

Lent: Season of Pilgrimage

A Lent Course for the Diocese of  
Edinburgh 2022



Happy are those whose hearts are  
set on the pilgrim way.

*Psalm 84.5*

Pilgrimage is an opportunity to travel lightly, to walk free of daily routines, to meet people, to make friends, to enjoy and celebrate God's creation. An opportunity, too, in the travelling, the conversations and the silences to reflect on the journey of our lives and on our journey homewards to God.

Two prayers from : <https://progressivepilgrimage.com/prayers/>

God bless the path on which you go.  
God bless the earth beneath your feet.  
God bless your destination.  
God be a smooth way before you,  
A guiding star above you,  
A keen eye behind you  
This day, this night, and forever.

God be with you whatever you pass.  
Jesus be with you whatever you climb.  
Spirit be with you wherever you stay.

God be with you at each stop and each sea,  
At each lying down and each rising up,  
In the trough of the waves,  
on the crest of the billows  
each step of the journey you take.

Celtic Blessings: Prayers for Everyday Life by Ray Simpson

Lay down your map and compass,  
and those dog-eared travel guides.  
Rest your weary eyes from so much looking,  
your tired feet from so much wandering,  
your aching heart from so much hoping.

Lay down on the soft green grass  
wet with morning dew, and watch as  
the tree heavy with pendulous pears  
bends her long branches toward you,  
offering you perfection in every sweet bite.

Give up the weight of knowing,  
for the reverence of quiet attention  
and curiosity, for the delight of  
juice that runs in generous streams  
down your chin.

Christine Valters Painter

## From Bishop John

I am so grateful to Sophia Marriage and David Paton-Williams for this study course – the fruit of their own lives' journeys. They remind us that there can be many kinds of pilgrimage. Some may be heroic treks, others short walks. Some may take us to wild places, others to a labyrinth in a church or even a finger labyrinth on a page. Sometimes we know exactly where we are going (or we think we do) at other times we set off in obedience to God, like Abraham, with no clear sense of our destination.



Pilgrimage is usually about intention. We make a conscious decision, a deliberate choice to pay attention to the journey and to be receptive to what we discover along the way. But sometimes we may be surprised to find ourselves on the pilgrim way when we had assumed we were simply travelling to work or to the shops. Perhaps, the very act of pilgrimage, the discipline of conscious recognition, helps us to be alert to God's presence in unexpected people and places. Helps us to be intentional about our journey from cradle to grave; to find in our baptism promises a way of living that equips us to journey with purpose through this life and beyond.

I pray that this study course will encourage you to discover some of the many routes that pilgrims have followed in the past and that it will deepen your sense that each day is an opportunity to be a pilgrim, with God and God's people by your side.

+John

# Introduction to Pilgrimage

Welcome to our diocesan Lent Course as part of our Season of Pilgrimage. Many churches are doing different activities this year to help them explore pilgrimage. We hope that this Lent Course will enable you to reflect on pilgrimage together as a community.

There is no right or wrong way to pilgrim, and there will be as many different types of pilgrimage as there are people taking part in it. In the same vein, there will be many different ways to use this material – this is your pilgrimage, your journey – use this booklet where it is helpful, where it speaks to you, where it challenges and prods you. But remember it's not the final word on pilgrimage. that is a journey we do together.

**Pilgrimage** is ...

...a sign of contradiction, and of resistance to our prevailing value system, that of the market. Pilgrimage, after all, has no function other than itself; its means is as important as its end, its process as its product. Its utility value is small, and its benefits cannot be quantified or costed. Its value is intrinsic. It is something that is good to do because it is good to do. It states clearly that the extravagant gesture (because it is extravagant in terms of time and commitment) is an irrepressible part of what it means to be human and to walk on the earth. And whether the context for pilgrimage is solitude or community, we will be drawn deeper into the mystery of God and the care of creation.

(Kathy Galloway)

Pilgrimage is a spiritual discipline in many faiths – we only have to think of the massive pilgrimages of our Muslim brothers and sisters to Mecca, and of all who gather on the banks of the River Ganges. There is a long tradition within Judaism and Christianity. Some places of pilgrimage have been important throughout many centuries, other places rise and fall at different times of history.

There are two distinctive parts of any pilgrimage – the first is the one that we normally think of – the physical journey to a spiritually significant place – whether a place of miracles or visions, or a place associated with a particular event or person. In this pilgrimage, there are times when it is the journey itself that leads us to God, which deepens our discipleship – and the destination is almost irrelevant. There are other times, when the sacred significance of a site to which we pilgrim, the worship and reflection we experience there, is the important part of our sacred time and sacred journey.

We know in our own experience as well as the story of the Bible, that all the world is infused with God's presence, and God reaches us anywhere – which is why different

pilgrim sites emerge in different generations, and why for different people, different places are more significant than for others.

There are a number of popular pilgrim routes, routes that have inspired others through the years and are well known throughout the world. At other times, a pilgrimage may be more personal to us as individuals.

