

Pilgrim: A Course for the Christian Journey

Pilgrim is a teaching and discipleship resource that helps inquirers and new Christians explore what it means to travel through life with Christ. A Christian course for the twenty-first century, *Pilgrim* offers an approach of participation, not persuasion. Following the practice of the ancient disciplines of biblical reflection and prayer with quotes from the Christian tradition throughout the ages, *Pilgrim* assumes little or no knowledge of the Christian faith. Individuals or small groups on the journey of discipleship in the Episcopal tradition can use *Pilgrim* at any point.

There are many different aspects to helping people learn about the Christian faith. We have taken as our starting point Jesus' summary of the commandments. We are called to offer our lives to God through loving God with all our mind, soul, strength and heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Learning about Christian faith and growing in Christian faith is about more than what we believe. It's also about the ways in which we pray and develop our relationship with God, about the way we live our lives and about living in God's vision for the Church and for the world.

There are two stages of material in *Pilgrim*. There are four short *Pilgrim* books (each comprising a course of six sessions) in the "Follow" Stage designed for those who are enquirers and very new to the faith. Then there are four short *Pilgrim* books (again, each comprising a six-session course) in the "Grow" Stage designed for those who want to go further and learn more.

Pilgrim is made up of two parts, each with four courses contained in four booklets:

Follow: *Do you turn to Christ?*

1. Turning to Christ
2. The Lord's Prayer
3. The Commandments
4. The Beatitudes

Grow: *Will you continue in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship?*

5. The Creeds
6. The Eucharist
7. The Bible
8. Church & Kingdom

Each course offers six sessions each that combine a simple prayer, reflection on a biblical selection using *lectio divina*, an article by a modern writer, and reflection questions.

The short courses in the four **“Follow”** stage books can be approached in any order. Together, we believe they offer a balanced introduction to the Christian life and journey. Our hope and prayer is that *Pilgrim* will help to introduce people to the Christian Way and also equip them to live their whole lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. It will help inquirers and those new to the Christian faith as well as those who are new to The Episcopal Church or Episcopalians who wish to refresh and renew their learning commitment to Christ.

The aim of the **“Grow”** stage is to help people to learn the essentials for a life of discipleship. A disciple is to be called to live in a rhythm of being with Jesus in community and to be sent out to live out the Christian faith in the whole of his or her life. Disciples need the support of other Christians and to be part of a community. We need opportunities to reflect and pray together and to explore the riches of our faith. The Grow stage supports that process both for new Christians and for those who have been Christians for many years. Some groups who use the Grow material will be moving on from the Follow stage of *Pilgrim*. Some will be specially convened just for this stage.

Component descriptions:

Leader's Guide *The Pilgrim Leader's Guide* has lots of helpful material for those who are leading any *Pilgrim* Group. A single guide covers all eight booklets and gives an overview of the program as well as a process of how to lead a group of youth or adults in discussing the material. This is an essential tool for anyone who wishes to offer any portion of *Pilgrim* in a small group, whether in church, school, or home. Worship material, liturgies for enrollment in the catechumenate, and additional resources are also included.

Course 1. *Turning to Christ: What do Christians believe?* This is the question explored as the questions that are asked at Holy Baptism are discussed. We begin by looking at who Jesus was; why did people want to spend time with him so long ago and why do we promise to turn to Christ and follow him today? This is followed by learning what Christians believe about God, Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Holy Spirit, and the Baptismal Covenant.

Course 2. *The Lord's Prayer: How do Christians know and worship God?* Explore the Lord's Prayer in these sessions as a gateway to the Christian gospel, as a guide to our own prayers, and as a way of deepening our relationship with God. Here is a way of seeing God and the world and yourself which is profound and revolutionary and good news.

Course 3. *The Commandments: Following Jesus* is about the way we behave as well as what we believe. So how should Christians behave and how should we live? This part of Pilgrim explores that question through one of the core texts of the Christian faith: the Commandments. We look in Session 1 at the two commandments Jesus uses to summarize the whole of the Old Testament law: the call to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. In Sessions 2–6 we explore the remainder of the Ten Commandments.

Course 4. *The Beatitudes* The Beatitudes are a short but profoundly beautiful and influential collection of sayings by Jesus. They sum up his teaching about what it means to live as a child of God's kingdom. This course believes that following Jesus requires us to engage with this important text, so that it is restored to a central place in the life of the Church. We believe that the Beatitudes, and trying to live them out, is one of the best ways of loving God with all your heart and understanding the Christian vision for the world.

Course 5. *The Creeds* As we speak these words we do so as part of the worldwide family of Christian believers, the household of God. In Session 1, we look at what it means to say: 'I believe' and 'We believe' and at the role the creeds play in strengthening our relationship with God. We move on in Session 2 to explore what it means to understand God as Trinity: one God in three persons. Sessions 3 and 4 take us deeper in our understanding of Jesus and look at the way Christ is fully God and fully human and at the great work of redemption on the cross. Session 5 explores the person and work of the Holy Spirit and Session 6 at what we believe about the Church – the people of God called into being through God's grace.

Course 6. *The Eucharist* How do Christians know and worship God? This second book in the "Grow" stage offers six sessions that reveal the reasons why The Eucharist is celebrated as a memorial of Christ's saving passion and stands at the very heart of Christian worship. We look at the intimacy we have with God in Holy Communion and how we are transformed by the encounter. The last session considers the notion that the whole of life is sacramental.

Course 7. *The Bible* What is it, how was it given to us and how should we read it? These six sessions combine simple prayer, Bible reflection in the *lectio divina* style, an article by a modern writer, and time for questions and reflection. It includes an exploration of what it means to say that the Bible is living and active and how to making Bible reading part of our regular life and prayer.

Course 8: *Church & Kingdom* What does it means to live as a child of the kingdom of God and to follow in the way of Christ each day as a member of the Church? The importance of prayer, living out our faith, celebrating Sabbath, and reflecting generosity is explored. We look at how faith in the God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit shapes and changes all our relationships. We consider how the Christian life requires us to be involved in the affairs of the world and to witness to God's kingdom of peace and justice every day, plus how we are in relationship with the earth itself.