

# Oxon Fourth



*The magazine of*  
**OXFORD ANGLICAN  
CURSILLO**

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## Editorial

Praise the Lord! What a wonderful autumn for Oxford Cursillo! After all the trials and tribulations Oxford 4 happened. It was a great journey of faith which resulted in a successful weekend. As palanca gofer I also discovered how many ways there were to get round a postal strike! Thank you everyone. We had six guests from the Oxford diocese and two from Worcester. This made for a great exchange of ideas and ways of doing things. I hope that they all climbed the mountain and have now come safely down.

It was a privilege for me to be a member of such a harmonious team, which survived all the times when we thought the weekend would not happen. Alison Shaw, our Lay Rector did a superb job and I hope that she has had time to recover. We thank Fiona Rose Jebson, Revd. Michael Bolley and Revd. Barbara Hammond for their hard work and support, especially to Barbara for filling in at short notice.

Being part of a team is very rewarding. We also go up the spiritual mountain and then have to come back to earth. This is the strength of the Cursillo Fourth Day – it gives us that support to keep on going. Living in such a large geographical area, some of us can feel isolated but through our reunion groups, our Ultreyas and our Weekends we are able to come together in fellowship and with God., in the hope that we leave strengthened and better equipped for our daily struggles.

Our prayers must be with Peter Watsham as he prepares his team for Oxford 5 and for the guests who could benefit from the experience.

Thanks are due to Sister Sylvia and the staff at Cold Ash, for the way they looked after us.

Ultreya!

Mary Willets (Editor)

## ***All good gifts....***

The amount of work needed to produce any worthwhile event never ceases to amaze me and the way in which the gifts and talents of all those involved are brought together and used so well is astounding. This is particularly true of Cursillo weekends when it's often only when taking a closer look, usually some time later, that the enormous amount of preparation and effort expended before, during and after the occasion really becomes clear. The outward and visible achievements are obvious, as are some people's talents, but it's also good to remember all the great number of things done by those behind the scenes, working away quietly and efficiently, and without whom the weekends would not function as well as they do.

We don't always recognise the things that we do, especially the ordinary, everyday tasks, as using our gifts and yet they are, especially if we take time and care whilst carrying them out, and commit all that we do to the glory of God. Even our failures and mistakes can be tremendous gifts if we allow them to increase our own self awareness and enable us to be equally aware of the needs of others.

Cursillo helps us to identify and use our God given gifts for the benefit all so let's remember, as St. Paul tells us, that every gift is vital for the growth and wellbeing of the community and also that Jesus always called, and still calls, those who think that they have nothing to offer and yet have played their unique part in the bringing in of the Kingdom.

Above all else the identification and use of gifts can be tremendous fun and immense privilege. May we all be ready and open to receive the gifts of God, to use them generously and to commit ourselves again and again in his service. ....***then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord, for all his love!***

**With every blessing, Angela Linton**

*Spiritual Director for Cursillo in the Oxford Diocese*





OXFORD 4

## CURSILLO #4 – A Pilgrim's Report

By Val Bradley

I wonder if anyone else has noticed that Cursillo, the spoken word, begins with 'curse'? This thought did not occur to me until late afternoon of day 2.

For me, the weekend started well. My sponsor drove me to Cold Ash (incidentally, a complete misnomer, it certainly is not cold!), my bags were carried to my room and I had time to unpack before a welcome gathering in the lounge. The evening was restful: the night not too bad.

I knew that things were not going to be easy for me the following morning. We were up early, just had time for quick shower and were off to chapel. I can cope with the odd early morning so that was not too much of a problem. The day continued in a fairly gentle manner. No long boring lectures, no tough questions or difficult issues to tackle. Not too keen on the 'art work' though and my body was beginning to ache from having to sit upright for so long. I had time for a brief snooze in the afternoon, which helped, at least temporarily, to relieve the stress building up in my limbs before dinner and the evening session. Later to bed, not such good rest.

Day 2 began in the same fashion but this time it took much more effort to be in chapel on time. I missed my leisurely morning awakening that I have become accustomed to since I retired. The day continued along the same lines as day 1 but I (and my weary body) began to feel a definite lack of personal time for complete relaxation. No time for a snooze.



