

THE CURSILLO CONNECTION

Summer 2026



Cursillo News for the Diocese of St Albans

Welcome to your latest Newsletter!

Welcome to this Summer edition of the Cursillo Newsletter. Remember that Cursillo is here for all Cursillistas, for friendship, for fellowship, to help and encourage people as they go about their everyday lives.

Editor's Message

My thanks to all who have contributed to this newsletter. Their contributions were much appreciated. I hope you find this Newsletter interesting and helpful. PLEASE remember that this is your Newsletter, and I am dependent on you to send me stories, experiences, anecdotes, insights, discoveries, pictures etc - anything to do with your Cursillo experience. Please do not wait to be asked. Send me anything at any time by snail mail or, preferably by email on geoff.nicholson34@gmail.com

The secretariat is now as follows:

Spiritual Director.	Vacant
Lay Director	Laurie Little
Secretary	Matthew Rheinberg
Treasurer	John Emmett
Publicity Officer	Geoff Nicholson
4th Day Rep	Carol Pellowe
BACC Rep	Mike Ashwood
Palanca Rep	Liz Fuller

If you want to get in touch with anyone on the secretariat visit the

new website stalbanscursillo.com or e-mail: laydirector@stalbanscursillo.com. If you want to find out more about Cursillo in Britain, go to the national website www.anglicancursillo.co.uk

From the Lay Director

Thanks once again to Geoff and I suspect Elaine for pulling together another edition of The Cursillo Connection.

It is full of uplifting, encouraging and spiritual messages putting into practice our call to apostolic action. Alison Jordan shares the brilliant talk she gave at our May Ultreya and AGM in Bishop's Stortford. In which we hear of the wonderful new bereavement support work a small group of Cursillistas are offering at St Michael's.

Geoff reflects on his son's first marathon run and how for so many of the runners it would have been a spiritual journey.

Yvonne Bennett shares with us the work of an organisation called 'Compassion' who came to her church to talk of their work in arranging sponsors for children across the

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world, which has led to her own journey of sponsorship of a girl in the Philippines.

My thanks to Liz Puller who has rejoined the secretariat as our Palanca Officer. Most of the current membership of the secretariat have been in post for much longer than they should have been, and I continue to be grateful for their continued service.

Matthew Rheinberg has taken on a central role as the area rep for Greater London on BACC Council as well as agreeing to become our next Lay Director in 2027 when I stand down. He is also carrying on in the meantime as our secretary. Is there any one of you out there who would be willing to take this job on. Talk to Matt it is not particularly onerous, I promise.

We are still looking for pilgrims/participants for St Albans #11, already postponed once, and now due to take place between 14 and 16 May 2027. At present we have just two people signed up, and they have been waiting patiently for some time to attend this weekend. **PLEASE** ask around in your church communities to see if you can find another two people to join them on St Albans #11.

All that remains is for me to wish you the very best for the summer break whether you go away or stay put and

do keep safe in the extreme weather we are experiencing.

Laurie

CURSILLIO ULTREYA MAY 2026. APOSTOLIC ACTION TALK.

Alison Jordan

Jesus said, in John 20 v 21 "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" . I wish to talk about a subject that God has lain on my heart, that is, to care for those who are bereaved. Being the hands and feet of Jesus, who always sort out those who were vulnerable and hurting. And To partner with God to care for the bereaved, to show His love. It is part of The great commission, I see it as emotional care of the orphans and widows. We run a course for those people who are suffering grief following the death of someone significant. It is an honour and privilege to come alongside people who are vulnerable and grieving. We Help bereaved people feel supported, understood and less alone.

Bereavement is one of the most stressful times in life, and the loss needs to be processed. Without support it can lead to mental and physical ill health.

Also, can lead to low attainment, behavioural problems, job loss, relationship issues, substance

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abuse, alcohol, crime. Recent research about unresolved grief and re-offending, as the course nationally is expanding into working within prisons.

