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Welcome to the Autumn issue. There's lots to read, and I hope enjoy. See below for details of the BACC online seminar on 2-day weekends. New features in this issue are a meditation and a book review. Our Spiritual Director the Rev Tony Price looks back at what he calls "The Longest Lent", but happier times are on the horizon as the roll-out of anti-Covid vaccines gathers pace. My interview this time is with Matthew Caminer, who initiated this magazine and was its first editor.

Deadline for our autumn issue is Sept 15th.

Please send articles and ideas to me, Vivien Leeming at magazine.editor@oxfordcursillo.co.uk



Letter from our joint lay directors, Stu and Margaret Vaughan

Two days, or not two days, that is the question!

Dear Cursillistas,

Margaret and I hope this communication finds you in good health and spirit, eagerly awaiting the world to start spinning again. I start by apologising for corrupting the words of Shakespeare, although Hamlet's 'what's the point' rhetoric would unfortunately be echoed by many people during the last year. That said, I was thinking earlier that with vaccinations scheduled and restrictions easing, this Easter's "He is risen" affirmation will have wider connotations ... like newly emerged butterflies, we have a chance for a new beginning or, at least see the world anew.

So as you may have guessed the title refers to the potential of holding two-day weekends alongside the usual three-day weekends. Two dioceses have held 2-day weekends so BACC thought it a good idea to hold a webinar in February to discuss the relative merits and address any concerns.



The Secretariat had already discussed it, but the webinar was a greater opportunity to glean first hand experience. It must be reiterated that the 2-day weekends will not be replacing the traditional version but could give us options -more so given the current constraints around venues and the reality that we probably won't be ready to hold a weekend until next year.

See below for the output from the Q & A session which I hope you will all find useful, and of course, if you have further ideas or questions not covered please send them in to the Secretariat. Lastly, I have left in the link to the closing worship from the national Spiritual Director which I thought wrapped things up just lovely. Hopefully see you all soon even if it is by Zoom!

BACC Webinar on Two-Day Cursillos

Held on February 2021

Questions and Answers

1 GENERAL QUESTIONS

Will Three-Day Cursillos be phased out? NO. Dioceses are free to hold two-day Cursillos, three-day Cursillos or a mixture of both as your Secretariat thinks best. One is not better than the other, both are equally valid ways of introducing people to the Cursillo Method. Neither the 2-day nor the 3-day Cursillo has to be over a weekend: it can be held midweek.

What can the 3-day Cursillo learn from the 2-day? Holding 2-day Cursillo is an opportunity to review what you do, why you do it and how and when and where.

2 TIMETABLE

Could we see a 2- day programme which has already been used? Will there be a new national time-table for the 2-day weekend to save each diocese from writing their own? Could we have programmes from the dioceses already running a 2-day weekend?

We have circulated Chelmsford's timetable for their 2-day Cursillo (and also for their 3-day Cursillo for comparison). Please remember that every diocese does things a little differently, because of the constraints of the venue and also because 'that's how we've always done it, so there is not (nor has there ever been) a 'national' timetable.

What counts as clutter that can be cut out? See the Chelmsford 2-day and 3-day Cursillo timetables to see what they saw as clutter. But this will vary as every diocese has its own 'clutter'. Critical components of the Cursillo course are the meditations, talks and the daily act of worship.

What time do people usually finish on the last day? This will vary between dioceses depending on venue etc.

Could we substitute evening service (possibly on Fri) with the Service of Light? Absolutely. There is no prescribed timetable for a 2-day or a 3-day Cursillo, so long as the essentials (5 meditations and 15 talks) are included. For example, Norwich has removed art work

from the timetable, only having a very popular art table that can be used in down time. Chester stripped back their Cursillo a couple of years ago and it proved liberating.

Could we have 2 of the talks on the Friday evening? This is down to the Secretariat and the Lay Rector. If you think this can work then by all means do it, but please remember participants (and staff) may well have been at work all day and therefore tired, and that you are likely also to be having an evening act of worship and 2 meditations as well as the 'housekeeping rules'. That's a lot for people to take in on their first evening.

How do you make enough time for discussion and bonding in table groups?

How do you protect the time alone - it can be very important for pilgrims to decompress/pray alone and reflect - when the programme is so full?