But of course, without the second part of pilgrimage these are just hikes or expeditions, visits to important places ... they're not pilgrimage. The second part of pilgrimage is the journey of our heart and mind as we move nearer to God. This is an intentionality, an opening of sacred space, sacred time and sacred relationships. Throughout the Bible there are many stories of people journeying with God, pilgrimages on which they come closer to God. Some have even read the story of our salvation history as one of pilgrimage, starting with the reverse pilgrimage from the Garden of Eden, and continuing through a journey with progressive revelations of God through to the Eternal City – to our true home in God.

The spiritual part of pilgrimage is fundamental to it all and therefore regardless of our frailties, our age, our resources or our time, we can all engage with pilgrimage. This is the pilgrimage, the journey of life, of faith that we are all on.

Pilgrimage invites us to travel light, to step back from the busyness and fullness of our lives, from the noise we use to fill our emptiness and pains. It invites us to turn to sacred time and space, and deepen our walk with God, with each other and with ourselves.

We hope as you meet together as groups – in person and on line – during Lent or whenever you choose to do it – that you will be able to inspire and encourage each other in your pilgrimages of faith and life as well as experience some of the physical pilgrimages, and to try new spiritual disciplines to deepen your discipleship and walk with God.



## How to use this material:

This guide was created for the Diocese of Edinburgh during the Season of Pilgrimage - a season that was elongated because of the restrictions and changes of pandemic. It was ironic that in our diocese and province, we started to think about pilgrimage at a time that physical travel was so curtailed. However we are aware that we have all continued on our spiritual pilgrimages in that time and have been changed in so many ways.

The guide is an opportunity to explore pilgrimage in small groups or as individuals. It is intended as a Lent Course and therefore leads up to the events of Holy Week, but it can equally well be used at other times of the year, or different sessions can be taken as needed.

We hope that the material can be used by a range of groups, online and in person, young and old, perhaps offering material for midweek services.

As in all groups, the questions are there to get conversation going. In different settings, different questions will be needed, and others laid aside. At times, reflection on our own pilgrimages may be very personal, please share only what you are comfortable with sharing in your group.

There are more questions than most groups will be able to use in any one meeting, this is intentional, as it provides alternatives. It is intended that you adapt the material as you see fit for your setting.

The course was written by two different people, we have tried to offer a consistency of presentation, but style and perspectives will be different and we hope that this adds to the course. May your journeys be blessed and fruitful in the company of the rest of the diocese.

David Paton-Williams and Sophia Marriage



# Maps



Global Sites - from sacredsites.com



Sites within close distance to our diocese, considered in this Study Course

# Week 1: Setting Out

Place: Ninian's Cave, Whithorn



Pilgrimages are often a series of resting and setting out. St Ninian's cave was clearly a place of refuge and retreat from the busyness of monastic life. A place to get away from it all.

However, we could argue, Whithorn was also the place from where Christianity set out into the Southern Pictish kingdoms of the fifth century.

Sometimes making the decision to go on pilgrimage can be the hardest part. Time and energy needs to be set aside, plans need to be made, and we need to work out what can be laid aside from our normal daily life. Sometimes we can also find ourselves making a pilgrimage without first realising it.

The walk down to the cave near Whithorn, takes you alongside a burn and through the woods. It's a beautiful walk which opens out onto a large stony beach. Looking westwards, this is an amazingly peaceful place just to be. Many of us like walks through woods and along beaches. But is there something different about a pilgrimage? We can explore caves and rock formations, but is there something different about a visiting a cave linked to a saint, where people have prayed and met for centuries?

Ninian rested in this cave, and from here, the message of God's love went on a pilgrimage through the kingdoms and through the centuries.

This week we're thinking about the process of planning and setting out – of setting aside the time and space for sacred journey, and of reflecting on any differences between a walk and a pilgrimage.

- What are your views about pilgrimage?
- Have you ever been on a long distance walk? Or bike ride?
- Have you ever been on a pilgrimage? Do you think pilgrimage requires physical effort? Can you do pilgrimage by car?
- How do you plan for a physical pilgrimage – what do you think are some of the things that you would need to think about before you could set off?
- How do you prepare both your body for the journey, and your soul so that it becomes a pilgrimage rather than a tourist route? Is there a difference?
- What are the differences between a pilgrimage and a journey?

### Scripture: Luke 1:39-55

In our reading, Mary had just received some momentous news, she needed space to process this, she needed a journey. She will have visited her cousin Elizabeth many times before, but this time was different. This time required pilgrimage, intentional journey and discovery.

- How do you think Mary might have prepared for this journey into the hill country? What was going through her mind as she travelled? Was she nervous, scared, excited, hopeful?
- Have you ever received news or had something to process that meant you needed to get away from daily life to process? What did it feel like?
- Mary found her own calling confirmed during that meeting, in the darkness of her womb, she knew that a baby was growing, that God was taking human form. How have times you've set aside for reflection, for prayer, been times that God has confirmed to you that God is with you, that you are in the palm of God's hands?

