

BRISTOL ANGLICAN CURSILLO®
Group Reunion Guide

These notes are intended to encourage us in the development of our Group Reunions – for the benefit of we who are in them, and those we hope may join us. These notes will serve as a resource for new cursillistas, and also for those of us who are already grouping. Some of us may not be fully aware of the ideals of Group Reunions; others may be aware but welcome a stimulus to put them into practice; others may find here reassurance that what is already being done is being done well. (Well done!)

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The purpose of Group Reunions is to provide a listening and affirming community, in which people support one another to reach their full potential in Christ.* You may see this happening! This is built on growing relationships with one another and with God. They are also the main way in which we stay connected with the wider Cursillo movement in our diocese and beyond.

Items marked * are taken from the National Episcopal Cursillo booklet “Group Reunion” of July 2004 (the booklet). My experience of our Group Reunions is that we meet together for fellowship and, for some of that time, use the BACC Group Reunion Card. The *booklet* seems to envisage (rightly or wrongly) that the whole of a Group Reunion will be taken up by using the card. So, for the sake of clarity (I hope), I am going to use words as follows,

<i>group:</i>	the people
<i>reunion:</i>	the activity of working through the BACC Group Reunion Card
<i>meeting:</i>	gathering for a <i>reunion</i> (the <i>group</i> may gather in other ways too).

Being focussed at the *reunion*

- At *reunions*, the *group* should first decide who is to lead (chair, or facilitate) the *group*. Leadership is probably best taken by *group* members in turn, or perhaps by the host if all the members take turns to host the *reunion*.
- The leader: oversees the ordering of the *reunion*; keeps an eye on time; ensures that everyone has opportunities to contribute; keeps the *reunion* focussed on its content: piety, study, apostolic action, and the prayers. He or she also needs to encourage us to go that which we all seem reluctant about: to set this in the context of the apostolic plans of each in the *group* in his or her environments (and perhaps of the *group* as a whole). The host could make sure that a leader is chosen.

(So time-consuming funny stories and tales of recent holidays, unless they were apostolic action, turned out to be a “moment close to Christ,” or we share what we learned (study), probably need to be kept to other parts of the *meeting* – see below!)
- Sometimes the *reunion* may feel that it is getting “derailed” because of a crisis of a member of the *group*. On the contrary, not only is our mutual support important, but this too will benefit from the context of piety, study (learning), and action.
- The *reunion* starts with the opening prayers, including the Lord's Prayer, and then each heading (piety, study, action) is taken in turn. Each in the *group*, who wishes to, contributes in turn within each heading.
- Contributing is about sharing what each wants to share, such as “personal concerns, fears, failures, hopes and dreams; the significant events, people and places in one's life; spiritual background, emotional ups and downs, as well as present hurts and joys.”* The response of the *group* is not to probe, interrupt or to offer advice (normally), but to listen, to “hear people out” and to affirm and “bear up each other as a community of love.”*
- The *reunion* ends in prayer, which is also an opportunity for free prayer in the light of thanksgivings and concerns that have been mentioned.
- According to the *booklet*, *reunions* need to take place weekly, but I am not advocating that, as our experience seems to favour *meeting* every two or three weeks. What is true is that the more frequent *reunions* are likely to be shorter, and this may be preferable for some *groups*. In some places *reunions* of business people take place for half an hour, weekly, over breakfast before work!

Building relationships

- My experience of *meetings* is that they last from one and a half to two hours, and that about an hour of that is taken up with the *reunion*, with the balance being about welcome, catching up on news, and a shared meal or refreshments. A vicar I once knew had a policy of always ending *meetings* early, while they were still in full flow, so that people would want to come to the next one! *Meetings* should not last so long that they seem to drag (perhaps after ninety minutes). As with *Ultreyas*, the timings should be clear so that people know that they are able to attend only the *reunion* if they are pushed for time. People should feel the value of the *reunion*, and want to return for that reason.
- Having said this, the building of relationships within the *group* is essential, and not just for the sake of the *reunion*. So it is important that the *group* spend time getting to know one another and catching up on news. This can be achieved by *meetings* that are hospitable and intentionally longer than the *reunions*, and by the *group* choosing to gather in other ways to build friendship, for example: “a meal, a game, a party...”*
- Looking at this another way, the Cursillo method encourages us to: “make a friend; be a friend; bring a friend to Christ.” So we need to be friends with one another, not just see Cursillo as something else that we belong to.
- The *group* may choose to do things together that are apostolic action

Ensuring the health of the reunions

- From time to time the *group* should gather to review its own progress.
- Please do so in response to this note, to:
 - decide how to adopt these proposals, including duration of *meetings*;
 - decide what specific changes are needed, if any;
 - give one another permission to comment from time to time on the dynamics of the *meetings*, and indeed on anything else that the *group* does together;
 - plan to renegotiate these things after any new person joins.

Outreach

- To quote Edward Bonin, one of the founders quoted in the *booklet*, “We must bear in mind that Group Reunions are not held so that there may be people to attend Cursillos, but the Cursillos are held so that there are people to make a Group Reunion. And that the Cursillo is only the best means we know of putting the soul at the necessary level to begin to make Group Reunion.” * Thus it is good to encourage people to join in the Group Reunion.
- Such outreach may take place as we invite people to experience Cursillo by visiting our *group*, and in due course joining it. These do not need to be leaders in our churches; they may be Christians on the fringe of church, who perhaps exercise leadership in other fields.
- Since a Group Reunion only needs one cursillista as a member, *groups* can be “planted” by one or two cursillistas choosing to start one in one of their environments, such as their place of work.

Help! I'm already in loads of groups! Why a Cursillo Group Reunion too?

To stay connected with Cursillo, and to benefit from the Cursillo method (as above). At the heart of Group Reunions is Apostolic Action: we have this in common with Cell Church, but not with typical church home groups. Meeting in this way is not just about feeling good, but seeking to be part of God's mission where we are. Prayerfully look at why you do what you do: it may be that some of your other groups would be keen to develop into Group Reunions!

Finally, please pray for Cursillo, and for your own Group Reunions, and do give me feedback about this document to help with future improvement.

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