The Course is a safe space to talk with others who understand the raw pain of grief, to explore

their loss and look at ways resolve issues for a healthier, positive future.

We are a team, Vivienne, Val, Liz and myself, here from St Michael's church, and we run a course called the bereavement journey course.

You may have heard of it, or indeed be running, or have done the course yourself.

Hopefully I can inform you, maybe signpost you or a loved one to a course if you feel it would be good,

Hopefully help you to talk to whose hurting people who God brings to you, and maybe to inspire you to run the course in your own churches.

I do realise that for any of you, this maybe a very difficult subject at this time, and if anything is hard or becomes overwhelming for you, you may wish to take time out during the talk. Please feel free to leave, there is a beautiful quiet space at the top of the stairs, and one of the team can come and sit with you.

If you are suffering, please find a myself or a member of the team afterwards.

It is OK to not be OK.

God is still working His plan of love in circumstances that are devastating.

Hopefully you can still find peace, love and hope.

The church is a suffering community, a safe space to be.

Queen Elizabeth 11, 'Grief is the price we pay for love', after 9/11 twin towers tragedy.

I heard about the course during the Pandemic.

A friend from church, her husband died suddenly from covid in first lockdown. She did this course online from her daughter's church, as her daughter recommended it to her after doing the course herself. She found it helpful, so I looked into the course.

I was very interested as I was aware of the great need, especially in Bishop's Stortford. I was a recently retired GP, and had been caring for local families over 3 decades seeing the many complexities of grief. The lack of support. The value in caring support, for individuals to do grief work.

I feel that the local church is in the best place to offer this to a hurting world.

The course is organised by a charity called At a Loss.

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This is a UK wide bereavement signposting website, over 2,000 services and resources.

They organise the Bereavement journey course, which is an award winning, peer group support programme. It is run by Christians, over 600 churches across UK.

The course gently guides bereaved people through the most common aspects of grief and bereavement to help them process their loss.

Running for 25 years, initially HTB. 7 sessions of films and discussions.

They run training for churches in bereavement support, and also Raise awareness about the impact of bereavement, through government, media, programmes and news. CEO speaks to PM, relevant committees about the importance of investing in bereavement awareness and community support.

Practically what to do...

PRAY and TRUST. It's God's course, He will bring the guests. We do advertise, but usually word of mouth by previous guests.

God will empower you, give you the strength to run the course.

"God doesn't call the equipped, He equips those He calls "

GATHER your team, registered course, usual online training, excellent, safeguarding etc.

Invite and meet your guests. I See people individually before the course, to hear their story, everyone has a story, power in telling their story. Also, we explain the course, expectations, which will give space to talk, only if they wish.

Every relationship is unique, every loss is unique, yet some common feelings in bereavement and problems to negotiate.

Get the coffee, chocolate biscuits and tissues.

Sort out the IT. (stressy bit!)

COURSE, for everyone, anyone who has been bereaved at any time, by death. Usually people come within a few months of the death, but often unprocessed grief many years earlier.

All faiths and none.

Nationally attended by people who do not normally attend church, yet often ongoing connection

Optional last session, faith questions discussed.

Faith can be impacted negatively, following the death of someone special. With feeling Distraught with unanswered questions.

Or it may strengthen one's faith, very spiritual experience being with someone as they die. Some people come to faith in this season of life.

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Outreach. Plant seeds of faith, kindness and hope. We Trust in our God who gives growth.

We are trained facilitators, not counsellors, course films are written and presented by a very experienced counsellor and a C of E minister.

Individually Leads to our own Personal growth, having compassion for others, being the hands and feet of Jesus. Read different literature. I Do feel very blessed doing this ministry.

We provide a safe space to think about grief. Guests can be suffering the extreme pain of raw grief. We cry and we also laugh together. Surrounded by love.

Non-judgemental.

Guests will say things which they never dared to verbalise before.

