



HEARTS IN SEARCH OF GOD
www.pilgrimways.org.uk



HEARTS IN SEARCH OF GOD SPRING GATHERING REPORT

The Hearts in Search of God Spring Walking Pilgrimage Gathering was held at Amigo Hall, Lambeth Rd, Southwark, SE London on 21st & 22nd March 2026. 60 people registered for the event and over 40 people attended on the day. Several more participated in the evening social event and Sunday morning pilgrim walk. The male/female split was 50/50 and about half of those who registered were new to the project.

Aims

The aims of the day were to:

- Bring together people and organisations already involved walking pilgrimage in our nations as a community
- Celebrate what was achieved during the 2025 Jubilee and plan how to promote and develop walking pilgrimage in England & Wales in the future
- Consider a proposal for a walking pilgrimage to *Adoremus* in October 2026
- Discuss plans for walking pilgrimages in 2026 to mark the Year of St Francis of Assisi

The Way of St Cuthbert

The day started with the premier of the film the *Way of St Cuthbert* and a panel discussion.

- Historian of pilgrimage Dr Anne Bailey of Oxford University gave an insight into the life of St Cuthbert, his cult, and medieval pilgrimage to his shrine
- Filmmaker Christian Holden of St Anthony Communications described the making of the film
- Dr Jason Baxter, Director of the Centre for Beauty and Culture at Benedictine College in Kansas, USA explained the inspiration for the film and the impact the pilgrimage had on the participating students.

The film was welcomed enthusiastically, and a lively discussion ensued about how to promote it in parishes, dioceses, schools, other Catholic organisations and ecumenically.

Copies of the film for public viewing can be obtained here: <https://saintant.com/>

Celebration

After lunch we celebrated what was achieved in relation to walking pilgrimage in England & Wales 2025 and our plans for 2026. 2025 was a Holy Year with the theme 'pilgrims of hope'. 2026 is the Year of St Francis of Assisi, the pilgrim of peace.

The achievements and plans are summarised the next section. Those with a heading in orange were contributed by participants, those with a heading in green are from the organisation's website.

The discussions and actions are summarised the final section.

2025 achievements	2026 plans
A&B Ecumenical Pilgrimage organises an annual group walking pilgrimage: www.thepilgrims.org.uk/wp	
<p>Each summer (since 1975) the Diocese of Arundel & Brighton organises an ecumenical walk to a place, shrine or area exploring a particular theme or aspect of our faith and Christian heritage. We stop at a pub for lunch and sleep on the floors of church, school or community halls. We try to walk on footpaths not roads. The 2025 pilgrimage was badged the Pilgrimage of Hope.</p>	<p>We are organising a pilgrimage taster, based in the village of Old in Northamptonshire. This will be the traditional mini pilgrimage / pilgrimage reunion format of 2 nights in a hall, with a walk and evening meal on the Saturday. The dates are 17th – 19th April. Next year’s pilgrimage is from Middlesbrough to Blackburn between 15th - 30th August. Bookings should be open soon.</p>
Archdiocese of Southwark: www.rcaos.org.uk/jubilee-pilgrimage-2025	
<p>We organised the Southwark Jubilee Pilgrimage from St George’s to Aylesford on 2- 6th June, the eve of Pentecost, about 60 miles. There were 65 pilgrims in total, about 50 of whom did the whole route. We stayed in Parishes, some in people’s homes and some in the parish itself. Some people returned home each evening. The parish priests celebrated mass each morning as well as providing adoration and evening prayer at the end of each day. Parishes also provided breakfast each day and sometimes evening meals. We walked in groups, often praying and singing as we went. It was a wonderful experience of God’s providence and Christian community.</p>	<p>We have no plans for this year, but we are interested to get involved with what may be happening in October.</p>
Augustine Camino celebrates the conversion of the English-speaking peoples to Christianity: www.augustinecamino.co.uk/	
<p>The two big, guided pilgrimages last year were the annual one in May and a charity pilgrimage for Mary’s Meals in September. The May pilgrimage was in glorious weather and particularly interesting for having a Buddhist with us who noticed similarities between his religion and Catholic piety. Mary’s Meals was a more Catholic event with daily Mass and the rosary as we walked. It felt as though we were sacralising the path.</p>	<p>We didn’t badge our 2025 events ‘Pilgrims of Hope’ but are whole year of activity was informed by it. This year there is the annual May Pilgrimage, a Musical Pilgrimage in June with Eddie Gilmour, the Mary’s Meals Pilgrimage in September and a group pilgrimage for Catholic People’s Weeks also in September.</p>
CAFOD is the official overseas development and aid agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales: www.cafod.org.uk	
<p>We are so grateful to everyone who took on walks of faith with CAFOD in 2025: those who walked to Holy Sites, to our children</p>	<p>Yes, we’ll be walking to Holy Island again, please join us on 20 June 2026. It’s not too late to join in the Big Lent Walk as we’ll be doing a</p>

