



The Church of England  
across Nottinghamshire



## NEWSLETTER November 2025

### WELCOME

Hi, Wow how the year has gone by so quickly. I hope you are well and that God is working with you and bringing lots of grace and peace in all that you do.

This has been a busy year: Ultreya's most months, a fantastic weekend at Launde, a summer BBQ and the National Ultreya at Durham – An amazing place.

There's been plenty of challenges for individuals and prayers raised, as asked for via the prayer warriors' group or SNAC WhatsApp group or Facebook, and our awesome God has answered our requests. Prayer opens our heart and soul to words from God and takes our earnest messages to Him.

As for Study, many of us have completed various training courses or home church courses but I would like to say a huge congratulations to Helen Ballinger on her being licenced as a CofE Reader last month. God be with you in all you do Helen.

Action! – I see cursillistas in action all the time and I am still blown away and thankful for the Cursillo movement and the people involved, who are so rich in the Spirit of Our Lord, sharing His love and blessings with all.

The secretariat have investigated the issue of reunions with current cursillistas (the survey sent to everyone), as well as looking at the ways we can outreach to churches that do not know about Cursillo yet! These two areas will be discussed at the AGM:

### Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> November: Christmas Lunch and AGM

St Peter's Church, 83 High Rd, Toton,  
Nottingham NG9 6EN

Christmas Lunch starts at 1pm and the AGM will follow afterwards.

There is no cost, but we will gratefully accept Donations!

The GB25 National Ultreya witness talk was an insight into a part of our Christian community that very few of us are involved with or are particularly aware of – so I have (with permission of the author) included it in this Newsletter. Please be inspired.

With the grace given by our Lord Jesus Christ, Keep praying, studying and taking action FOR HIS KINGDOM.

*Michelle Greenberry*

## **WITNESS Michael Bullock GB25 National ultreya**

### **Cursillo Talk 6<sup>th</sup> Sept 2025**

#### **Keynote Speech: Faith in Action – working with Traveller communities**

My name is Michael Bullock. I attend St. John's church here in Durham and I made my Cursillo on Durham 30.

I was very grateful to be asked to speak to you this morning as it's an opportunity to talk to you about how the Holy Spirit is working mightily amongst Gypsy and Traveller communities. It's also part of my Cursillo journey and I want to share with you something about these diverse communities and how the Lord has provided an opportunity to serve them through my work.

My talk is framed around the core principles of Cursillo: study, prayer and action in deepening my relationship with God and working with others. It focuses on my work with Gypsy and Traveller communities and some of the amazing Spirit-inspired experiences I want to share with you.

I also want to consider some of the challenges facing communities, reference the 2019 General Synod resolution of working with Traveller communities and the work of the growing Traveller Friendly Churches movement which is seeking to build links with Traveller communities across the country and seek to provide safe places for people to stop for those traveling.

#### **Study**

At the recent Durham 31 weekend, I was asked to talk about study and my talk concluded in this way:

We are called to learn to bring us closer to God and deepen our relationship of and understanding of Him. We have the Holy Spirit to help and guide us. God has given us His word which we are encouraged to study and meditate upon. He has also put us in particular communities, families and places. We learn through many ways, not just by reading books, and be on the lookout for how the Holy Spirit prompts us and guides us. Be watchful for what God is showing you through study. Has there been a time when God has really spoken to you through something which you have been studying?

Ultimately, God wants us to love each other and study is not just for our own benefit, it equips us for His service.

With this in mind, I'll now share with you some background to the Travelling communities I work with.

In my day job, I co-own a housing research consultancy, and we work with councils around the country on different aspects of housing and planning policy. One area of work I have been drawn to and I'm particularly passionate about is working with Gypsies and Travellers.

In England, Planning Policy for Traveller Sites is the national planning policy document which sets out how councils should meet the needs of these communities. Councils are required to assess need and find ways of meeting the needs of both permanent and temporary accommodation. That's where me (and a few other organisations) come in and assist.

However, it should be noted that Travelling communities remain one of the most marginalised and persecuted communities in the UK and any opportunity to explain more about their heritage, traditions and challenges is valuable.