Feedback, guests say that they like the structure, with focused films and discussion.

Very helpful and supportive, look forward to the sessions, formed supportive friendships who continue to meet up.

Topics include

Session 1 Looking at Loss, with the attachments we have made throughout our life, and separations we have had to learn to deal with, because we cannot remain in relationship with

everyone we have been close to.

Present grief reminds us of previous losses, especially in childhood.

Session 2 The pain of grief. The way that as humans we can respond, feelings, physical reactions, mentally what we think, actions what we do.

Waterfall and whirlpool of grief.

Session 3. Reaction of others, people we meet, socially, work, friends, church. Family reactions.

Session 4. Obstacles to the grief journey. Anger and guilt and regret. Grief on hold, avoid or delayed. Being denied grieving, keeping strong for others.

Seesaw, activities feel like coping and then not with raw pain.

Complex grief due to death by suicide, intrusion press,

Session 5. Coping with change, identity, journey of separation, funerals and anniversaries.

Queen Mother, years after death of her husband,

"When does it get better Ma'am?"

"It doesn't get better, but we get better at it"

Session 6. Moving forward. Signs of recovery, encompassing the loss. Grief changes shape over time, grief changes us, as we encompass the loss. We grow around the grief, carry it with us, hope loads are less heavy.

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Find the new normal, but still unexpected triggers waves of emotions can knock us down and difficult to function.

Discussion and Explanation that these reactions are a totally normal reaction.

Session 7. Faith questions that arise in bereavement, provided from a Christian perspective.

Is there a God?

where are they now, is there an afterlife?

What is the meaning of life, is life worth living?

If God is good, How can He allow suffering?

We have a Time of reflection, light a candle in memory of loved ones, listen to music, read some recommended bible verses.

Personally, I do know that God does bring beauty out of ashes.

He has Triumphed over death.

When we are collapsed in a heap in tears, with God's help we can rise again.

I cling to God with all that I have, putting trust in His goodness.

In Desperate times, I find faith, love and hope in Psalms.

Psalms 61 Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

God Offers us physical, emotional, spiritual protection

Change of perspective on the rock, in God's everlasting arms, under his wings.

Thank you for listening about this important ministry.

Please do seek any of the team out to talk about anything that I have said.

Reflections- Geoff Nicholson

Elaine, I and all the family went to Brighton a few weekends ago to support our son Andrew who was running in the Brighton Marathon, his first ever marathon. As I watched some of the 20,000 runners go past it crossed my mind what a spiritual journey some of the runners were going through as they run the 26.2 miles. I tried to imagine what it was like to run a marathon even though I have never run a marathon myself by reflecting on Marathon running, faith journeys and life and how that are all connected in some way. First there is the months of training and when you stand on the start line, everything feels possible with a combination of nerves and excitement. I would imagine many will be saying, I can do this. All this mirrors the beginnings of so many journeys in life, full of hope, determination but not completely sure where it may take us. But then as miles go by things seem to change slightly as suddenly, the race seems to be a little longer than it first appeared. Legs start to ache and the early excitement gives way to a slight uncertainty. The middle stretch is often the bit that often is not talked about after the race., It is that point

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when runners must dig in and is where perseverance is formed. In life, much of what matters happens in these steady, unremarkable stretches when you make the choice to keep on going when nothing special is happening. Then between 18-20 miles comes what runners call "the wall." a point where the body protests and the mind is tempted to give in and at this point it becomes less about physical strength and more about inner resolve. The runner may even ask themselves why they started the marathon. For many, it becomes something deeper, and they may even draw on faith. And that's where marathon running becomes a powerful metaphor. Because life, like a marathon, will bring us to moments where we feel we have nothing left. We may have doubts in life and stopping may seem the easier option and it is precisely in those moments that we discover a deeper strength. The final miles of a marathon are rarely the fastest, but they are often the most meaningful. They may be tired but there may also be elation and a clarity unmatched since standing on the start line. The crowd would be shouting the names on the runner's vests and then the finish line is in sight, and the large clock is showing them their potential time it took to run all that distance. And crossing the finish line is not just about achievement. It's about transformation and the person who

finishes is not quite the same as the one who began. The words I endured. I continued. I finished springs to mind. The winner of the Ladies London Marathon event thanked God as do so many elite athletes.

