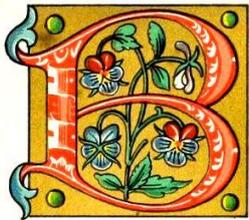


Pilgrim '25

BY FOOT FROM WANSTEAD TO CANTERBURY



THE PART OF THE JOURNEY.



Wanstead Parish
St Mary with Christ Church

Pilgrim '25



WEDS 2ND — TUES 8TH JULY 2025

For many centuries Canterbury has been a key destination for pilgrims young and old, rich and poor. Countless generations have trod the ancient path of the Pilgrims' Way, walking miles over the beautiful North Downs to reach the venerable and holy city of Canterbury, seeking spiritual refreshment, mental and physical challenge – and hoping to glimpse God on the way.

This year Fr James, Fr Charles and Fr David will be leading our own pilgrimage to Canterbury, walking there from Wanstead over the course of a week. Along the way we will be stopping to pray, rest, eat, sing and meet with others who we see along the route. We will also be reading excerpts of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (from where our mascot – 'the parson on horseback' is taken).

It is hoped that you might like to join us. Perhaps you fancy a serious challenge – maybe walking most, or even all, of the way. However, if the thought of that makes you weak at the knees, there are lots of other ways of joining in:

Join us for one or more days of walking

The following pages show the route of the pilgrimage and there are public transport options provided for each stage. If you would like to join us for a day or for an extended period, please be in contact so we can update you with accommodation options (it would be your responsibility to book and pay for any accommodation). Contact details can be found on this booklet's final page.

Join us for our Pilgrim Family Day

Saturday 5th July is a special day in our pilgrimage, with a shorter morning walk especially for children and families, plus a short service, a picnic lunch and fun games for everyone! We do hope you and your family would consider coming to join us on this day.

Join us for our Canterbury Eucharist

The final day of the pilgrimage in **Tuesday 8th July** and will culminate in Canterbury itself, where we will be holding a special service. We hope that

as many people as possible will join us for this, and maybe for a meal afterwards. You don't have to have walked there to join! Why not come and enjoy a day in Canterbury, and celebrate the end of the pilgrimage.

Sponsor us

In completing this pilgrimage, we will be raising money for our *Inspire Wanstead* fund – our plan to preserve Christ Church for future generations. We need to raise a total of roughly £300,000 if we are to be successful in obtaining external funding, and anything you can give will be extremely helpful.

Pray for us

We ask that you pray for all who are taking part in this pilgrimage. Pray for all those who would come on this pilgrimage if they could, but who are prevented by infirmity. Pray for all those seeking healing in body or mind. And pray for spiritual growth and renewal in our parish, for the future of our churches in Wanstead and for more people to walk through their lives knowing Christ.



Total pilgrimage distance: 74 miles. Total time walking: 28 ¼ hours.

Pilgrim '25: The Route

Day 1: Wednesday 2nd July

Wanstead to Sidcup

Distance: 15 miles

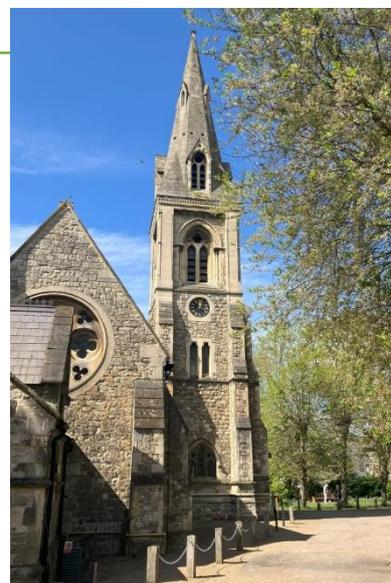
Time walking 5 ½ hours. Meet at 10am.

Start station: Wanstead Tube(!).

End station: Sidcup (SE trains to London Bridge, tube thereafter – total journey time 1 hour).

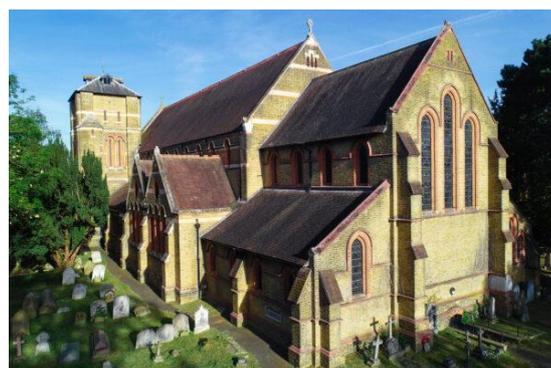


Our pilgrimage begins at **10am** on Wednesday 2nd July, from the tower of Christ Church. There will be a short service of prayer and we will sing the Pilgrim Hymn, before the church bells ring out to send us on our way – and we hope that as many people as possible will come to see us off!