Now, when I decided to come on a Cursillo weekend, even without knowing what to expect, I knew that I would be going on a journey. I hoped that I might find something of use with which to return to my parish and help others discover the blessings to be enjoyed in loving God. I knew that God would take me to unexpected places and show me new insights. I allowed myself to be led blindly into the usual

trap! Physically, I am really not good at being away from my home and husband (who is exceptionally understanding, patient and waits on me quite a bit!) but I conveniently forget my weakness and think of myself as invincible. Yet again God, in his wisdom, laid me low, let me break down and then graciously met with me in my weakness. It happened on the evening of day 2. We were in chapel and I was trying to connect with God. Others seemed to be getting there but even though I tried, I had erected barriers I could not overcome. I decided to stop trying and concentrate instead on praying for someone else. It was in that moment that God reached down and blessed me. I had been unable to climb the mountain myself but I discovered, yet again, that in my weakness God is my strength.

Day 3 came and went. I made a shaky start but with God's grace (and modern medication) recovered to enjoy an easy day, a wonderful afternoon service and a pleasant journey home with my sponsor.

Was I aware of the 'curse' in Cursillo? – well, yes physically but the blessings far outweighed that. I met some beautiful people, learned some spiritual truths and met with God. Above all, I found that God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit - is still alive in the Anglican Church!



## Some thoughts on light, beauty and resurrection

by Wendy Pritchard

In October, I was privileged to be at the early morning service on Sunday, during Oxford Cursillo #4. We sang resurrection hymns as the dawn slowly forced its way through the dark grey outside the windows, and it was like stepping back in time to stand with the women at the empty tomb. What a feeling of joy and anticipation!

Every weekend, Easter is celebrated afresh at the Taize community, deep in rural France. It is home for a group of about a hundred monks of different ages and nationalities, who are joined every year by many thousands of young people. These visitors come for the international atmosphere, the discussions, the singing, the peace of the worship times – some just to escape from their own countries for a bit. The abbot in charge of this thronging mass of humanity is Brother Alois, who despite all the pressure and daily crises is a man of deep peace, humility and calm, whose favourite word is 'beautiful'. He uses it of people and their actions – so when you look in the mirror and grimace, remember how he would see you!

When John and I were there a few years ago, there was a party of four Russian Orthodox monks there too. They wore long black cassocks and swept in on the very last minute to every service, the crowd parting before them. If you wanted a seat on a bench near to the front (otherwise it was the concrete floor) you had to arrive at least half an hour before the service. Strangely, this group of monks always found a place on the bench, even though there was only a few minutes to go! There was no friendly chat from them, no joining in the singing - just stony silence. They looked as if they had been sent there by their abbot to enjoy themselves, and that was the last thing they were going to do! They left the instant the service finished, whilst many folk stayed there singing for hours.



During the week, I and others were praying that they might just find something they could enjoy. It didn't seem to be doing much good! On the Saturday night the community celebrates the Resurrection by lighting candles. On your way in you pick up a candle with your songbook, and at the appropriate point the light is passed round, until the whole huge space is alive in the dark with thousands of tiny flames. There are so many people there that the candles run out unless you arrive in good time.

The four monks were on the last minute, as usual. The rest of us had been there for at least half an hour, so all had candles. They swept in to the best seats, and sat in silence. When the candles were lit, and the little lights were twinkling round about, I realised I was within reach of the leader of the black four, and gave him my lighted candle. For the first time that week, he smiled all the time that his candle was burning.

We have all been given God's light, whether we arrived early or late, whether we have joined in before or not. The light is beautiful, and so are we. We have nothing to prove, only to accept. Rejoice! – smile, and go in the light of God.



## ANGLICAN CURSILLO in the DIOCESE of OXFORD ANNUAL REPORT

The 12 months (to Aug 07) have seen further steady growth in the Cursillo movement across the Oxford Diocese and progress in achieving our objective of enabling Christians to share God's Love with everyone.

**Secretariat & Servant Community:** The year began with a few fresh faces being appointed following last year's AGM in November on the Secretariat (\*) or Servant Community:

*	Kevin Beer	Lay Director
*	Ken Cotterell	Treasurer
	Alison Shaw	Palanca Rep
	Hilary Derbyshire	Web Servant
	Margaret Cotterell	Music Co-ordinator (including CCLI admin)

It is particularly encouraging that Alison, Ken & Margaret came forward after only recently having been on Oxford #2 whilst Hilary was on Oxford #1: all "home-grown" Oxford cursillistas! Our thanks again to the previous office holders for their dedication and hard work over the early years and for ensuring a smooth handover. Other members continued their service from previous years:

*	Angela Linton	Spiritual Director (from December 2005)
*	Mary Willets	Secretary (from November 2005)
*	Liz Dowding	BACC Rep (from autumn 2005)
	Gill Lusby Taylor	Booking Secretary (from May 2006)

Our healthy rotation policy of appointments lasting no more than 3 years means that we now need to consider new appointments for the AGM in 2008, so that the roles can be shadowed beforehand. There are also outstanding vacancies for Co-ordinators for a) Weekend; b)



4<sup>th</sup> Day; c) Communications & Publicity that need to be filled to bring our Servant Community up to full strength and share the workload.

