

THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

PILGRIM

Places,

HOLY

Lives

A GOSPEL

JOURNEY WITH

THE ENGLISH

SAINTS



FREE SAMPLER

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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This sampler only contains a small selection of the 24 reflections included in the full 64-page booklet.

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Introduction

Each of us has our own story, but we are also part of bigger stories.

The greatest story ever told is that of God becoming human in Jesus to offer us a transforming relationship with him. In this devotional booklet, we will see how this amazing story took root in Anglo-Saxon England, and how those who responded to it became signposts to God. They not only changed the world around them but can still challenge, inspire, and encourage us today.

This booklet is designed to help individuals pray and reflect on the ancient practice of pilgrimage, inviting them on a spiritual journey with the early English saints. Through Bible readings, reflections, questions and prayers, this booklet invites us to reflect what it means to live as pilgrims on a purposeful journey through life.

Over the course of twenty-four days, each week focuses on two saints who helped to welcome the Gospel, dedicated their lives to God, and shared the Gospel with others. The saints are not merely a set of remarkable people from the past but fellow travellers on our pilgrim journey who continue to shape our identity, our worship, and our witness to the world.

May this journey with the saints strengthen our faith, deepen our understanding, and inspire us to play our part in the great Gospel story with renewed conviction and joy.

Archbishops Sarah Mullally & Stephen Cottrell

Week 1

Welcoming the Gospel

This week, we explore how the Gospel took root in Anglo-Saxon England through the lives of **St Bertha of Kent** and the **Venerable Bede**.

Bede's writings preserve the story of England's Christian beginnings and remind us that the Church is always on pilgrimage, helping us to see God at work in every encounter with the Gospel, in every community, and every pilgrim journey.

We then turn to the story of St Bertha, who stands at the beginning of English Christianity. Bertha helped rebuild Christian life in Kent, welcomed the first Christian mission, and planted seeds of faith that transformed whole kingdoms. Together, their stories invite us to rediscover what it means to rebuild, to welcome others, and to see our lives as a great journey towards God.

A seated scribe (believed to be Bede) writing.
British Library Archive/Bridgeman Images.



Day 4

REBUILDING



READ Isaiah 58.11-12

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

The story of Christianity became the story of Anglo-Saxon England with the arrival of St Bertha in 580.

St Bertha arrived in Kent as the bride of King Æthelberht – a young Christian princess from a foreign land. Christianity had first been brought to Britain by the Romans, but centuries of upheaval left its buildings ruined and its practices forgotten. Into this landscape of new customs and half-remembered faith, God led Bertha – not as a conqueror or a public reformer, but as a woman of prayer whose faithfulness prepared the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Kent to welcome the Gospel.

Bertha's marriage was on the condition that she would be allowed to practice her religion. King Æthelberht granted her the old Roman church of St Martin on the edge of Canterbury. It was worn, neglected, and in need of care. Yet Bertha, with her chaplain Liudhard, restored and prayed in it daily. Long before St Augustine arrived to preach the faith in England, she was already rebuilding, making space for God's presence to be known again.

Her story echoes Isaiah's promise: God guides his people so that they may restore what has been broken. Bertha's example reminds us that rebuilding begins in small, hidden acts of faith: tending a place of prayer, renewing a neglected practice, choosing hope where others see ruins.

What 'ruined' or neglected place is God asking you to reclaim for prayer today?

God of restoration, guide us as you guided Bertha. Help us to repair what is broken, renew what has been neglected, and trust that even small acts of faith can become the beginning of new life. Amen.



Day 1

Being Sent

READ John 15.5-6

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit.'

While visiting Holy Island in Northumbria a few years ago, it dawned on me that what for us, today, is a place of arrival, a holy place we come to on pilgrimage, was, for those who established it, a place of departure. The monastery that Aidan founded there in 635 was a place where people were formed in the Christian faith in order to be sent out to live and share that faith with others.

One of these people was Cedd. He was born around 620. He became a monk on Lindisfarne along with his brothers. In the year 653, he sailed down the east coast of England and landed in Essex at a place now called Bradwell-on-Sea – also a beautiful place of pilgrimage – and established a monastery there. Cedd was part of a missionary movement that spread from Northumbria to Essex and then, Cedd's final resting place, up to

Yorkshire, where he established another monastery in Lastingham, where others were formed in the Christian faith and then sent out.

Cedd teaches us that every Christian church should be a school for disciples, a place where people learn the way of Jesus together and are then sent out to share his love with others. And though we treasure the physical buildings of our churches, the boundaries of this mission, which began with Jesus calling those first fishermen, run through human hearts and are led by the Spirit. When we visit the sacred places associated with these Anglo-Saxon saints, we should arrive in the same spirit as those who came to Jesus: ready to be sent out.

Where might God be calling you that requires you to step out in faith? What are you being asked to leave behind?

Loving God, I thank you for those who have taught me the way of Christ. Deepen my commitment to worship and prayer so that when I read the scriptures, I can hear your voice speaking to me, know your love for me and even be able to share that love with others. Amen.

Travel through places made holy by faithful lives and uncover fresh light for your journey with God



Pilgrim Places, Holy Lives invites you to explore eight places which were important in the spread of Christianity in England, and the stories of the saints who lived there, through 24 days of Bible readings, reflections, questions and prayers on the ancient practice of pilgrimage.

- Full 64pp available now individually/Pack of 10.
- Free supporting digital resources for individuals, churches and groups.
- The *Everyday Faith* app will also feature the reflections between 25 May and 20 June.

THE CONTRIBUTORS

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Find out more and
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