



**The British Anglican Cursillo<sup>®</sup> Council**

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## **Table Leaders Guide**

*Revised 2018*

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## Introduction

These booklets, which form the Resource Manual or Handbook for British Anglican Cursillo (BAC), are revised versions of the original documents gifted to BAC from the Episcopal Church of the USA in 1989. In the early to mid-2000s and again in 2013/4 They had been revised for basic differences between the American ways of doing things and for language alterations, but it became apparent that the booklets were not being read or used effectively by Diocesan Cursillo.

This major revision and rewording of the booklets was made by a group of experienced Cursillistas in 2017/8 and is intended for use by Diocesan Cursillo in order to explain and guide such groups in the practicalities and use of the Cursillo method. We believe that this reflects best practice.

In line with recent legal requirements there are also attached Guidelines and Policy Documents, particularly in regard to safeguarding, insurance and financial matters.

It is recommended that any future reviews of these booklets refer back to the original documents received from the Episcopal Church of the USA (ECUSA), copies of which should be held by the BAC President.

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Each member of the community has an important part to play, but the table leaders have close interaction with the participants so have a particularly key role. This booklet is intended to guide you through aspects of this valuable Table Leader role on a weekend.

### **Why me?**

It's natural to doubt your own abilities and to wonder what you have to offer. If you think you are unworthy then remember the gospels and think of the motley band of people who responded to Jesus' call to be His disciples.

- Gifted –each of us has unique gifts and talents from God; the weekend is an opportunity for God to use them in His service, sometimes in unexpected ways; during the weekend you may recognise gifts in yourself of which you were previously unaware
- Chosen – the team is selected prayerfully and God has chosen you because you are an essential part of His plan for the weekend
- Empowered – God always gives us what we need to fulfil what he asks us to do; through prayer and trust we can be assured that in the power of the Holy Spirit we will be enabled

“Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands no feet on earth but yours.”

*St Teresa of Avila*

## **What is a Table Leader?**

During the weekend participants sit on tables with 3-5 participants with one or two team members working alongside them; usually at least one of the table leaders will have had previous experience in the role.

### *Open to God*

- Prayerfully supporting those on your table throughout the weekend
- Enabling them to have a safe space to be open and honest about their journey
- Be yourself, natural and genuine, which will put everyone at their ease

### *Friend and Confidant*

- Be friendly and receptive to all the people on your table
- Confidentiality is crucial, people may share deeply in private conversations
- If something of a safeguarding nature is revealed to you, you should not discuss it with anyone except the designated weekend Safeguarding Officer
- If you have any other concerns or anxieties about what has been said, it is appropriate to share them with either the Lay Rector or a Spiritual Adviser, but with no-one else
- Confidentiality about everything on the weekend extends beyond the weekend and if you feel burdened by something discuss it with your own Spiritual Director or the Spiritual Adviser from the weekend
- Be aware that physical contact is entering someone's personal space and that people have different thresholds of what they find comfortable and appropriate. It may occasionally be appropriate to

put a hand on someone's arm, offer a hug when they are distressed etc. It is important to wait until you are sure someone will be comfortable before you offer a hug and remember for some that may not be at any time during the weekend

- Be aware that sometimes you may be drawn to some people more than to others; remember that your duty is to serve each person and to be genuinely interested in them
- Be aware of non-verbal clues and your own facial expressions, posture and gestures
- Be careful not to fidget or shift your gaze; eye contact is important without staring
- The two table leaders can help each other by sensitively feeding back to each other and making constructive suggestions
- Be on the lookout for any needs that participants may have and ensure they are met if possible; gofors may be needed to help with this
- Be on the lookout for feelings behind the statements people might make and respond appropriately; if necessary take advice from the Lay Rector or a Spiritual Adviser

### *A Catalyst*

- The table leader is there to help to create the space for participants to be open and respond to God
- Individuals develop at their own pace; different aspects of the weekend will touch people in varied ways; try to go with their pace and resist the temptation to hurry things along too quickly