### Our own journey

Sometimes the spur for a pilgrimage or a longer journey of discovery – whether one that involves a physical journey or one that invites us on a spiritual journey – is a time of rest, of quietness, maybe even a retreat, which invites us onwards.

- Many consider Lent to be a journey. This year as a diocese, we're hoping that we can journey together. What kind of time do you need to set aside for this sacred

path? What will you need to stop doing for the duration of the period? How do you feel about that? What preparations do you need to make?

- And longer term, is God calling you to set out on a different pilgrimage? How do you know? What do you feel about it?

## Ideas for the Week

The Labyrinth is an ancient path of prayer found in many different religious traditions. In the middle ages, labyrinths were often placed in churches to enable people to ‘pilgrim’ without the very real danger of international travel. Walking often enables us to pray, and the winding path, into the middle and back out, take us on a pilgrimage. There are many labyrinths around the diocese (there is an outdoor one in George Square in Edinburgh and many churches will have labyrinths in their buildings at some point during Lent). You might like to find your nearest one. Finger labyrinths offer a similar prayerful experience. Use this one as an opportunity to trace with your finger a path that winds in and out, as a space for hearing God calling you on your path this week.

Make a pilgrimage this week – it might be one to your own church, or to a site of historical interest, it might be the diocesan cathedral (our mother church), or to a place of natural beauty. It might be to a place of quietness, retreat and darkness. You will probably have been to this place many times in the past, but how does it feel to make it a pilgrimage – to prepare in prayer, in committing the time and energy, in what you carry, and the expectations you feel on your journey. Reflect on your experience and what God might be saying through this sacred time and space.

## Prayer

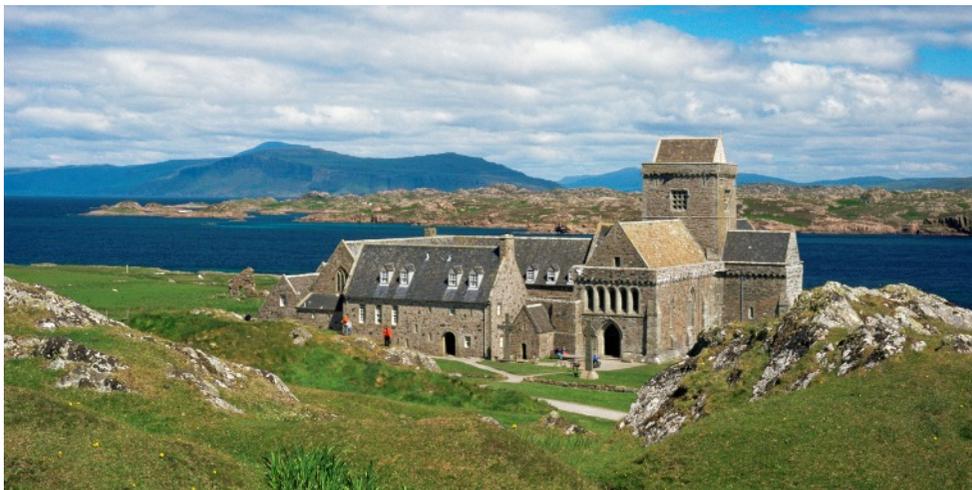
Pilgrim God,  
you are our origin and destination.  
travel with us, we pray, in every pilgrimage of faith,  
and every journey of the heart.  
Give us the courage to set off,  
the nourishment we need to travel well,  
and the welcome we long for at journey's end.  
So we may grown in grace and love of you  
and in the service of others  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(John Pritchard, Pocket Prayers for Pilgrims)



## Week 2: Companions on the way

Place: Iona



In the sixth century, Columba was educated in Ireland in the monastic tradition. There are different traditions about why he set off for Scotland, some say he was exiled after a violent dispute, others refer to it as a pilgrimage. Whatever the reasons, Columba left Ireland in a small curragh with 12 companions, and came to the island of Iona, where he founded a monastic community. Its continued influence is well known to us all in the diocese and around the world.

The monastery at Iona has continued to be a place of pilgrimage, and today the Iona Community is a worldwide community. The journey to the monastery involves travel to Oban, the ferry to Mull, travel by bus or car across Mull, and the final tiny ferry from Fionnphort to Iona. Day and overnight pilgrims walk off the ferry on Iona, and walk up the road to the monastery. Time spent in prayer, community and reflection on the island often leads people to remark about a thin veil between heaven and earth. At the heart of Iona is community ... the companionship of others.

- What is your experience of Iona?
- If you've been to Iona, who did you go with?
- It is not an easy journey to do and takes time, how do you find long and complicated journeys? What helps you when you have to undertake them?

**Scripture - Luke 5:17-25; Acts 13:1-4a**

Throughout our Scriptures the people of God are surprised by those they meet – from Abraham meeting the priest Melchizedek to Jesus walking the roads with his

disciples. Companionship is part of God's plan – not only the companionship of God, but also the companionship of others.

