

A Licensed Reader writes

Dear all,

During August, you may have travelled more than usual. Perhaps you travelled as part of a holiday or perhaps you travelled to help look after grandchildren during the long summer holiday? I too have been thinking about travelling particularly pilgrimage. I have been thinking back to my frequent visits to Holy Island and one very special visit to Iona. These are places where many people travel and have been visiting them for many centuries. On my trip to Iona, I remember a sense that I was joining with the Church on earth but also the saints (in the loosest sense) that await us in heaven. Iona is so remote, it is amazing that those early pilgrims had the courage and fortitude to complete the journey.

My godparents lived in Northumbria for several years and we regularly visited Holy Island. I was always struck by the rugged beauty of the place, the vastness of the sky and the silence. My godmother used to take services in the chapel there but always had to factor in the tides, ensuring that she was on and off the island while the tide was low. The last time I was on Holy Island, we went into the chapel as usual and I just stood and observed the carving of Cuthbert and his fellow monks whose journey was not in a car but on foot.

Anyone who studies Chaucer at school will know that pilgrimage was a key feature of medieval life. Also, living in Bedfordshire, we have John Bunyan's 'Pilgrims Progress' which talks of Christian's pilgrimage through life. Much of the countryside we view around us is featured in the book.

Our new incumbent Simon Domett who we are very excited to welcome in November (see pages 6 -7) is currently on sabbatical studying pilgrimage and the effect that pilgrimage has on those who are visited. We look forward to hearing about his study.

We held our first reflective service on 29th July 2018. It was an evening service aimed at those who particularly wanted more silence and reflection in worship. The theme was journeying and pilgrimage. We acknowledged we are all on a pilgrimage through our lives. We built a cairn as part of the service, an ancient way of marking a point on a journey. We took time just to reflect where we are.

We undertake journeys as individuals but also as a congregation. Just as the early Christians journeyed so we must too, picking up those that travel with us. It seems to me that three things are vital on pilgrimage, firstly that we listen to where God asks us to go, secondly, that we are changed by the journey and lastly that we travel together as a church family conscious that we must help those who need help to make the journey.

One of my favourite hymns is 'Brother, Sister Let Me Serve You' which has the beautiful words:

*We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.*

I pray that in September we all might take time to reflect where we have come from and where we are going together. I believe that we have an exciting journey to come when Simon and Heather join us.

Best Wishes for September,

Cathy Sanderson