

Education and Pilgrimage at Christ Church Cathedral Oxford

Vision Document

1. SUMMARY

This paper details the finalised vision for Education and Pilgrimage work at Christ Church Cathedral. It includes a detailed proposed programme of school visits and a draft proposal of an equivalent offer of parish pilgrimage programmes.

A Vision for Education and Pilgrimage

As a department we would seek to emphasise four key points:

- The overall focus on **spiritual formation**
- The inclusion of both the **metaphor of pilgrimage**, and the **making of a pilgrimage** itself (a physical journey with a spiritual intention), as important areas of work in and of themselves, and in representing the spiritual journey on which we are seeking to accompany people
- The **Emmaus narrative** as emblematic of, and programmatic for, both spiritual formation and pilgrimage; it illustrates the transformation that can take place when travelling spiritually and physically from point A to point B in 'companionship' with Christ
- The concept of **companionship** is also closely allied to both Education and Pilgrimage.

Furthermore, we continue to use three words to reflect three aspects of values associated with this work, which also link closely with the story of St Frideswide:

Foundations relates to the Christ Church Foundation and the interface with those beyond the Cathedral. Whilst most outside of the Cathedral, College and School would not recognise the word Foundation related to the Cathedral, it does speak to a public interest in the historical foundations of the Monastery, Shrine, Cathedral, College, City, and University. It communicates that through Education and Pilgrimage you are being invited to build an ongoing relationship and engagement. It can also speak of a foundation of faith, Christ as a foundation, and indicate a solid sense of place, to which we are inviting others. Within educational settings there is much use of the word 'foundation' with regards to early years education and building blocks for learning throughout formal education.

In relating this to the story of St Frideswide – she built her life on the foundation of faith which, in turn gave rise to the foundation of a church on this site over 1000 years ago – and ultimately the foundation of the city, the university and the Cathedral of Oxford.

Formation relates to the Spiritual Formation which we hope all will experience. Whilst an educational offer should rightly involve 'in-formation' and the acquisition of knowledge, it is hoped that a special emphasis and accent will also be given to spiritual 'formation'; how might those who engage with Education and Pilgrimage at the Cathedral experience some sort of formational journey, such that they are shaped, formed and even transformed by the experience.

The story of Frideswide continues with the idea of formation as she forms a community. Later on when the Shrine was established in 1289, there was a formation of the cult of pilgrimage to this place and a continued focus on prayer

and healing, as begun by Frideswide herself, all of which form part of an opportunity for formation today.

Flourishing relates to the ongoing dynamic of growth and impact beyond the engagement with Education and Pilgrimage; flourishing is about proliferation and propagation. It asks how those who engage with Education and Pilgrimage at Christ Church might leave with an altered perspective and understanding – however hard to quantify – such that they might be termed to have experienced transformation and seek further engagement in the future. We'd also want to use this word in terms of expressing what we the Cathedral can offer both to the Diocese and the City.

All that was established by Frideswide on this site gives opportunity for those who encounter it to learn, grow and flourish.

2. CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

Outlined below is the programme which is proposed for the academic year 2026/7. Whilst it is indicative of the direction of travel, it is not set in stone and, wherever possible within reasonable parameters of capacity, we would seek to tailor visits as much as possible to the needs of the school. Similarly, the educational diet offered is subject to adaptation and innovation in response to take up of the offers, and in response to feedback from the schools and groups.

Putting the Christ in Christ Church (inc. key festivals) KS1, KS2, KS3

A look at the figure of Jesus and some key stories about Jesus' life. An overview of important aspects of Christian worship and how/why people use the church as part of their life of faith, i.e. a focus on baptism and/or eucharist.

This visit can also include a focus on a particular festival and an aspect of how Christians celebrate that festival: Remembrance, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Harvest.

Curricular links: RE, history.

To be a pilgrim KS1, KS2 **Pilgrimage workshops also available as an in-school visit and/or to explore your local area**

The importance of Frideswide as founder of the city, university and Cathedral.

Exploring the practice of pilgrimage in medieval times and today. Looking at the Cathedral as a place of pilgrimage and the concept of holy/spiritual places.

Considering intentions of pilgrims both in the past and in contemporary pilgrimage. Exploring 'story' as a lens to understand the meaning and purpose of pilgrimage – stories about self, other people's stories, stories of faith and the stories we tell after the physical journey.

