



Where do Christians go on pilgrimage? – teachers' notes

Thank you for downloading this resource. We hope that it will be a useful teaching tool in your classroom.

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All Bible references are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

NB: If your class has completed the lesson "Why do Christians go on pilgrimage?", please begin at slide 5, using it as brief recap of key terms.

Learning Objectives: To learn about where Christians go on pilgrimage

SLIDE 3: Today we will be able to:

- Discuss how pilgrimage is different to a holiday.
- Explain why pilgrims go to Westminster Abbey on pilgrimage.
- Explain why the Shrine of St Edward the Confessor is a special place.
- Talk about how Christians travel to pilgrimage and where they might choose to go.

SLIDE 4: Using the discussion questions about journeys, aim to link to holidays and school trips as the session will refer to these later.

Have you been on any journeys today? (School, childminder's, breakfast club, train station.) Remind children that walking is a journey and that it doesn't need to be a mode of powered transport.

What other journeys do we go on? (Visiting friends, holidays, school trips.)

SLIDE 5: Lead to the key question of 'why did we go on our last school trip?' We went to have fun, learn something, experience something different/in real life. Establish with children that there is often more than one single purpose.

Was the journey part of the trip? Perhaps they even enjoyed the journey as much as/more than the trip!

SLIDE 6: Pilgrimage

Explain that today we will be learning about a special kind of journey called a 'pilgrimage'. Has anyone heard this word before?

Where might people go on pilgrimage? We're going to use these images to help us work out what a pilgrimage might be.

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NB If children have completed 'Why do Christians go on pilgrimage?' this slide could be used to recap and come up with a class definition of pilgrimage. Slide 6 can still be used as it focuses on why Christians might choose to visit these particular places.

SLIDE 7: Click to play the film. After watching this film, encourage students to think about the difference between a pilgrimage and a school trip.

SLIDE 8: Why do Christians go to these places on pilgrimage?

Together build a definition of pilgrimage with help from the pictures on the slide and matching statements.

Key questions for discussion:

- Where is this?
- Why is it special to Christians?
- What happened or happens here?

Establish that pilgrimage is a journey to a holy place.

Places:

Bethlehem – this is where Jesus was born. Christian pilgrims visit the Church of the Nativity which some believe is built on the place that Jesus was born.



Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem - Neil Ward / CC BY (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>)

Rome – Roman Catholic Christians go to Rome to be close to the centre of their faith. It is where the first 'Bishop of Rome' is buried, his name was Peter and he was one of Jesus' disciples.



Vatican City - Image by Luigi Suglia from Pixabay

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London – Westminster Abbey is the burial site of St Edward the Confessor where Christian pilgrims go to pray.



Westminster Abbey – ©2023 Dean & Chapter of Westminster

Work in pairs to discuss which might match together. If you prefer, print the slide off and ask children to cut and sort the images and descriptions.

SLIDE 9: Pilgrimage

Take feedback from students, exploring that pilgrimage is a journey to a holy place. Discuss why some journeys might be special, like a holiday to Disneyland, but that this place isn't 'holy'. A holy place is one dedicated to God, sometimes this is called 'sacred' too. Explain that today we'll be focusing on where Christians go on pilgrimages.

SLIDES 10 & 11: Why do people go on pilgrimage?

Explain that a physical journey is the one we make with our bodies. Spiritual journeys happen inside of us, although other people might notice a difference in how we behave or think.

When a pilgrim goes on their journey, they might spend a lot of time thinking, looking at nature and the world around them as they travel, and praying. Pilgrims might be saying thank you, sorry, or ask for God's guidance and help or blessing. They might be looking for an answer or thinking about what to do next in their life.

SLIDES 12 & 13: Why Westminster Abbey was built

Some Christians go on pilgrimage to the shrine (tomb) of St Edward the Confessor in Westminster Abbey. Westminster Abbey was built because he had promised to go on pilgrimage to Rome, however due to the turmoil around the throne, Edward didn't think he could leave England. He asked for special permission from the Pope not to honour his commitment and go to Rome. Building the Abbey was what the Pope asked him to do in order to glorify God in a different way.

SLIDES 14 - 19: Inside the Abbey

This activity zooms out from a small part of the shrine of St Edward the Confessor, allowing children to explore elements of the Shrine, its purpose, its context in the Abbey and infer why this person might be special based on their location.

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The Shrine has holes (niches) in the side in order for pilgrims to kneel and pray. Pilgrims believed, and believe, that miracles would happen at the shrine, and therefore wanted to get closer to it.

The Shrine is situated within a small Chapel where there is an altar (the table with the white cloth). The floor of the Chapel is delicate and so services are carried out there more rarely. Edward's Shrine is located beside five kings and four queens: Henry III, Edward I, Eleanor of Castile (wife of Edward I), Edward III, Philippa of Hainault (wife of Edward III), Richard II, Anne of Bohemia (wife of Richard II), King Henry V, and his own wife Edith of Wessex.

