

Christ Church Gabriola

2020 Summer Pilgrimage Retreats: *for Times Such as These*



1. Beginning (July)

2. Walking (August)

3. Coming Home (September)

Introduction

What is a Pilgrimage? A pilgrimage is an intentional journey into an experience of unknowing and discomfort for the sake of stripping away preconceived expectations. The Latin root of the word pilgrimage, *peregrini*, means “strange” or “stranger.” The journey to become a pilgrim means becoming a stranger in the service of transformation.¹

Prepare Space/Time

- *Carve out Time: decide on a 2-3 hour block of time, write it into your schedule and honor this commitment you have made to yourself.*
- *Prepare the Space: create a sacred space to begin your pilgrimage. What do you need on your journey? Bring this booklet as your guide . . . there may be other essentials, like a candle, journal, camera (needed for one of the exercises) or other objects that feel meaningful and necessary. Make sure there is room in this space for you to sit in stillness and write any reflections which arise.*
- *Turn off your phone and your computer and bring to the space the retreat materials and necessities.*

Suggested Schedule (Approx. 3 hours)

Adjust the times for your own needs (include all the pieces)

Opening Blessing (15)

Coming Home (60)

- *Home is*
- *Greet Your House*
- *The Eternal Home*
- *Come Home to Yourself*
- *Once I Returned*
- *My Final Question*

Midrash Explorations (30)

Homecoming Walk (60)

Reflection & Journaling (30)

Join Rev. Karen and others on September 24 at 10am on Zoom to share reflections on our personal retreat experiences.

Oikos or the English version “Eco,” means **home**, either a human home, a temple, or the home of the gods, and even the astrological “house” or domicile of a planet. A sacred word covering several profound areas of life, *oiko* embraces our emotional search for a home, the building and caretaking of churches and temples, and the astrological quest for the most fruitful arrangements of time and place. At the deepest level, ecology involves the spiritual practice of making a human home and, more mysteriously, finding a home for the soul.²

Opening Blessing

Sit with your eyes closed and feet on the floor. Take a few deep breaths and bring yourself into the present moment. Open yourself to the presence of the Holy Spirit and sit for several minutes, offering gratitude for this day, this time, and naming your intention for this time of retreat. When you are ready, you’re invited to pray these words.

How lovely is your dwelling place,
O Lord of hosts!
My soul longs, indeed it faints
for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy
to the living God.
Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O Lord of hosts,
my King and my God.
Happy are those who live in your house,
ever singing your praise.
No good thing does the Lord withhold
from those who walk uprightly.
O Lord of hosts,
happy is everyone who trusts in you.
~ **Psalm 84:1-4, 10-12 (NRSV)**

Coming Home

Home is the slumping drop of luggage on floors that bear the ghostly footprints of your motion. The light is a lambent thing that feels right on your shoulders, so that walking here after time away is a convergence of energies. Past, present and future allow you floating passage on the way to a collection of “now”s that beat in your chest, settle on you lightly, glitter in your eyes and lodge in your mind as reflection, introspection and awareness. The shadow of the one you were before you left occupies a space in the corner as you re-enter and engage fully in simple, effortless things you do every day with what you come to recognize as love.

~ Richard Wagamese, *Embers*

Greet your house every time you come home. This is the first homework assignment I give my clients at my private lessons. Just as you would greet your family or your pet, say, “Hello! I’m home,” to your house when you return. If you forget when you walk in the door, then later, when you remember, say, “Thank you for giving me shelter.” If you feel shy or embarrassed to say these things out loud, it is fine to say them silently in your mind. If you do this repeatedly, you will start to feel your house respond when you come home. You will sense its pleasure passing through like a gentle breeze.

~ Marie Kondo, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*

The Eternal Home To appreciate the enchantment that home can bring into a life, we have to shift attention from the literal house to the felt experience of home and realize that the sometimes bitter tenacious longing for home many feel may not be satisfied by an expensive house or a mere shelter. Memories, fantasies, and desires for home are subtle and set deep in the heart. The longing for home may ask us for the kind of attention that is much less literal than housing, or that can be satisfied only by aesthetic, emotional, and memorial aspects of a house, and not its convenience and good functioning.

Home is an emotional state, a place in the imagination where feelings of security, belonging, placement, family protection, memory, and personal history abide. Our dreams and fantasies of home may give us direction and calm our anxieties as we continually look for ways to satisfy our longings for home.

~ Thomas Moore, *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life*

To Come Home to Yourself

May all that is unforgiven in you
Be released.

May your fears yield
Their deepest tranquillities.

May all that is unlived in you
Blossom into a future
Graced with love.

~ John O'Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us*

Once I returned back home to the rhythm of ordinary life, I kept struggling to remember those moments of beauty, to feel their gravity in my bones. So much conspires to make me forget, so many thoughts want me to hold back. This is being a pilgrim: to stay committed to awakening each moment to the truth of life's generosity. I'm to give myself over to the immense love beating through me. I'm to allow it to spill over into everything I do and with everyone I meet. Every threshold in life is an invitation to this kind of rededication. As we cross over into something new, we pause, we commit ourselves anew.

~ Christine Valters Paintner, *The Soul of a Pilgrim*

My final question, "How will I know when I have reached the destination?" brings me full circle, and I face the Mystery again. Perhaps the truth is that we never arrive, not because the journey is too long and too difficult but because we have been there all along. I am coming to believe that there is no final destination except to continue to be on the journey and to know that every place along the way is a holy place because God is present. I believe that God is calling us to stand on our own ground and know that it is holy and let our roots grow deep. And yet at the same time, the journey goes on. It is a paradox, I know, but perhaps we are traveling most faithfully when we know ourselves to be most at home.