So perhaps marathon running invites us to reflect on our own journeys. Not just how fast we go, or how strong we feel, but how we endure. Who runs alongside us. What sustains us when the road is long. And how, even in struggle, there is meaning in simply putting one foot in front of the other. Because in the end, the marathon is not only about reaching the finish line—it's about who we become along the way.

PS. Andrew completed his first ever Marathon in 4 hours 10 minutes.

From Yvonne Bennett to her church.

Dear Church family,

10 years ago, someone from Compassion came to our church and gave a talk on sponsoring a child. The talk touched me. At the end of the service, I spoke to a member of the Compassion team and said I wanted to sponsor a child. I was asked to choose a child from the many faces on a board. I looked at the faces, and Vallerie, the child I sponsor, stood out from the rest. I guess we chose each other, and it's such a joy. We

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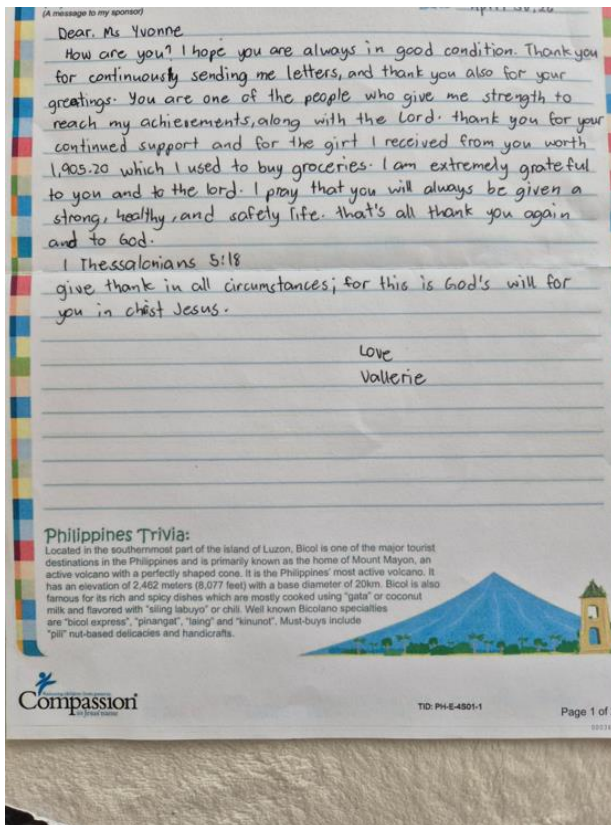


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exchanged letters throughout the years, from receiving Sunday school drawings to passing an important exam to enter the senior school. She is getting a good education and receiving health screening for the whole family. I believe that if one child in the family is educated, they can teach their siblings and maybe a village.

Without action, there is no glory from God; we are the hands and feet of Christ in the world. Let the Holy Spirit be our guide. Amen.

Love prayers and blessings
Yvonne



The Bishop of Bedford, the Rt Revd Richard Atkinson, has announced that he will retire at the end of this year, having received the consent of both His Majesty the King and the Archbishop of Canterbury. He and his wife, Helen, plan to move to their home near Milton Keynes, returning to the Diocese of Oxford where he was first ordained 42 years ago.

Announcing his retirement, Bishop Richard reflected on his 14 years of ministry in the Diocese of St Albans:

"It has been a huge privilege and joy to serve our diocese and its parishes, schools and chaplaincies over the last fourteen years. At the heart of this has been our shared commitment to Living God's Love, through going deeper into God, making new disciples and transforming our communities."

