PILGRIMAGE LITURGY

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Pilgrimage Resources

I offer this outline as a resource for preparing a pilgrimage liturgy. I find that starting and finishing with some sort of liturgy is most important, but along the way I think flexibility is needed and depends on factors such as individuals, the group dynamics, the weather and the location. The use of walking in silence either to reflect on something suggested by the leader or just to look and notice is valuable and often unexpectedly appreciated by people.

The amount of biblical or other material I set out to use depends on my perception of the group and its needs. Often with groups from outside the church I keep the liturgy to a minimum and have a theme which I introduce and then pause at various points and ask questions around the theme. Hope it is useful.

Gathering

Who would true valour see, Let him come hither; One here will constant be, Come wind, come weather. There's no discouragement Shall make him once relent His first avowed intent To be a pilgrim.
(John Bunyan)

Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. *(Psalm 84)*

Why have pilgrims walked this path?

Follow, and together we will see.

Why have pilgrims worshipped here?
Follow, and together we will hear.

How do we follow the way of Christ today?

Follow, and together we will learn.

Setting out

Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits. These were his instructions: 'Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town.' *(St. Mark 6:8-9)*

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's household, then the Lord will be my God.' *(Genesis 28:20)*

Pilgrimage is one of the most ancient and widespread of all religious activities. Today we are invited to journey through the centuries, giving thanks for those who have gone before us, those who travel with us, and those who follow after us.

We will walk this way together

With Jesus Christ in our midst

We journey forward in faith

With the Holy Spirit as our companion and guide.

We walk in the footsteps of patriarchs and prophets

We tread this way with thanksgiving following their example of faith.

We walk in the footsteps of the apostles and the early church

We tread this way with joy following the call of Christ.

We walk in the footsteps of the saints across the centuries

We tread this way with grace in the knowledge that God goes with us.

Journeying through the good times

'Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.' *(St.Matthew 11:29-30)*

Silence

We give you praise God of our journeys

For the power of love, the discovery of friends, the truth of beauty

For the wonder of growth, the kindling of fidelity the taste of transformation

For the miracle of life, the gift of becoming

For the taste of the little dyings which have strengthened us for this moment

For the mystery of the journey, the bends in the road, the pauses that refresh

For the faith that lies deep enough to permeate discouragement and anxiety.

We give you praise God of our journeys

Journeying through the hard times

Psalm 124
A song of ascents. Of David.

1 If the Lord had not been on our side—
let Israel say—

2 if the Lord had not been on our side
when people attacked us,

3 they would have swallowed us alive
when their anger flared against us;

4 the flood would have engulfed us,
the torrent would have swept over us,

5 the raging waters
would have swept us away.

6 Praise be to the Lord,
who has not let us be torn by their teeth.

7 We have escaped like a bird
from the fowler's snare;
the snare has been broken,
and we have escaped.

8 Our help is in the name of the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

Silence

We give you praise God of our journeys, for you are with us in times of plenty and in want

You are with us in seasons of comfort and discomfort

You are with is in ease and hardship as well

You are present with us in darkness as you are in light.

So make us a pilgrim people whose hearts are free to face, with joy intact, any deprivation along this journey

Confident that even in losing all comforts we still have you.

Confident that in losing all things we have lost nothing of eternal value

For all our treasures are hid and guarded in you.

Expression of Faith

We believe in Jesus Christ
Who entered our unknown journey
And experienced all of our living
Who walked in our earthiness
And can still be discovered in our midst.

Journey's end - the heavenly destination

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:
such a way as gives breath;
such a truth as ends all strife;
such a life as conquers death.

Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength:
such a light as shows a feast;
such a feast as mends in length;
such a strength as makes his guest.

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:
such a joy as none can move;
such a love as none can part;
such a heart as joys in love.
(George Herbert)

And a highway will be there;
it will be called the Way of Holiness;
it will be for those who walk on that Way.

The unclean will not journey on it;
wicked fools will not go about on it.

9 No lion will be there,
nor any ravenous beast;
they will not be found there.

But only the redeemed will walk there,

10 and those the Lord has rescued will return.

They will enter Zion with singing;
everlasting joy will crown their heads.

Gladness and joy will overtake them,
and sorrow and sighing will flee away. *(Isaiah 35:8-10)*

Conclusion

We bring before God all we have experienced this day. For words spoken, for sights seen, for laughter shared, for feelings stirred, and as always his patience and love for us. We take a moment to give thanks and maybe one thing that we want to take with us from this day.

Blessing

May God, the Father, who created us, **continue to guide our footsteps**

May God, the Son, who redeemed us, **share our journey,**

May God, the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies us, **lead us on life's pilgrimage.**
And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit **be with us wherever we may go.**
Amen.

Duncan Weaver
has wide work experience of police service, Army chaplaincy in the UK and Germany, school teaching and pastorship, and leading outdoor pilgrimages with a wide range of age groups. He was originally ordained in the Church of England and enjoys using new resources and liturgies to help others encounter God in new ways. He recently moved to Cupar to be nearer his family and is now the Ecumenical Fife Pilgrim Pastor.