What’s An “Ob Mod”?

An “Ob Mod” is someone who is trained by observing someone who was trained by observing someone who was trained by observing someone who was trained by observing someone who was trained by observing someone who was trained by observing someone who was trained by observing someone who was trained by observing someone who was trained... and then they get to run the next Cursillo/Pilgrimage weekend!

It may be that we can enhance the preparation of “ob mods” - observing moderators - or whatever you call them in your community.

A good place to start is to require that the upcoming observing moderator has read and understood chapter four of Dr. Fred Keith’s doctoral dissertation. As you know, chapter four of his dissertation is the manual we use to run our Cursillo method weekends.

In particular, emphasis should be placed on the purpose of the weekend and upon the function and purpose of each of the scheduled events.

It often happens that suggestions are made to drop a particular event in favor of some other event that is not included in the schedule. I still remember the suggestion that we change the entire Friday afternoon into a nature walk.

Sometimes other events that are proposed might be good—but wouldn’t serve the essential purpose of whatever has to be dropped to make time for them.

It would be best if the upcoming ‘ob mod’ has served several weekends in leadership positions and has attended the National Training program.

The community leadership has responsibility for selection of the next observing moderator. That responsibility includes the necessity of selecting someone who will understand the job of moderator and do it well.

It seems to make sense that candidates for the ‘ob mod’ role be examined by the local council leadership - or a representative committee of it - to determine readiness and suitability.

One measure that might be useful—assign a capable past moderator as a coach or tutor for upcoming observing moderators.

Perhaps your council or whatever you call your leadership group could establish a leadership development program—keeping an eye on promising fourth day folks, especially as they work their way through the various staff positions on our weekends, and as they show initiative in recruiting and in the fourth day.

It’s not necessary to make this a public effort. It could be done by a small subcommittee that tracks capable fourth day folks quietly and brings their names to the attention of the council and of weekend moderators who are trying to recruit people to fill staff leadership positions.

It might be possible with an adequate leadership development program to guess who might serve as moderator 4 or 5 weekends in the future.

Without such a program - without helping ‘ob mods’ learn and understand the significance and importance of each element of the weekend schedule - the weekend is likely to miss the mark - to fail to achieve its purpose.

Tom

National Training Contact

To find out the when and where of our National Training program (or even the howcum and whuffo) contact Lea Ann McElroy at mcelroy313@att.net
Please Note

In December we changed the Cursillista from an every other month 16 to 20 page publication to a monthly 6 to 8 page pub. This format no longer leaves us room to list weekends, contacts and other information, much of which must now be left to the web site. For whatever reason, we have since received almost no calendar and contact listings. Please resume sending them to me ASAP, so we can update the calendar and contact sections of the website. Thanks. 

Tom

Our National Council

Our movement is governed nationally by our national council—which is really two councils.

Our twenty communities consist of four that call themselves Presbyterian Cursillo and sixteen that call themselves Presbyterian Pilgrimage.

All are members of The National Council of Presbyterian Fourth Day Movements. The Cursillo* communities are also members of the National Council of Presbyterian Cursillo.

Our National Council—formed in 1999—meets twice a year—preferably once in the east and once west (of the Mississippi.)

Our most recent National Council meeting was March 24 and 25 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Our next meeting is scheduled for August 25 and 26 in Selma, Virginia.

The meetings are normally attended by representatives from the individual communities, but they have often welcomed visitors. 

Tom

* Our Cursillo communities operate in accordance with a license granted by the Cursillo Secretariat, a Roman Catholic body.

Don’t forget...

Sign Up For The

Prayer Banner

They’re part of our youth movement—junior palanca chas!
Rita, where do fourth day folks go when they pass on?

Roy, those who are saved will go to be with Jesus, just like all believers!