What free time is there in total? Table discussion time is already said by many to be too short, also free time could be an area for concern! This does require careful management of time. See the Chelmsford 2-day Cursillo timetable. Chelmsford and the other two dioceses that have held 2-day Cursillos (Southwell and Scotland) found there was enough time.

Is the opportunity for spontaneity lost? Scotland found that spontaneity was not lost.

Would it be an idea for the Rollo room gofer to have a copy of the talks so they can assist with questions if talks are back to back? If you wish – there are no 'rules' about this, although isn't that primarily the role of the Table Leaders?

3 STAFFING AND PARTICIPANT NUMBERS

Was there a need for extra training days, could Zoom be used? Not necessarily more training days but we do need to emphasise to staff that a 2-day Cursillo is different (not better or worse, just different).

Should the number of pilgrims be reduced for 2-day weekends? Not necessarily. Experience so far shows maximum is about 16 – 20.

Do you need more staff? On the Chelmsford 2-day Cursillo they had the same number of staff but fewer participants. Because there is less time overall, there is a greater call on SAs so they had three SAs. On Scotland's first 2-day Cursillo they had more staff as there was less time to get things organised in the background.

4 PALANCA

How much palanca? This is down to the Secretariat and Lay Rector to decide and will be influenced by what you do for a 3-day Cursillo. One set given during the Cursillo and another given to the participants afterwards is a good guide.

Would collecting and organising palanca before the weekend be better? That is how some dioceses already do it.

5 RESOURCES

Could a new 2-day flow chart be prepared please?

Is there a guideline for timing on SD talks?

Is the structure/ theme of the 15 talks going to be reviewed?

The Talks and Meditations Guides will be revised by BACC, but there is no timescale as yet.

6 NOMENCLATURE

Can you say 'talk' rather than 'rollo'?

Yes. BACC has never dictated the terminology to be used, but has recommended demystifying the terminology where possible.

What do we now call 'fourth' day!?

On a 3-day Cursillo we use the Hebrew calendar (possibly to everyone's confusion) in which a day runs from sunset to sunset. On this basis, the Cursillo lasts three days. On a 2-day Cursillo we arrive on (eg) a Friday and leave on a Sunday so it lasts three days in most people's eyes. So we can still talk of the 'Fourth Day' as being everything post Cursillo.

BACC has tried but (so far) failed to come up with convincing names for the 2-day' and '3-day' Cursillos; the prefixes '2-day' and '3-day' are used here to differentiate between the two for convenience. In general both should be referred to simply as "Cursillo": it is important not to give the wrong impression that one is somehow better than the other.

Cursillo Leaders' Workshops

Please can we have a CLW at Wychcroft in Southwark diocese.

Could we please have some CLWs that are midweek .

Bookings are still open for the CLW in October

CLW in October 2021 is at Shepherds Dene in Northumberland; March 2022 Wistaston; October 02022 Shallowford. Information and booking forms on the BACC website.

Please note that the closing worship can be found here: <https://youtu.be/vldXxWLG068B>

**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.**

Message from our Spiritual Director, the Rev Tony Price

Life's Longest Lent

Will we ever go for a walk again without crossing the road as soon as we see someone coming towards us on our side? Will we feel entirely safe again on public transport? Will we be able to see people's faces in the supermarket, and smile back at the checkout person? Will we ever again speak to our GP face to face? Will we get used to routinely shaking hands again, or be able to share the common cup at the Holy Communion?

One year after the first coronavirus pandemic lockdown began, and as we approach a second Easter when many of us may not be able to attend church or receive the Sacrament, this Lent feels as if it has gone on for that whole year, and perhaps we start to wonder if it will ever end. Many Christian leaders have suggested that we shouldn't think of this Lent as a time for giving things up

in the usual way. We have already lost so much, had to give up so much, had so much taken from us. It is more appropriate for us to see and use this ongoing Lent as a time of mourning for all that we've lost.

And many people throughout the world have lost so much. Their own lives, or people they've loved and not been able to be with to hold their hands in their last moments. Their income or their jobs. Their health, in the case of those who contracted the virus and are still suffering the after-effects of 'Long Covid', or whose treatment for painful conditions has been cancelled. Plans for holidays that have had to be abandoned. Months of schooling for our children. Mental well-being, the joy of human companionship. We ourselves may have been part of the huge increase in the number of people suffering acute loneliness, or seeking help to cope with depression.

