

THE CURSILLO CONNECTION

Christmas 2021



Cursillo News for the Diocese of St Albans

Welcome to your latest Newsletter!

Indeed, welcome to this Christmas edition of the Cursillo Newsletter. After over 20 months of Covid restrictions, this is just a reminder that Cursillo is here for all Cursillistas, for friendship, for fellowship, to help and encourage people as they go about their everyday lives.

When I last spoke to you in August 2021, things were looking a bit brighter. Covid-wise all Government restrictions had been lifted, the vaccination role out had gone well, and we all felt a lot more positive. However, a new variant has raised its head and now more restrictions have come back (including mask wearing in places of worship) and the future looks a bit more uncertain. Please, everyone, stay safe!

Despite the uncertainty we are planning for future events within Cursillo in the St Alban's Diocese (see below)

Let's start with:

A Christmas Message from Geoff Nicholson - Lay Director

This year has been the second extraordinary year in a row and when I

say extraordinary, I do not mean good. So many of us have been touched in so many ways by the Pandemic and we fear at times for ourselves and loved ones. As I write this article the new variant is battling

to be the dominant variant and there is a possibility that we could see a repeat of the newspaper headline 'Christmas is cancelled' but as Christians we know that is not true as we will be celebrating the Birth of Jesus in a safe way as we have been worshiping each week in our Churches or online all this year.

What of course we have been deprived of for so long is people interaction which is so important to us all but as people of action we find a way of meeting with others in person safely or on a virtual platform.

Looking forward to next year we have got a Weekend booked 23rd-25th September and we hope to have a full compliment of Pilgrims subject to any possible restrictions and hope to hold a Day of Deeper understanding and Ultreyas next year. It would be glorious to have a weekend again, but I believe the core of Cursillo is the fourth day, our local group reunions, and all of us meeting a few times in the year together.

This leaves me to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Ultreya!!!!

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Your Cursillo needs you, to be a friend and bring a friend to Christ

St Albans #9, that weekend that seems never to be coming. Well, it is coming between 23 and 25 September 2022, and we need to have a viable number of prospective pilgrims (we can take up to 12) by March. That is the time when the secretariat will have to decide whether to proceed. This will be our first time of running a shortened or concise (2 day) weekend, starting on the Friday evening and finishing on the Sunday afternoon. So, as I say, Your Cursillo Needs You, in that lovely Cursillo adage, "to be a friend and bring a friend to Christ". This is a challenge for all of us Cursillistas but especially relevant to you who are single Cursillistas in your churches/parishes. This is the opportunity for all of us to engage with others in our churches who might benefit from the Cursillo message and method. Perhaps the question to be asking them is "Are you attracted by a way of renewal in Christ which inspires, challenges, equips, supports and encourages you to play an active part in changing the world for God?"

Be open about what Cursillo is and what happens over a weekend and how you feel it has affected your life as a Christian. Remember, Cursillo offers committed Christians a proven way of

discipleship in which they are supported and encouraged. The pandemic has meant that we have not been able to meet or engage in Cursillo activities as we would have liked to. Group reunions are, hopefully, functioning in some way or another. As we come towards a closer return to normal (current developments permitting) this is the time for us to re-engage with Cursillo, for each of us to reach out to fellow Cursillistas who we have not seen for a while and importantly to look around our parishes for those prospective new Cursillistas. If we don't do this, if we don't begin to grow, I fear for our future as a Diocesan Cursillo group. That is why I say "Your Cursillo needs you, to be a friend and bring a friend to Christ. Wishing you all a truly Blessed Christmas.

Laurie Little

Commissioning of Sam Frampton as Spiritual Director & Ultreya

We have fixed the date for Bishop Alan to Commission Sam as our Spiritual Director. Please make a note of the Date: Saturday 26th Feb- time to be confirmed. I am delighted that Sam has agreed to hold the event at his new Church in Oxhey. Full details to follow early next year.

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Lay Leaders of Worship (LLWs) - Geoff Nicholson

Some churches across the Diocese do not hold a service every Sunday because they do not have licensed ministers to lead. In some churches circumstances require that services are held at different times each week. In other churches worship is led by lay people who feel ill-equipped or have little training. The diocesan Scheme, which was piloted in Autumn 2014, is designed to address these concerns and to help make it possible for public worship to take place in every church every Sunday. It enables parishes across the Diocese to discern the gifts of lay people as local Lay Leaders of Worship (LLWs) and provides agreed training for them, on completion of which they receive a letter of permission from the Bishop recognising them as Lay Leaders of Worship in their parish church. The commissioning is formally marked by the incumbent in one of the regular services in the benefice.

A few years ago I felt called to the possibility of taking on the role as LLW. When our church went into a vacancy I felt as a LLW I could be a real value to our Church community but before I could undertake the training the Pandemic arrived and the training course that I planned to go on

was cancelled. Well in September this year we welcomed our new incumbent to the Parish after a long vacancy and I just finished my training as LLW and so I look forward to working with our new Priest.

