



Pilgrim Paths

Chipping Norton Deanery

Charlbury Circular Walk

5 Miles

A pilgrimage is a spiritual journey to a sacred place

This leaflet offers Bible passages and reflections to accompany your journey, with suggestions of places to pause. Please allow much more time than you would usually spend on a walk to be able to pause and take in the suggested ideas and activities.

The circular walk includes a short stretch of road-walking, some rough ground and a gentle hill.

St. Mary The Virgin, Charlbury

Preparing : Inside the Church

Parts of the present building date from the 12th century, though a Saxon church may have existed here. Notice the rounded 12th century arches and the more pointed ones from the 13th. If you look up, you will see some carved stone heads, said to represent the Abbot of Eynsham, a wool merchant and other citizens.



A Prayer For Beginning

**Gracious God, help us to be mindful of your presence today.
Guide us through its events and encounters and bless our words
and actions.
Give us the grace to begin, engage with and end this day
In your love and truthfulness. Amen**

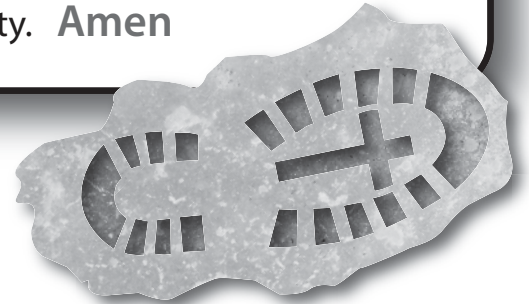
Reading

‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.’
Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’
Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’ (John 14:1-6)

Silence

The Almighty and everlasting God, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, dispose your journey according to His good pleasure; send his angel Raphael to keep you in this your pilgrimage, and both conduct you in peace on your way to the place where you would be, and bring you back again on your return to us in safety. **Amen**

(Sarum Missal)



Leaving: At The Church Door

Stand at the church door, ready to begin your pilgrimage.

The Porch was built in the 15th century and was restored in 1903 by the Rev'd A.C.Smith, vicar from 1898 to 1903.

Over the inner door there is the 13th century trefoil-headed archway. Glass doors were added in 2011.



Prayer

Lord God, just as you created Adam and Eve
By your life-giving breath, fill me again with your Spirit.
Help me to feel alive to the world and to you,
Rejoicing in my place in your creation,
Ready to explore it further. Amen



Beginning Your Journey



For a journey of any sort to change us, we must be willing to change and to be changed. Sometimes this process is refreshingly simple, at other times we may find pain and difficulty in growth and development.

Find a stone from nearby and examine it carefully. Bits of the stone are very smooth to the touch, other parts are jagged and rough. So in our lives there will be parts that are going well and smoothly, and others which cause us pain and distress.

We are the same in our dealings with other people – we can be kind and caring at times but in other company we can seem harsh and cruel.



As you begin your journey hold the stone in your hands, and continue holding it for at least part of your pilgrimage. Remember God's loving kindness to all people, and as the stone gradually becomes warmer, pray that God will melt the cold hard places in your heart



The Journey: The River Evenlode

With the church door at your back, follow the path to your right and continue along Church Lane. At the end of the lane, turn right up Dyers Hill, turning left into Thames Street at the top. Continue straight on downhill, passing the cemetery on your right.

At the bottom of the hill is a small parking area by a branch of the River Evenlode. This river is a tributary of the Thames, rising near Moreton-in-Marsh, and flowing through the Cotswolds to join the Thames just above King's Lock, a few miles north-west of Oxford.



Pause Here

Pause to look at the river; notice the different ways that the water runs, as it bubbles and churns over the obstacles in its way or settles briefly into still pools or swirls in eddies, before continuing smooth and clear on its way downstream towards the Thames.