<p>walking loops of their playground and to all the families, parishes and hikers who have walked in solidarity with those in poverty during this Jubilee Year. To name a few highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 250 people took part in our pilgrimage to Lindisfarne in September. This was run together with the Archbishop Romero Trust, and it was beautiful to have stops for prayer during the crossing of the causeway and to have a Care of Creation focussed Mass. • CAFOD's Big Lent Walk, taking place again this year to walk in solidarity with those who have to walk long distances for water. This Lent walking challenge is an opportunity to direct your Lent efforts to help others. Schools, parishes and individuals doing the Big Lent Walk, raised an amazing £479,849 in 2025 to help our sisters and brothers overseas. <p>In many ways, all our walkers became Pilgrims of Hope and this became the golden thread running through all our guides and communications. We produced a Jubilee Reflection Guide which was incredibly popular, 15,225 copies were ordered and these were used in parishes, schools and by walkers. We supported pilgrims walking to Nottingham Cathedral, producing prayer cards and having our Jubilee icon in the Cathedral.</p>	<p>shorter 'Walk to Easter' through Holy Week. We are encouraging people to pilgrimage with CAFOD, wherever they are journeying to with Christ. We have a webpage called 'Pilgrimages for charity', to help people plan their walk for the love of God and their neighbour. We help guide people to set up a fundraising page and offer prayer resources, as well as linking to Phil's fabulous pilgrimage resources.</p>
<p>Catenians: www.thecatenians.com</p>	
<p>The Catenians are a network of Catholic men who meet regularly to enjoy each other's company and to help and support each other throughout the world.</p>	<p>In the current year they plan to develop walking pilgrimage. Eddie Gilmore will address their national conference.</p>
<p>Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome <i>promotes pilgrimage to Rome on foot, by bike or by horseback:</i> www.pilgrismtorome.org.uk,</p>	
<p>Our purpose is to promote the Via Francigena pilgrim route between Canterbury and Rome together with its northern extension the Francigena Britannica from London to Canterbury and its southern extension, The Sud, from Rome to Santa Maria di Leuca. We do this</p>	<p>We will continue our programme as described above, with a Francigena Britannica one-day walk in May and a cycle ride along the whole length in July</p>