Even those of us who have been fortunate and have 'got off lightly' (so far) by not contracting the virus or losing loved ones, would mostly say we are struggling to keep the huge sadness at bay. There is a general sense of fear and anxiety, expressing itself in nights of strange and troubling dreams, even as we reach out for the hope given by the continuing programme of vaccination. We're told that the number of cases is falling, but that it may still be months before life returns to anything like 'normal'. I read today that this might not be next month or even this year, but that we may still have to take care and accept some restrictions going on into 2022.

So sadness, grief, mourning are entirely appropriate reactions. Mourning is generally something people are able to do together; it is much harder when we're not able to meet together. What remains for us is to take it to God in our prayers. I'm so glad that the Psalms show us how to do this. They show us by example that it's OK to cry, to complain, to shout and scream at God, to rant and rail and express our



doubts and fears and ask why God isn't *doing* something about it.

In the Bible, and in earlier centuries, believers often saw plagues, defeats and calamities as God's punishment, sent to bring the people back to God. This is not how we like to think of it; it doesn't sit easily with what we believe about the love of the God who sent his Son into the world not to condemn but to save. But I'm convinced that we can still give meaning to all the suffering of this past year, this extraordinarily long Lent, by using it as a time for turning to God in some new way. Yes, in mourning, in complaining, (God can take the worst we can say in our prayers), in confessing. But let's not forget the other part of prayer which I believe is the most important even when life is at its worst: Thanksgiving.

St Paul so often urges us that our proper bearing is to be *giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (Ephesians 5.20). However hard it may be at times, many of the greatest saints bear witness that it is the surest way of transforming suffering into blessing.



Faith Through Adversity

There is light at the end of the tunnel,

Calm at the end of the storm.

The cave may be pitch black,

But there will be a way out.

The darkness stops me in my tracks,

I need someone to hold my hand,

Lead me out, back to the light.

It may be a friend or stranger,

But You are holding their hand.

I am scared, but the hand is firm, reassuring.

I trust that hand,

We will find the way out.

Barbara Essam

Lay ministry
was a call
Jane could
not ignore



In November Cursillista Jane Vowles and 12 others were due to be licensed as lay ministers in the Church of England at Christchurch Cathedral in Oxford, but because of Covid lockdown, they found themselves being licensed via zoom in their own homes! Giving the Action Talk at an Ultreya, also on zoom, Jane shared part of her journey to this point.

May 26th 2017 began quite normally. I was giving my friend Sarah who, like me, works in Oxford, a lift to work. She is ordained and happens to be our vicar's wife and a chatter box! We did the first 30 minutes of the journey without me needing to say a word. As we were passing Oxford Crematorium Sarah asked how I was. Well for several months I had been feeling very unsettled, which was unusual for me. I had decided I needed a new job. When I told Sarah I was job hunting she asked if I had thought of Lay Ministry. NO! I was job hunting, not looking for a vocation! However, once vocalised the idea would not go away so "Sarah's Silly Suggestion" became my constant companion.

I could think of 101 reasons why SSS was a bad idea, such as:

- It's a bit late at my age, haven't we got enough middle-aged women in the church without another one? I was heading for a gentle retirement of gardening and walking, not a whole new venture
- I had a full-time, demanding job and no spare time
- I hate giving talks at work so the idea of preaching left me quaking
- Even reading out loud has never been one of my strong points
- I had spent large periods of my life in the spiritual wilderness, allowing the weeds and thorns free reign and the "worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful."
- My Biblical knowledge was pathetic

- The training on a Wednesday evening would clash with bellringing practice, and I was tower captain
- Nothing in the role of Lay Minister fitted with me.

Now I am always a bit wary of reading too much into Bible verses that appear to jump out into a particular situation. However, over the following few weeks my daily Bible reading plan bombarded me with reasons why I should step outside my comfort zone and basically trust God and do this “silly” thing. Once I opened the metaphorical door a crack and started to seriously look into the role and what the training involved, a lot of things began to fall into place and make sense.