Whether we are more introvert or extrovert, companions are critical to our wellbeing and our ability to walk with God. Sometimes we don't notice the companions around us, at other times we have actively and intentionally chosen those we walk with for specific times.

When we are on a pilgrimage, we stop looking down at our phones, we stop being immersed in our normal life and we look up and around. We chat to our neighbour on the train, we pass the time with the people we meet crossing the stile, we ask directions from the shop in the village we stop at. At the end of the day, we find somewhere to stay, receive hospitality and rest, and chat to those we are with.

Equally there are many companions on our faith journeys and the pilgrimages of life. Sometimes these companions stay with us for many years, sometimes they are sent at particular periods of our lives. In Scripture there are many stories of messengers from God, showing the way, pointing forward, and like John the Baptist after he had pointed the crowds to Jesus, fading into the background.

- What did the paralysed man feel about his friends? Why did his friends take him to Jesus?
- Why do you think the people in Jerusalem sent Paul and Barnabas together? What might they achieve by going together rather than going to two different places?
- What is your favourite story in the Bible where we see people travelling together? Why?
- What kinds of conversations have you had with strangers when you've been travelling?
- Does it make any difference where you're going? Whether you're travelling along? What you're travelling for?

## Our own journey

As we walk over the hills we often come across cairns, piles of stones left by those who have travelled the route before us; in other countries we see wayside shrines with pictures, flowers and trinkets left by those who have prayed here before. Sometimes we are mindful of those who have travelled before us, sometimes we think we are the only ones to have walked this way before.

- What have you learnt from those who have walked the road of life before you?
- As you reflect on your faith pilgrimage – who are the companions right now who are gifts from God to walk with you on this stage of your journey? Is anyone carrying you to God at the moment?

- Who are you accompanying in their faith journey? And who do you carry?
- How do you allow Christ to be pointed out to you on the journey through the ups and downs of daily life?

## Ideas for the Week

This week, if the weather is good, you could imitate Columba's journey over the sea. In our own diocese we have the priory at Inchcolm in the Forth. Boats can be taken from South Queensferry. As you go, open your eyes to your fellow travellers – humans, animals, birds, fish etc who accompany you – what are they showing you about God? Who carries you in their boat? What can you learn from her/him?

Or go to a local pub or café, to a meeting place of friends, and intentionally see those around you as companions on the journey, as faith companions for you today.

## Prayer

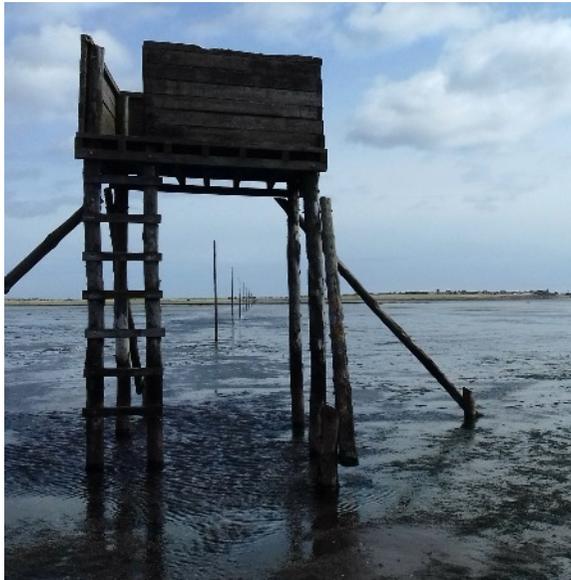
Christ our companion,  
you have given us friends to love us  
and be loved by us.  
You have travelled with us  
on our varied journeys.  
You have encouraged and strengthened us  
through the gift of one another  
and the beauty of creation.  
Continue to be our travelling companion  
challenging us strongly,  
upholding us when we fall,  
and nurturing us with your presence.

Elizabeth Baxter,  
in John Pritchard, *Pocket Prayers for Pilgrims*



## Week 3: Baggage Allowance

Place: Lindisfarne and Melrose



Lindisfarne lies off the coast of Northumberland. Unlike Iona, it is sometimes an island and sometimes not. Many a pilgrim - on foot, bicycle, car or bus - has waited by the causeway for the tide to go down to allow them to cross safely. When it is connected to the mainland, Lindisfarne can be a busy, bustling place. When it is cut off by the sea, the island takes on a much quieter, more reflective feel.

After the death of Aidan in 651 AD, the founder of the monastery on Lindisfarne, Cuthbert travelled there from Melrose to lead the community. He must have left many things behind, disconnecting from his past life. However he will have taken some things with him that were too precious to leave, or that he needed on the journey, or that were parts of his own character.

In 875 AD, Viking attacks forced the monks to leave Lindisfarne. They set off carrying, among other things, the coffin of Cuthbert in which lay his apparently uncorrupted body. It must have been a heavy burden for the monks who bore it on their shoulders around northern Britain. However it was their most precious "possession". They could not conceive of travelling without it.

