



DIOCESE OF  
**YORK**

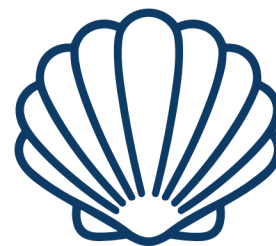
# On the Way

*Exploring Life  
as God's Pilgrim People*



# On the Way

Exploring Life as God's Pilgrim People



Pilgrimage is something many people associate with special journeys to holy places, yet it can also describe the shape of everyday Christian life. As followers of Jesus, we are invited to see ourselves as pilgrims — people learning to walk with God in the midst of ordinary everyday life.

This small group resource invites us to reflect on different dimensions of this journey: the inner life of faith, moments of encounter with God and others, the call to follow Christ more closely, the outward movement of mission, and the challenge of living as pilgrims day by day. Each session is designed to be accessible and flexible, offering space for conversation, prayer, and shared discovery.

You are warmly encouraged to bring your own questions and experiences. There is no need to have everything worked out. Simply come as you are, and be open to what God may be doing among us as we explore life as God's pilgrim people, and grow in becoming more like Christ.



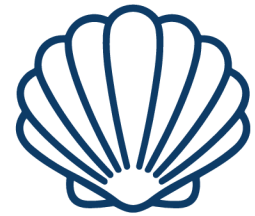
## Contents

- 1 Week one: Pilgrimage of the soul
- 2 Week two: Pilgrimage as encounter
- 3 Week three: Pilgrimage as discipleship
- 4 Week four: Pilgrimage as mission
- 5 Week five: Living as a pilgrim
- 6 Epilogue: Continuing the journey



# Week one:

## Pilgrimage of the soul



As we begin, we consider the theme of pilgrimage of the soul, reflecting on the inner journey of faith to which Christ continually calls us. As we follow the Way, we are invited to deepen habits of prayer, discernment, and rest, learning to dwell more fully in the presence of God along the path.

### Bible Reading: John 14.1-6

Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

### Reflection

We begin this Bible study by reflecting on a passage we might usually think of as being about Jesus who is the ‘Way to eternal life.’ But this is a passage that also speaks of Jesus’ continuing invitation to journey with him, and to find places to rest – to dwell – along the way.

As we set out to explore the theme of pilgrimage, we begin by considering the idea that, as Followers of the Way - a very early name by which Christians knew themselves - we are called to journey with Christ in the way we live out an active faith in our outer lives, but we are also called to an inner journey – an inner pilgrimage, if you will.

This inner pilgrimage involves cultivating habits of prayer and reflection, and of listening carefully for God’s quiet call on our lives. It involves paying close attention to the journey we are on, seeking to discern the road ahead as we follow closely on the Way. It also involves seeking to recognise those times when we are called to rest, and to simply dwell in the presence of the One who is Way, Truth and Life.

## Questions for discussion



The reflection speaks of an inner pilgrimage in our soul, alongside our outward journey of faith. What does this idea stir in your own experience, and how might you recognise such a journey unfolding within you?



If pilgrimage involves attentiveness and intention, what practices might help you to shape and sustain a pilgrimage of the soul in your daily life?



Jesus invites us not only to journey, but also to dwell and rest along the way. How do you recognise and respond to moments of rest in God's presence, and what helps you to enter into them more deeply?



The image of 'dwelling places' suggests pauses of grace within the journey. Where might you notice these places in your own life, and how do they sustain and guide you as you continue on the Way?

## For the week ahead

Is there a practise that you could commit to this week, and for the duration of this course? Perhaps a new (or former) habit of prayer, or an intentional pattern of resting/dwelling in God's presence?

## Closing prayer

O God of journeying,  
you call us to follow you  
in the paths of everyday life.  
Give us courage to take the next step,  
even when the way is unclear,  
and openness to recognise your presence  
in those we meet along the road.  
Shape us as your people,  
that we may grow in faith, serve with love,  
and learn to live as your pilgrim people;  
through Christ, our companion on the road. Amen.

## Suggested music



How delightful is your dwelling (Resound Worship)



Fear not, for I have redeemed you (Thomas Allain-Chapman)

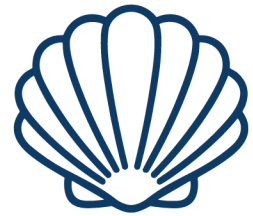


Psalm 84 (Edward Bairstow)



# Week two:

## Pilgrimage as encounter



This week we explore pilgrimage not simply as a journey to somewhere holy, but as an invitation to encounter Christ in the midst of everyday life. As we reflect on the road to Emmaus, we are invited to notice how God meets us in ordinary moments, shared companionship, and the places we least expect.