For instance:

- I work in a medical research lab. I am the only person there without a PhD so I had often considered studying for a higher degree in stem cell biology, but every time I had looked into it, I concluded I would rather study theology, but as that would not further my career, I had not pursued it. Now I was being given a reason.
- Also, as Churchwarden during a recent vacancy, I had an overwhelming feeling that, as a church, we lacked depth in teaching and many of us did not have the confidence or vocabulary to speak about our faith. This had been an important consideration in the appointment we made, but perhaps God was asking me to be part of that enabling.

I eventually decided to apply for training. At that moment I understood what “the peace of God which passes all understanding” means. It was something I had never experienced quite so intensely before and I knew applying was the right thing to do. However, filling in the application form was quite traumatic as we had to write about our spiritual journey to date. I took a day off work and spent most of the day in tears as I charted the ups and downs of my journey, mostly downs and mostly, looking back, resolutely ignoring God’s call on my life. But of course, God does not give up and eventually resorts to shouting at us if we won’t listen!

So I attended the next LLM Selection Conference and was accepted for training.

The initial training takes 3 years of part-time study. 12 modules are taught as weekly evening classes and a few residential weekends. Luckily there are no exams but you do need to write 2 assessed essays per term plus a longer portfolio each year. I had not written an essay since 1981 so it was quite a shock!

So, there have been some lightbulb moments along the way. During the Pastoral Care module, we were asked to critique a prayer our tutor had written for the Diocesan Health and Wellbeing group. By the end of the second line I was welling up and by the end of the 3rd line had tears rolling down my face. I’ll read you the first few lines..... “The affirmation that my ordinariness is prized by God, and God can use my ordinariness to speak to other “ordinary” prized, cherished and loved people, was game changing. This really brought home to me that God uses us as we are, in our individuality. He might stretch us, in a way that can sometimes feel uncomfortable, but however ordinary we feel we are, in fact, extraordinary workers for Him.

I was also lucky enough to hear Archie Coates preach a couple of years ago. He is one of these high flying, Holy Trinity Brompton, Church planting guys. He said, with a passing nod to Alcoholics Anonymous “I am Archie Coates and I am self-reliant” and then went on to preach on 2 Cor 12:9 “My grace is

sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness". I have no idea about the rest of his sermon. I was just sitting there realising that most of my life I have been saying "I am Jane Vowles and I am self-reliant." I trust in my own ability, my own strength, my ideas, and turn to God when I run out steam. But that is not what He is asking me to do. He is asking me to rely on Him daily, He who fashioned the world, who is almighty and who never fails. I forget almost every day; I still try to do it on my own. I'm a slow learner.

During the last 3 years I have been wonderfully supported by my lovely Reunion group who are open, honest, encouraging and prayerful. Just what a Reunion group should be, thank you, Quainton Reunion. I'm still not totally clear what shape my ministry will take and Covid has not helped that, but I take encouragement from an elderly acquaintance, in her 90's, who recently moved into a care home as she was tired of housework. When I asked her if she was settling in OK, she said she was, apart from all the old people, and was **not yet sure** why God had put her there, **but was sure** he had a plan and purpose for her. So, I am taking a leaf out of her book and not getting hung up on the detail but trusting God will make it clear in His time. And as someone here today reminded me on the day of my licensing, 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future' ".

So if I come back to my initial reasons for thinking Sarah's idea was silly

- "It's a bit late at my age" changes into: You have a lifetime of experience and if in some small way I can encourage all those other middle-aged people in church to talk about their faith to their children and grandchildren.....
- I have a full-time demanding job and no spare time, but I will be resigning it at Christmas
- I hate giving talks at work but preaching is entirely different and a huge privilege
- Reading out loud has never been one of my strong points, but so what if I fluff my words occasionally?
- I had spent large periods of my life in the spiritual wilderness, but God constantly draws us back to Him however many times we turn our back
- My Biblical knowledge is pathetic so I need to work at it
- What could I contribute that our vicar was not infinitely better equipped to provide? Every one of us has a unique important ministry
- The training was on a Wednesday evening which clashes with bellringing practice and I am tower captain, but now my initial training is over I can get back to ringing, but: Oh no I can't - because of Covid19!



God loves us and He wants to be with us!

A meditation by Lucie Austin



"GOD loves company. God loves 'being with us'.