Psalm 42

- 1 As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.
- 2 My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and behold
the face of God?
- 3 My tears have been my food
day and night,

Recognise

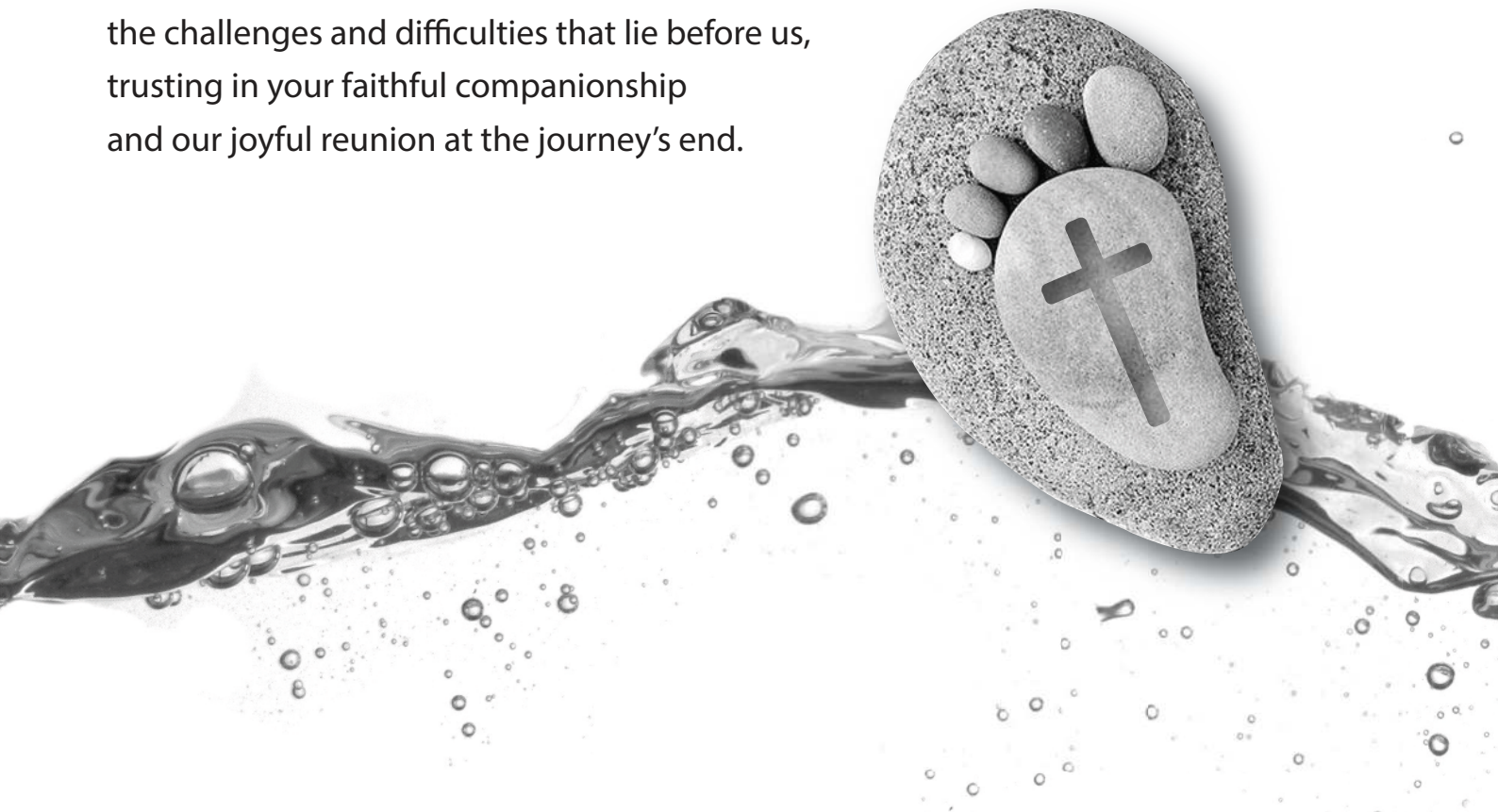
... any longing in
your heart for life to be more satisfying.



while people say to me continually,
 ‘Where is your God?’