Walking over the three miles of sands to Lindisfarne, following the waymarkers (and refuge towers - only cross on a receding tide!) can feel like walking in the footsteps of

those monks, and the countless others who have made the journey in the past. A walk of similar length from Melrose to the Old Melrose, would bring us to the place Cuthbert had known as home, part of the ancient Columban family of monasteries.

- Have you been to Lindisfarne or Melrose? What do you remember about your visit/s there?
- What do you think Cuthbert had to leave behind when he went to Lindisfarne? What do you think he may have taken with him?
- Pilgrims to Lindisfarne often have to wait for the tide. Do you find waiting for things difficult, or can it sometimes be a gift?

### Scripture : Luke 10:1-12

We sometimes talk as if Jesus only had twelve disciples but this passage shows there were many more. They had been following Jesus on his journey around the Holy Land but now Jesus sends them out ahead of him. He was going to follow in their footsteps. They were to be his heralds, preparing the way for his arrival. This meant not only proclaiming that the kingdom was coming but also demonstrating that this wasn't mere words by healing the sick. They needed to walk the talk. What a responsibility that must have been!

They were to travel light. They were even to walk barefoot without sandals. In a similar passage, (Matthew 10:9-10) his apostles are told to leave even more things they should leave behind – gold or silver, a second tunic, even a staff.

Hospitality was, and still is, a highly prized virtue throughout the Middle East. So Jesus expects that normally his heralds would find a welcome and he gives them instructions on how they are to behave in these houses. However, he also knows there may be times when people will turn them away. Such is the vital importance of the coming kingdom that Jesus has harsh words for those who do this.



- Why do you think Jesus told the disciples to leave so much behind? How difficult do you think that might have been for them?
- What do you think Jesus wanted the disciples to take with them?
- Looking back on the history of the church, in what ways have Jesus' followers travelled light or been burdened by unnecessary things?

## Our own journey

Making any kind of pilgrimage involves disconnecting, separating ourselves from so much that is familiar. We have to leave so much behind because we can only travel light. However there are things we may need to take with us: drink to refresh us, food to sustain us, a map so we don't get *too* lost, good clothing and footwear to protect us from the weather or the path, maybe a stick to support us on the tricky bits. Yet the most important things may be carried inside us, in our head and heart. These things are there for us even if we cannot walk very far. They are resources for the inner journey.

- What in life has helped to refresh, sustain, guide, protect or support you? (They might be things, practices, people, or places.)
- If you had to leave home suddenly, what would you take with you?
- Is there something in your life that you feel you need to let go of, or reconnect with?

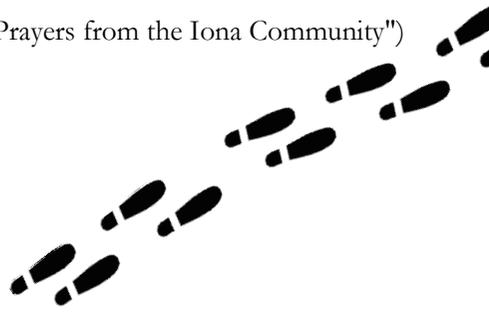
## Idea for the week

Take time to think of the things that are most precious to you. You may like to make a list and use it to give thanks each day.

## Prayer

God of the tides,  
 whose faithful rhythm underlies our daily lives,  
 help us to keep on, with courage and caring,  
 both when we are full and fulfilled  
 and in times of ebb and emptiness -  
 neap and spring tides in our lives -  
 within the ocean of your love.

(Jan Such Pickard, from "50 Great Prayers from the Iona Community")



## Week 4: When the going gets tough

Place: St Andrew's and Queensferry



In AD 345 a monk called Rule (Latin: *Regulus*) is said to have brought relics from Andrew's shrine in Greece to a little Scottish town that was then called Kinrymont. The town we know as St Andrew's would become an enormous centre for pilgrims from all over Europe. The bones - supposedly an arm, kneecap, three fingers and a tooth of St Andrew - were first housed in a church dedicated to St Rule (the tower of which still rises high above the town) before being transferred to the cathedral, itself now a ruin.

To medieval Christians St Andrew's was no less important than Rome or Compostela. They came in their thousands to venerate a man whose journey had led him to share the same brutal death that Jesus faced. One of the most famous pilgrims was Queen Margaret who crossed the Forth by boat and gave her name to the ferry that was to last for centuries. Her royal pilgrimage may have been relatively comfortable but for most it could be fraught with hardships and dangers.

Of course bridges eventually replaced the ferry and you can walk the three miles from South to North Queensferry across the Forth Road Bridge, while for the more

adventurous a newly created pilgrim way across Fife is reconnecting modern pilgrims with those ancient travellers.

- Have you been to St Andrew's, or North or South Queensferry? What do you remember about your visit/s there?
- Why do you think St Andrew's became so popular as a place of pilgrimage?
- What might have been some of the difficulties and dangers of making a long pilgrimage in the past? Why do you think people were prepared to take the risk?