The morning's walk will take us down Leytonstone High Road, through Stratford and Canning Town, over the River Lea and onto the Isle of Dogs, where we will walk through the Greenwich Foot Tunnel and rest at the Cutty Sark, where we will have our lunch.

After lunch, we will continue on our way, through Greenwich Park and the very attractive Blackheath, past the grounds of Eltham Palace and eventually on to a footpath that takes us along the side of the A20, ending up at the Church of St John the Evangelist, Sidcup.



Day 2: Thursday 3rd July

Sidcup to Meopham

Distance: 14 miles

Time walking: 5 ½ hours. **Meet at 10am.**

Start station: Sidcup (tube to London Bridge, SE trains from there to Sidcup – total journey time 1 hour).

End station: Meopham (SE trains to Victoria, tube thereafter – total journey time 1 hour 30 mins).



Starting at the Church of St John the Evangelist in Sidcup at **10am**, we will journey south-east out of the town, turning east at Swanley Park and travelling through countryside, stopping for prayer at St Paul's Church, Swanley Village.



Travelling east, we will take a country route which goes under the M25, stopping for lunch at Bridges Pub next to the majestic railway viaduct and the River Darent.

We will continue our journey in the afternoon further to the picturesque village of Meopham, where those who are continuing the pilgrimage will spend the night, staying in the beautifully modernised church of St John the Baptist.



Day 3: Friday 4th July

Meopham to Aylesford

Distance: 10 miles

Time walking: 3 ½ hours. Meet at 11am.

Start station: Meopham (tube to Victoria, SE trains to Meopham – total journey time 1 hour 30 mins).

End station: Aylesford (SE branch line train to Paddock Wood, mainline to London Bridge, tube thereafter – total journey time 2 hours).



After a leisurely breakfast at Meopham, we start walking at **11am**, heading south east across beautiful Downland scenery, arriving at Aylesford Priory where we will spend the rest of the day and those of us who are staying will spend the night.



It is at Aylesford that we finally join the ‘Pilgrims’ Way’ – the ancient route taken by pilgrims from King Henry II onwards. Aylesford Priory is a beautiful place of peace and worship. There will be a service of thanksgiving for the pilgrimage at 4pm, followed by a reading from the *Canterbury Tales*!

Day 4: Saturday 5th July: PILGRIM FAMILY DAY

Aylesford to Harrietsham

Distance: 11 miles (Family Walk: 6 miles).

Time walking: 2 hours (a.m.) 2 hours (p.m.). Meet at 10.30am.

Start station: Aylesford (tube to London Bridge, SE mainline to Paddock Wood, change for branch line to Aylesford – total journey time 2 hours).

End station: Harrietsham (SE branch line to Ashford International, mainline to Stratford International, tube thereafter – total journey time 1 hour 20 mins).



Commencing after breakfast for those who have stayed over, we hope all will join us for our PILGRIM FAMILY DAY which will start at Aylesford with a short service including the Pilgrim Hymn, at Aylesford Priory (service starting at **10.30am**) we start the FAMILY WALK – which is about 2 hours, just under six miles.

Bring a packed lunch with you to eat at St Martin's Church, Detling, followed by a short communion service and some games for children and adults in the churchyard.

Vehicles will be available to take people back to Aylesford, where parking is provided.



You are welcome to join us for the rest of the day's walk, another of similar length to the morning's, which leads us on the ancient path through the fields of the North Downs to Harrietsham.

Day 5: Sunday 6th July

Harrietsham to Boughton Lees

Distance: 11 miles

Time walking: 4 ½ hours. **Meet at 9.30am.**

Start station: Harrietsham (tube to Stratford International, mainline to Ashford International, SE branch line to Harrietsham – total journey time 1 hour 20 mins).

End station: Boughton Lees bus stop (bus to Ashford International, mainline to Stratford International, tube thereafter – total journey time 2 hours).

Travel tip: Save money by purchasing a day return from Stratford Int. to Ashford Int., and a single from Ashford to Harrietsham.



The day being Sunday, we aim to make a slightly earlier start than usual (**9.30am**) from Harrietsham, which will take us to Lenham Church in time to join with their congregation for a service of Holy Communion at 11am.



After the service, we continue the day's walk, on to the large village of Charing. Charing, which has many mediaeval buildings, will be our stop for Sunday lunch – a chance to recharge the batteries before heading on along the path where the Pilgrims' Way and the North Downs Way join, leading on through Eastwell Park to Boughton Lees.



Day 6: Monday 7th July

Boughton Lees to Chilham

Distance: 6 miles

Time walking: 2 ¼ hours. Meet at 10.30am.

Start station: Boughton Lees bus stop (tube to Stratford International, mainline to Ashford International, bus to Boughton Lees – total journey time 2 hours).