How else did God know that Adam needed a partner, that it was not good for him to be alone?"

This is from a sermon by Barbara Brown Taylor (Church Times 18 December 2020).

Barbara also quotes Wisdom: *"When He [God] marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside Him, like a master worker," she says,*

"and I was daily His delight, rejoicing before Him always, rejoicing in His inhabited world and delighting in the human race" (Proverbs 29b-31).

Many, if not all, of us still have remembered childhood images of God as a stern and forbidding kind of Father Christmas without the 'Ho, Ho, Ho' and most definitely without the bags of sweets. Even if we have since learned to push that image into the background, it somehow seems much easier to think of "Gentle Jesus" being more approachable and friendly than the Almighty God. So many misconceptions have become ingrained in our collective Christian consciousness, stereotypes created from small pieces of the story.

Each of us is unique. God made us that way. God created us in His own image. I like to imagine my small piece of the story using the potter picture. Only, of course, the Potter is actually creating the clay as He forms it - minute fragments of stone bound together with water. He shapes the clay from the inside out, with all the potential to be exactly that particular person He wants me to be. And God sees that His work is good.

Because we are created entirely in the image of God, we are creative and free. Free to live and love and rejoice in His inhabited world. But that very freedom gives space for downfall - as the Adam and Eve story demonstrates. I believe we need to learn to turn to our Maker every time we fall. We can see only partial images of God, but God knows all there is to know about us. We can't hide anything from Him. What's more, God understands us. God understands us better than we understand ourselves and He will never leave us. God loves to be with us.

Whatever is troubling us - whether it is as huge as a pandemic, or as small as a broken eggcup - God feels our pain. Whether I have mistyped an email, said something hurtful, broken a law or lost my temper He is still always there. Even when I have shouted at God Himself and clearly not been the person He made me to be, God loves me. My Potter is ever ready to hold, to reshape, to reform my torn and broken bits to make me whole. Being in God's hands is the best place to be.

I shall enjoy getting to know you!

I have been a keen member of Cursillo since attending my own weekend in October 1999. I depend on the ongoing support, direction and discipline of Group Reunion to provide the prompt for review and therefore development of my own Christian life. I am an advocate of the Cursillo method having seen the effect on other individuals too, and have enjoyed supporting the movement over the years.

I have staffed in both Chester and Bradford dioceses. I have twice been Lay Rector of a Chester weekend, and I feel privileged to share with others as they develop in confidence and faith through their Cursillo experience and beyond.



As BACC area representative for a (then) newly defined area of Wales and the Marches I began the process of regenerating Cursillo in the Lichfield diocese by renewing contact with their known Cursillistas, and I look forward to the support and development offered by the wider Cursillo family to that diocese as well as to those dioceses undergoing their own challenges.

I enjoyed working as part of the team responsible for reviewing and rewriting the Resource Manual in 2017/18. I am curious to know how each diocese organises itself as well as its concerns and priorities, and feel that BACC can continue to develop its assistance in sharing best practice on many different levels. I am encouraged that cross-diocese working and sharing of resources is now evolving.

After a professional career as a rating surveyor with the Civil Service I chose to take early retirement in 2014 and enjoy the indulgence of many pastimes and hobbies. This has been an opportunity to get to know many others outside the church family whilst I maintain time for my church family responsibilities as Vice-chairman of our PCC and a Home Group Leader. I appreciate contemplative prayer with the occasional quiet day and retreat including, on occasion, a specialist retreat simultaneously indulging in spiritual growth and making bobbin lace.

I recognise that everyone has different expectations of the role of President and circumstances are such that we all have many unexpected challenges ahead, but I trust I will at least be available to listen to all. I would like to get to know you more in order to help BACC serve and encourage you in your part of the body of Christ. I look forward to meeting as many as possible during my term as President.