### **Bible Reading: Luke 24.13-35**

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” ... As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”

### **Reflection**

Pilgrimage is less about a physical distance travelled, and more about how we are changed along the way. On the road to Emmaus, the disciples walk with the risen Christ and yet do not recognise him; their journey is ordinary, their conversation full of confusion and disappointment. It is only in the shared act of breaking bread that their eyes are opened. Pilgrimage as encounter, then, is not chiefly about arriving at a sacred place, but about awakening to a sacred presence that has been alongside us all along.

This invites us to see our daily lives differently. The familiar roads we walk — our routines, relationships, and responsibilities — may become places of revelation. Christ meets us in scripture, in sacrament, but also in the unremarkable exchanges of ordinary time: a conversation, an interruption, a moment of unexpected grace. To be a pilgrim is to cultivate attentiveness, a readiness to recognise God where we had not thought to look.

Equally, pilgrimage is shared. The disciples' hearts burn as they listen together, and their recognition leads them back toward community. We encounter Christ not only in solitude, but in one another—in the stranger who walks beside us, in the companion who listens, in the neighbour who needs us. Every human meeting holds the possibility of holy encounter, if we have eyes to see.

### Questions for discussion



In the story of the Road to Emmaus, the disciples only recognise Jesus in hindsight. Can you recall a time in your own life when you became aware of God's presence only after the moment had passed? What helped you to see it differently?



This week, we are considering pilgrimage being about attentiveness in everyday life. What practices or habits might help us to notice God more readily in our daily routines and ordinary encounters?



The disciples encounter Christ through both conversation and shared hospitality. How do our relationships with friends, strangers, or those in need become places where we might meet God?



Pilgrimage is often imagined as a solitary journey, yet Emmaus is a shared experience. How does travelling with others shape or deepen our awareness of God, and what might it mean for our church community to be "pilgrims together"?

### For the week ahead

At the end of each day this week, reflect gently on where you may have encountered God. Were there moments that, like the disciples on the Emmaus road, only seem significant in hindsight? Was there a conversation, an interruption, or an act of kindness that carried a deeper weight than it first appeared?

### Closing prayer

O God of journeying,  
you call us to follow you  
in the paths of everyday life.  
Give us courage to take the next step,  
even when the way is unclear,  
and openness to recognise your presence  
in those we meet along the road.  
Shape us as your people,  
that we may grow in faith, serve with love,  
and learn to live as your pilgrim people;  
through Christ, our companion on the road. Amen.

### Suggested music



Brother, sister, let me serve you



Pilgrim's Hymn (Stephen Paulus)

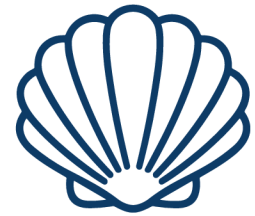


A song of peace (Sarah McDonald)



# Week three:

## Pilgrimage as discipleship



This week we explore pilgrimage as discipleship, discovering that the journey of faith is shaped not only by where we go, but by how we learn to live each day with God. As we reflect on Micah's words, we are invited to see the pilgrim path in acts of justice, mercy, and humble companionship with God.

### Bible Reading: Micah 6.6-8

With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?

### Reflection

We often imagine pilgrimage as a special journey marked by distant places or significant milestones, a leaving behind of the familiar in search of somewhere touched by holiness. Yet the prophet Micah offers something quieter and more searching: pilgrimage as the shaping of a life before God. "What does the Lord require of you," he asks, "but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?". Pilgrimage as discipleship is not chiefly about travelling elsewhere, but about learning to walk rightly where we already are.

To do justice is to allow our lives to be unsettled by the reality of another person's need or diminishment. It is to refuse the easy habits of indifference, and to become available to the costly work of repair. To love kindness is to delight in mercy, not as a reluctant duty but as a glad participation in the generosity of God. It is to become, slowly and imperfectly, a place where others may breathe more freely. And to walk humbly with God is to recognise that we do not travel alone or by our own wisdom. The pilgrim disciple learns dependence, listening for God's guidance and trusting the pace at which grace leads.

So pilgrimage as discipleship is the patient making of a Christ-shaped life. We walk not in order to arrive at holiness, but because, in Christ, holiness has already come near and asks to accompany us.

## Questions for discussion



When you hear pilgrimage described as the shaping of a life rather than a journey to a place, what does that change in how you think about discipleship?



Micah speaks of doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God. Which of these feels most natural to you at this stage of life, and which feels most challenging?



The reflection suggests that interruptions, neighbours, and daily encounters may be places of grace. Where have you recently glimpsed God in the ordinary or unexpected?



The reflection describes kindness as becoming a place where others may breathe more freely. Where do you notice people being excluded or diminished in our communities, and how might God be calling us to embody a kindness that restores dignity and makes space for them?

