

A Fresh Look at Cursillo

“But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. And His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”
(Ephesians 4:7, 11-12)

A Cursillo weekend is an opportunity for Episcopalians to meet clergy and laity while seeking to strengthen one's faith and spirituality. Cursillo provides an environment to experience the reality of the gift of God's love through shared prayer, individual meditation, worship, study, fellowship, laughter, tears and unconditional love.

What should one expect to experience while attending a Cursillo weekend? Lay Director Roni Kelly shares, “When you arrive for a Cursillo weekend, you are placed into a group called your “table family.” You participate in talks and respond with music, plays, drawings, etc. These are opportunities to be light **and** serious. Each person responds as they feel in a safe environment. During the weekend, each person is building more of a loving family than simply new friendships. Cursillo is a beautiful opportunity to get to know people on a deeper level than your church's typical coffee hour. Cursillo is an opportunity for community building – it is a chance to get to know more people within the Diocese, as well.”

During a typical Cursillo weekend, participants experience living and sharing in a loving and caring Christian community, with the realization that this can be extended into our individual and family lives. Participants become part of a continuing community that gives support and encouragement to help attendees carry out their Baptismal vows. The specifics of what happens during a Cursillo weekend includes 15 talks, five meditations and daily Eucharist.

The Episcopal Diocese of Florida hosts an annual weekend for women and an annual weekend for men. Recently, the Diocese hosted its first co-ed weekend and it was a wonderful success. As a result of this success, Cursillo's leadership decided to offer another co-ed weekend in March 2018.

Nothing shares the experience quite so well as testimonials from Cursillo attendees. Here are two testimonials from team members during the co-ed weekend:

1. Testimonial by Cherie Harris, *St. Bartholomew's*, High Springs

“When I was asked to attend Cursillo, I was pretty hesitant to say “Yes.” This introvert spending the weekend with perfect strangers? To be honest, I had attended church all my life, taught Sunday School, led youth group, served on the Vestry. What could they say that I hadn't already heard? I had no idea what I was getting into and never dreamed that it would change my life in a drastic way. Cursillo allowed me to look at myself through Jesus' eyes for the first time. I felt unconditional love & acceptance, which caused me to look at others in a whole new way. I came home with a community of family members, who have since prayed for me, stood

by me in my dark valleys, and celebrated with me through God's blessings. I was given so many tools that I can use daily in my own personal walk and with those I meet along this journey. Cursillo was so much more than just a fun weekend experience. Twelve years later, it is such an important part of my life. I pray that when someone asks if you'd like to go to Cursillo, even if it's hesitant, say 'Yes.'"

2. Testimonial by Joe Donnelly, *St. Andrew's*, Interlachen

"Cursillo...what does it mean? 15 talks, 4 meditations and an intense look into what it means to live a Christian Life all during a retreat weekend at Camp Weed, but it's really so much more! When I went to Cursillo, I was a bit down on my luck. I was out of work and doubting everything (including myself!). I went with an open mind and found a new sense of self, a better love for my brothers and sisters in Christ and a yearning to learn and do more in Our Lord's name. I hadn't received anything physically, but mentally I was ready to move forward into my life with Christ no matter where it or He led.

"Where did He lead me? I signed up to work the very next team because they needed more team members. During a team retreat I laid every struggle I had clouding my heart and mind at the Lord's feet and prayed that He steer me where I need be in life. That Monday, I received a call for a job from a company I had applied at 11 months earlier with a job that (coincidentally) didn't start till the day after that Cursillo's weekend!

"I worked with that Cursillo team and received even more blessings from Our Lord. From my fellow teammates showing me the bond of brotherhood that exists when you have the Love of Christ in your heart, to the candidates that came through and said they felt that same love in everything I did. I moved forward knowing I had a duty to be The Hands, The Feet and The Living Breath of our Lord in everything I do.

"So, what has Cursillo done for me? It changed my life!"

3. Testimonial by Amy Gibbes, *Episcopal Church of Our Saviour*, Jacksonville

"Going into Cursillo, I did not really know what to expect. While I was already a believer, I was blown away with love and care of the Body of Christ. It was so powerful to have a weekend set aside to focus on what's most important in life: our relationship with Christ. The Cursillo community goes above and beyond to take care of you in every way, and to reach out to you with the love and grace of Christ. I am so glad I went to Cursillo....and it's so special to have this common bond with such a caring community."

Think about joining us during a Cursillo weekend! We'd love for you to join us as we share the love of Christ and share that love with our families and communities.

For more information about Cursillo, please visit: <http://diocesefl.org/mission-ministry/diocesan-ministries/cursillo/about-cursillo.aspx>