Prayer

Jesus, our Living Water,
 Help us to drink deeply from your life –giving spring
 so that we may face with confidence
 the challenges and difficulties that lie before us,
 trusting in your faithful companionship
 and our joyful reunion at the journey’s end.



Jesus said, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” (John 4:13-14)

Oxfordshire Way

Find the footpath marked 'Oxfordshire Way', through a kissing gate near the road and, keeping parallel to the left-hand field line, go through three fields.

Follow the footpath sign over the lane (Water Lane), and continue through another four fields, this time keeping close to the right-hand hedge line.

As you leave the fourth field you will cross a small footbridge.



Pause Here

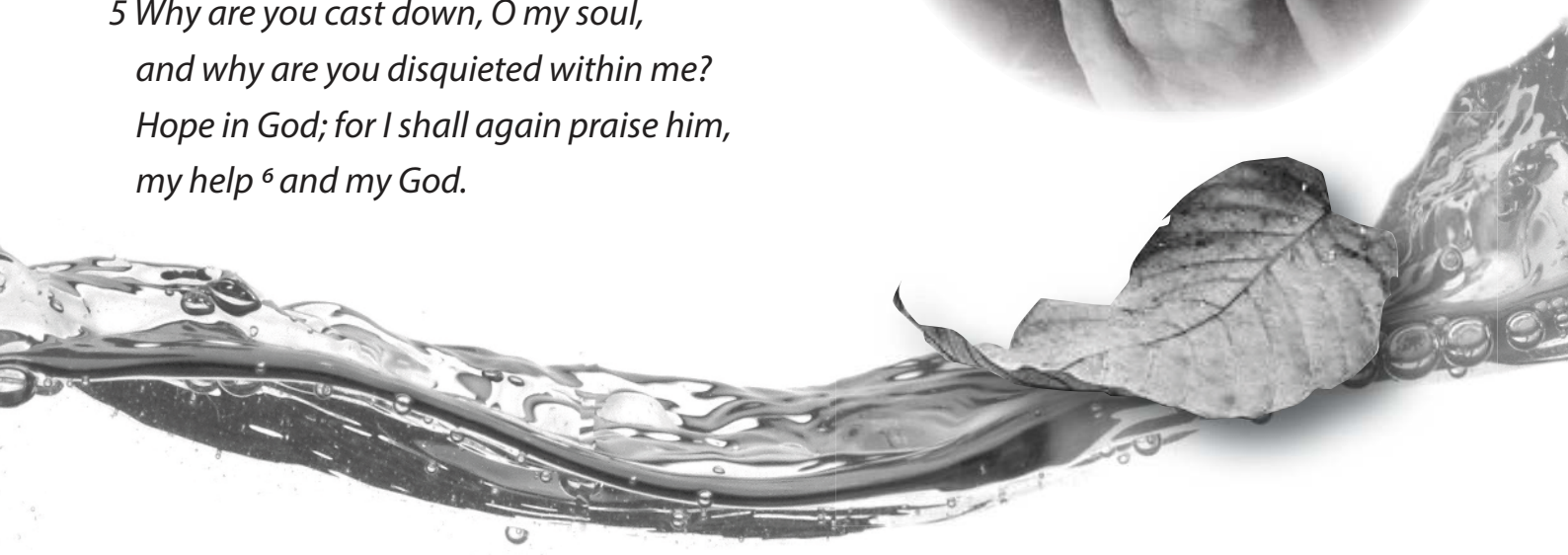
Psalm 42

This detail by Domenico Beccafumi (1530) is a powerful illustration of disquiet.



*4 These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,
and led them in procession to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.*

*5 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help ⁶ and my God.*



As you continue to walk, you may wish to use the time to gather up in your thoughts all the people and situations that you carry that feel burdensome.

