**Ely Cursillo AGM**

**Spiritual Director’s report 2022**

**Rev Olivia Coles**

It has been a joy and privilege to serve as the Spiritual Director for Ely Cursillo and work with such a lovely team of those on our Secretariat, this last year. I am grateful for each of their contributions in helping lead and guide Ely Cursillo, as we continue to emerge from the pandemic and a difficult last couple of years.

When I took up the role of Spiritual Director for Ely Cursillo at the end of 2020, I felt that we needed to bring **prayer** back to the heart of all *we do* and *are about* as Ely Cursillo. It is prayer which is the bedrock of the Cursillo movement and which enables us to grow in faith and our spiritual walk with Christ. This is still very much my prayer and I am delighted that we have been able to encourage a few more people to join a regular Group Reunion as well as our regular *Refugios*.

With the benefit of technology, we have continued with our regular monthly *Refugios* which have enabled us to meet from the comfort of our homes to pray, worship, enjoy a short reflection and fellowship together. We hope to continue these, even as we get back to meeting in person with regular *Ultreyas,* as it allows for everyone to join us from across the diocese and even further afield.

The highlight of this last year was our first Cursillo weekend in over two years, which took place in November 2021 at the new venue of Pleshey in the Chelmsford Diocese (following the closure of the Ely retreat centre at Bishop Woodford House). Fiona Mccullough, (the OLR for the postponed #Ely 36) kindly agreed to take on the role of Lay Rector for the weekend. Despite having to navigate around the ever-changing regulations of the pandemic, along with a new and unknown venue, Fiona got together a fabulous team and did an amazing job leading us all. With a really wonderful group of pilgrims, a very special weekend took place as God’s spirit was clearly at work in and through people’s lives.

It was especially good to be together in person and we were delighted to be joined by the SD of Chelmsford Diocese, Sharon Guest who brought along some of her *‘Cursillsta angels’* from Chelmsford Diocese, to help us with setting up and lending equipment over the weekend. Other highlights were joining the live *Refugio* zoom link up, to pray specifically for the weekend, staff and pilgrims. Then on the Sunday morning we all enjoyed hearing Bishop Stephen’s recorded video greeting to the pilgrims! What special gifts of *palanca* along with the delicious *palanca* cake and many *palanca* messages and notes sent in by so many, to encourage and bless our #Ely36 pilgrims.

I am really looking forward to our next weekend #Ely 37 which takes place again at Pleshey this coming September. We are praying that God will continue to move mightily in the transformation of those attending the weekend as pilgrims or staff. Please do pray for Claire Atterbury as she leads #Ely 37 as Lay Rector and puts together a team. Do also consider and pray about who you could invite or sponsor to go on #Ely 37.

Last July, Julie and I were so pleased to meet with Bishop Stephen to talk about Ely Cursillo. Bishop Stephen is very supportive of Ely Cursillo and keen that Cursillo is seen as a wonderful way of encouraging those in our Diocese to grow in faith and to help nurture their spiritual journey. It has been good also to discuss how Cursillo can help with spiritual growth, with Revd James Shakespeare who now heads up the Ely Diocese’ Spirituality group as the Bishop of Ely’s Spirituality Adviser.

In terms of forward planning for Ely Cursillo, I am hoping to do a ‘*Road show’* starting this summer to speak to Deanery Chapters or Synods about Cursillo and how it works. I hope to especially encourage clergy to consider and pray about those in their congregations who might benefit from doing a Cursillo weekend.

In the coming autumn, as a Secretariat we are also planning an Away Day together to plan and pray about the next three years for Ely Cursillo. We have been discussing together as a Secretariat about modelling good succession planning. We are looking to implement a system as a Secretariat, of both an *Observing* Lay Director and *Observing* Spiritual Director who would work as deputies to the LD and SD; to help share the work load and then be ready to take on the baton, when the roles come to the end of the three year period of office. This would hopefully be an ongoing feature of the Secretariat, meaning that this would encourage a more sustainable way of handing on the roles, knowledge and experience for the new LD and SD.

However, as you will have read in Julie’s Lay Director report for this AGM, Julie will be stepping down from her role as LD. We are really grateful to Julie for being willing to take on the LD role and for her enthusiasm, and passion that she has brought to Ely Cursillo in the last two years. We are very sad that Julie feels unable to continue with this role and will miss her being such a key part of the Secretariat but hope that Julie will very much continue to be a part of the Ely Cursillo community and continue to encourage many, with her gifts and passion for the way that Cursillo can be such an enriching and transforming part of our spiritual journey. We pray that God will bring forward the right person/s to step up and take on this really crucial role and enable Ely Cursillo to continue for this next season.

Finally, it has been so good to connect nationally with Cursillo, through the BACC council meetings, the National Ultreya held last September in Norwich and then for the National Cursillo Leaders Workshop weekend held this March.

It was a joy to see so many Cursillistas from around the country coming together to worship in Norwich cathedral and encourage one another for the National Ultreya. The next National Ultreya is to be held at Southwark Cathedral on Saturday 3 September and I hope that a good number of us can attend this event. We are blessed to have Revd Stephen Bowring as the National Spiritual Director of Cursillo as part of Ely Cursillo and for his wisdom and guidance, especially to Julie and I.

Meanwhile, I pray that each of us may know the joy, peace and hope of the resurrected Christ this Easter Season, in a time of continued global suffering, with the war and conflict in the Ukraine and other parts of our world, alongside the ongoing climate crisis. I hope that we will continue to pray for one another and Ely Cursillo, as we seek to encourage all to encounter Christ and grow and deepen in faith.

I leave you with my favourite prayer from Ephesians 3: 14-21

*For this reason I kneel before the Father,****15****from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.****16****I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,****17****so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,****18****may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,****19****and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

***20****Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we askor imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,****21****to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

Ultreya

Olivia

SD Ely Cursillo