The term Gypsy and Traveller is very broad and there are a range of ethnic identities embraced in it: there are Romany/Gypsy/English, Scottish and Welsh Travellers; Irish Travellers; Travelling Show-people and Roma. Each have a range of traditions and residential preferences. Gypsy Travellers and Irish Travellers are recognised as distinctive ethnicity and a protected characteristic under the 2010 Equalities Act. There are varying estimates of the number of people who identify as Gypsy/Traveller – a figure of 300,000 is suggested. Most live in 'bricks and mortar' houses but across England there are 27,300 caravans on pitches on sites. A pitch usually comprises a static caravan, tourer, a 'shed' providing cooking/washing facilities and a parking space. A site can have one or more pitches.

For Romany/Gypsy Travellers, their heritage can be traced at least back to Northern India, from where a migration began about 800 years ago, with Gypsies first recorded in Britain in the 1500s. This group tends to live on smaller family sites and their strong and deep cultural heritage means they have particular washing and cooking practices (hence the need to be outdoors) and moral practice. People identifying as English/Welsh/Scottish Travellers often have a Romany heritage but not exclusively. Travellers tend to have a 'home base' where they travel from. Traditionally, traveling took place from around Easter to September but the travelling season is now more linked to major horse fairs and school holidays.

Irish Travellers are a distinctive group within the broader Irish ethnicity. It is not known when the group emerged, but likely to be 300 to 500 years ago. Irish Travellers have become a key part of the Travelling community in England over the past 50 years or so. Family connections are also important to Irish Travellers, with extended families living on sites. Anecdotally, there is high demand for pitches for Irish Travellers as there has been an increase in migration from Ireland as sites there have been given over to other uses such as accommodating new migrants/asylum seekers in Ireland. As there is a Common Travel Area between the UK and Ireland, migration to the UK is possible. One of the challenges is the lack of accommodation for Irish Travellers which is partly reflected in unauthorised encampment activity. Interviews we have carried out on unauthorised encampments would suggest that people have nowhere to go but would like to settle down.

Roma have the same genetic heritage as Romany Gypsies and have migrated from Eastern Europe, particularly Bulgaria and Romania since the 1990s. Over time, they have assimilated into general populations and moved from a nomadic way of life to living in bricks and mortar accommodation. In the UK, Roma tend to live in houses.

The links between Gypsy communities and Christianity run deep. Billy Welsh, one of the most prominent Romany Gypsies in the county, talks about Gypsies worshipping the 'God of Abraham' and not other gods whilst on their early migration from Persia through India.

Others reference the conversion to Christianity in coastal Greece in the 13<sup>th</sup> century which has been described as 'providing the communal glue and moral compass for Gypsies as they migrated through Europe'. In more recent times, there has been a Christian revival amongst many Romany Gypsies. This started in 1950s France with the 'Light and Life' movement and when this came to

England in the 1970s it had a profound impact on communities. Engagement with brothers and sisters in Christ has also proven to be one of the most excited aspects of my work.

However, one of the ongoing challenges for Travelling Communities is discrimination, prejudice and misunderstanding. In 2019, the Church of England General Synod unanimously passed a motion calling on the Church to combat racism “in all its forms” against Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller communities. The motion declared it “a blasphemy” against Christ to tolerate racism and discrimination against these communities. The church has subsequently appointed Gypsy and Traveller chaplains in many dioceses to work with Traveller communities, including Nicky Chater who is the Durham Diocese chaplain.

So far I’ve talked a bit about the broad range of Travellers, their Christian heritage and how the Holy Spirit is working in communities. I now want to reflect on prayer and action together as these are very much intertwined. I also want to consider how I’ve seen the Lord draw me to work with Traveller communities... and the Lord sowed seeds very early on in my life.

So, to begin with, about 1975 I was 3 years old and a young couple moved in across the road to my parents. Angela and Ed became very close family friends to my mum and dad. Ange was a Romany Gypsy and settled in Runcorn after getting married: Ange and is one of our most deepest and loved friends. Ironically, Ange spent a lot of her childhood in the North East as her family travelled around the country. Through Ange and her family, I had an awareness of the Romany culture from a very early age, and little did I (or Ange) have any idea that when I grew up I’d be helping her people. Just as an aside, Ange’s mum Sheila and dad Cliff went on a National Geographic expedition to Northern India to retrace the migration of Romany Gypsies through Europe, and at the age of 102 Sheila can still tell people about the trip they made.

