

Oxon Fourth



Oxford Anglican

Cursillo®

Issue No 13

Spring 2011

®Reg. US Patent Office

Anglican Cursillo® in the Diocese of Oxford
Affiliated with the British Anglican Cursillo® Council

Registered Charity No. 1117925



The past six months have been very exciting for Cursillo in the Oxford Diocese. Our first weekend at Douai Abbey was approached with some trepidation as the venue was very different from Cold Ash. We were very aware that we were a large group of people who would in effect be “taking over” the venue for four days and that we needed to remember that we were joining a religious community whose daily lives were very different from ours. Matthew and the Team, made up entirely of Oxford Cursillistas, worked very hard to fit the timetable to the venue and, as will be seen elsewhere in this publication, the weekend was a memorable experience for the Guests. We felt very privileged to be able on that occasion to hold Clausura in the Abbey Church and while the acoustics took some getting used to, the setting was magnificent and it was, as always, a very moving service.

Having had twelve guests for only the second time in the life of Cursillo in Oxford we wondered if we could keep the momentum going; we need not have worried. By December 2010 twelve people had already been signed up for Oxford 9 and we once again have a waiting list.

The AGM saw all roles on the Secretariat filled – many thanks to Angela Linton for offering to remain as Spiritual Director although she had hoped to be able to stand down – and additions made to the Servant Community. It is important to remember, however, that members are elected for a three year term so we need to be constantly praying about discernment of gifts in order to identify Cursillistas who can take over when the present Secretariat complete their time. It would be lovely if people came forward without being press-ganged! Do you feel called to serve Cursillo on the Secretariat or in the Servant Community? If so, please talk to one of the current members.

Since Oxford 8 we have had three Ultreyas – the AGM, the December event at Val Bradley’s and the Witney Ultreya in February. They are wonderful opportunities to stay connected with friends from far and wide. It was lovely to welcome Michael Beasley, Director of Mission for the Diocese, and his wife Lizzie to Witney. It would be good to have an Ultreya diaried in once a month across the Diocese – if you feel you would like to organise one please contact Gilly Robinson, 4th Day representative.

This year the Living Faith strategy is highlighting “Making Disciples”. The Archbishop of York, endorsing Cursillo, said “Cursillo is about making disciples; it transforms people’s lives and empowers them for service”. It is our hope that this is true for all those attending weekends and that they enter their 4th Day greatly enriched and ready to serve God and their local Church with renewed vigour.

Alison Shaw
Lay Director

Piety, and what it really means, has been on my mind for some time and now, with weekend #9 on the horizon, has intensified. Cursillo Group Reunion cards help with getting to grips with this, firstly with that lovely quotation from John 15:5 which ends 'apart from me you can do nothing,' how very true that is, and secondly the invitation to share two things - one in prayer and worship which has nourished our union with Christ and one moment when we felt close to Christ.



This has always been a very good practice, which I have enjoyed, but somehow it has never quite covered everything and, in my opinion, concentrates too much on what we have done rather than who we have been. In this section of the card/meeting we are meant to be focusing on how our personal relationship with God is developing and, like all relationships, it's a two way process which can have many aspects which are not at all 'pious', can be remarkably volatile and downright awful. We must surely be free, even encouraged, to be honest about where we find ourselves with God at any one time, especially if God feels absent and the world appears dark.

In the book I have chosen for my Lenten study - Wondrous Encounters, Scripture for Lent - the author Richard Rohr takes the readings Jonah 3:1-10 and Luke 11:29-32 for the Wednesday of the first week and the fact that Jesus says that the only sign which will be given in an 'evil age' is the sign of Jonah. Rohr believes that this is almost an anti-sign for it means that "we have to release ourselves into the belly of darkness before we can know what is really essential. It might even mean that others will often throw us overboard and that we get to the right shore by God's grace rather than right action on our part."

I found this both comforting and exciting as I have certainly discovered that my own relationship with God has certainly deepened through periods of difficulty and darkness and only by grace has that happened, not through my own efforts. For me piety has to involve difficulty, darkness and 'being thrown overboard' in some way for that is where God meets us. Maybe we need to include that on our Reunion card - let me know what you think.

With every blessing, Angela Linton

Oxford Cursillo runs two weekends a year.

This was always the intention, but in the early days, when we were getting established, we generally only managed to go ahead with one per year. Those that *did* go ahead generally had empty spaces. It even got to the point that Teams were trained for a Weekend only for it to be postponed because there were insufficient numbers. Not surprisingly, therefore, our thinking got a bit skewed, something along the lines of "How on earth are we going to find more Guests so that we can go ahead with the Weekend?"