End station: Chilham (branch line to Ashford International, mainline to Stratford International, tube thereafter – total journey time 1 hour 20 mins).

Travel tip: Save money by purchasing a day return from Stratford Int. to Ashford Int., then a single from Chilham to Ashford.



Today's walk being shorter than previous days allows us time for a later start of **10.30am** and a short detour to the village of Godmersham and to Godmersham Park, where Jane Austen was a regular visitor (and which is depicted on the Jane Austen £10 note). Previously owned by Canterbury Cathedral, it is now a college – but there is a heritage centre open to the public.



We will spend our final night in picturesque Chilham, where there is a traditional castle and a modern pilgrim sculpture.

Day 7: Tuesday 8th July

Chilham to Canterbury

Distance: 7 miles

Time walking: 2 ½ hours. Meet at 10am.

Start station: Chilham (tube to Stratford International, mainline to Ashford International, branch line to Chilham – total journey time 1 hour 20 mins).

End station: Canterbury West (mainline to Stratford International, tube thereafter – total journey time 1 hour 20 mins).



The final walk of our pilgrimage will take place on the morning of Tuesday 8th July. We hope to set out at **10am**, and that we shall reach our final destination of Canterbury Cathedral at about **1pm**.

We hope that many people from our parish will be able to join us for some or all of this final walk, or to join us in Canterbury itself at 1pm.

Canterbury is an amazing city, full of history! A visit to the Cathedral is well-recommended, and all pilgrims are allowed to enter for free to receive a blessing and to receive the



holy water of pilgrimage. As we do so, we follow in the footsteps of thousands – perhaps millions – of people before us, coming to this holy place to find refreshment and spiritual renewal.

We hope to join with many Wanstead folk for a special Sung Eucharist at St Dunstan's – the Pilgrims' Church – in Canterbury city centre at 4pm, before going to a local restaurant for a final pilgrimage meal together with anyone who would like to join us. And then home, for a well-deserved bath and our own beds!

THANKSGIVING EUCHARIST: 4pm, St Dunstan's, Canterbury

Pilgrim '25:

Frequently-Asked Questions



Why walk to Canterbury?

Travelling to Canterbury on pilgrimage is something that people have done for many centuries, and part of our Christian faith involves connecting with the spiritual practices of our forefathers, trusting that they have something to teach the frenetic modern world about walking with God. Whilst the rich (like the parson on horseback – our mascot for this pilgrimage) may have preferred to use four-legged transport, most people would have walked the route.

King Henry II walked the pilgrimage barefoot in penitence for the killing of Thomas a Becket. Whilst we will be wearing shoes(!), walking is nonetheless a great physical and spiritual exercise, which is accessible to most people. It is sociable and allows for moments of quiet. And it pays tribute to the sacredness of journeys, recognising that we are all on a journey through our lives with God.



Do I need to be good at walking?

You do not have to be a seasoned hill climber to join us! The first two days of walking are the longest, and you will see from the schedule the approximate length of each day's walk. As the pilgrimage progresses, the walks become shorter and more attractive, but likewise, more rural and less involving a pavement. The North Downs are beautiful but in terms of how hilly the walks are, the clue is somewhat in the name (beware – there are ups as well as downs).

How will the accommodation be organised?

This varies according to the night in question. For the first two nights, we will be returning to Wanstead by public transport, then resuming the next day from where we left off the night before. After this, we hope to stay in a variety of places, including some ‘roughing it’ on church floors, and some B&B accommodation. A small amount of funding is available for those who cannot afford their own accommodation, but largely people would be expected to fund this themselves. We will stop for refreshments along the way – again this needs to largely be funded by those coming on the pilgrimage.

Will there be any back-up support?

Yes – we will have a back-up vehicle on each day of travel apart from the first (London) day. The vehicle is available to take the luggage of those who are staying overnight on to the next destination, and to pick anyone up in case of injuries, etc.

Is the pilgrimage suitable for children or young people?

We welcome all ages to join with us, although for safeguarding reasons anyone joining under the age of 18 needs to be accompanied by an appropriate adult. We particularly welcome young people and families on Saturday 5th July, where the walk is split in two to make it more family friendly.

How do I get involved?

Please look on the Parish website for more details about how you can indicate your interest in any part of Pilgrim 25. You can use the QR code at the bottom of the page to find out more about how to do this, alternatively go to:

<https://www.wansteadparish.org/765/Pilgrim-2025>

How might I sponsor a pilgrim?

We are raising money for *Inspire Wanstead* – our plan to revive Christ Church and preserve it for future generations. The task of raising funds for this project is large – we need to find at least £300,000 – so any funds you can give to sponsor pilgrims is very gratefully received! To do so, please follow the above link or use the QR code below.



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