<p>through our website, our membership of the European Association of the Via Francigena (EAVF), our regular e-newsletters to Members of Pilgrims to Rome (4pprox.. 300 people), our annual magazine and our annual conference in March each year. We also organised two on-line meetings with pilgrims in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and USA and a day's walking on the Via Francigena between Canterbury and Dover. We developed a guide to the Francigena Britannica which was published (print and e-book) in March 2026 and is available from our Shop on our website. The 2025 Jubilee was acknowledged in our e-newsletters, correspondence and magazine.</p>	
<p>Confraternity of St James: www.csj.org.uk</p>	
<p>The CSJ promotes pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela as well as pilgrim routes in the UK. It aims to provide information, guidance, and support to anyone wishing to undertake a Camino.</p>	<p>We will continue our programme as described above.</p>
<p>Diocese of Clifton: www.cliftondiocese.com/news/pilgrimage</p>	
<p>The St Wulstan's Way Pilgrimage took place between 22-28 May 2025. The route, tracing St Wulstan's life and legacy, from Worcester Cathedral to Clifton Cathedral was part of the Year of Jubilee, Pilgrims of Hope celebrations. Participants explored their faith while journeying through stunning landscapes and historic locations. Parishioners were invited to join in all, some, or part of the walks, talks, prayers and celebrations that take place during the pilgrimage.</p>	<p>We are planning a 2-leg pilgrimage to mark the 800th anniversary of the death of St Francis of Assisi on his Feast Day (Sunday 4th October). One leg will start at Clifton Cathedral and the other at the Franciscan church in Clevedon. They will converge for refreshments and prayer at the Church of St Francis of Assisi in Nailsea.</p>
<p>Diocese of Leeds: www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/st-wilfrids-way</p>	
<p>The St Wilfrid's Way Camino began 10 years ago in October 2016. The original intention was to walk a 'Camino' from Leeds Cathedral to Ripon Cathedral and to arrive in Ripon on 12th October being the Feast Day of St Wilfrid. In its 10th Anniversary Year, in the Holy Year of Jubilee 2025, the pilgrims walked as 'Pilgrims of Hope'. The SWW endeavours to provide an opportunity for pilgrims to experience a 'Camino' style pilgrimage with some structure and support. The</p>	<p>In 2026, there is a similar programme of pilgrimages. The principal pilgrimage is the St Wilfrid's Way Camino in October with other pilgrimages including the 'In Fr Brown's Footsteps' and Laudate Si' pilgrimages planned. Information is provided on the Diocese of Leeds website, and a dedicated email address allows pilgrims to register for the pilgrimages offered.</p>

<p>organisation and management are supported from the Diocese of Leeds. In 2025, the Diocese of Leeds also offered shorter pilgrimages including the 'In Fr Brown's Footsteps' being a Lenten Pilgrimage in support of Vocations. Shorter 'Laudate Si' pilgrimages, of 3-4 miles, have also been offered.</p>	
<p>Eddie Gilmore is a Hearts in Search of God collaborator and has started coaching and mentoring: www.eddiegilmore.org</p>	
<p>During 2025 Eddie undertook several pilgrimages around the world with his wife Yim Soon. They were both perpetual pilgrims on the southern Way of the Jubilee Pilgrimage of Hope to Nottingham. Contact: gileag@gmail.com</p>	<p>Spring Pilgrimage to Canterbury April 18th We'll begin at 10.30 A.M. from St Mary's Church, Chilham, then follow the lovely North Downs Way to St Mary's Church, Chartham where we'll have a Taizé-style prayer and lunch. We'll continue to Canterbury along the river Stour and finish with evensong in the Cathedral.</p> <p>Musical Pilgrimage on the Augustine Camino June 8th- 14th This exciting event is organised and led by Andrew Kelly, founder of the Augustine Camino, and me. Setting off from Rochester Cathedral, we will walk about 10 miles a day through the beautiful Kent countryside to Canterbury, then onto the shrine of St Augustine in Ramsgate. Each evening, I will perform a little concert in a pub en-route.</p> <p>Pilgrimage with The Catenians: One of this year's aims of the Catenian Association is to revive the practice of walking pilgrimage, so I hope to help groups organise pilgrimages in their local areas on some of the Pilgrim Ways routes.</p>
<p>Hearts in Search of God promotes and develops walking pilgrimage in the dioceses of England & Wales: www.pilgrimways.org.uk</p>	
<p>All the diocesan Pilgrim Ways were completed as well as new Pilgrim Way to mark St John Henry Newman being declared a Doctor of the Church. The major initiative was the 4 Way national Pilgrimage of Hope to Nottingham from Cardiff, Leeds, Norwich and London. The project was promoted at the WeBelieve festival with a walking pilgrimage in the grounds. The website continued to develop as new resources as added.</p>	<p>The Salford Diocese Pilgrim Way has been revised. An initiative has started to promote walking for peace with St Francis of Assisi in all dioceses. The project's governance has been strengthened by a bishop patron and a steering group. The Spring Gathering is an important event in the development of the project. We are considering diocesan representatives and the possibility of a walking pilgrimage to the <i>Adoremus</i> event in October. A St Francis of Assisi pilgrimage is planned for the WeBelieve festival in July.</p>