You could pick up a dried leaf, a thorn, a sharp stone to represent these and carry them with you on your journey to Shorthampton church.

The Journey: Continues

The footpath then takes a diagonal route to a gate at the far right-hand corner of the field where a gate leads to a track.

Turn right on this track and walk uphill, with a small woodland (Dene Grove) to your right.

Go through a wooden gate at the top of the field, and continue on the track to where it crosses a bridleway.



Pause Here

to look across the fields to the distant tower of Spelsbury church.

Psalm 42

*My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.*

*7 Deep calls to deep
at the thunder of your cataracts;
all your waves and your billows
have gone over me.*

*8 By day the LORD commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.*



At times God can feel far out of reach. But when the psalmist is discouraged, he not only listens to his troubled heart, but also speaks to his soul, bringing to mind the times he has known God's goodness and power.



Turn Left

Turning left on this bridleway, go through the Wychwood Project field, emerging from the woodland at the far end into a field with a hedge on your right.

Walk up to a broad grassy ride to the right of another wood, and continue down the bridleway, keeping the hedge on your right, until you reach a wooden equestrian gate.



Pause Here

Psalm 42

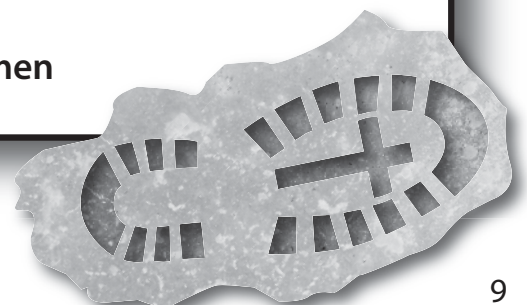
9 *I say to God, my rock,
'Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because the enemy oppresses me?'*

10 *As with a deadly wound in my body,
my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me continually,
'Where is your God?'*

Prayer

Lord, I praise you that you are a God who can be known.
Strengthen my weak heart,
And calm my fearful heart.

Amen



Stay on the bridleway

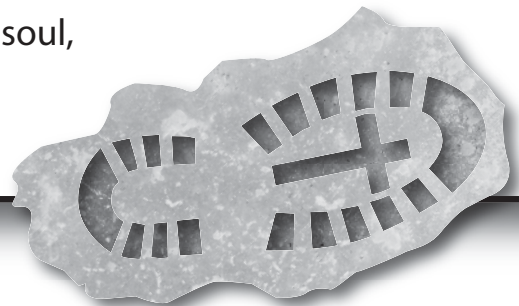
Stay on the bridleway, now with the hedge on your left, until you reach Catsham Lane (Chadlington to Leaffield Road), where you leave the Oxfordshire Way.

Turning left on Catsham Lane, cross two bridges spanning the Evenlode and the railway, just after which a footpath to the right leads diagonally across a ridge-and-furrow field to a metal gate from where you will see Shorthampton church ahead.

Prayer

Lord, teach me to speak to my anxious soul,
"Put your hope in God!"

Amen



Psalms 42

*11 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God*

Turn Left

Go through a final field, keeping the wall to your left, and turn left up the lane to the tiny church of All Saints.





Pause at the door before entering

It may be that you have arrived here with some 'burdens' and 'jangling' thoughts.