From the Spiritual Advisor:

“But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit,[a] and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God’s love.” Jude 20-21 (NLT)

Dear Saint Pilgrims of our Fourth Day! We have just stepped off of Camp Hat Creek holy ground, and put our sandals back on to re-enter the world we left for three days. Our fifteen new Pilgrims blessed the team, their sponsors, and everyone who participated in any way to bring about PPP #52. Those who attended Closing identified that our new Pilgrims were vibrant and alive with greater knowledge, understanding, and love of the Lord Jesus. Their lives were changed. Bless the Lord. Each of us has experienced moments closest to Christ on our weekends. We also have the cumulative and deepening effect of our relationship with the Lord Jesus in our Fourth Day. The passage above from Jude encourages us to support each other in our faith through fellowship in reunion groups and at Ultreya. This “building up” occurs when we are faithful to our lives of studying the Scriptures (study), praying in the power of the Holy Spirit (piety), and touching others for the Lord Jesus and His Kingdom (action). Keeping ourselves “safe” means maintaining our Christian life, and resisting the draw of the world to step out of the light of the Lord Jesus Christ. Keeping safe means being strong in the Lord and the power of His might (from Ephesians 6:10). May we help each other keep strong in the Lord through the encouragement of the Saints. May each of us be a part of a reunion group, and may we gather at Ultreya on May 6 at New Life Presbyterian Church in Salem. The Lord is magnifying your most holy faith. In the blessings of the Lord Jesus, Marina Gopadze, SWVA Cursillo #18/PPC #12

From the Palanca Chair:

Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow!

For willing hands to write and make Palanca;
For prayers (from VA to CA) who prayed us through… both named and unnamed on Prayer Banner;
For cooks who prepared meals, Agape bread, Agape cookies, snacks;
For hands that prepared Agape Feast;
For sponsors and helpers who asked, supported, and transported Pilgrims to and fro;
For team-ers, many of whom stepped outside their "comfort" zones;
For the blessings of God who provided beautiful weather, sounds of nature, rainbows, and all-around beauty;
For the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who lived and loved and gave us the promise of eternal life in Heaven with the Trinity;
For the love and support of human friends with whom God has so richly blessed us;
For extra hands helping to "pack-up" on Sunday evening etc., etc., etc!
THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!
To all the PPP Community, New Babe Chicks, family and friends, we hope to see you at New Life EPC, in (beautiful) Salem, VA, on May 6 at 3:00 PM. Bring a covered dish; be refreshed, renewed, and encouraged as we sing, fellowship, share, and commune with one another and our Heavenly Father. DeColores! Jesus loves you and so do I. Jane McRae (FPC #2) 540-884-2942, roja.mcrae@gmail.com

Virginia Peaks Presbyterian Pilgrimage community has a very interesting practice—their newsletter, “The Spark”-consists of short articles from nearly all their community council/secretariat members. The above by Marina Gopadze is the leading piece in the current issue. The prayer is the next column by Jane McRae is another.
Weekend Staff Spiritual Directors

The job of a staff spiritual director/advisor on a Cursillo method weekend is kind of a vacation, right?

Wrong! All the two or three spiritual advisors on a weekend staff have to do is:

- Prepare and give five of the fifteen talks.
- Lead at least eight worship services.
- Serve communion four times.
- Commission the weekend staff.
- Assign roommates and table groups.
- Give the Cursillo history talk.
- Give five meditations.
- ...and, oh yes, be available to counsel pilgrims and or staff anytime, anywhere—about pretty much anything, for as long as it takes.
- ...oh, and also, be available to resolve table discussion questions.
- ...and of course, be available to explain almost anything to almost anybody at almost any time.

Other than that, it is a sort of a vacation. Sort of.

Yes, our weekends are lay led—with very strong clergy support.

Why would a minister undertake to help staff a Cursillo/Pilgrimage weekend? Why would a minister enter the ministry in the first place?

Ministers are called to service in the church. Most ministers who help staff Cursillo method weekends do so, not to relax, but because they see the need for such service and the good it does. They have the training, the experience, and the will to serve Christ’s children.

Why could we not just use lay people to fill those two or three slots for each weekend?

Because they do not have the training, experience, or perhaps even the will to serve Christ’s children in that way.

From the very beginning, back in Mallorca in the 1940’s, clergy have been a very important part of Cursillo method weekends.

In addition to serving on weekend staffs, clergy serve on our governing bodies—our national council has two clergy slots, our own local community council has one as well.

Not only that, but clergy are heavily involved in training our weekend staffs and in leading the worship services we have at Ultreyas and other gatherings.

So, no, the job of a spiritual director/advisor on a weekend staff is not a vacation.