Curricular links: history, local geography, RE.

Flourishing with Frideswide KS1, KS2, KS3

Looking at Frideswide's story, but with a particular focus on the establishing of a religious community on the site where Christ Church Cathedral currently stands.

Looking at the structure, values and principles of monasticism and using those to inform an ethos of Christian distinctiveness for schools, focusing on spiritual flourishing. Introducing, where appropriate, resources from BeSpace/Prayer Spaces in Schools and the Space Makers resource.

Curricular links: history, PSHE, RE, SIAMS framework for Church of England schools.

Pilgrimage Workshops Senior Leadership, Church Leaders and Ministry Teams
Come together as a group of schools with their local churches, to create your own local pilgrimage in your own context. Explore historical and contemporary meanings of pilgrimage here at the cathedral and beyond. Learn about different resources which can give structure and meaning to your pilgrimage, and begin to workshop together what your local pilgrimage could look like in your own context with guidance, support and help.

Restore Retreat Days KS2, KS3, KS4, KS5

Come to the Cathedral as a space to experience peace, reflect on the journey of life, and step out of the rush and hurry of everyday school. Following a programme based on Space Makers exercises, BeSpace/Prayer Spaces in Schools and Godly Play, pupils and staff will be led through a day of spiritual and restorative practices which can help schools develop their own spiritual diet back at school. The ethos of the day will be inclusive, invitational and inspirational, yet distinctively Christian as well, following the guidance of The Church of England's Education Office.

Art, music and architecture KS1, KS2, KS3

Using the richness of colour, pattern and design to explore Christ Church as a place of beauty and creativity. With workshops possible to design your own piece of artwork or undertake some musical activity with some of our Cathedral music team. Visits can also include the organ, arch building and other creative activities. Some reasons to explore art, music and architecture here include links with; Charles Wesley, St Cecilia, Burne Jones, stained glass and Medieval paintings. Curricular links: history, art, science, music.

1300 years in 3 hours! KS2, KS3, KS4

Explore the history of Oxford and Christ Church and how this Cathedral and college came to be. Looking at key moments in history, including the Reformation, Tudors, Victorians, Medieval Society and the Civil War. Use key images and artefacts to bring these periods of history to life and relate them to Christ Church.

Curricular links: history, architecture, geography.

Sacred Science KS1, KS2

Using both light and sound to explore a sacred space with a focus on science. Looking at the stained-glass windows and the way light is used in the building to explore light, colour and shadow. Using the musical resources of the Cathedral to consider how sound travels, different ways sound is made and variation of pitch and volume.

This visit can also include a focus on shapes, symmetry and geometry; forces through arch-building and a look at how the Cathedral was made and/or materials and the types of materials used in the building in different ways and for different purposes.

Curricular links: RE, science, maths, history, art.

The Bible's Big Story KS1, KS2, KS3

Looking at the importance of the Bible in the Christian faith and its use within Christian worship. Unpacking this book as a series of different text types and as a piece of literature. Exploring stories in the Cathedral through stained glass and other imagery.

Curricular links: RE, history, art, literacy

Saints, stars, stories and symbols KS1, KS2

A short visit to explore some key areas of the Cathedral, some objects, shapes and symbols which relate to Christian worship as well as saints and stories which are important within the Christian faith.

This can also be adapted as a short sensory trail for EYFS.

Curricular links: RE, history, art, maths, literacy.

Latin and language KS3, KS4

Looking at all aspects of language used within the Cathedral, with a particular focus on Latin and its unique use within the Cathedral post-Reformation – and its use as an academic language. Another element is to explore the links with poetry through Auden, Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin, Gerald Manley Hopkins as well as the author Lewis Carroll and the literary connection with Alice in Wonderland.

Curricular links: RE, history, English literature, English language.

Q&A with a Cleric KS3, KS4, KS5

Specific RE focus on: Philosophy and Ethics, the Reformation, Eucharistic traditions, Pilgrimage KS3, KS4, KS5

Specific history focus: Tudors, Victorians, Medieval Society, Civil War, Reformation, GCSE Site Study KS3, KS4, KS5

Plus: come and explore the Cathedral as a place of Travel and Tourism, art and architecture, a centre of excellence for music and much more! KS4, KS5

It is also proposed to create suitable visits for home education groups and other community group visits. All visits can also be tailored to suit groups with particular SEND needs and the Department will work to provide suitable resources to support with this alongside our regular programmes.