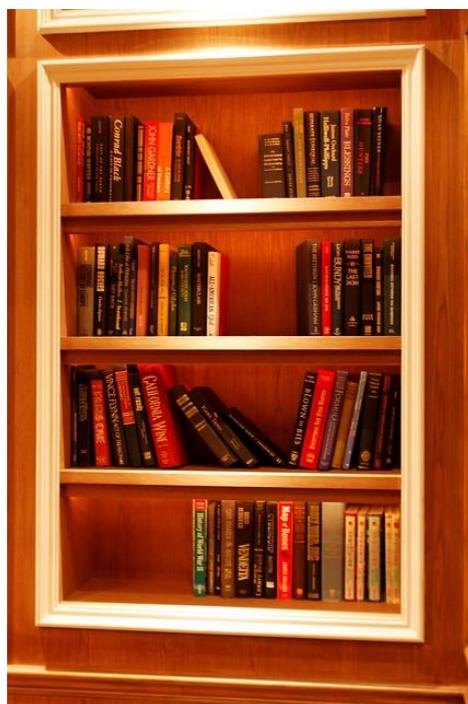
I am encouraged in this task by the saying "God doesn't call the equipped, He equips the called". This gives me the confidence and, as we do with everything in Cursillo, I rely on your prayer, and I shall trust in God for guidance in whatever response is required of me in this venture.

[Ultreya!](#)

Saying Yes to Life

by Ruth Valerio

Book review by
Kate Banks



The book that I have chosen to review is one that I have been reading through Lent, and that has made a big impression on me – **Saying Yes to Life**, by Ruth Valerio.

The book is written in 7 chapters, each corresponding to one of the days in the Creation Story, and focusing on the different events of each day. So for example, chapter 5 focuses on Genesis 1.20-23, when God says, 'Let the waters teem with living creatures and let birds fly'. Valerio uses this text as the basis of an in-depth study looking at how the human lifestyle has damaged the oceans and how this in turn affects the creatures living in and around the waters.

This is a deeply felt and well researched book, which nevertheless remains easy to read; and despite the inevitable warnings of how human behaviour is damaging our planet, Valerio's love of creation shines through every page. Ruth Valerio is Global Advocacy and Influencing Director at Tearfund, and illustrates her writing with examples from her experience of climate change and deforestation, and how these and other issues affect people and economies across the world. This is also an extremely practical book: after each section, there are suggestions on how we can change our lifestyle to alleviate the specific problem addressed in that chapter, along with links to online sites which offer more resources and ideas for further reading.

Saying Yes to Life was originally published as the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book last year. The royalties from the sale of the book are donated to Tearfund, and used to support their work in the places of greatest need.

(Published by SPCK, £9.99 in paperback format, but also available in audio book and eBook)

Editor's Interview

Matthew Caminer, Oxford's first Lay Director



Matthew Caminer (69) was the original Steering Group Leader and first Lay Director of Oxford Anglican Cursillo. After a career in export sales of Scotch whisky and then as an IT project manager and process excellence specialist, he moved to GlaxoSmithKline and thence to Accenture before moving into freelance consultancy.

He and his wife Miriam, a priest with Permission to Officiate, are members of All Saints, Ascot Heath where Matthew runs the church band and co-ordinates the weekly Men's Breakfast group. They live in Old Windsor at the extreme southeast of the diocese.

Since stepping back from leadership roles for Oxford Cursillo, Matthew has taken a particular interest in clergy family wellbeing, and has written 3 books on the subject, published by SPCK and Grove. He runs workshops for theological colleges, vocation groups and dioceses. He has broadcast on Thought for the Day for BBC Radio Oxford and has written for the Church Times.

Q: How and where did you first get involved in Cursillo?

A: Although I was brought up in London, I spent 20 years living and working in Scotland. I met my wife Miriam there, when we were both last minute soloists in a performance of Handel's Messiah! The Scottish Episcopal Cursillo was in the second wave of the launch of Cursillo in the UK. This venture had strong leadership from Texas, and from Richard Holloway, Bishop of Edinburgh who was also presiding bishop of the Scottish Church, and also from the Rev Timm Engh, a parish priest in Edinburgh.

In Scotland church leaders first went on a Cursillo Weekend before recommending it to their congregations, and as a Reader at our church in Glasgow Miriam was one of the first to go and I went with her. Scotland's 15th weekend in 1992 was held in a huge draughty monastery of the Redemptorist Fathers in Kinnoull, near Perth.

I enjoyed every minute of it. The music was wonderful, the rollos (talks) were all extraordinary. I made a bit of a nuisance of myself insisting on being served only decaffeinated drinks, so I should not have been surprised that one of the Spiritual Advisers, looking me in the eye, defined grace as “a sort of spiritual caffeine!”