## For the week ahead

During the week ahead, choose one ordinary place where you regularly spend time — your workplace, home, street, shop, or daily journey — and prayerfully notice what is happening there. Notice who might be carrying loneliness, pressure, exclusion, or unseen burdens, and ask yourself how you might respond with justice, kindness, or encouragement in a small but meaningful way.

## Closing prayer

O God of journeying,  
you call us to follow you  
in the paths of everyday life.  
Give us courage to take the next step,  
even when the way is unclear,  
and openness to recognise your presence  
in those we meet along the road.  
Shape us as your people,  
that we may grow in faith, serve with love,  
and learn to live as your pilgrim people;  
through Christ, our companion on the road. Amen.

## Suggested music



Come, faithful pilgrims all



Ewe Thima (We walk his way)

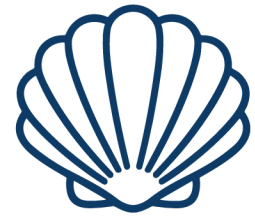


I want Jesus to walk with me (spiritual)



# Week four:

## Pilgrimage as mission



This week we turn our attention to pilgrimage, not simply as a personal spiritual practice, but as a possible meeting place between faith and the wider world. As we reflect, we are invited to wonder how these shared journeys might open up new opportunities to notice God at work and to join in.

### Bible Reading: Matthew 5.13-16

Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

### Reflection

Perhaps you have heard the definition of mission which says that mission is ‘finding out what God is doing and joining in.’ Across our culture, there are signs that people are longing for journeys that carry deeper purpose and spiritual significance, noticing the many ways people are already seeking meaning, direction, and encounter within and beyond everyday living. In that context, it’s perhaps not surprising that pilgrimage is in the air at the minute and capturing the public imagination.

Rather than a hike or a walk in the countryside, people might undertake a pilgrimage because they feel within themselves a desire to connect with more than simply the landscape around them. It is often a deeper longing - a desire to draw closer to something which they might or might not name as ‘God.’

As followers of Christ, when we undertake a pilgrimage, we seek to say with our actions something about the journey of faith that we are on. We do not hide what we do, but rather we ‘let our light shine before others.’ Along the way, we might find ourselves with the opportunity to share something of the journey of faith which we are on. We might find ourselves with the opportunity to share something of the light of Christ. If mission is finding out what God is doing and joining in, might we dare to wonder whether pilgrimage is something God is doing, and might we therefore look to join in?

## Questions for discussion



When you hear mission described as “finding out what God is doing and joining in,” how does that shape the way you think about sharing faith with others? Where might this differ from how you understand evangelism?



The reflection suggests that God may already be at work in people’s longing for meaning, direction, and encounter. Where do you notice these signs in the lives of those around you, and how might you respond?



Pilgrimage is described as more than a physical journey, opening space for conversation, encounter, and witness. In what ways might it become a natural and intentional expression of mission for you, and your church community?



Some are drawn to pilgrimage as a solitary journey, others as something shared. Which resonates more with you at this stage, and how might each create different opportunities for connection, reflection, and invitation?

## For the week ahead

Consider how you might approach an ordinary walk this week with openness to missional opportunity. Reflect on not only the route you will take, but the posture you will carry — one of openness, attentiveness, and a willingness to notice where God might already be at work in the people and places you encounter. As you go, quietly ask where God might be inviting you not just to observe, but to join in.

## Closing prayer

O God of journeying,  
you call us to follow you  
in the paths of everyday life.  
Give us courage to take the next step,  
even when the way is unclear,  
and openness to recognise your presence  
in those we meet along the road.  
Shape us as your people,  
that we may grow in faith, serve with love,  
and learn to live as your pilgrim people;  
through Christ, our companion on the road. Amen.

## Suggested music



Hamba Nathi (Come walk with us)



Peace I leave with you  
(Amy Beach)

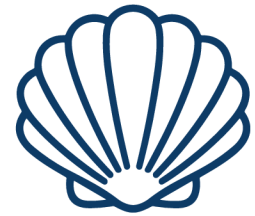


I heard the voice of  
Jesus say (Nick and  
Anita Haigh)



# Week five:

## Living as a pilgrim



This final session draws the series together by returning to the image of the pilgrim as a way of understanding the Christian life. As we reflect on what it means to live as those on the Way, we are invited to consider how our whole lives might become a gentle, ongoing witness to the nearness and welcome of God's kingdom.

### Bible Reading: Mark 1.14-18

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

### Reflection

There is an intentionality about life as a pilgrim. We began this course by thinking of ourselves as 'Followers of the Way' and, as we come towards its latter stages, it is worth returning to that image. To live as a pilgrim is to treat the Christian life as a journey, holding the quiet conviction: 'I'm not there yet, but I'm on the Way.'