### Scripture : Matthew 10:16-25

This whole chapter contains instructions for Jesus' twelve apostles who, like the seventy last week, are being sent out into the world. The chapter begins with Jesus calling the twelve and authorising them to bring healing to body, mind and spirit – freeing people from the destructive forces in their lives. They are then sent out to proclaim the kingdom, cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers and cast out demons – doing exactly the same works of power that Jesus had been doing. Like the seventy, they were being given an awesome responsibility.

However, while last week there was the assumption that they would find a hospitable welcome, here Jesus seems to expect that their reception was probably going to be very different. He tells them that they would need great wisdom, “innocence” and trust in God's Spirit as they faced these challenges. Although there would surely be many high points on their journey, their road was, at times, going to be a hard one. Their journey would cost them dear. For some of them it was even going to demand their lives. However, Jesus tells them that only if they managed to keep going would they come safely to the end of their true inner pilgrimage.

- What were some of the challenges the first disciples were going to face on their outer and inner journey?
- What might have helped Jesus' followers to keep going through all this?
- What do you think some of the “high points” might have been for those first followers of Jesus?



## Our own journey

Even today, going on a pilgrimage has its risks and hardships: blisters, exhaustion, getting lost, our clothing not being sufficiently warm or waterproof, and so on. However, these are usually less important than all the positives - appreciating the world around us, walking with friends or encountering strangers, time to listen to ourselves and God, and to reflect more deeply. As the saying goes: flowers bloom along the way of the cross.

- Can you remember a journey that was particularly difficult? Were you tempted to give up?
- What helps you to keep going when things get tough in life?
- “Flowers bloom along the way of the cross.” Has this been our experience?

## Idea for the week

Make a simple cross from broken twigs etc. Carry it with you through the week, or put it somewhere that you can look at it often.

## Prayer

Christ our guide,  
stay with us on our pilgrimage through life:  
when we falter, encourage us,  
when we stumble, steady us,  
and when we have fallen, pick us up.  
Help us to become, step by step, more truly ourselves,  
and remind us that you travelled this before us.

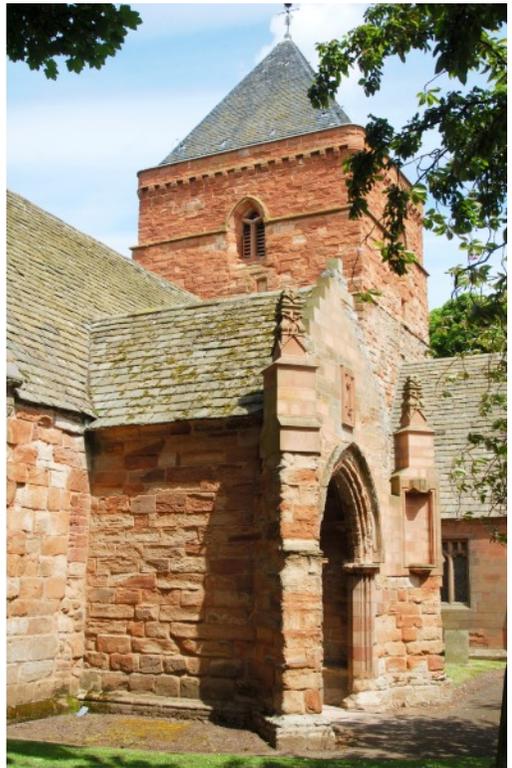
(Angela Ashwin, The Book of a Thousand Prayers)



# Week 5: Arrival and Going Home a Different Way

Place: Whitekirk, East Lothian

Whitekirk (4 miles from North Berwick) has been a place of Christian worship since early times. It had a holy well dedicated to St Mary the Virgin and a famous statue, known as Our Lady of Haddington. It was on the pilgrim's route from St Andrew's to Santiago de Compostela. The shrine was desecrated in 1356, and its shrine moved to the Church of St Mary the Virgin in Haddington. However, Whitekirk continued to be a place of pilgrimage throughout Tudor times, receiving visits from popes and royalty. The Holy Well dried up in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is now lost. Each year on the second Saturday of May, there is an ecumenical pilgrimage from Whitekirk to Haddington.



- Have you ever visited a site that was considered sacred by those who have gone before? Or a site where you were suddenly aware you were standing on holy ground? What did it feel like?
- What was it like when you left that place and returned to your home?

## Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

Pilgrimage is about change and possibility. Sometimes on a pilgrimage the journey itself is more important than the destination, at other times, the destination is important. Whatever pilgrimage you are currently on, all pilgrimages come to an end and we return to 'normal life'.

The magi didn't know where they were going, they just knew they had to journey. When they got to the Christ child, they were aware that this ordinary house with an ordinary family, housed something sacred. After they had been there, they returned home by a different route.

- What does it feel like to arrive somewhere?
- And what does it feel like to return home?

The magi didn't return by the 'same road'. Sometimes on journeys and pilgrimages, we are changed, a perspective has shifted, we have encountered God, others and ourselves in a new light. We return on a different path. What do you think the magi were thinking as they went a different way home?