The Secretariat met five times during the year. On 12<sup>th</sup> February 2007, "Anglican Cursillo in the Diocese of Oxford" achieved our long-awaited registered charity status (No 1117925) with the Secretariat members becoming the trustees. Particular thanks to Mary for handling this application. All donations since the start of 2006 now qualify for Gift Aid as long as the appropriate form is signed.

**Weekends:** In April, the third Oxford weekend went ahead (Lay Rector: Kevin Beer) and we were delighted to welcome eight new Cursillistas at the Clausura, including one guest from Somerset. It was a wonderful Spirit-filled weekend, typical Cursillo, this time marked by enthusiastic singing of John Bell's worship songs from around the world and "Des Colores". Our thanks go to Bishop Alan for presiding at the Clausura, to Fr Iain Forbes from Woking, bringing his experience from Blackburn Diocese, and likewise to Cliff Scott from Coventry and to Mike Whitton (and Jean whose home was moved to Scotland over that weekend).

During May, our Lay Director attended the BACC AGM held at Kettering where the study was about all the things that are "inauthentic" Cursillo, having been added over time: we were given the freedom to drop any of these optional extras and concentrate on the core message of the 15 talks & 5 meditations.

In June, the Lay Rectors of our #3 & #4 weekends attended a three day residential Cursillo Leaders' Workshop (CLW) at Offa House, near Leamington Spa. This experience was a reassurance that Cursillo in our diocese is true to the original vision and purposes, and that there is a nationwide network of practical support and advice

available when we need it, in addition to the wonderful help we already receive from Coventry as our gifting diocese. These contacts would prove essential later in the year as we are short of clergy available to act as Spiritual Advisors for a weekend.

Our spring weekend has always proved to be viable but preparations and applications for our autumn weekend seem to be adversely affected by the slowdown in activity over the summer holiday which we need to overcome in future. Alison Shaw's Oxford #4 team are going ahead in faith with their preparations 11-14<sup>th</sup> October 2007. Cold Ash has also been booked in advance for:

- Oxford #5 – 24-27<sup>th</sup> April 2008 (Lay Rector: Peter Watsham)
- Oxford #6 – 16-19<sup>th</sup> October 2008 (Lay Rector: tba)

**Fourth Day:** We have held two Diocesan Ultreyas, one in Checkendon and one at Diocesan Church House, the latter being the Summer Ultreya and picnic where we enjoyed the food and fellowship and an inspiring lay witness/action talk from Andrew Pritchard. The popular programme of Saturday morning breakfast Ultreyas has continued in East Berkshire at Ascot (twice), Stubbings and Old Windsor and has proven to be a wonderful opportunity to welcome enquirers. There was also a local pre-Christmas Ultreya in Bucks. We hope to continue to have at least one Ultreya in each archdeaconry.

The heartbeat of Cursillo is the Group Reunion: we have about 10 groups actively meeting around the Diocese, many of these include people who are interested in and follow the Cursillo method but have not experienced a weekend. Introducing people into Group Reunions before they go for the weekend is very important as it allows for a better understanding of Cursillo, a chance to ask questions and explore the personal relevance of Cursillo and, if necessary, provides an opportunity for participant and sponsor to build a firmer and trustful relationship. It is noticeable that Reunion Groups which meet



regularly are the most effective in attracting newcomers and we need to continue to work to fill the geographic gaps to make further groups possible.

We are sorry to say goodbye to Shane & Jacquie Griffiths and Hannah as they leave Watlington to make their new home in Mullion, Cornwall for Shane's new appointment as priest for which we ask God's blessing. Also, to Mike & Jean Whitton who have faithfully supported our Ultreyas, DDU's and weekends, usually arriving on Mike's BMW bike from Crawley but now on the West Coast of Scotland. We wish them all our best wishes in their new homes and surroundings.