He also paid tribute to the many partnerships and ministries he has been involved in, including the work of the Diocesan Board of Education, the

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Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, and his national responsibilities relating to interfaith work and disability.

Reflecting on his time as Bishop of Bedford, Bishop Richard said:

"Being Bishop of Bedford has immersed me in the life of the county, and I am deeply grateful for partnership with so many, as was expressed so powerfully at the service of reflection and prayer one week on from the Bedford Rail Crash."

Bishop Richard has also served as Acting Bishop of St Albans during the vacancy in see. Looking ahead to the arrival of the new diocesan bishop, he said:

"It has been a special responsibility to be Acting Bishop of St Albans for the last year. I look forward to welcoming and working with Bishop Andrew. I am only sorry that it won't be for longer."

Responding to the announcement, Bishop Andrew said:

"Bishop Richard has been a wise and faithful shepherd of the Church in this diocese. A splendid advocate for Bedfordshire, he has truly pursued 'all that makes for peace and builds up our common life'. I would like to pay particular tribute to Bishop Richard's leadership as Acting Bishop of St

Albans during the recent vacancy-in-see, for which I am extremely grateful."

Bishop Andrew added that Bishop Richard is "well-loved and widely admired" and will be greatly missed, offering his warm good wishes and prayers for the months ahead.

Bishop Richard will continue in his ministry across the Diocese until his retirement in December. Details of opportunities to give thanks for his ministry and say farewell will be shared in due course.

About Bishop Richard

Bishop Richard has served as Bishop of Bedford since 2012 and as Acting Bishop of St Albans during the recent vacancy-in-see. Over four decades of ordained ministry he has become known for his leadership in education, disability inclusion, social justice and interfaith engagement. Nationally he has served as the Church of England's lead bishop for the ministry of and amongst Deaf and disabled people, while within the Diocese he has chaired the Board of Education and helped shape partnerships with schools, parishes and communities across Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and beyond.

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The Diocese of St Albans is delighted to welcome the appointment of The Right Reverend Dr Andrew Paul Rumsey as the next Bishop of St Albans. The nomination, approved by His Majesty the King, was announced by 10 Downing Street at 10am on Thursday 19 March. Bishop Andrew is currently the Suffragan Bishop of Ramsbury in the Diocese of Salisbury.



"I am thrilled to be announced today as the next Bishop of St Albans. This is the diocese where I was born, baptised and grew up, and it is a profound joy to return home. My prayer is that together we will come home to Christ, and that our churches, schools and chaplaincies will be places where people of every background can truly belong."

About Bishop Andrew

The Right Revd Dr Andrew Paul Rumsey is currently the Suffragan Bishop of Ramsbury in the Diocese of Salisbury and will be well known to many in this region, having been born and raised in the Diocese of St

Albans, where his father served as a parish priest. He studied at the University of Reading and King's College London before training for ordination at Ridley Hall, Cambridge. Ordained deacon in 1997 and priest in 1998, he has served in a range of parish contexts, including Trinity St Michael, Harrow, and later as Vicar of Christ Church, Gipsy Hill in the Diocese of Southwark. He went on to become Rector of the Oxted Team Ministry in 2011.

Bishop Andrew has served as Bishop of Ramsbury since 2019 and is also the Church of England's national lead bishop for church buildings. Alongside his episcopal ministry, he is known for his writing on place and belonging, including *Parish: An Anglican Theology of Place* (2017) and *English Grounds: A Pastoral Journal* (2022). He is also a singer-songwriter; his latest album, *Evensongs*, was recorded live in the 12th-century church of All Saints, Ham, where he and his collaborators set out to capture the natural sounds and character of a summer's day in the building.

The installation of the Right Reverend Dr Andrew Rumsey as the 11th Bishop of St Albans will take place on Saturday, September 19th, 2026, at 2pm at St Alban's Cathedral.