future harvesting. Autumn is the time for that in the cycle of the natural world. At the same time, autumn Harvest celebrations remind us of spiritual fruitfulness and spiritual harvesting. An old autumn hymn makes the connections in homely but effective words:



*Behold the bending orchards
With bounteous fruits are crowned;
Lord, in our hearts more richly
Let heavenly fruits abound.
Our barren hearts make fruitful
With every goodly grace
That we thy name may hallow,
And see at last thy face.* (Bp. W. W. How)

I hope that the spiritual import of autumn and Harvest will strike us all the more forcefully this year so that as we experience them we might embrace their spiritual equivalents.

Charles Miller
Spiritual Director

How to Have an Authentic Cursillo Weekend

"I'm going to set you a little exercise. Please take a sheet of paper, draw a line down the centre to make two columns and label one "Necessary" and the other "Unnecessary".

Now consider this list of elements of the current Oxford Cursillo weekend. Which are necessary for us to have an "Authentic Cursillo Weekend" and which are unnecessary? Please write them in their respective columns."

This was how Jan Watts (who led the Cursillo Leaders Workshop at Pleshey House of Retreat, Chelmsford, which Terry Pitt, Linda and I attended in April) introduced her session on "The Authentic Three Day Weekend". And here's a list of elements that I've put together (because I couldn't exactly remember the ones she gave):

Light Meditation	Butterflies
15 Talks	Special Meal /Party
Palanca	Wake-up
Clausura	Stations of the Cross
Act of Reconciliation	Music
Decorated Folders	Daily Eucharist
Period of Silence	Sweet Dreams
Art table	Posters
Skits	Chapel Visits
Rainbows	5 Meditations

Please try this exercise yourself; the answer (which is at the end of this article) may surprise you, *(Please be reassured that ALL OXFORD WEEKENDS ARE AND ALWAYS HAVE BEEN AUTHENTIC)*

The Cursillo Leaders Workshop was a wonderful weekend led by three remarkable people, Jan with Paul Thacker, who is the Lay Director of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, and Revd. Canon Hall

Speers, of Barnet. We shared with 25 Cursillistas from 16 dioceses that cover the country from Ripon & Leeds all the way to London and across to Exeter.

We shared the Eucharist, prayers, music, excellent food, a cheering glass of wine and made new friends and connections to other Cursillos that will last for years if not for ever. I thought I was pretty well experienced in Cursillo and the Cursillo method but I learnt so much in such a short space of time it has been a real blessing.

The course included a very full day on Saturday with talks and sessions that covered Group Reunion and Ultreya, a meditation on The Church, Christian Living and the place of Cursillo in Christ's church, the Servant Community, Pre-Cursillo, Building the Cursillo Community, and Spiritual Direction. And two more subjects that are currently very close to Oxford Secretariat's heart, Fourth Day First and The Authentic Cursillo Weekend.

The Authentic Weekend.

In every Cursillo the weekend that is offered consists of those elements that are essential for an Authentic Cursillo weekend and those that have been added over time. Every new idea, every new addition adds another element to the weekend, and absorbs time.

And I know that we all love some of those things that may be wonderful experiences, or that we did on our weekend, but are not essential to providing an Authentic Cursillo Weekend.

This can cause two problems:

1. The real message of the weekend becomes lost in all of the activity that surrounds it. Having a great party becomes more important than the teaching. Guests are overwhelmed by a mountain of Palanca so that the meaning, the prayer behind it becomes meaningless. They feel like invaders in a swarm of butterflies or are dazzled by an entire spectrum of rainbows. They feel unworthy because they're not arty or crafty or theatrical.

2. There is so much activity, so many things to do; that we don't allow the guests time and space to reflect on the message they are being given. Instead of returning to their own environment refreshed and energised to take Christ into their world they (and the team) return home completely exhausted and without a clue about what happened and what it could mean.

Recognising this BACC is asking us to consider very carefully everything we do on the weekend. Does it add to the weekend and the Cursillo message, or does it obscure or even detract from the message. All that is necessary to make a Cursillo weekend authentic are the 15 talks, 5 meditations and a Eucharist each day.