And one other thing: Being a weekend staff spiritual director/advisor is not ‘just part of the job’—not just one of the things the pastor gets paid for. The pastor usually pays his/her own staff fee to attend.

The pastor often has to put up with criticism from the session members who hate for their local church to have to pay for pulpit supply, just so the pastor can get “an extra weekend off”. It is obviously NOT “an extra weekend off” - it is service to the church at large.

P.S. The next time you have to assist in the preparation of the budget for your church, please be generous when it comes to the minister’s salary. God bless our pastors.

Tom

While your mom is at Cursillo this weekend, you get to take care of the puppies and kitties!
Into The Fifth Day

Sooner or later we will all pass to our reward. Those of us in the Fourth Day might think of it as passing into some kind of fifth day. Regardless of what we call it, or of how we think of it, we will all pass on eventually.

How should our fourth day communities react when one of our fourth day folks passes on?

That’s not an easy question to answer - the circumstances differ greatly from case to case; from place to place. Your Cursillo/Pilgrimage community has no control over what the deceased or their family has decided regarding memorial or funeral.

Often, of course, there is an opportunity for family and friends to gather. I used to dislike that process, until my dad died and I saw the wonderful effect that gathering of friends and family had on my mother - just to talk about it over and over again and meet with folks who were fond of my dad…

Often, that is followed by a memorial service, sometimes followed by interment—frequently in a different city or state. Sometimes there are ashes to be scattered.

It usually happens fast - much too fast for your community council to respond.

How should your fourth day community react to the passing of one of your own? Do you send an expensive floral piece to the funeral home? Most of our communities couldn’t afford that as a regular practice—and many would probably be too late, in any event.

Do you flood the surviving family members with good wishes and pastoral care?

Do you take meals to the family?

Do you assemble a choral group and music chas to sing at the funeral service? (Possibly unbidden.)

All of these and more are fine and have been done—but it’s very hard to manage them in any consistent—let alone timely—way.

I recently attended services for two prominent fourth day members from the same church. At the first one, almost everybody wore their Cursillo/Pilgrimage cross. At the second one—no one did. My cross stayed in my pocket. Why the difference?

I don’t know.

There are some things that can and really should be done:

Except for the obvious “step 2.” below these are things that can still be done after the fourth day member has been buried.:

1. As quickly as possible, notify the fourth day of the passing— asking for prayer for the survivors. This can often be anticipated by prayers previously asked for a very ill fourth day member.

2. As soon as the information is available, notify the fourth day of the details of funeral or memorial services—when and where they will be held. Include directions to the church, funeral home and/or cemetery. Also include name and mailing address for notes of condolence to be sent.

3. Send one or more warm and sympathetic notes to surviving spouse or family. Concentrate on pleasant memories of serving with and service by the deceased. This is not the time to attempt to recruit prospective pilgrims.

4. Add a moment to remember deceased fourth day folks by name at the next Ultreya. It would be appropriate for someone to speak about experiencing the weekend with the deceased.

What ever policy you adopt in honoring fourth day folks who have passed on, it would be worthwhile to create a council member position with responsibility for this honoring of the deceased fourth day members.

This might be combined with the task of keeping the fourth day informed about fourth day folks who are in special need of our prayers. Tom
The Goal of the Church

Our local Monday afternoon study group is studying one of John MacArthur’s books.

This week he asks “What is the primary goal of the church?”

With reference to Matthew 28:19-20, his answer is simply this: “Evangelism.”

How can our movement claim that the goal of our fourth day ministry is anything less than evangelism?

Tom

Matthew 28:16-20 NIV

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Tom

The Purposes

The Purpose of the Pre-Cursillo:
To recruit participants
To select and train weekend staff
To prepare for the weekend

The Purpose of the Weekend:
To exercise the process of transforming new pilgrims into the fourth day

The Purpose of the Post-Cursillo - 4th Day:
To assist the people of the fourth day in joining the work of Christ in his church evangelizing the environment, of reforming our communities.

Tom

How Many Communities?

The question “How Many Communities have we?” deserves a bit of qualification. At present, we have 20 active communities that have been recognized as such by our National Council. Two of our most active communities - North Carolina and Michigan - are organized in clusters, 3 in NC, 2 in Michigan (which was founded by NC). If we were to count each cluster as a separate community, we’d have 23.

Tom