**Communications:** We have issued two editions of our magazine, OxonFourth, edited by Mary. We also have the opportunity to pray for each other and for weekends, meetings and Ultreyas using the Monthly Prayer Diary compiled by Alison. Our website, [www.oxfordcursillo.co.uk](http://www.oxfordcursillo.co.uk), has received recognition from around the world as one of the best adverts for the movement and Hilary is to be commended for all the recent enhancements in usability and navigation. This is THE place to look for any information, including leaflets, application forms and OxonFourth which are available for download and printing.

The Secretariat has tried to follow up opportunities for publicising Cursillo around the diocese. Introductory presentations have been made to the Wallingford deanery synod and the clergy of Abingdon. There has been less activity than in previous years in the way of Taster Evenings and this is another area where the movement would benefit from the support of the wider community. Results from personal contacts are proving very effective, especially when sharing in group reunions. In addition to our entry in the Oxford Diocesan Year Book, we also appear in the further resources list for the diocesan SPIDIR (Spiritual Direction) network.

Our greatest boost is to welcome Rt Revd John Pritchard as the new Bishop of Oxford, together with his wife, Wendy, both active cursillistas. John preached at the GB Ultreya in 2006 in Durham and his sermon was printed in the next BACC Pages. We are now blessed with 3 bishops who have been on a weekend and operate with the full encouragement, help and support of all 4, for which we are truly grateful.

We have strong foundations from which we can continue to expand and grow with great confidence. After a year of growing deeper roots / building on our foundation (none other than Christ Jesus), it is time for us to spread out, “to blossom where we are planted”, among our friends, families, colleagues and communities and to enable others within our churches to do the same. The mission of Cursillo is the mission of the Church: nothing less than to win the world for Christ.

**ULTREYA!**

*Kevin Beer - Lay Director for Cursillo in Oxford Diocese*

10<sup>th</sup> November 2007 (AGM)





# *Cookery corner*

## *Laity Cake*

### **Ingredients**

Currants - through which energy passes  
Brandy - fine Spirit  
Water - life giving water  
Salt - of the earth  
Carrots - deep roots  
Eggs - new life  
Multigrain fibre and the occasional nutcase

### **Method**

Bake in the community  
Fan by the flames of fire  
Bind together by Love  
Ice with Grace  
Allow to mature with ample amounts of the Spirit.

### **Serve**

On a cross shaped cake stand  
Cut large slices  
Offer widely  
**Calorie free!!!**

# **Witness statement from the Diocesan Ultreya on 16 June 2006**

## **Changing my environment for Christ**

by Andrew Pritchard

In December 2004 my wife and I were involved in a serious car accident. When we moved to Oxford in August 2005 I was not working full time. We joined a home group in our local church and got involved in the prayer and worship ministry. But as time went by we felt that we were not seeing many new people coming to the services. I believe we felt something of Jesus' yearning for all to hear about new life in Christ.

I took advantage of the fact that I was only working part time and started chatting to the people in our housing complex. Just saying 'Hello' and asking questions like 'What's it like living here?', talking about what interested them such as their allotments, asking their advice on parking and alarm systems etc. Through these encounters my wife and I started to have contact with people in an area where we were told neighbours rarely used to talk to each other.

In December 2005 we invited our neighbours to Christmas drinks and mince pies. We had a good time and advertised the Christmas Services at our church but were saddened that nobody came along. We decided with our pastor to trial a group for our neighbours every other week. So we personally invited folk to an every other Wednesday evening 'get together'. The response was really encouraging.

A young lady who had been on an Alpha course, a man in his thirties who was an occasional church goer and a new couple to our church came along. Some neighbours declined to come while others were happy to give us prayer requests for our meetings.

A meeting might begin with a meal; with one or more of our guests at 7pm, others would join us for drinks and social time at 8pm and at 8.30 pm we had a 5-10 minute thought from the bible, followed by prayer for each other. The official end was 9pm although guests often stayed until well after 10pm.



Prayer requests have included - prayer for a partner, how their speed dating was working out, problems at work, wanting a new job, moving house and the loss of loved ones.

In December 2006 we held our Christmas drinks and mince pies from 4.30pm to 6.00pm - just prior to our church Christmas Service. Three of the group (one our newest member) came to both.

The group has evolved over the year. My wife and I are still recognised as a leading couple and yet we are increasingly aware that the group is making suggestions of their own. Examples include going out for a Chinese meal or meeting for a drink in a pub. We are happy with the flexibility but my wife and I always ensure that there is a space and time for prayer requests and praying for each other. Our aim is that Christ is seen to be real and is concerned about us in our daily lives – that Christ is available to everyone.