John 4:1-30

Water is important in Scripture, from the waters of the creation (Genesis) to the river of life in Revelation. Water courses are places of promise and hope (the Red Sea), places of healing (Naaman), places of growth (Jeremiah 17:8), places of baptism (John the Baptist), and places of the reconciliation of the nations (Revelation 22). In this passage of John, the well is a place of meeting, of recognition, of change. The woman journeys to the well for a very mundane normal reason, but there she finds a companion, she encounters God, and she returns changed – even forgetting the urns of water!

- What were the woman's feelings when she found someone sitting beside the well. She had come for water for her family life, what did she feel when He asked her for water?
- What experience do you have of going about your 'normal business', but then suddenly finding a new meaning laid on top?
- What experience do you have of chance conversations or meetings, opening the possibility of change in you and in others?

## Our own journey

Water, springs and wells are often places of pilgrimage around the world in all faiths. As places of pilgrimage they offer the possibility of 'taking something home', and many pilgrims return with water from the wells, normally the waters are believed to have special healing properties, so pilgrimages become times of healing, wholeness, transformation and hope.

In our own diocese there are many places of sacred wells: Whitekirk in East Lothian, St Triduana's well in Restalrig and St Margaret's Well in Holyrood Park, St Katherine's Well in Liberton, St Bernard's Well on the Water of Leith; St Ronan's Wells Leithen Valley, Hier Well, Saint Boswells, Our Lady's Well, Stow.

- Why do you think water is so important in so many faiths? How do you feel about the reputed qualities of water? Does it matter where that water is?
- Is water important to you as a destination for your journeys? Have you ever been changed by water?

- When you walk, do you like going on a circular walk, or do you prefer to return on the same path? How different are those two experiences?
- What experience have you had of being changed by a journey you have made, a companion you have met, a place you have visited? Why were you changed? And in what ways?
- Looking back on the pilgrimage thus far in Lent, in what ways have you been changed by this time set aside? What do you want to pick up or plan for the coming months?

## Ideas for the week

Visit one of the holy wells in the diocese, or go to the seaside or a river. Reflect on God's use of water in your life, in the life of the world. What questions do you have to throw into the water of life?

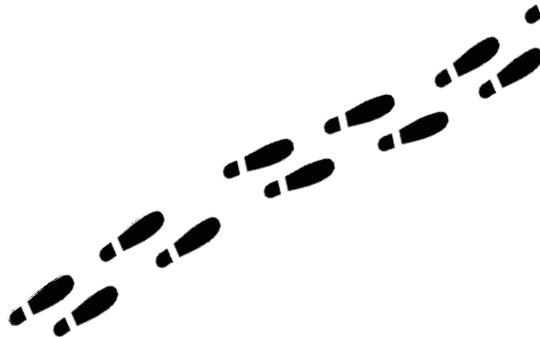
Reflect on some of the great pilgrimages of all faiths to places of water (River Ganges, Lourdes to name but two). When you next shower or take a bath, feel the water washing over you, use the time as prayer.

## Prayer

Thank you for the ancient places of prayer:  
for the faith that has blossomed there,  
for the worship in all its seasons offered there.  
for the lives that have been touched there,  
and communities stirred into life there.

Bless us, as we tread in the footsteps of our mothers and fathers in the faith  
and speak to us with the whisper of your love;  
for you are a God of renewal and steadfastness,  
now and for ever.

(Angela Ashwin, *The Book of a Thousand Prayers*)



## Week 6: Holy Week - Journey to the Cross

Place: The Ruthwell Cross and our own church

The Ruthwell Cross in the village of Ruthwell, Dumfries and Galloway was not part of a pilgrimage route, except perhaps for the people who lived around it. Before our landscape was dotted with churches, many tall crosses were erected, many with elaborate carvings. Although their exact purpose is unclear, they may have been places where people gathered to hear wandering preachers proclaim the gospel and teach the faith.

The Ruthwell Cross is one of the most famous, dating from the 8th century. Its Latin and runic inscriptions, possibly the oldest surviving text, predate any Old English poetry. The inscriptions have been thought to refer either to Mary Magdalene or to the Dream of the Rood. The cross is also covered in many carvings, including Mary Magdalene washing the feet of Jesus, Jesus healing the man born blind, Mary and Martha, the flight into Egypt, and Christ as judge together with two beasts. The cross was broken up at the reformation, but was reconstructed in the 19th century. It now stands 18 feet high, housed in the local church.



Although the site is currently closed due to the pandemic, access details (for the future) are available on the [Historic Environment Scotland website](#).

- You may have seen many crosses over the years. Which ones stand out in your memory?
- Why do you think people in the past added so many other images to their crosses? Why do you think people may have stopped doing that?
- If you were designing a cross, what scenes from the life of Jesus would you want to include on it?