What does this mean? Do we have to stop doing all of the wonderful things we found moving on our weekend? No we don't. But we do have to carefully weigh their contribution to the weekend and the Cursillo message before we include them. We have to prayerfully consider the load we place, physically, emotionally and spiritually on the guests, and we must allow them enough time and space

to absorb the important messages and teachings of the weekend. And we have to consider the team.

What has this meant? Some diocese have closed the Wake-up, only allowing Team members to be involved, some have stopped it altogether, preferring that the main reunion and celebration is focused on the Clausura. Some have dropped the Stations of the Cross. Some no longer have a special meal.

And for Oxford? Well, after long discussions, study of the Cursillo method and literature and much prayer, the Secretariat has decided to try some changes to the timetable for Oxford 12 so that we can still provide an Authentic Cursillo weekend, while allowing more time for prayer, reflection and absorption of the message of Cursillo.

Some of those changes may surprise you, particularly that it has been decided not to have a "Wake up" on Oxford 12, but to focus on Clausura, the time the new Cursillistas enter into the Fourth Day.

You may not agree with all of the changes, but please bear in mind the intention is to provide a less busy, more fulfilling experience for the guests, who have no pre-conceptions of what a Cursillo weekend should contain, and will not be aware of any "missing" elements. And of course all of the changes will be reviewed by Secretariat after Oxford 12 and adjusted if necessary.

So please, have a lovely lay-in on the 28th of October, enjoy a leisurely lunch and then join us at Douai to welcome the new Cursillistas into the Fourth Day!

ULTREYA!

David Atkinson - Lay Rector, Oxford 12



It would be easy to précis and paraphrase the excellent leaflet put out by the Anglican Cursillo in the Diocese of Oxford entitled ***“Be a Sponsor – Sponsorship Guidelines and Responsibilities of Sponsors”*** which is full of good advice and essential reading when considering whether to sponsor someone on a Cursillo Weekend and a really good guide as to why, how and when to sponsor properly and well.

From my point of view a simple sentence in this leaflet encapsulates the most vital element about sponsorship, namely ***“Sponsorship begins before the weekend and continues after it has finished”*** which is the thought I would like to concentrate on here.

It was obvious that my sponsor had studied, and taken to heart, the full import of what sponsorship involved with the result that my pre-weekend introduction to Cursillo and the weekend itself proved to be a life-changing experience leading to a spiritually challenging but fulfilling and rewarding journey along the 4th day path. Her sponsorship, nurturing and support continues still.

When deciding whether to invite a possible candidate to go on a Cursillo Weekend, you need to be sure of your reasons. If you desire to help someone to discover the ***“treasure of reawakened Love, Prayer and Service”*** which you have found through Cursillo or if you see that a person has a need for renewal and growth in their lives, perhaps they appear to have an unfulfilled longing to speak and work for God, or enthusiasm to do more within their church and personal environment, then it may be that our Lord has opened your eyes to someone he knows will benefit from the Cursillo approach. In my case my sponsor told me she was going on a course which sounded interesting and which was, perhaps, something which would also interest me. Upon her return she was able to confirm her belief that Cursillo could be what I was looking for. In the next weeks and months we started praying together and formed a Group Reunion of 2, meeting on a regular basis. She suggested that I should consider whether I would like to go on the course and to let her know if so. The “clincher” was when she took me to an Ultreya – I knew it was for me.

A thorough introduction to the idea of Cursillo in advance and a great deal of pre-weekend preparation will help your guest to enter more easily into the atmosphere of the weekend with an open mind and an open heart. **One of the most important ideas to impart at this stage is that the weekend itself is not the final objective, it serves as an introduction to, and the foundation for, a lifetime journey – the 4th Day.** Knowing this should enable your protégé to regard the course with understanding; absorbing the ideas and

wisdom embodied in the talks and meditations and emerging from Clausura enfolded in God's love, filled with the Holy Spirit and bursting to set out on their 4th Day adventure.

Since sponsors are not normally part of the weekend team, it is essential to make sure you are with your guest in spirit throughout. By taking them to the venue, introducing them to one or two friendly faces, perhaps accompanying them to their room, and leaving them with love, you will help them ease into a strange place and environment. In my case my sponsor was part of the weekend team but her nominated co-sponsor fulfilled these encouraging and supporting actions with as much kindness and warmth as she would have done. As everyone knows, palanca is a very significant part of the weekend experience, particularly palanca from sponsors, co-sponsors and even Cursillistas whom the guest may have met previously. Sponsors should give this aspect of the weekend a great deal of thought and prayer well in advance to make it as personal and meaningful for their special guest as possible, thus ensuring that they are conscious of your spiritual presence throughout.