3. PARISH PILGRIMAGE PROGRAMMES

Outlined below is the programme which is proposed for the academic year 2026/7. Like the Education offer, it is indicative of the direction of travel, it is not set in stone and, wherever possible within reasonable parameters of capacity, we would seek to tailor visits as much as possible to the needs of the parish. Similarly, the educational diet offered is subject to adaptation and innovation in response to take up of the offers, and in response to feedback from the schools and groups.

Journeying with Jesus: exploring the metaphor of pilgrimage through the Emmaus narrative in Luke Chapter 24 and exploring how individual and corporate story meets with Jesus' story, thus combining to create a shared story which can be shared in mission and outreach in your particular context. A time of workshop and resourcing for individual journeying and corporate journeying.

Companions of Christ: Explore Ignatian spirituality as a 'Pilgrimage of the Soul'. Explore how to deepen your connection with Jesus using principles and practices from the 30-day Ignatian Retreat. An opportunity to explore a number of 'spiritual exercises' to help you get 'spiritually fit' to walk with Jesus on the way.

St Frideswide's Way: Pilgrimage walks along St Frideswide's Way, walking the last day's route into Oxford to end at the Shrine, guided by a pilgrimage leader. Six reflections will shape the day walking together with a final, seventh, of sharing at the Shrine; which may include time for prayer. Plus a week-long walk during the summer months which is a bookable experience for a small group.

Shorter pilgrimage walks: Shorter walks may also be available from other points across Oxford to conclude at the Shrine of St Frideswide.

A shorter walk just around the grounds of Christ Church Cathedral using the Vadstena pilgrimage principles is also an option.

Pilgrim places: Come for a regular visit using your 'Parishioner pass' and explore our designated spaces for making a pilgrimage around the building. Journey and experience Christ Church as a place of pilgrimage, ending at the Shrine and using ways to engage spiritually with the building as you journey. Consider combining this with coming to a regular act of worship, e.g. 1.05pm BCP Communion on a Wednesday, daily Evensong/Evening Prayer at 6.05pm or Pilgrim Prayers on Fridays at 12.30pm.

Parish pilgrimages: Come and visit Christ Church Cathedral as a parish group. Your visit includes a tour, prayers at the Shrine, a short talk/workshop from a selection of options (including children/youth workshops) and finishes with Evensong. You can also come for a longer day if you want to use your time here to explore your own pilgrimage of faith and how to move along the way in your own context, e.g. mission action planning.

Labyrinth: life's journey: Using the ancient practice of walking a labyrinth to explore the journey of life as a pilgrimage. Guided reflections and creative responses will be provided as part of this experience. This can be booked as a group but is also offered as a bookable session for up to 15 individuals.

Pilgrimage and music/poetry/art: Have a specialist tour of the Cathedral focusing on one of these areas and explore the journey it takes you on, both physically and spiritually. Then, with a creative lead from a practitioner, take part in a workshop to use your own creativity to capture the journey you have made, another physical journey you may have been on, or your experience of pilgrimage more as an inner journey. There are major connections between Christ Church and many significant musicians, poets and artists. Come and be inspired by their stories and works.

Stillness of stone: Time to spend silently in the Cathedral, after hours, to explore the beauty of the space and respond spiritually, if you choose. This can be a really good opportunity to see the Cathedral in a different light, without the busy nature of visiting tourists and may also help those for whom noise/sensory overload is a challenge. Make this an inner pilgrimage by stopping at our 'Pilgrim places' designated around the building for quiet reflection, e.g. candle lighting, prayer writing.

Flourishing with Frideswide

Looking at Frideswide's story, but with a particular focus on the establishing of a religious community on the site where Christ Church Cathedral currently stands. Looking at the structure, values and principles of monasticism and using those to inform structure, values and principles of parish, community or family life.

On the Way

Designed specifically for those churches which sit on the St Frideswide's Way between Oxford and Reading. To build relationships between individual churches and the Cathedral and as a whole group of pilgrim destinations. To consider the identity as a 'pilgrim place' on the route and explore opportunities and challenges around this.