~ Judith E Smith, "This Ground Is Holy Ground," *Weavings Journal*

Questions for Reflection

- How are you being called home again?
- What is required of you as you "come home" or re-enter your home (house, body, emotional home, etc)?
- What does past, present and future look like in your home?
- What do you long for?

Midrash Explorations

Midrash is an ancient practice of the Jewish tradition. Pieces of Midrash are essentially stories *about* the stories of scripture. Rabbis wrote Midrash to help explain problems they encountered in the biblical texts such as inconsistencies or missing voices. Midrash fills out the stories into a more complete picture. These stories form an important part of the Jewish sacred literature. While the Jewish tradition of Midrash originated with the early Rabbis, in more recent years, the feminist movement has brought this practice alive again. Women started to search for the voices of women in the biblical narratives. And we are invited in this retreat to write some Midrash of our own . . . here's how to do it.

- Begin much in the way you would for a practice of lectio divina (see Pilgrimage 1). Center yourself with some deep breaths, move your attention inward, begin settling into stillness.
- Read the text through slowly. Imagine that you are experiencing the story right now; it's not some distant mythical account but a story meant to become alive for you.
- Enter the story with all of your senses engaged. What do you see, taste, smell, hear, and feel? Allow some time for each of these to reveal themselves.
- Let yourself enter into each of the characters in the story. Enter into their experience and their dialogue. What are their hopes and fears? What are their motivations? What wisdom do they have for you?
- Pay attention to the moment in the story which stirs the most curiosity or energy for you – it might be a place of resistance or a place in the story that feels difficult for you. Stay with that energy. Where do the questions emerge? What are the questions that arise for you from the text?
- Use your imagination to answer one or more of those questions. You aren't breaking any sacred rules by adding to the story or filling in gaps – as explained above, this is an ancient practice. The form of the writing (poetry, prose, etc) is up to you – simply let yourself enter the story and see what gifts are there for you to discover.³
- You're invited in this pilgrimage to write a piece of Midrash using the excerpt below from the book of Ruth.

Summary of Ruth 1:1-10 for context . . . Naomi moved with her family to the country of Moab; in time her husband died, leaving her and their 2 sons, who grew up and married women from this new land. When her two sons also died, her daughters-in-law aimed to go with Naomi back to the land of Judah.

Ruth 1:11-19 But Naomi said, ‘Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me.’ Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

So she said, ‘See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.’ But Ruth said,

‘Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!

Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.

Where you die, I will die—
there will I be buried.

May the Lord do thus and so to me,
and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!’

When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem.

Example of Midrash: Naomi finally relented and accepted that Ruth had made her choice, so they walked together in the familiarity of their relationship. When the end of each day came, they found a place to rest until dawn. Each night Naomi looked at Ruth and said, ‘you really should go home.’ Ruth would only chuckle and lean her head on Naomi’s shoulder, sighing, ‘I love you, too.’

~ Karen Hollis

Homecoming Walk

Go for a walk – the form of the walk is up to you – take pictures, bathe in the forest, make a mandala, or simply get outdoors.

If you can, start your walk from your front door (instead of driving somewhere). At the end of your walk, return and greet your home as you enter it; give thanks for your home, and tell your home of your summer of pilgrimage (maybe write it in your journal). Tell your home how you are the same and how you are different. Tell your home about any daily patterns you need to shift and the support you need to sustain these changes, or ways in which your inner journey needs to be expressed outwardly (maybe discuss this with those you live with, too!). And share with it your questions.

Perhaps you want to make the evening meal after your walk a ritual of blessing. Perhaps you bring out the nice dishes, set some flowers on the table and give thanks as you sit down to eat. Give thanks for your home and the life you live in it.

Reflection & Journaling

- What has this pilgrimage revealed about the purpose of your life right now?
- How have the questions you’re asking of your life changed as a result of this pilgrimage?
- How will you joyfully rededicate yourself to your own life?

A Blessing Called Sanctuary

You hardly knew
how hungry you were
to be gathered in,
to receive the welcome
that invited you to enter
entirely—
nothing of you
found foreign or strange,
nothing of your life
that you were asked
to leave behind
or to carry in silence
or in shame.
Tentative steps
became settling in,
leaning into the blessing
that enfolded you,
taking your place
in the circle
that stunned you
with its unimagined grace.
You began to breathe again,
to move without fear,
to speak with abandon
the words you carried
in your bones,
that echoed in your being.
You learned to sing.
But the deal with this blessing
is that it will not leave you alone,
will not let you linger
in safety,
in stasis.
The time will come
when this blessing
will ask you to leave,

not because it has tired of you
but because it desires for you
to become the sanctuary
that you have found—
to speak your word
into the world,
to tell what you have heard
with your own ears,
seen with your own eyes,
known in your own heart:
that you are beloved,
precious child of God,
beautiful to behold,
and you are welcome
and more than welcome
here.

~ Jan Richardson, *Circle of Grace*

¹ Valters Paintner, Christine. *The Soul of a Pilgrim* (Notre Dame: Sorin Books, 2015) p. 1-2.

² Moore, Thomas. *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life* (New York: HarperPerennial 1997), p. 41-42.

³ Valters Paintner, Christine. *The Soul of a Pilgrim* (Notre Dame: Sorin Books, 2015) p. 24-27.