After graduating from Lancaster University, I came to the North East to work as a housing research officer and in the early 2000s started work in Gypsy and Traveller studies. This has continued as key strand of my work since then. Through the studies carried out, well over 6,000 households across around 100 council areas have been interviewed and evidence gathered to help meet accommodation needs.

But in the past 5 years a much stronger spiritual dimension to my work has emerged... February 2021, mid Covid, and I moved to St John’s Church in Nevilles Cross. One of the first people to acknowledge me sitting there in my isolated pew was Nicky Chater. A few weeks later she was doing a talk on her role as GRT Chaplain, and I happened to mention that part of my day job was working with Travellers. At the time Nicky was still finding her feet as Chaplain and couldn’t quite believe she was talking to someone who had worked extensively with Travelling communities. (I was asking God at the time of moving churches for confirmation that it was the right thing to do – this was a clear signal it was!). It’s so encouraging to see Nicky now chairing the Traveller Friendly Churches movement which is growing from strength to strength.

But I can also speak of more profound spiritual encounters have happened when I’ve been on site visits. One of the things I do in my work is visit all sites in the area we’re working – myself and my best mate who accompanies me on site visits commit our work to the Lord – and at a guess we’ve visited well over 1,000 sites in my years of doing this work. And there are some visits that I will always remember... They often take place on the last visit of the day.

Kent a few years ago. We went onto a nicely managed site with plenty of space, Knocked on the door and a lady gingerly opened the door wondering who I was. I explained the work I was doing and we sat down. As we were talking, she said something and I just commented 'oh are you born again'... that just turned the whole conversation upside down! Turns out only a few day before she had been praying to God about wanting to get the site expanded and have her extended family live with her. She had the room and didn't know how to do it. God showed her a picture of the site and having her family with her. And a few days later I turned up with a way of helping her achieve her dream. I recommended that her site was suitable for expansion in the report I prepared, helping to pave the way for what God had showed her.

North Wales, a few weeks ago. I was asked by the council to conduct a welfare assessment for a Traveller family. After having a bit of a faff trying to find their home as I was reading a map the wrong way (did I mention my degree and PhD was in Geography?) I was being directed in on the phone, and as I approached the gate, I noticed the chap had a rather large cross on his T-shirt. The family were believers, and we were hugging before I got into their caravan! His wife was incredibly anxious about the visit as it was a formal visit. She had been praying that it would be someone who would be sympathetic to their needs . It was a joy to be able to pray together before we did the formalities of the assessment and to close in prayer that God's will would be done for the family. My newly found brother in Christ talked about the importance of relationship with God as we parted.

It is such a privilege to be working with Travelling communities and being able to encourage, pray and learn with communities who are often misunderstood and marginalised. It is my prayer that this talk has given you some positive insights in to Traveller communities and demonstrate how study, prayer and action can lead to some incredible spiritual encounters.

One of the things I really notice is the deep spiritual conviction and wisdom of many Travellers that I meet. God is working mightily amongst Travelling communities and spiritual revival continues. I hope through this talk it has given you some insights into Traveller culture and the centrality of Christ in the lives of so many Travellers. I want to encourage you to engage with Travelling communities in your area, and God is very much at work with Travellers. I have heard some say they believe that Travelling is a spiritual calling. And I'd like start bringing this talk to a close by pondering on the fact that a travelling lifestyle was something our Lord Jesus Christ was used to – from an early age as a refugee to Egypt, but particularly during his ministry years centring on Galilee and Judea. Like many Travellers today, He also had a 'home base'. For Him it was Capernaum which served as his base for much of His ministry.

The final words of my talk are taken from a conversation I had with a Romany brother in Christ a few months ago. He was thrilled to be talking to me about Christ and salvation and these were his closing words which I think are a perfect end to this talk and will leave us all with something to think about: "just remember," he said, "if you've got Christ in you, you've got a Traveller in you."

Amen

Michael Bullock

## UPCOMING EVENTS 2025

**22<sup>nd</sup> November: Christmas Lunch and AGM**

St Peter's Church, 83 High Rd, Toton, Nottingham NG9 6EN



### **ACTION**

**From Hilary Sykes**

Isaiah 8 : 11-13

The Lord has put this passage on my heart for a long time and as I was musing on the goodness of the Lord it once again entered my thoughts. What follows is a little perambulation through those thoughts in the hopes that it might encourage you or at least spark off your own meditative thoughts!