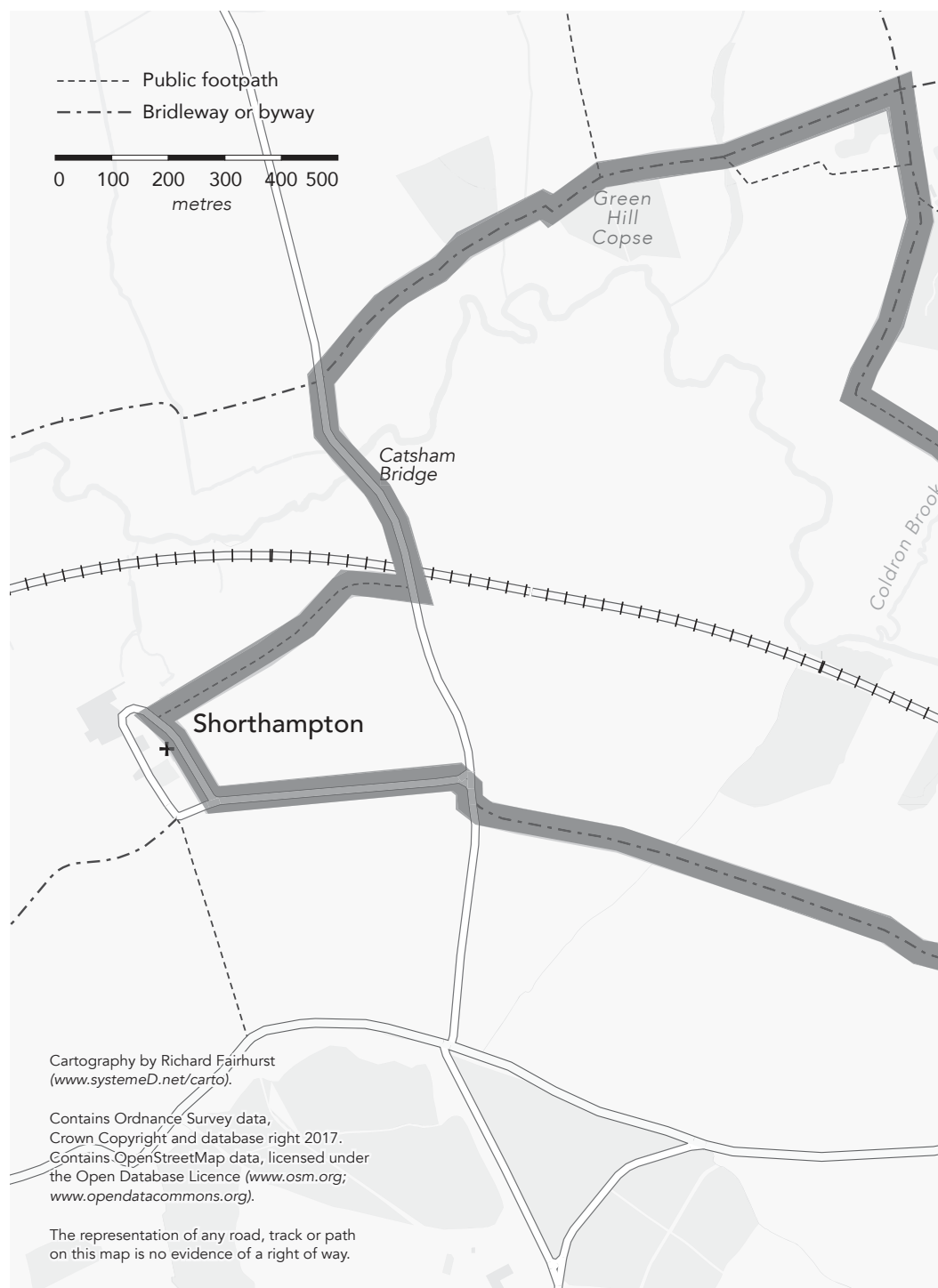
Perhaps, like the psalmist, you can remember previous happier and more innocent times?