- Guard against talking about your own Cursillo weekend or talking excessively about yourself; sometimes sharing something of your experience may facilitate the discussion, but should not dominate it
- Be aware that opinions may be expressed with which you disagree; it isn't appropriate for you to try and change them; your job is to try and keep the atmosphere open and accepting
- It's important to listen and resist offering advice or solutions; it may be helpful to offer to pray with someone at an appropriate time as they seek God's guidance or to direct them to a Spiritual Adviser
- Allowing silence for reflection can be very useful, although sometimes it may be helpful to intervene to move the discussion on

### *The Organiser*

- Be aware of the weekend programme and what the specific task is at any given time and any time limitations,
- Ensure the participants are aware of what they need to know, e.g. when and where the next session will be
- You may be the contact for various needs so be prepared to respond or find assistance if required

### **Practical Tips**

#### **Organising the Table**

##### *Table Etiquette*

- Learning names - try to learn and use participants names as soon as possible; praying ahead of time for each of them by name will assist
- Seating arrangements – ensure the participants are seated comfortably, with good sight lines,

accommodating any physical or hearing difficulties; if practical it may help to encourage people to sit in different places over the weekend

- Facilitating discussions – it is likely that the more experienced table leader will take the lead at first, but as time goes on this role will move naturally between both table leaders
- Stay at the table – to reduce disruption it is best to remain at the table for all the sessions; if you have to leave ensure the other table leader is aware why you are leaving, and the Lay Rector may ask someone to take your place
- Undertaking other roles – you will probably be giving a talk during the weekend and be asked to be a prayer partner, during which time another team member may temporarily take your place as table leader, as you will not join in any discussion or art work following that talk; those planning the programme should ensure that you are able to stay on the table for at least the first two talks
- Participation – encourage the participants in discussion and any art work; it may be appropriate to prompt and offer ideas, but not to dominate; it is best to let their ideas emerge naturally
- Identifying a speaker from your table for the Closing Service – both table leaders should pray and then confer with each other about who to recommend. The Lay Rector will invite the individual to undertake this task. Once someone has agreed to undertake this role explain what will happen, encourage and support them.
- Don't choose someone to feedback from the table at the Closing Service just because they are a good speaker, it should be someone for whom this weekend has had a particular impact; this is likely to have been a positive experience for them, if not then be sure to discuss with the Lay Rector or a Spiritual Adviser why you think they are the best person to be invited to do this.

## *Discussion and Artwork*

- Confidentiality – agree with the table an understanding of confidentiality within the table group to ensure everyone is aware that they must take care when giving feedback to the larger group and talking to other people outside the group
- Note taking - whilst the talks are being delivered take good notes, this will assist you in leading the discussion and encourage the participants to do likewise
- Table Secretary – someone needs to take notes of what is discussed to feed back to the larger group; from the second talk onwards encourage the participants to volunteer to do this in turn, understanding that they will be asked to report back on the discussion, this should not be a re-write of the talk but a precis of the discussion
- Leading the discussion – the objective of the discussions is for the participants to engage with the material; ask open questions, such as ‘what’, ‘how’ or ‘why’, avoiding questions which could be answered ‘yes’ or ‘no’ ; other useful phrases are ‘what if’, ‘I wonder’ or ‘suppose’; it is sometimes helpful to reflect a question that someone has raised back to the group; a timely question can move the discussion on when necessary; remember generally the less you say the better
- Involving everyone – if one person seems to be dominating the discussion try to involve others through questions such as ‘has anyone else anything to add’?
- Sharing a little of your own experience – often by sharing something of yourself others may be prompted and will be encouraged to share their own experience; take care not to dominate with your own story but allow others the space to open up as they wish

- Artwork – after some talks artwork will be suggested as a different way to express peoples' views and understanding; it's the ideas behind the artwork that is important, not the finished product; remember there are many forms of artwork ranging from poetry, drawings, posters, sculptures, music, drama, etc.; encourage the reluctant participant but don't force anyone to contribute

Reflection – the two table leaders should find opportunities to discuss together privately about how things are going and any changes that are necessary