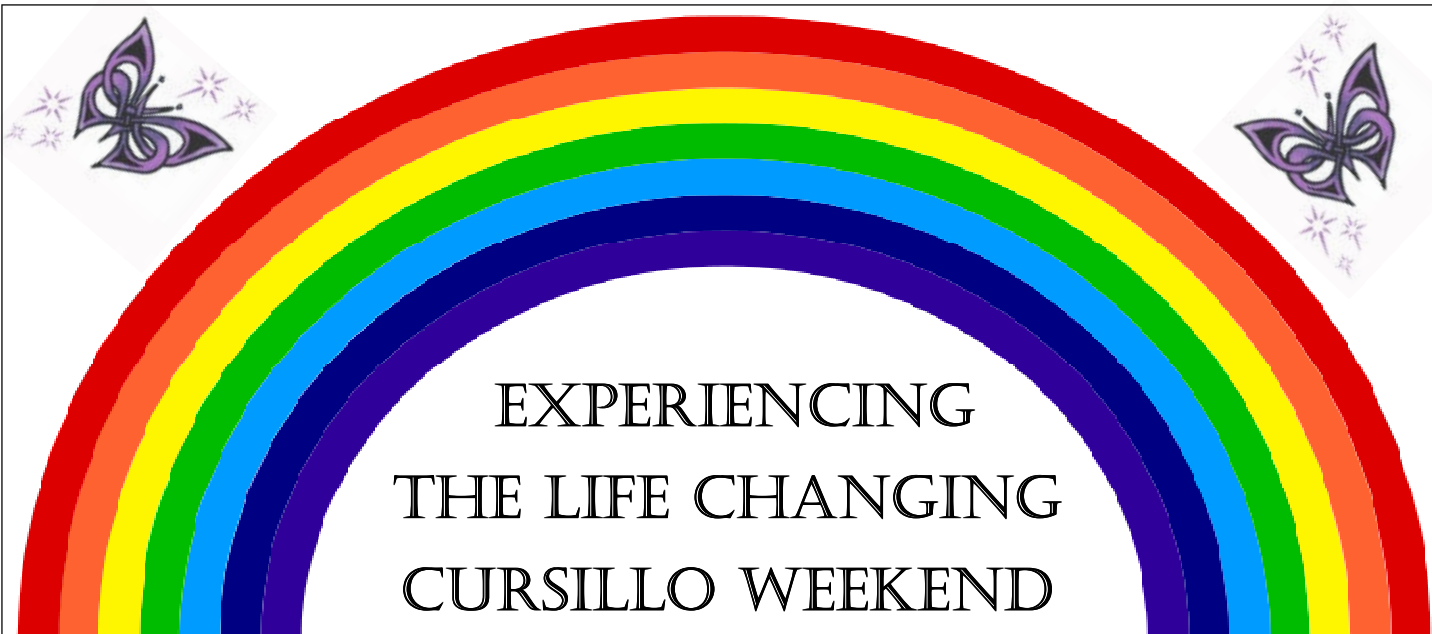
Wrong! Weekends do not happen for their own sake: they happen because there are Guests who will benefit from them.

But things have changed... For the second Weekend running, Oxford #9 is fully subscribed: in fact all the spaces on Oxford #8 and #9 had been claimed several months in advance, with people on waiting lists for cancellations. This means we have all had to change our mind-set. Now, we are able to pray ahead and plan ahead... and that is how Cursillo is meant to work. With #10 taking place in November, therefore, and registrations already arriving, now is the time to be thinking about, and praying about possible Guests. In practical terms, this means...

1. Think and pray through what Cursillo is all about
2. Identify someone in your church who might benefit from it in their future journey
3. Pray about it and seek clarity about whether it is 'right'
4. Talk to the vicar - there may be something that s/he knows that you don't
5. Talk to the person... invite them round, give them leaflets, point them towards the web site
6. Help them fill in the application form and makes sure it gets sent off
7. Keep praying!

The church is very good at putting things off, whether it's Easter, the holidays, Christmas - you name it. But the process of discernment and discussion is continuous and must be given time and space. So, when should you start this? Now! And a final word... if your memories of your weekend are pleasurable and you want to share that pleasure with someone else, why shouldn't they get it into their diaries sooner rather than later and have something to look forward to?

ULTREYA



EXPERIENCING THE LIFE CHANGING CURSILLO WEEKEND

To you, the participants of Oxford 9, you have just been on a wonderful roller-coaster ride which was just overflowing with love. A truly beautiful life changing time.

During your weekend you were wrapped in prayer - worldwide - that enveloping prayer full of transforming love.

From a group of strangers on a course, came the transition during your time together, to a caring, sharing team, opening up afresh to God, and to one another, in ways never before experienced - believe me!

Exuberance and joy flow through the teaching and worship times.

Suddenly you're a renewed person - open to God in ways you never dreamed - changed by over-whelming love, and supremely aware that God loves YOU and with that blanket of love wrapped around you, you'll find your on-going faith journey just as exciting.

Ultreya

Beryl Walters (Oxford 8)

Roller Coaster - Oxford 8

A group of people from across the diocese rolled up at Douai Abbey for Cursillo: Oxford 8 on a beautiful afternoon. As we pulled up to the Abbey there were smiling faces to greet us and from the moment we stepped out of the cars everything we needed was provided - even bags being carried to our rooms. The accommodation was very comfortable and it was an amazing place to spend a few days.