The LLW Course I found extremely interesting and helped equip me to fulfil the role as best I can. There were 6 sessions each headed as follows 1. The Nature of Worship. 2. Book of Common Prayer and Common Worship. 3. Using Other Resources: Music and Intercessions. 4. Leading worship. 5. Making worship accessible for children, young people, and families. 6. Leading Worship in Pioneering Contexts.

The description I gave at the beginning of this article you may feel does not describe your own Church as I thought that my Church had more than enough resources to lead the services, but I have very quickly discovered how I can be of real use to our community as Lay Deacon at the Eucharist or Officiant at Choral Evensong. The Clergy and the Laity working together can be a wonderful tool for growing the church and for Living Gods Love and all of you contribute to your own Church in your own special way. I just felt that LLW was what was crying out to me personally.

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An Article about Elaine's Fund-Raising for Madagascar

During the lockdown since March 2020, I have not been able to hold a Coffee morning until 4th September 2021 to raise funds for the people of Madagascar. And wow how people responded with their generous donations. Traudi and I, who have both visited Madagascar with our previous Rector, and now a Bishop in Mahajanga, Hall Speers, decided it was time to raise some funds. Bishop Hall needed to build a new church in Manantseva in the mountain area in the North East of the diocese. This church was to be named St John the Baptist (*After your church in Barnet?*).

So, the work began. Traudi and I booked the church, asked some congregation members if they would make cakes, and we donated raffle prizes. Traudi put together a fun quiz for people to participate in. We set the tables out, socially distanced of course, and Geoff and our daughter Katie set the screen up for the quiz. The quiz was pictures of famous people and they had to name them. With every detail taken care of we waited for people to arrive, hoping that we might get a few, due to Covid restrictions. We were so surprised that over 40 people attended during the morning. The church was full of

laughter again mainly due to the quiz, as some of the pictures of famous people had people laughing. All the home-made cakes were sold, and the raffle was a great success.

When Traudi and I sat down to count the monies and add the cheque donations we had a fantastic amount of £2,200. We were both close to tears at the overwhelming generosity. Bishop Hall sent a report that states 'the church will be a very simple building made with local materials and is on the hillside in a commanding position overlooking the village. They hope to complete the building quickly and have it in use for Advent and Christmas.'

Even when life seems so bleak there is an opportunity to help others. This new church will serve many people in an area where they struggle to find a church close to them.

In Living Gods Love how marvellous is this.

Elaine Nicholson.

Two pictures of the new St John the Baptist Church being built:

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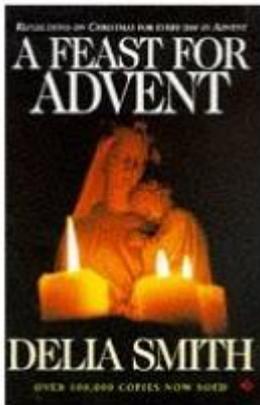
Now, a couple of book reviews:

Sensible Shoes by Sharon Garlough

Brown:

This is titled 'A Story About The Spiritual Journey'. This makes it sound a rather hard going and earnest book but it is the exact opposite and I found it difficult to put it down. It is about four American women from totally different backgrounds who are drawn into a spiritual formation journey at a retreat centre. Their lives are slowly woven together, and I just wanted to read on to find out what happens next as well as applying areas to my own life - totally compelling.

A Feast for Advent by Delia Smith:



And no, I did not purchase this book expecting really wonderful recipe's using seasonal ingredients, locally sourced, for this time of year. I was made aware of this book by Di Cox, a

fellow Cursillista in my fourth day group, many years ago and finally came to reading it this Advent. It has daily reflections, from Advent Sunday to Epiphany, where Delia shares her personal insights on preparing for

Christmas and on the Christmas story itself. There are passages for each day comprising bible readings, a reflection on the readings, prayers and further meditations. I've enjoyed reading the reflections and the simple message of the preparation for the arrival of Christ, the bringing together of Old and New Testament passages. I would recommend it as a read to just take you away from some of the hustle and bustle that can occur at this time of year and reflect on the meaning of Christmas. Enjoy!

Finally, despite some restrictions returning, I know that Cursillistas are holding fourth day groups over Zoom if they feel unable to meet in person. Holy Trinity Church, Bishop's Stortford is also holding a Zoom course reflecting on the Psalms during Advent. Well done to everyone in supporting each other during these testing times.

Remember, your Secretariat comprises:

- Lay Director: Geoff Nicholson
- Spiritual Director: Revd. Sam Frampton
- Treasurer: John Emmett
- Publicity Officer: Mike Ashwood
- Fourth Day Rep: Pauline Hinge
- Palanca Rep: Laurie Little
- BACC Rep: Elaine Nicholson
- Secretary/Minutes: Liz Puller

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Editor's Message

My thanks to all who contributed to this newsletter: Geoff, Elaine, Laurie, Zoe, Carol and Val. Their contributions were much appreciated. I hope you have found 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 mikes.ashwood@gmail.com

If you want to get in touch with anyone on the secretariat visit the website stalbanscursillo.com or e-mail:

laydirector@stalbanscursillo.com

Have a Wonderful Christmas and a peaceful New Year wherever you are.