London to Walsingham Camino: www.andybull.co.uk/the-london-to-walsingham-camino	
<p>I re-walked the London to Walsingham Camino path to check what updates were required to the route, and information on the facilities along it. All necessary amendments to the route were applied to the online resource: downloadable maps in both gpx and kml form were added to the website, available to purchasers of the London to Walsingham Camino guidebook. I updated the list of churches with pilgrim stamps. The total is now 35. Those churches report a steady trickle of pilgrims. I believe the London to Walsingham Camino is at a stage comparable to the various routes to Santiago in the 1980s.</p>	<p>The major challenge remains: there is still limited accommodation on some rural stretches. I am working with local communities to develop more accommodation options in churches, church halls and B&Bs. One community is now offering bed and breakfast in village homes; another has joined the British Pilgrimage Trust's Sanctuary scheme and offers pilgrim accommodation in its village hall; a third church offers Champing (camping in their church). I also re-walked the path in February 2026 and added further updates to the online resource.</p>
Mary's Meals provides a simple solution to world hunger: www.marysmeals.org.uk	
<p>Mary's Meals organised a pilgrimage on the Augustine Camino from Rochester Cathedral to the Shrine of St Augustine, Ramsgate, passing through four Jubilee churches (and Canterbury Cathedral) en route. We were walking for the children we serve in poor communities around the world, many of whom walk for an hour or more to school each day on an empty stomach. This was very much a pilgrimage for the Jubilee Year. We were blessed to have Fr Neil Vincent from the Parish of St John Fisher, Rochester walk with us and say Mass for us each day. We also prayed the rosary each day while walking.</p>	<p>8-9 May: The Way of Our Lady of Consolation. Join us on the beautiful Pilgrim Way from the Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation at West Grinstead to the Cathedral of Our Lady and St Philip Howard in Arundel. Includes a rare opportunity to see the Secret Chapel at West Grinstead.</p> <p>3-5 July The Hope Pilgrimage: Experience the Hope Pilgrimage in the Peak District, a three-day challenging journey through breathtaking landscapes, nine historic churches, and tranquil spiritual landmarks. There are a range of accommodation options for every wallet, or you can commute to the start of each day's walk.</p> <p>4 July Mary's Meals Pilgrimage Day – Knock Shrine, County Mayo is an opportunity to meet other volunteers and supporters involved in Mary's Meals and pray for the mission at this International Eucharistic Shrine.</p> <p>5-11 September: The Augustine Camino. Join Mary's Meals and Andrew Kelly, creator of the Augustine Camino, for a pilgrimage from Rochester Cathedral to the Shrine of St Augustine, Ramsgate via Aylesford Priory and Canterbury Cathedral. Join us for the whole</p>

	<p>week or individual days. There are a range of accommodation options for every wallet, or you can commute to the start each day.</p> <p>8 September: The Thames Way City Pilgrimage will start at Westminster Cathedral and take you alongside the River Thames to the City. You will visit places of faith and of scholarly interest – there will be something for everyone.</p>
<p><i>Pilgrim Street - Anne Hayward explores pilgrimage in a contemporary setting in the British Isles: www.pilgrimstreet.uk/</i></p>	
<p>Inspired by the recent designation of St Brigid's Day (February 1st) as a public holiday in Ireland, I walked across Wales to Holyhead, and then on to Dublin and Kildare, on a St Brigid themed pilgrimage in 2025. Walking as I do on my own, I had plenty of opportunities to talk about this very notable early Irish saint with people I met as I made my way to Kildare. As usual I was then able to give various talks and presentations to different groups over the winter about my walking pilgrimage and Brigid of Kildare, with these groups including a church youth group and a study group of Methodist Local Preachers. I also walked on a shorter pilgrimage from London to Canterbury. I was very happy to join the western branch of the Pilgrimage of Hope for four days. I then compiled a short section on my website about this and the overall inspiration of the jubilee Pilgrims of Hope proclaimed by the late Pope Francis, with my website acknowledging this link. See Pilgrimage of Hope 2025 – Pilgrim Street</p>	<p>I have recently completed devising a two-day trail in Gloucestershire to mark the William Tyndale Quincentenary this year. Together with the Tyndale Society, I am working to publicise this amongst various parties. See A Tyndale Trail: William Tyndale in Gloucestershire – Pilgrim Street. I am also walking on pilgrimage this year from my home in south Wales to Cardiff and then to Penrhys in the Rhondda valley (a pilgrimage destination dating back to the medieval period) and then on to the ancient cathedral city of St David's and then walking home via Talley Abbey. I also plan to walk from Lichfield to Lincoln and then to Beverley near Hull. As usual, I will then have the opportunity to give presentations about what I have done, as well as walking pilgrimage more generally, to a variety of groups over the coming autumn and winter. Thus, I would hope to draw in people to whom pilgrimage is not something which they would usually engage with.</p>
<p><i>St Francis of Assisi Catholic Ramblers Club holds weekend walks in the Home Counties: www.stfrancisramblers.ukwalkers.com</i></p>	
<p>Each walk is around 8 – 12 miles. Kent, Surrey, Bedfordshire and the Chilterns are some of the regular walks, as with Thames Path and Richmond. We have not badged activities as 'Pilgrims of Hope'.</p>	<p>We will say the St Francis of Assisi prayer in each walk, and we have made prayer cards for distribution during the walk. We are open for ideas!</p>