A sense of excitement - and trepidation for some - was palpable. Soon people were getting to know one another and friendships were being formed. The table with all the spare things people might have forgotten was a lovely touch and

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showed just how much thought and preparation goes in to caring for those on a Cursillo weekend.

Soon we had gathered together in the room where our meetings happened. The Lay Rector beamed. 'Umm, I don't mean to interrupt...'

Looking back it feels as though that moment was just like when a roller coaster pulls up to the top at the beginning of a ride. There was that sense of 'Pause'... Not knowing what was happening or quite where we were going...

Then we were off...

The roller coaster - or should it be Rollo Coaster? - that is a Cursillo weekend was on track and we were storming ahead. The hours of the next few days passed in something of a blur as we ran from one thing to the next. We were fed spiritually, through study, through companionship, through liturgy, through singing and singing some more! And of course we were fed through the hospitality of the Monastic refectory at Douai - 'Food, glorious food' springs to mind.

The different talks from the leaders were really moving and helped the group to reflect on our own lives of faith and how we respond to Jesus. At times it was hilarious; at others poignant; at others heart-aching. Like a group at the fair ground we flew from one thing to the next, having one experience, then another. The team who helped us through the weekend put up with the vagaries of the guests who were, at times, like a troop of funky monkeys. Huge fun was had and laughter rocked the Abbey.

We were all overwhelmed by the love shown through the gifts of prayer which flooded upon us at times during our stay. Certainly I shall never forget the Eucharist to mark the end of the weekend which was really moving.

After this, it was time for the roller coaster to stop - though only once more food had been shared in the Refectory. We gradually said farewell to new friends and old and climbed back into our cars ready to travel home again. There was certainly a sense that we had enjoyed the most amazing journey which meant, surely, that life could never be the same: here's to the Fourth Day...

And just before the end, a nod to the Gofer and all who worked so hard as leaders of the weekend. We were thoroughly spoilt by the display of Christian love and generosity: it won't be forgotten.

From an Oxford 8 Cursillista

Fourth Day in Action.....

Dick, who was one of my best friends for nearly forty years, died in January, after five months mainly in hospital suffering from cancer. During this time, he remained sure that he was going to recover, and was making plans for his future. In recent years you may have seen him in his flower-covered hat, at a folk festival, or busking with his melodeon. He was a true free spirit, devoted to the folk traditions of England, particularly the music, and after passing his driving test in his fifties he spent a small inheritance on a van and travelled the country researching his interests. He had faith, but in God rather than in organised religion. He ended up in the Churchill in Oxford, where I visited as often as I could. He had no family locally, but he had many friends and he was also visited by one of the hospital chaplains who also happens to be a friend of mine and a Cursillista. When the time came, my Cursillista friend was asked to conduct the funeral, and we had endless telephone and e-mail discussions with Dick's two sisters as to the format. There was an article about Dick in the Oxford Mail, for which I was interviewed, and following which I was contacted by several long-lost folkie friends. There was an interesting congregation at the funeral - folkies and family - and on a grey February day we gave Dick as good a send-off as we could in the crematorium chapel. It was strangely appropriate to listen to Dick's recorded voice singing a drinking song as the curtains closed behind the coffin. We adjourned to the pub.

While I have been to funerals before, Dick's was the first one I had been to where I had played any part in the service, reading a lesson. I cried. It didn't matter. Although there were people at the funeral whom I had never met before, we all shared the experience of knowing Dick and that brought us together. He was one of those people you could not ignore, and although he could be infuriating at times, he was totally without malice and was much loved. I am glad to have known him and to share his memory with his many friends. This was part of my fourth day experience, and I wanted to share it with you.

Diocesan Ultreya and Picnic

At Diocesan Church House
Saturday 9th July 2011, 10.00 for 10.30 Ultreya

followed by bring and share picnic lunch.



NATIONAL ULTREYA 2011 3RD SEPTEMBER

The National Ultreya 2011 this year is being hosted in the beautiful city of Lincoln. The website for news and information is:

www.lincolncursillo.org.uk

Dates for your diary

Saturday 28th May 2011

Ultreya

17:00 Drinks and nibbles for 17:30 start
Pennyfarthings, Spring Lane, Swallowfield RG7 1ST

Saturday 9th July 2011

Diocesan Ultreya & Summer Picnic

10:00 for 10:30 start
Ultreya followed by bring & share picnic
Diocesan Church House

Saturday 3rd September 2011

Ultreya GB

Lincoln (see previous page)

3rd-6th November 2011

Oxford Weekend No 10

Douai Abbey

Saturday 26th November 2011

Ultreya and AGM

9:15 Breakfast for 10:00 start
Venue details to be announced (see website)

26th-29th April 2012

Oxford Weekend No 11

Douai Abbey

We are now in the delightful position that we have a waiting list for Cursillo weekends so if there is anyone that you would like to sponsor please book early.

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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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 September 2011