SLIDE 20: What would St Edward think?

These questions are designed to encourage critical thinking and encourage children to reflect on what they have learned about Edward. Key points would be that Edward was given to generosity and may have preferred to spend the money on helping the poor, however he would be pleased that the site of his grave was encouraging people to pray and draw closer to God.

SLIDE 21: Miracles

This is the reason many pilgrims visited the Shrine as touching it was supposed to bring healing. The custom of touching the King's cloak or hand in order to be healed began with Edward. Christians believe that Jesus heals people, but can do this through the touch of another human person.

SLIDE 22: Pilgrim badges

Due to the Shrines being demolished through pilgrims taking 'relics' home with them, those in charge decided to create souvenirs to take home. The designs aimed to link to the pilgrimage site, with Edward's signifying his royal status.

SLIDE 23: St Edward the Confessor

The shrine of St Edward the Confessor is only shrine in the UK with the person's body still buried there.

He was a kind and generous king who loved Jesus and tried to live like him.

SLIDE 24: Pilgrims at the Shrine of Edward the Confessor

Pope Benedict XVI visited the shrine in 2010, and was the first Pope to do so. This illustrates that any Christian can go on pilgrimage and what a pilgrim might be thinking or reflecting on when they travel.

SLIDES 25 & 26: Edwardtide

Once a year there is a special period when pilgrims might go to the Abbey. It's called Edwardtide. It is in October, near to the 13th which is the date that Edward's body was moved into the Shrine where it is today and there are a series of special services. There are also family activities, so if your school is nearby you might like to suggest to families that they could attend.



Do you think October would be a good time of year to go on a pilgrimage? What challenges might you face? Considering whether pilgrimage is meant to be an easy thing to do is included in Slide 25 but could be discussed here too.

SLIDE 27: How do pilgrims travel?

Discuss how these different pilgrims might have travelled to their locations. Any misconceptions that you must walk will be addressed in the following slides.

SLIDE 28: Walking

Discuss that pilgrims in the past would have walked, that was part of the experience. Although it was physically hard that would also mean time to think spiritually and talk with other pilgrims.

They make take part in a footwashing ceremony like when Jesus washed the disciples' feet. He did this to show he was their servant rather than better than them:

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet: John 13: 1-17

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ got up from the table, ^[a] took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸ Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, ^[b] but is entirely clean. And you ^[c] are clean, though not all of you." ¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹² After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Very truly, I tell you, servants ^[d] are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

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Discuss with the children whether they think it is easy to do a pilgrimage and whether they think it is supposed to be easy. Some may think it is designed to be hard to show real commitment to doing the pilgrimage.

SLIDE 29: Travelling

There are many other ways people could travel to their pilgrimage. Thinking about to the images earlier, how would we get to Bethlehem or Rome? We could walk but we would need to take boats at the very least. These days it is rare to walk the entire distance to a pilgrimage site abroad, although people might walk to closer sites.

SLIDE 30: Pilgrimage Passport

People like to go to different pilgrimage sites across the UK. They might do this while on holiday or visiting friends, so their journey is not solely about pilgrimage. From North to South, the map shows Iona, Walsingham and Westminster Abbey.

SLIDE 31: Pilgrimage

Explain that lots of faiths have pilgrimage sites.

For Muslims it is compulsory to visit Mecca which is in Saudi Arabia once in their lifetime if they are able to. This is called the Hajj pilgrimage. Mecca is the birthplace of Muhammed PBUH.

Varanasi is a site of pilgrimage for Hindus. It is in India and on the River Ganges. The city is dedicated to the god Shiva. Pilgrims purify themselves by bathing in the river, although the river itself is very dirty.

Lourdes is a Roman Catholic Christian pilgrimage site. It is the place where the Virgin Mary appeared 18 times to a young girl called Bernadette. Miracles are said to have happened at this site and pilgrims often drink or bathe in the water there.

SLIDE 32: Quick Quiz

Why is Westminster Abbey a site of pilgrimage? It is the principle Church in the Church of England, and houses the Shrine of St Edward the Confessor.

Why is Disneyland not a site of pilgrimage? A pilgrimage site is a holy site, one sacred and dedicated to God. People who go there want to go on a spiritual journey as well as a physical one.

Who was St Edward the Confessor? He was the king of England from 1042 to 1066.

Why was he considered to be special? He was a generous, devout king who is said to have performed miracles and seen visions.

Why do pilgrims still visit his Shrine now? Pilgrims believe miracles can happen at the Shrine of Edward. They want to go on a spiritual journey and take time to travel and pray at the Shrine.