Pilgrimage organisations not represented at the Gathering
Catholic People's Weeks runs holidays that 'make a difference': www.catholicpeoplesweeks.org
CPW is a volunteer-led charity. The organisation's mission, and the mission of each event, is to revitalise the heart, mind and spirit of Catholic people today. From weekends to week-long holidays, we hope that you will find events that nourish your faith, ignite your intellect, inspire social action, challenge your understanding, invite creativity, and enrich you with friendships old and new. This year we are walking the Augustine Camino. We will be taking on the simple life of a pilgrim, visiting ancient churches, monasteries and shrines for blessings, prayers and masses. We hope to offer an authentic Camino experience, with an expert guide and baggage transfer for one backpack or small case per pilgrim. There is still one place available.
Hidden Catholic https://hiddencatholic.com/
Hidden Catholic provides immersive walking tours, pilgrimages, and custom experiences that connect you to the deep, often hidden, Catholic heritage of England:
John Bradburne Memorial Society supports Mutemwa Care Centre in Zimbabwe: www.johnbradburne.com
The JBMS was set up in honour of its late warden, John Bradburne who spent the last 10 years of his life from 1969 -1979 caring for the leprosy patients of Mutemwa. They promote his beatification. The JBMS will be running their annual pilgrimage in Cumbria on Saturday 13 June. Register by email. Further details will be shared closer to the time with those who register.
Latin Mass Society Walsingham Pilgrimage: www.lms.org.uk/walsingham-pilgrimage
The LMS organises an annual walking pilgrimage from Ely to Walsingham. This year the pilgrimage will take place over the August Bank Holiday weekend, starting on Thursday 27 August.
Men of St Joseph: www.menofstjoseph.com
The Men of St Joseph organise a walking pilgrimage to Walsingham from Stockport, Yorkshire and Cambridge annually in Holy Week.
Pax Christi Peace Pilgrimage: peacepilgrimage.org.uk/events/pilgrimage-to-sdsc-uk/
Pax Christi organises a one-day Peace Pilgrimage as a witness against the SDSC UK Arms Fair. This year it took place at the NEC in Birmingham on the 3-4 February.
Pilgrim Cross: www.pilgrimcross.org.uk
Pilgrim Cross is an inclusive Easter pilgrimage for all Christians. Whether joining virtually or walking for one, three or seven days our pilgrimage has options to suit all physical abilities, ages and levels of faith. We build community with those we walk alongside and the communities who host us on our way. This journey culminates on Good Friday where we join together, young and old, to celebrate the Easter weekend in Walsingham – an ancient site of pilgrimage. Whether you are looking to deepen your faith, find like-minded people or just taking some time to think, there's something for everyone.

How can we work better together to promote walking pilgrimage in England & Wales?

1. Ideas for how our organisations could work better together. For example, how could we share information, plans and promote each other's comms?