## Scripture: Mark 15 v15-39

Many of us hear these familiar words every Palm Sunday, and possibly on Good Friday as well. They are part of what is called the Passion Narrative – the story of Jesus’ suffering and death, the last hours of his earthly journey. Mark devotes about a fifth of his gospel to the last two days of Jesus’ earthly journey: Walking out to Bethany and having his feet washed; Climbing the stairs to the upper room where, according to John, he would wash the feet of his friends and followers; Finding his way in the dark to kneel under the olive trees of Gethsemane; Being hauled by guards to his trial; Stumbling out of the courtyard where he had been whipped, barely able to carry the cross laid on his shoulders; Dragging himself to the hill of Calvary. These would be the final footprints his earthly body would leave in the dust of Jerusalem.

And then the feet that had walked the hills and shores of Galilee, Samaria and the surrounding Gentile lands, and finally the streets of Jerusalem – these feet were pierced by a single, long spike of iron, driven through Jesus’ ankles. And his feet had one final burden to bear, as so much of his weight bore down through them and their brutal, gaping wound.

Only three hours later, as his mother wept over them, were they finally at peace. And yet the journey still carries on – in the glorified risen body of Christ. For as the angels said at his tomb on Easter Day: “He is going ahead of you.”

- What do you think helped Jesus to keep going through his passion?
- How might Simon of Cyrene have felt? What does “carrying the cross” mean for you?
- How do we walk with Jesus today?

## Our own journey

We no longer have to gather at a preaching cross, having brought our crosses inside our churches. We are probably grateful for this in our climate but making them less public may separate the cross from the rest of society and the world around us.

In El Salvador, in 1989, Maria Cristina Gomez was brutally murdered as a result of her community work among poor and dispossessed people. Her friends created a cross in her memory, with images of her everyday life as well as one of her on the cross, sharing in Christ's death. They saw her life and death as a unity.



Maria Cristina's cross

- Where do we see the cross outside church, in wider society? What might these crosses mean for people?
- Do we lose something if we worship only indoors? Where do you go to be close to God?
- If someone was to make a cross in your memory what images would you like to be on it?

## Idea for the week

Walk slowly, reflectively, prayerfully to your local church, or within or around the church.

## Prayer

Jesus, Lord of the journey,  
we thank you that you set your face firmly towards Jerusalem,  
with a single eye and pure intention,  
knowing what lay ahead but never turning aside.

Jesus, Lord of the Palms,  
we thank you that you enjoyed the hallelujahs of ordinary people,  
living fully in that moment of delight  
and accepting their praise.

Jesus, Lord of the Cross,  
we thank you that you went into the heart of evil and pain,  
along a way that was both terrible and wonderful,  
as your kingship became your brokenness  
and you dying became love's triumph.

(Angela Ashwin, *The Book of a Thousand Prayers*)

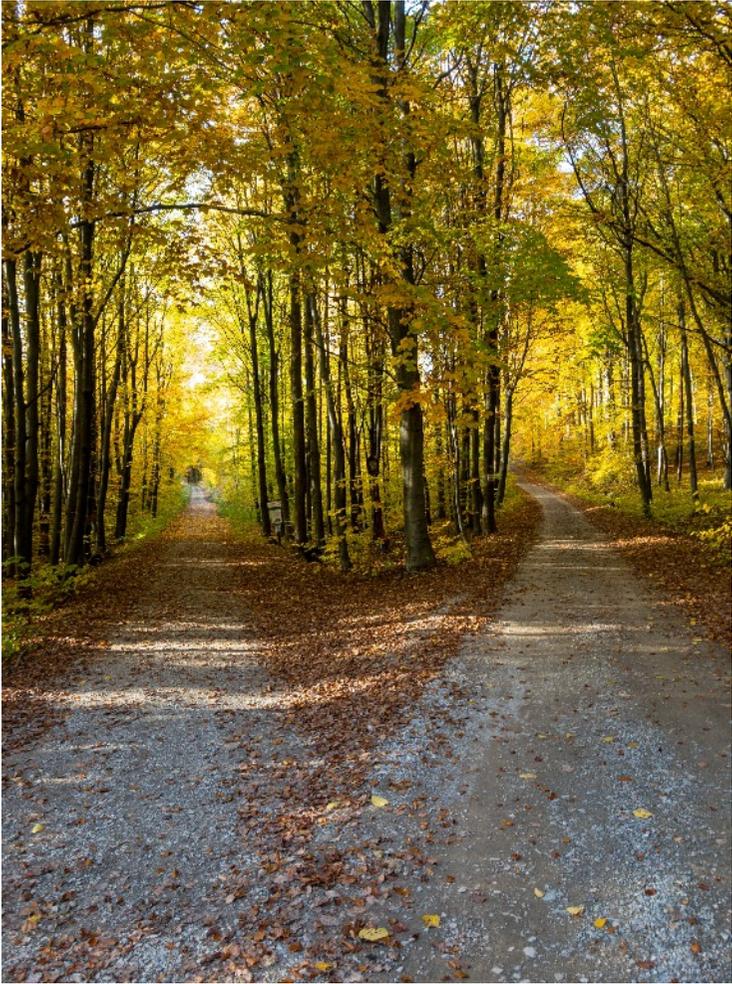


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