Signing up on the prayer vigil for one (or more) hours is another way of providing prayerful, active support from a distance and is very re-affirming to your guest. Without being explicit about the weekend programme, your assurance in advance, that you will be journeying with them spiritually, will mean a great deal to them.

The importance of the sponsor attending "Wake-up" (if there is one) AND Clausura, cannot be over-stressed - it is confirmation of continuing fellowship, support, encouragement and love. The ideal end to the weekend is for the sponsor or co-sponsor to take their guest home. It provides an opportunity to talk about the new Cursillista's experiences, hopes, plans and feelings. This sharing is important and helps to strengthen the bond between the sponsor and their guest which is vital at this stage, to promote an easy transition into 4th day activities. I think it also helps the guest make the transition from Cloud 9 to "everyday". An early follow-up visit to deliver palanca provides a further chance to continue this process.

The final part of Sponsorship may be a relatively short period but hopefully it will continue for weeks or months. I would describe it as "maintenance". With my sponsor and co-sponsor we formed a Group Reunion and we have subsequently been able to include more Cursillistas from our benefice. Initially I was encouraged to accompany them to Ultreyas, but there was no necessity for me to be persuaded to continue to attend on a very regular basis. They supported the plans I made and activities I undertook in my local parish. In fact we have shared plans and activities to a very large extent in the ensuing years. Thanks to a model sponsor, my life has been enriched and enabled by Cursillo and that is what I would wish for others.



ULTREYA!

Terry Pitt
4th day rep

ULTREYAS

Over the past six years I have attended a number of Ultreyas, ranging from huge, as in GB Ultreya, to small, as in the latest I went to at Newbury in September. In number it was the smallest I have been to - 19 of us - but I was so glad to be there. The majority of Cursillistas were from Swallowfield/Shinfield/Wokingham and Newbury, where there are active Reunion Groups, the rest of us being from the Oxford/Abingdon area and one from Bracknell. A very moving Action Talk was given by Anne Ashikawa and a wonderful Gospel response from Gill Lusby-Taylor, SA for the day. The atmosphere was warm and friendly, the epitome of the Cursillo community when working well. Next time you receive an invitation to attend an Ultreya and wonder whether you have the time, want to travel so far, etc. pray about it and hopefully you will be led to attend - you might have the same experience as I had; it really boosted me and made my week and I was so glad I had gone!

ULTREYA!

Book Recommendation: I have just finished reading Jane Shaw's "A Practical Christianity: working on transforming our lives". Jane Shaw was Fellow and Dean of Divinity of New College Oxford and is now Dean of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. A statement on the back cover of the book says "What difference does faith make to our lives? How do we practise Christianity? Jane Shaw argues that the test of faith is not so much 'what do you believe?' but 'how has faith transformed your life and the world around you?' It is through the practice of Christianity that we come to understand its central doctrines, and are drawn into Christian community. In community, we can become not merely a body of like-minded people, but a group of diverse women and men who desire to transform themselves and the world by love. A Practical Christianity explores: preparing ourselves to live in a world that is complex and baffling; salvation and faith and the importance of doubt in faith; prayer and worship, and the ways God becomes known to us; love - the demonstration and practice of our faith." I recommend this book highly - I wondered often while reading whether Jane Shaw is a Cursillista! -Alison

Dates for your diary

Oxford 12 25-28 Oct 2012

Clausura at 3:00pm on Sunday

Douai Abbey

Ultreya & AGM Sat 10 Nov 2012

10:00 for 10:30 start

St Helen's Church Centre, Abingdon

4th Day Away Event 11-14 April 2013

Douai Abbey

Oxford 13 24-27 October 2013

Douai Abbey

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Deadline for next issue:

If there is anything you would like to contribute to the next issue of Oxon Fourth, any thoughts, prayers, study recommendations or action tips that you would like to share please send to communications.rep@oxfordcursillo.co.uk by the beginning of March 2013