- Share information by sending news, stories and events to the Hearts in Search of God project lead to be posted on the [News, Stories and Events](#) webpage
- Encourage others to sign up for Hearts in Search of God project [updates](#)
- Bring people together at in person and online events
- Promote walking pilgrimage on Radio Maria, Catholic Events and social media
- Show the [Way of St Cuthbert](#) film in parishes, schools, university chaplaincies
- Contribute to events like [WeBelieve](#), the Civil Service Network, etc
- Consider the branding and marketing of walking pilgrimage
- Walking pilgrimage organisations could identify a person to link with the project

2. How could we promote walking pilgrimage in our dioceses? For example, would a volunteer diocesan walking pilgrimage promoter be useful, and if so, what might the role involve? NB There may be people who are already doing this role in dioceses

- Keep the bishop informed of walking pilgrimages in his diocese
- The promotor would need local knowledge of what's going on in their diocese and of the [practical resources](#) on the website
- Promote awareness of shrines in the diocese, there is a database of shrines [here](#)
- The role must take administrative burden away from clergy and not increase it
- The promotor could promote walking pilgrimage in parishes of the diocese and link with youth ministry, Catenians, environmental/Laudato Si leads, Justice & Peace, SVP, CAFOD, Caritas and many others
- Maintain a calendar of events in the diocese and link with the diocesan comms officer
- Promote age specific day pilgrimages to meet different needs
- Consider a model of pilgrimages as retreats
- Low-cost accommodation is a major problem in England & Wales, so the promotor could be aware of parishes which are prepared to allow their hall to be used overnight. It may be possible to secure grant funding to adapt church premises for pilgrimages. The British Pilgrimage Trust's [Sanctuary Network](#) provides one model, and the church run hostels in Italy and Spain are another.

3. How could the Hearts in Search of God project help? How might the project develop over the coming years?

- Compile a list of upcoming walking pilgrimages and create an events calendar on www.pilgrimways.org.uk
- Add details of organisations involved in walking pilgrimages in England & Wales to the '[Companions on the Road](#)' webpage
- Host short videos promoting pilgrimages on the project's [YouTube channel](#)
- Engage with social media more widely. There are Facebook and LinkedIn pages and Instagram was used during the Pilgrimage of Hope

- Promote the [walking pilgrimage basics](#) resources to make it easier for parishes to organise walking pilgrimages
- Hold an annual national walking pilgrimage

Walking for peace with St Francis of Assisi during 2026

1. Ideas for walking for peace with St Francis in our organisations and dioceses

- Find out what initiatives are planned for the Year in the diocese and link with them
- Organise a parish day walk or a visit to a church dedicated to St Francis of Assisi and involve a Franciscan community in the diocese. Details of churches and communities [here](#)
- Highlight links with care of creation and Laudato Si through parish visits to gardens, picnics in the country, etc
- Consider a diocesan peace walk inviting people of other churches and faiths. A 'Damietta Pilgrimage' commemorates the 1219 meeting between St. Francis of Assisi and Sultan Malik al-Kamil during the Fifth Crusade at Damietta in Egypt.
- Be aware of the Anglican Franciscan pilgrimage [On New Roads](#)
- The Marian Franciscans held a pilgrimage from Ramsgate to Canterbury in 2025
- Use the Franciscan tau cross on walks
- Consider a banner for churches and schools
- Pray the St Francis of Assisi [Rosary](#)
- Encourage schools dedicated to St Francis to undertake a short pilgrimage

2. Ideas for marking the feast day on Sunday October 4th

- Pray for peace in parishes and within parish groups with a suitable hymn
- A Mass for Peace to mark the feast day with a walk before or afterwards. This is planned on 3/10 in Nottingham and 4/10 in Clifton. The Diocese of East Anglia has no church dedicated to Francis, but a special Mass is planned for 3rd October
- Link to the [Season of Creation](#) (1/9 to 4/10) and use symbols of creation and animals
- Plant a tree to show we are all members of one family
- Promote with young people who find St Francis attractive and interesting
- Promote fundraising for people in conflict zones (NB use the opportunity to promote and support CAFOD's Harvest Family Fast Day which is on this date)