### *Prayer*

- Encourage the table group to pray together, there may be specific times scheduled for this, but it can be arranged at other times; try to establish an atmosphere that gives everyone the confidence to join in; this may be for silent prayer, prepared prayer, favourite prayers, prayer books, music or written material provided
- There may be an opportunity for a Visitation during the weekend which will be explained by a Spiritual Adviser; be sensitive to participants feelings as some will be unfamiliar with this practice
- Ask a Spiritual Adviser for help if necessary, especially if anyone is asking for a blessing or absolution which can only be done by a Spiritual Adviser

### **Problems**

Problems may arise but recognise that this can be a natural part of the Cursillo process. Remember that you are not alone; God's Spirit is at work in you and in those around you. Trust that God is at work transforming us all.

Here are some possible issues that might arise with some suggestions for how to deal with them; it is not exclusive, you

can trust God to guide you.

### *Participation*

- Resist the urge to over control, if that is your nature, especially at the beginning of the weekend

- Domination of the discussion by one member of the group

Be sensitive to them, they may realise they are dominating so it may be best to initially ignore this and let it run, unless you are aware of distress in the rest of the group.

Peer pressure may develop to control or neutralise the situation and others will probably begin to contribute more

Appoint him / her as the discussion leader, gently reminding them that the leader's job is to get everyone to contribute

Appoint them as secretary for one of the discussions , reminding them to keep notes to feedback to the larger group

During a break get them on board to help you to facilitate other members of the group to talk more; along with appreciating their ideas and experience, remind them that others may be diffident about sharing their experience and need encouragement

- Someone isn't participating in the discussion

Invite them to participate in the artwork, as some find creative expression easier than speaking; encourage them to explain their contribution to the group which may give them confidence to speak more in the discussions

Suggest they act as secretary for one of the discussions, which encourages them to participate in the group's

work, recognising that some people find it easier to feedback other people's ideas. If their reluctance is so extreme that feeding back to the larger group would make them very anxious this may not be appropriate

- Disagreements - different opinions are a natural and healthy part of discussion.

Most people will accept that they can disagree amicably, holding legitimate differing opinions; differing views might however lead to conflict and may become difficult to manage

It is helpful to point out that we can agree to disagree whilst respecting each other's views

If things escalate and are becoming a distraction to the work in hand talk to the Lay Rector or Spiritual Adviser for advice

- Someone won't participate in the art work

Ask them to help get materials which helps them to feel involved and they may then get more involved

Ask them for their ideas and opinion about the art work in progress and ask for any additional suggestions they may have

Don't force anyone to join in if they really don't want to

- A group member wanders around during the discussions or artwork

Follow them, engage them in conversation and then remember that we are meant to be taking part in the group work, inviting them to come back to the table with you

Remind the group that nothing starts on Cursillo till everyone is present, unless they have given prior notice of their absence; the group should wait till they return before proceeding

Ask them to help get specific materials for the table which may help them to re-engage with the group

Be aware of everyone's needs, offer to get someone a drink etc. if that is what is distracting them

Remind them in a break that they are needed in the group and they have a responsibility to the group

Involve the Lay Rector or Spiritual Adviser when required

- Participants relying on the Table Leaders for ideas for artwork or skits (if applicable)

Remember that your main role is as a catalyst to encourage and facilitate the participants in discovering their own thoughts and feelings

Explain that you are willing to join in with what they decide, but this is their opportunity to share their own thoughts

### *Theology*

- Theological arguments can arise and become a problem

Intervene firmly with a statement such as 'we all have opinions to be considered' and remind everyone that there are a variety of theological understandings

If someone feels distressed or concerned about something in the discussion suggest that they have a conversation with one of the Spiritual Advisers

If the discussion becomes heated or disruptive it may be appropriate to invite a Spiritual Adviser to join the group

- Participants deferring to others e.g. participants who are clergy, for theological answers. This should not occur as clergy participants usually attend 'incognito'. This is not always possible in which case -