Living as a pilgrim involves becoming a sign of the gospel. Near the beginning of St Mark's Gospel, Jesus calls those who are listening to 'repent.' This is far more than simply saying sorry or turning around; it is a call to a deep realignment of our whole lives, placing ourselves within the kingdom of God which has come near. The gospel—the good news—is that this kingdom is near, and that every person is welcomed into it. To live as a pilgrim, then, is to embody this welcome, seeking to reflect it in the way we live each day.

It is also to accept a certain lightness of holding, a freedom from the need to have everything settled or secured. The pilgrim travels with open hands, receiving what is given along the way. The ordinary becomes significant again - a conversation, a shared table, a moment of listening may become small signposts of the kingdom. We do not manufacture these signs; rather, we notice them, and allow ourselves to be shaped by them. In this way, pilgrimage becomes not an escape from the world, but a deeper inhabiting of it, trusting that God is already ahead of us, already among us, and already drawing us onwards.

## Questions for discussion



The reflection suggests that there is an intentionality about life as a pilgrim. What helps us move from good intentions into patterns of living that actually shape the way we follow Christ in everyday life?



To live as a pilgrim is described as living as a sign of the gospel. What might that look like in ordinary life, and where do you most feel the challenge of it?



The gospel speaks of the kingdom of God having 'come near.' How do you understand that nearness, and where do you notice signs of it in the world around you?



If the kingdom of God is both gift and invitation, how might we participate in its coming near in the places and relationships of our everyday lives?

## For the week ahead

Consider committing to a form of examen (an Ignatian spiritual exercise), reflecting at the end of each day on how you have lived life as a sign of the gospel. You might reflect on how your pilgrimage through today been a sign of the gospel or, picking up on the themes of this course, how your pilgrimage through today has involved encounter, discipleship, mission or rest.

## Closing prayer

O God of journeying,  
you call us to follow you  
in the paths of everyday life.  
Give us courage to take the next step,  
even when the way is unclear,  
and openness to recognise your presence  
in those we meet along the road.  
Shape us as your people,  
that we may grow in faith, serve with love,  
and learn to live as your pilgrim people;  
through Christ, our companion on the road. Amen.

## Suggested music



Make me an island  
(Lucy Walker)



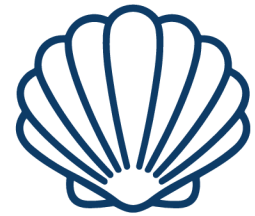
The path that winds  
before us (Karine Polwart)



Pilgrim (Nick and  
Anita Haigh)



# Epilogue: Continuing the journey



Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

*Psalm 119:105*



The Road Home (Stephen Paulus)

As this series draws to a close, it may feel natural to think in terms of completion. Yet the Christian life rarely feels like something neatly finished, it is more often experienced as a continuation – sometimes clear, sometimes uncertain, but always held within the love and trust of God. What we have called pilgrimage is not only something we undertake once, physically or spiritually; it is a way of understanding the whole of life.

For some groups, a fitting way to continue this shared reflection is to consider undertaking a pilgrimage together. This need not be far or complex. It might be a local journey to a place of prayer, a walk to a nearby church, or a simple day set aside to walk, listen, and pray together.

As you consider this, you may wish to shape the journey around the themes you have explored together:

- Pilgrimage of the soul – recognising that what is most significant may be unseen: the inner movement of trust, questioning, gratitude, or quiet transformation.
- Pilgrimage as encounter – making space for silence, prayer, and attentiveness, expecting that God may be encountered not only at the destination, but along the way.
- Pilgrimage as discipleship – walking together as those learning to follow Christ, noticing how conversation, patience, and shared rhythm form us as we go.
- Pilgrimage as mission – intentionally being open to others encountered on the journey, holding a gentle awareness to where God may be at work.
- Living as a pilgrim – travelling lightly, resisting the urge to rush or control outcomes, and allowing the journey itself to shape how you see your life of faith.

You may find it helpful to agree simple practices before you go: times of silence, short prayers shared along the way, or moments when each person reflects on what they are noticing in themselves and around them. Above all, the invitation is not to complete something, but to continue - to carry forward what has been discovered together into the ordinary pathways of daily life, trusting that the God who has accompanied us in reflection and conversation continues to walk with us still – on every road, in every place, and in every step of the journey ahead.



This resource has been written by John Hoyland and Sammi Tooze,  
on behalf of the Diocese of York's Pilgrimage Working Group.

Published 2026 by the Diocese of York.  
Diocese of York, Amy Johnson Way, Clifton Moor, York, YO30 4XT  
[www.dioceseofyork.org.uk](http://www.dioceseofyork.org.uk)

Text copyright © The York Diocesan Board of Finance 2026.

This resource may be printed, copied and shared for use within churches,  
schools and ministry settings, provided it is used for non-commercial  
purposes and is not adapted, edited or sold.

Scripture quotations, unless otherwise marked, are from the New Revised  
Standard Version Bible: Anglicized Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 National  
Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