The packed clausura stands out in my memory as being an instant welcome into a community of people who had driven huge distances to be there. No wonder the hymn “We are marching” has such strong resonances for me.

Q: *Did you get involved in Cursillo right away?*

A: I soon got into a reunion group and went to every Ultreya. I served on team as a Kitchen Gofor, the standard job for a first timer in Scotland, including, no, *especially* for clergy serving on team for the first time! I have never been so exhausted, before or since! Eventually I was Lay Rector on Scotland #25.

I also went to meetings of the Servant Community – something which for some reason hasn’t clicked in Oxford Cursillo – and took on positions such as Fourth Day Rep, Music Organiser and then Provincial Lay Director when I welcomed the gathered Cursillo community for the UK Ultreya in St Mary’s Cathedral, Edinburgh. Another highlight was serving as Gifting Liaison Officer for Scotland’s gifting of Cursillo to Durham, which is still a vibrant Cursillo community.

Q: *So what brought you to Oxford?*

A: My job involved commuting to London weekly, and the company suggested I moved down here, all expenses paid, so Miriam and I returned to our roots – she was born in Gerrards Cross so we were both familiar with the area. I had been a management trainee for Marks & Spencer in their Windsor and Slough branches in my twenties.

Q: *And Oxford Cursillo?*

A: I soon found Cursillistas in Goring and Streatley and others dotted around the Oxford diocese. They had already tried to launch the movement but it did not take off first time. I became involved and soon found myself at the helm. Working with BACC and friends in Coventry Cursillo we formed a steering group, and started regular Ultreyas, sending people for team experiences in other dioceses and then sponsoring people to go on weekends. In other words, we followed the classic route of establishing a Fourth Day community first, and only then launched our own weekends.

Q: *When and where was the first one?*

A: We hosted Oxford #1 at Cold Ash in April 2005, gifted and largely staffed by Coventry Cursillo. It was

very exciting and a huge privilege to be able to welcome the gathered Cursillo community at the clausura, with representatives from many dioceses all over the country. At that point I became Lay Director, and went on to serve in a number of roles. I have always been in a reunion group.

Q: *What have you learnt from your experience with Oxford Cursillo?*

A: Every Cursillo community is different, so while we may use the same reunion card, same order of service for Ultreyas, and an identical structure for weekends, you can make no assumptions. I was mistaken in presuming we could simply transplant what had worked in Scotland, or Coventry for that matter, and that it would work, in terms of the weekend or the ways of living Cursillo. Contexts, people, priorities are all different and we really had to start with a blank sheet of paper. It was quite a painful learning experience, but I think anybody coming from a successful Cursillo community elsewhere would agree. It's a very hard transition.

Q: *What sorts of things do you have in mind?*

A: Well, for instance, that first experience I described of the church being crammed full of people for the closing service of my own weekend - I expected the same here. And yet attendance at Oxford's clausuras has never been great. True, it's not all about numbers. The reality is: different needs, understanding, interpretation, priorities and context. Some things, though, are not so context-sensitive. The lack of a Servant Community has been a handicap throughout the life of Oxford Cursillo, because without it too much has rested on the shoulders of too few people; there has been a lack of succession planning, and, above all, there has been a lack of the shared joy of working together to make Cursillo work.

Something else: the entire membership of the Scottish Episcopal Church would comfortably fit into one of the larger deaneries in Oxford Diocese, so even allowing for the fact that Cursillo is certainly not for everyone, I have always found it difficult to understand why we struggle to get sufficient people to go on one weekend a year, compared with the three weekends a year pattern to which I had been accustomed, each with two or three dozen participants. Of course it is true that weekends happen because there are people to go on them, not the other way round, but even then....

I think it is something to do with priorities and commitment and the fact that in the busy world of the 2000s Cursillo has to take its place amongst many conflicting calls on people's time.

Q: *All of that makes it sound as if you are disappointed or disillusioned, would that be true?*

A: No, quite the contrary. There was clearly a need and a desire for Oxford Cursillo when we started it. For me, the evidence that Cursillo was part of God's plan was the way doors kept opening unexpectedly, one after the other in all sorts of ways. And I've seen many fruits from it. For instance, people's lives transformed, vocations recognised, whether to ordained or non-ordained roles, and the communities that

continue to meet regularly, with friendships forged over many years.