We live in a world of constant prophesies of doom and gloom, war and strife; constantly being barraged by theories, possible conspiracies and there seems to be a real lack of joy, optimism and faith.

As I write this the words of the song "For all my life you have been faithful, for all my life you have been o so good. With every breath that I am able I will sing of the goodness of God."

I know that all my children (a different generation, my grandchildren, another generation, my mother, grandmother and all her siblings, past generations, would all attest to the truth of these words.

The Lord, by His very nature, is Faithfulness, Truth, Love, Mercy, Grace, Forgiveness and Hope.

He is unchangeable He is who He is-present continuous. These characteristics of God permeate His word and action and we, who are His children, whose spirit dwells within us display some of these characteristics by His power (the gifts of the spirit).

How wonderful it would be if we countered the doom and gloom of the news with the good news of salvation. That instead of despair there is hope and joy in Jesus. So many of us have wonderful stories to share of God's wonderous provision, miracles, faithfulness and forgiveness. People need to hear them, to know our hope is real, that death is not to be dreaded or feared if you have the hope of heaven through Jesus Christ.

If only politics was based on the Lord's commands and characteristics – how much more hope there would be. I am not so naive as to think that wars would end as it seems that the evil one indeed stirs up the worst attitudes of mankind, but it is our calling, our nature as children of God to sing a different song, one of hope and joy in the goodness and provision of the Lord. So "do not call conspiracy all that this people call conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, him shall you regard as holy; let him be your fear and let him be your dread."

May the Lord keep you in His loving, generous, kindness and grace as we all daily lift our eyes to Him and put our hope and trust in His unfailing goodness!

## Ultreya GB

National Ultreyas are great events where people from all the Cursillo diocese' across the country can gather worship together and can show us how powerful Cursillo fellowship can be for the Kingdom of God. Please add into your diaries the next Ultreya GB and join SNAC in Fellowship and Support with other cursillistas coming from across the nation.



**Chichester** has agreed to host GB Ultreya 26 on **Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2026** and Eds & Ips will hold GB Ultreya 27. There are normally planned events for the Friday evening as well as the service and an Ultreya on the Saturday.

Once Chichester has arranged all the details there will be information on the BACC website <https://anglicancursillo.uk/events/ultreya-gb/>. If you are planning on attending (I am going), Think about booking accommodation and travel as early as you can.

## Durham 6th of September 2025.

<https://anglicancursillo.uk/events/ultreya-gb/>

The day was a great event, the weather was good and the fellowship fantastic. Some of us were stopped in the street and asked what we were about – well what a chance to witness! When I was walking to the ultreya at the Methodist church, along with fellow Cursillistas from Derby, to were stopped by a couple of ladies who were Mormons! Very interesting conversations were had! It set our day up for a brilliant movement of the Holy Spirit in and around us all.



Durham Cathedral



All ready for the Walk of witness



Cathedral service – Banner entrance



Ultreya at Durham Methodist Church

## **Cursillo #77: 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug 2025** Launde Abbey, Leics, LE7 9XB.

David Simcox was Lay Rector for weekend #77 and the whole time was a great success. The staff and pilgrims bonded in the gift of the presence of the Holy Spirit so much that even the hic-cups, that inevitably happen, were no distraction from the purpose of God. Bishop Peter gave a brilliant talk on the Sunday morning (which many of the listeners took great inspiration from) and also lead the afternoon Closaura for us. His support for Cursillo is very much appreciated and he is willing to join us again – if diary dates are favourable!

New to our family are Penny W, Brenda B, Helen M, Judith S, Janet K, Ruth J, Judith M, David M and Sue T.

I ask that pilgrim companions/partners continue to support the new Cursillistas in their faithful development, and encourage them to come to Ultreya's and local Group Reunions so that we all can encourage one another, moving deeper in faith through prayer, study and action for our Lord.

