

A How To Guide to *MOUNTAIN PILGRIMS*

Welcome

to this how to guide to setting up a Mountain Pilgrims group. Mountain Pilgrims was developed alongside the launch of the Lakeland Pilgrimage in 2016 which was designed by John Fleetwood, experienced ultra-fell runner, walker and mountaineer.



Based in Cumbria with access to the beauty of the Lake District, it seemed the obvious place to set up an outdoor Fresh Expression of church, something that would appeal to those who enjoy the outdoors where participants can experience an holistic approach to church that actively engages the body, as well as the mind and spirit.

In just over a year we have seen Mountain Pilgrims grow to include groups; of family inclusive Mini Pilgrims, mindful Reflective Pilgrims, walking and climbing enthusiast Active Pilgrims and Abbey, a more intentional Christian strand of Mountain Pilgrims. With interest in the development of groups further afield, and crossing into other areas of outdoor interest such as cycling, the potential for creating a meaningful and engaging Mountain Pilgrims group as a Fresh Expression could be a great option for many churches.

With this in mind this leaflet has been put together to explain a bit more about the ethos and intentions of Mountain Pilgrims. With advice on where to start, what groups there are, as well as access to ready to use tried and tested resources, and information about the Lakeland Pilgrimage.

MOUNTAIN PILGRIMS is an emerging community of people that seek to re-imagine the mountain experience. Mountain Pilgrims meet outdoors to discover the 'thin places' where the spirit soars and we are lifted out of the everyday. We invite those with different experience and fitness to join us as we journey together.

To be a Mountain Pilgrim means:



- To experience wild places together and see more than the view
- To be refreshed and resourced for life's ups and downs
- To be a community of fellow travellers eating and sharing stories together

Who are *MOUNTAIN PILGRIMS*?

Where to begin...

Listen to your local community: those who might join a Mountain Pilgrims group, helpers and volunteers. **Listening**, is not just about audible listening, it's also about what you see in your locality. For Mountain Pilgrims - do you see walkers around the locality? Are there other local outdoor groups/clubs? **Do some research** on the internet, social media, local noticeboards, in the library. Are there outdoor clothing shops? Do you live in an area of outstanding natural beauty? Is there a particular interest in your local area e.g. walking, running, cycling, climbing, wild swimming, boating, dog walking, children and families, adults, older generation etc. You don't need to be able to say you have all of these things going on, but some observed interest in the outdoors is essential in the success of starting up a Mountain Pilgrims group.

Also **find out about your local community**. Things that might be useful include: population, make up of population, things that make your locality different/special/unique. Is there a niche you could create for yourself? For example for Reflective Pilgrims we combine walking with a mindful reflection, but perhaps you could have a group that shares stories, eats cake, or have activities with a particular focus or interest e.g. photography, kite flying, family friendly, for single people.



Practicalities

Staying safe is important and making the necessary preparations before setting out will ensure that all potential hazards and dangers have been adequately assessed. It is important to risk assess the activity as this will help identify potential hazards so that you can put into place appropriate measures as required.

Mountain Pilgrims is not a formally constituted group and takes place in open public spaces. Whilst Mountain Pilgrims is by its very nature, not bound by lots of rules and regulations, we do feel that it's important to set out a few guidelines for safety. Make sure people are asked to dress appropriately for the time of year and wear suitable walking footwear. On our Facebook Page we have a disclaimer for participants which outlines their responsibilities for themselves and their dependents. Health and Safety issues will be something you as a group or church will have to decide, it may be you have procedures in place you can adapt or use. Whatever you decide, each group should take responsibility for its own safety policies and procedures.



If you are interested in setting up a Mountain Pilgrims group there are options for getting insured: You may be able to get insured through your church, or there is an option of getting insured with Ecclesiastical Insurance through the Diocese, please contact mountainpilgrims@gmail.com for more information.

Ways in which we can experience the divine in the wild places

1. Challenge/change of perspective

This could be described as awe or wonder – or something like a 'change of perspective' - what happens to us as we see the grandeur of mountain scenery? or the detail and diversity present in the small scale? OR: Me and my life, with its tendencies of behaviour and thought patterns, are no longer the centre of the universe. My eyes are lifted and I am reminded I'm connected to something bigger than me.

2. Space

In our busy world full of distractions, wild places offer space; the four walls are gone; the clamouring distractions are gone; I can breathe.

3. Metaphor

This is often our default method, using an activity to help experientially deliver what we think others should know. For example: on a stormy walk, we shelter behind a rock and find relief: God has been described as a shelter from the storms of life. What new spiritual insight do we have into the nature of God as we sit out this storm behind this physical shelter? I think metaphor has real value, as participants are invited into interpreting their experiences which can help bring the experience of the wild into the rest of life. But it comes with a warning that we can resort to shoe-horning our agenda into a context that either doesn't need/want it (yet) or was going to teach us something completely new.

Resources and links

We have produced a number of **FREE** resources which can be used by any group interested in running a Mountain Pilgrims group. These are available at www.godforall.org.uk/mountainpilgrims. Here is an example on the theme **Mortal**:

During the walk we went into the longer tunnel, the entrance to which is a sign saying Little Langdale Quarries. About half way along is a junction that is shut off and this is where we paused for our reflection. We took out our pieces of card. As they had been kept in our pockets the names had begun to rub out. We used this as a way of reflecting on our own mortality. Everyone was asked to put their card flat into the bottom of a kilner jar. A tea light was lit and put in the jar on top of the pile of card. We turned our torches off and left the candle for a moment before closing the lid of the jar, watching in silent reflection until the candle went out. Switching our torches back on we broke the chalk into small pieces and crushed a small piece beneath our feet 'from dust we came and to dust we will return.'



To find out more about the 275km Lakeland Pilgrimage route go to:

<http://lakelandpilgrimage.blogspot.co.uk>

For details.



We hope that this leaflet will get a conversation started and hopefully give some answers, but if you have more questions you can find us on Facebook, Twitter **@MtPilgrims** or you can email us directly at **mountainpilgrims@gmail.com**. If you would like to have a more in-depth chat about Mountain Pilgrims, or how to go about setting up a Fresh Expression of church, you can contact Richard Passmore the Fresh Expressions Enabler by emailing:

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