There was a pancake party on Shrove Tuesday where we explained the meaning of pancakes. We have had birthday parties for members which included special times of prayer for the person, which was a new experience for one of them.

One of our new members says that he feels at home with us! Recently he told us that he liked the way we prayed together as a group and that he now prays with his daughter every night before she goes to sleep. Her nightmares have stopped – and we thank Jesus for that! As a single parent he sometimes brings her to our meetings and sometimes we meet at his home.

As a couple we are learning about being available and building relationships with a small group of people who are open to God and His Word. It is a privilege that members of this group feel comfortable in sharing significant prayer requests and have grown in their trust of one another.

Is it all a perfect success story? One member remains a good friend but seems to be cool towards coming to pray with us. Another does not yet call himself a Christian. Sometimes my wife and I do not feel up to the commitment at the end of the day – our contribution isn't always perfect. But we keep going.

## **Cursillo leaders' workshop**

Kevin Beer and I drove up to Offa House on a very wet day at the end of June. There were twenty five delegates and three leaders from fourteen Dioceses. Jean Radley and Helen Jago were the lay leaders and Liz Cowley was Spiritual Advisor. We were given an impressive looking booklet with an even more impressive looking timetable – the weekend was certainly not going to be restful!!

Most of the talks were roughly Rollo length, followed by group discussion and it was encouraging for me to find that many of the delegates were relative newcomers to Cursillo and not the experienced leaders I had expected them to be. Talking with others about the Weekend and Fourth Day was extremely helpful and highlighted the different approaches taken by the Dioceses. I was amazed to hear that there are “Cursillo parishes” in many Dioceses, admittedly those who have had Cursillo for a great many years; it certainly gave us something to aspire to!

The worship was, as usual at any Cursillo gathering, wonderful; Liz Cowley uses Celtic worship at every opportunity so in addition to traditional morning prayer and compline there were many inspirational services.

As far as “authentic weekends” go, it seemed to me that we in Oxford are doing very well. It was agreed that prospective guests should be given as much information as possible about what they will experience during the weekend, e.g. guest timetables can be issued in advance, without wishing to spoil anything that may come as a pleasant surprise. The importance of the Fourth Day was emphasised and we came away determined to make renewed efforts to involve as many Cursillistas in Oxford Diocese as possible in Group Re-Unions, and to try to hold Ultreyas in areas other than East Berkshire where they are so successful.

The highlight of the weekend was the opportunity to pair off with one other delegate to share our life and faith stories. During the final Eucharist we were invited to pray with our partner during the intercession time, which was an enriching experience. The final hymn, what else but “I, the Lord



of sea and sky”, brought a lump to the throat of many and tears to the eyes of some.

I am very glad that I attended the workshop; I came away with much to think about and share with others. Offa House is a very good venue, with comfortable rooms (many now en suite) and excellent meals. We had some free time on the Saturday afternoon and many of us took the time to visit the gardens which were open in the Village and to go into the Church where there was a photographic exhibition. The more energetic – e.g. Kevin – took a run in the country!

I would recommend all those who are likely to serve on a Team in the future to sign up for a future CLW weekend. It is so important to hear others’ experiences of Weekends and the Fourth Day and it helped to make me feel more confident about leading Oxford 4.

Alison Shaw  
Oxford 2/Lay Rector Oxford 4

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## **Cursillo Leaders Workshops 2008**

Fri. 29 February – Sun. 2 March  
Morley Retreat House, Ilkeston,  
Derbyshire

Fri. 20 June – Sun. 22 June  
Offa House, Nr. Leamington Spa,  
Warwickshire

Fri. 17 October – Sun. 19 October  
Wyedale Hall, Scarborough

For more information  
Contact Kevin Beer.

## Diary Dates 2008

- Ultreya at St Helen's Church Centre,  
Abingdon, 10 for 10.30 on 12 January
- Diocesan Ultreya and Picnic, 7 June 2008  
10.30 for 11.00 at Dorchester Abbey
- Oxford 5: 24-27 April
- Oxford 6: 16-19 October

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### Please pray for

The well being and growth of Oxford Cursillo

Peter Watsham, the Lay Rector for Oxford 5

Shane, Jacquie and Hannah Griffiths as they  
settle into their new home in Cornwall.

The members of the Secretariat

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.

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