## **The British Anglican CURSILLO® Council BACC**

The new British Anglican Cursillo web page can be found at <http://anglicancursillo.uk/bacc>

**Dates and venues of future meetings & events** – already decided and to be confirmed (tbc):

Standing Committee – Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2026 – venue tbc

**BACC Conference including Standing Committee and AGM:** 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026 – Highgate House, Northampton

Standing Committee – Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2026 – Chichester – exact venue to be confirmed

**Ultreya GB 2026** – Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2026 – Chichester

Standing Committee & BACC Council – 7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> November 2026 – via Zoom

## **Cursillo Leaders' Workshops** (please discuss with the LD if you wish to attend)

**20 March 2026 to 22 March 2026** at [Wistaston Hall](#) Crewe CW2 8JS

**23 October 2026 to 25 October 2026** at [Pleshey Retreat Centre](#), Chelmsford CM3 1HA

**5 March 2026 to 7 March 2027** at Wydale Hall, Scarborough YO13 9DF

Admin: Angela Smith [clwadmin@anglicancursillo.org.uk](mailto:clwadmin@anglicancursillo.org.uk);

Convenor: Adrian Trotter [clw@anglicancursillo.org.uk](mailto:clw@anglicancursillo.org.uk)

Application: via BACC website or [https://anglicancursillo.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CLW-ApplicationForm\\_September2021.pdf](https://anglicancursillo.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CLW-ApplicationForm_September2021.pdf)

The CLW is for all who want to know more about Cursillo; lay or ordained. Those who have any leadership role should certainly attend before, or as soon as possible after taking up office. Areas covered are: The purpose of Cursillo, 4<sup>th</sup> Day first, Group Reunions, Servant Community, Authentic

Cursillo and Looking Ahead. Please ask your Lay Director/Secretariat to sponsor your attendance. Starting from 5.30p.m. on the Friday evening to around 2pm on Sunday.

## **SNAC SECRETARIAT NEWS**

Among the details of secretariat business there has been much discussion on the lack of small group reunions across the diocese and the difficulty some people find in getting to the ultreya's (we do not expect anyone to attend every ultreya, but we miss seeing you face to face and would love to see you more). Thus, we sent out a survey to gage the facts from everyone we have an email address for. The results and further options will be discussed by all at the upcoming AGM Saturday 22 November at St Peter's Church, 83 High Rd, Toton, Nottingham NG9 6EN.

At the AGM there will be brief reports from various officers of the secretariat and an invitation to others to join the secretariat in specific roles or as observers. If you are curious about a role in the secretariat and want to find out more – then please ask one of us about it. We are very happy to pass on what we know, and/or have a period of shadowing/coaching into a role before you make a decision. Most roles are elected at the AGM and it would be good to know that we have a succession plan at our next AGM ready for a vote at the 2026 AGM. We have a brilliant team and all are gifted in different ways, which makes our focus of serving God through the Cursillo movement clear and a joy to be part of.

### **Members of the Secretariat and other Roles in SNAC are:**

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Spiritual Director         | Fr Matthew Askey SR  |
| Lay Director               | Michelle Greenberry <a href="mailto:ld.southwellandnottscursillo@gmail.com">ld.southwellandnottscursillo@gmail.com</a> |
| Treasurer                  | Irene Milburn  |
| Secretary                  | Bernard Ory  |
| BACC Rep and Pre -Cursillo | Hilary Sykes   |
| Midlands BACC rep          | Michelle Greenberry  |
| Cursillo #78               | Michelle Greenberry TBC  |
| Post Cursillo Rep          | Wendy Skelton – Stepping down  |
| Palanca & CCLI             | Helena Shipston – stepping down 2025   |
| Palanca                    | Angela Simcox  |
| Prayer Circle Lead         | Hilary Sykes   |
| Website                    | Jeff Moore   |
| Auditor                    | Karen Sycamore   |

### **WAYS TO COMMUNICATE**

#### **Southwell and Nottingham Cursillo Facebook page.**

We have a SNAC fb group for information and prayer. To be part of this closed group please send in a Facebook request or contact Michelle Greenberry.

#### **WhatsApp group - SNAC.**

We use WhatsApp as a friendly virtual reunion; sharing prayer requests, things we have studied and how our Lord is moving us onward - encouraging one another in our walk with God. If you would like to be part of this group, please text Michelle Greenberry.

**Website.** <http://southwellcursillo.org.uk> This is the link to our web site – thanks to Jeff Moore.