Most clergy will deal with this in their own way, probably referring the questioner to refer to a Spiritual Adviser for

further information

It may be helpful to have a quiet word with the clergy participant to encourage the questioner to go to a Spiritual Adviser

Intervene during the discussion and re-direct the question to the group as a whole

It may be appropriate to highlight to group, or the questioner in private, that the clergy person is there as a participant in their own right to learn and listen; they are not there as a theological Adviser, that role is fulfilled by the Spiritual Adviser for the weekend

### *Personal*

- Problems of friction, hostility or domination may develop. This may resolve naturally over the course of the weekend

During a break get into conversation with the person who is distressed or causing the problems; ensure they are aware of your care and concern for them and ask them if there is anything troubling them, offering them the opportunity to talk; listen to what they say, listen to what they don't say, don't offer solutions, if necessary suggest they talk to a Spiritual Adviser, tell them you are praying for them and arrange to pray with them if they would like to

- The prospect of having some participants on your table may appear daunting; e.g. Clergy, Clergy Spouses, or other professionals. As with all participants make a point of talking to them and starting to get to know them at the welcome on the first evening. Remember that they are there in their own right to listen and learn more about God's love for them, they will prefer to be treated as any other participant

### *Administration*

- Inevitably not everything will go according to plan

Be prepared to carry the responsibility for the tasks allocated to you, dealing with any simple problems

Make the Lay Rector aware of significant issues or problems at the earliest opportunity

Support the Lay Rector and don't indulge in open criticism of what is happening e.g. the timetable may be changed for good reason,

The team meeting is an appropriate time to raise issues, let the Lay Rector run the meeting keeping your observations brief and to the point

Make notes during the weekend of good practice and things which might be improved to feedback at the end of the weekend

## **Preparation**

### *Prayer*

Prayer is the bedrock of all things Cursillo. It is important to pray through everything to do with the weekend and trust that God will work in each person as they need. Before the weekend pray about your decision to serve, and pray for:

- the Lay Rector and Secretariat as they bring the team together,
- your role and others on the team, particularly your fellow Table Leader
- the potential participants
- Throughout the weekend continue to pray for the team and participants, the venue and the practical arrangements
- After the weekend continue to pray for the team and the participants in their Fourth Day

## *Personal Preparation*

In order to serve the team and participants most effectively you will have ensured that you come as well prepared as you can.

- It is important that arrangements have been made about practical things so you don't worry about them over the weekend, e.g. who is looking after the family or the dog
- You have a duty to be well prepared for the weekend e.g. well rested and organised
- It is important that you prepare spiritually, seeing your Spiritual Director if you have one, so that unresolved issues will not distract you over the weekend.
- Should significant issues arise in the run up to the weekend e.g. health issues, family illness or bereavement, etc. it is important to think about whether it still appropriate for you to serve on the team; take advice from the Lay Rector and / or a Spiritual Adviser, your own parish priest or your Spiritual Director.

## *Training*

It is expected that all team members attend the planned training and team building sessions prior to the weekend, even if you have staffed on previous weekends

- Those on the team will find it helpful to attend a Cursillo Leaders Workshop (CLW) to help them understand more about Cursillo
- Talks – all talks need to be written in good time to be reviewed by a Spiritual Adviser prior to the training session where the talks will be delivered and commented on. It is also important to practice them at home so you become familiar with the content and can be more relaxed when giving the talk and to focus on your particular tasks, e.g. have written and practised your talk in good time and able to focus

## After the weekend

- Final palanca should be presented by the sponsor after the weekend, though in some places this may be during the Closing Service, so that the sponsor can encourage the participant into their Fourth Day
- All the team should continue to pray for each other and for the participants, that they continue to reflect on their Cursillo experience and respond in God's will.
- Staffing on a Cursillo weekend is a privilege and a joy, it takes a lot of energy so it is important that you leave some space after the weekend to reflect and recover. We suggest you protect and plan some free time after the weekend. It is also important to continue with your own Fourth Day activities
- Everyone in the Cursillo community should encourage all the participants into their Fourth Day, to attend the first Ultreya after the weekend and any Day of Deeper Understanding

