



Bigger and Wilder
Life, loss and learning to be a pilgrim
By Jill Baker

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Interest in the idea of pilgrimage, people taking a devotional journey often to a special place of significance, seems to be increasing lately, at least in the media. More than one TV series has fairly recently featured well known people walking the Camino de Santiago or journeying to Lourdes. Traditionally, pilgrimages may often have some particular religious or spiritual motivation, although they may just as well be about searching solely for a new or expanded meaning about oneself, others or nature, for example.

This relatively short, accessible book offers a reflective and practical introduction for exploring the meaning, significance and practice of undertaking, and also of potentially leading, pilgrimages. In many ways this is also a very personal book.

Following a tragic family bereavement, the author, who is a Methodist lay woman, found herself led in her grief to explore for herself the ancient spiritual practice of pilgrimage. This she found to be a lifeline, in the process discovering God to be bigger and wilder through her pilgrim experience than she had previously known, hence the title.

Following a brief survey of the origins, history and biblical roots of pilgrimage, she reflects expressively on pilgrimage as a metaphor and guide for travelling well on life's journey, not least in the experience of grief on which there is a strong personal chapter.

Recognising the pilgrim life as much more than a physical journey, her thoughtful and practical reflections are grounded in her lived experience over a decade, including latterly as a pilgrimage leader. Much of her lived experience that she describes comes from walking the Northumberland pilgrim journey to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne.

A chapter on Methodism and pilgrimage, including suggestions for doing pilgrimage in a Methodist way, may not resonate quite so readily with a non-Methodist readership but is interesting nonetheless. Overall this thoughtful, readable and practical book provides in 157 pages a useful introduction for exploring the spirit, wisdom and practice of pilgrimage for anyone curious about, or considering undertaking, or even leading a pilgrimage

Review by Peter Wright (Reader)