Q: *So to finish on a high, any insights into our Cursillo family?*

A: There was a wonderful moment back in Scotland that said everything about Cursillo when a large group of us were waiting in Oban for the ferry across to the Isle of Mull for a 'welcome back' Ultreya, several of us carrying musical instruments. A young man with a guitar came up to us and it turned out he was on his way to Iona, which meant hopping across from Mull. He asked where we were going with our instruments. He was a Cursillista from New Zealand and he asked if he could join in our Ultreya. It was as if we had been friends forever!

Q: *I know there's another special moment you'd like to share!*

A: Yes, in 1997 Miriam and I were on holiday in Deia, Mallorca, the birthplace of Cursillo. One day I walked up to the church at the top of the hill and got talking to an elderly man dressed in black, sitting on a bench under an olive tree in the churchyard. I asked him if he'd ever heard of Cursillo. His wrinkled face lit up, he raised his hands and said "*la mano de Dios*" (The hand of God) and it turned out that in 1944 he had been a guest on the very first Cursillo weekend anywhere in the world. He was now the aged parish priest. It was so special because it spoke of history and of global friendships made with a common purpose and a shared commitment.



De Colores

Sister Barbara June SLG

A tribute by Victoria Mort



Sister Barbara June died on January 8th, in a residential home in Iffley.

She was born Barbara Anne June Kirby in 1934 in Darjeeling. Her father was a Scottish tea planter. Her family relocated to England after the war and she went to grammar school in Southampton. She finished her education at St Andrew's University. She first entered the Community of the Sisters of the Love of God in 1955 but left when her father died in order to take care of her mother. She supported her mother and sister as a supply teacher, then in St Swithun's School in Winchester and finally in Chalfont St Peter.

After her mother's death she entered the Community again in 1966. The convent house is in Fairacres, Oxford, where she was much sought-after as a Spiritual Director. She was ordained in 1997 and used to preside at the Eucharist on the fifth Sunday of the month in St Alban's church, Charles Street, Oxford.

She and I made our Cursillo the same Weekend: Oxford #2, having been brought together by Marilyn Parry, whom many may remember as a regular Spiritual Adviser on Weekends. Subsequently we met in Fairacres for our Reunion Group with other Oxford Cursillistas about once every three weeks or so. Sister Barbara June served as SA on Weekends and at Ultreyas a few times, where she had much to contribute and was greatly appreciated. We had many excellent conversations and she often mentioned books which were worth looking up. I lent her Hilary Mantel's trilogy about Thomas Cromwell too, which

we were able to discuss. A significant memory from Oxford #2 was her offering at the little show we used to do after the Saturday night dinner. She taught us all to sing the round:

Good bits and bad bits
God loves our good bits
God loves our bad bits

I've found this simple message very encouraging!

Quite a number of different people joined our Reunion Group over the years until I became the only one at a time when Sister Barbara June was starting to display signs of Alzheimer's. In due course she moved to the residential care home at Iffley, where she died on 8 January.

I attended the funeral in St Andrew's Headington, representing her many Cursillo friends, on 26 January.



Sister Barbara at the care home

Dates for your diary

Cursillo Leaders' Workshops

October 15th – 17th 2021 at Shepherd's Dene, Riding Mill, Northumberland NE44 6AF

March 18th - 20th 2022 at Wistaston Hall, Crewe CW2 8JS

October 7th – 9th 2022 at Shallowfield House, Stone, near Stafford ST15 0NZ

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CWL Convenor: Rev Dr Judy Craig Peck clw@anglicancursillo.org.uk Tel 01604 743734

OXFORD ULTREYAS: by Zoom March 27th, May 15th and July 10th 2021

BACC NATIONAL ULTREYAS: Sat Sept 4th 2021 at Norwich; Sat Sept 3rd 2022 in London

OXFORD AGM: Sat Oct 30th 2021 via ZOOM or a venue to be announced.

**Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue of OxonFourth.
The next issue is planned for the autumn and items for inclusion should be sent to:
magazine.editor@oxfordcursillo.co.uk to arrive not later than September 15th, 2021.**

Please contact me with ideas for articles well before this date.

Telephone 01296 655342

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