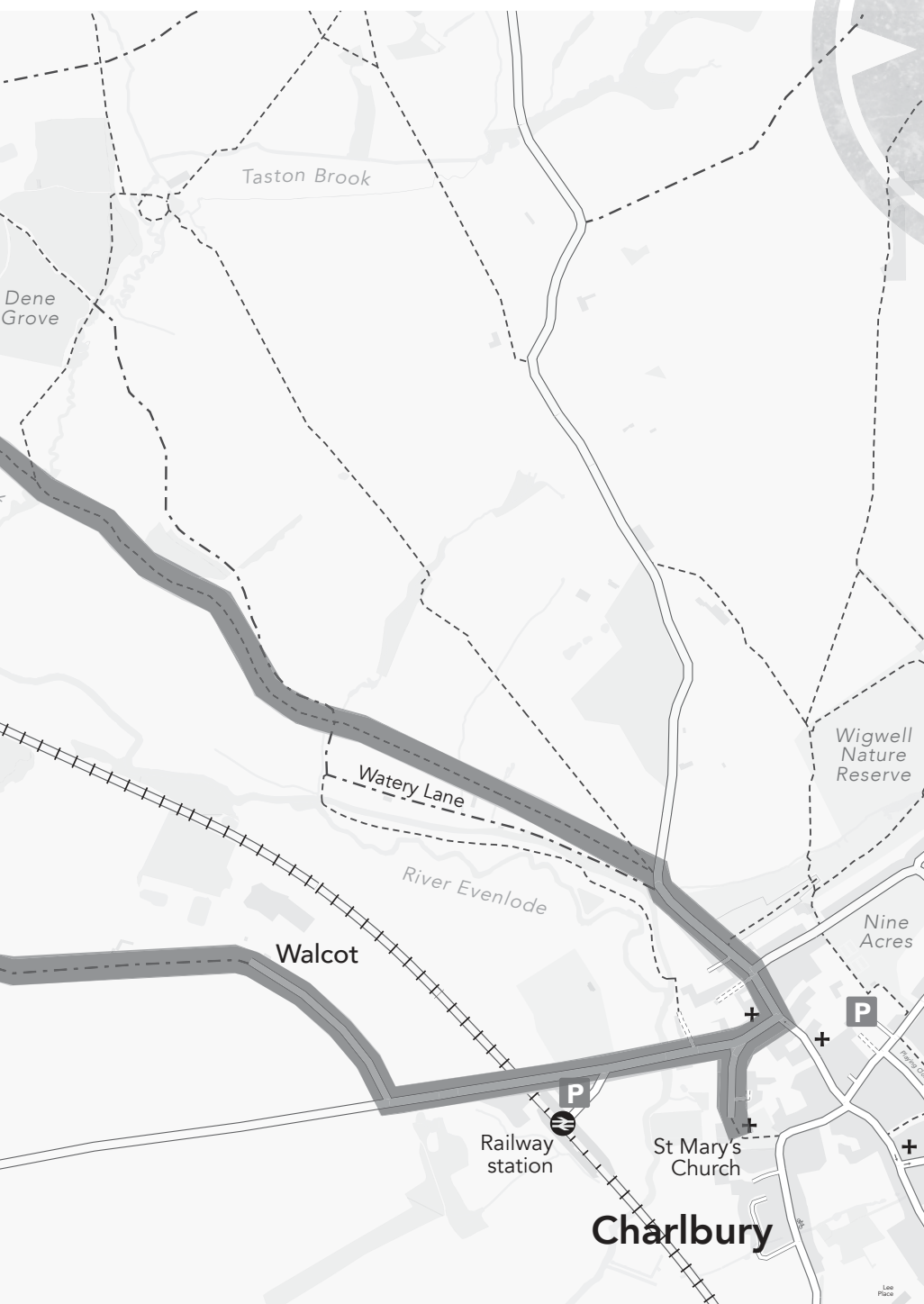
As you enter the church, remember that many of the psalms are full of lament; and so we are reassured that we can come to God with our questions and our troubles.



You may not resolve these issues now, but let the peace of this place give you a place to acknowledge them..

Pilgrim Paths





Inside The Church



Take some time to admire the beauty and simplicity of this place of worship. The oldest parts are Norman, with the tiny chancel being added in the 13th century. Box pews were installed in the 18th century, but it is the medieval wall paintings which most attract the eye, including the enchanting 'miracle of the clay birds'.

Decision Time: The Path Divided

Leaving the churchyard, go on up the lane, bearing left at the signpost.



Pause here and Turn around

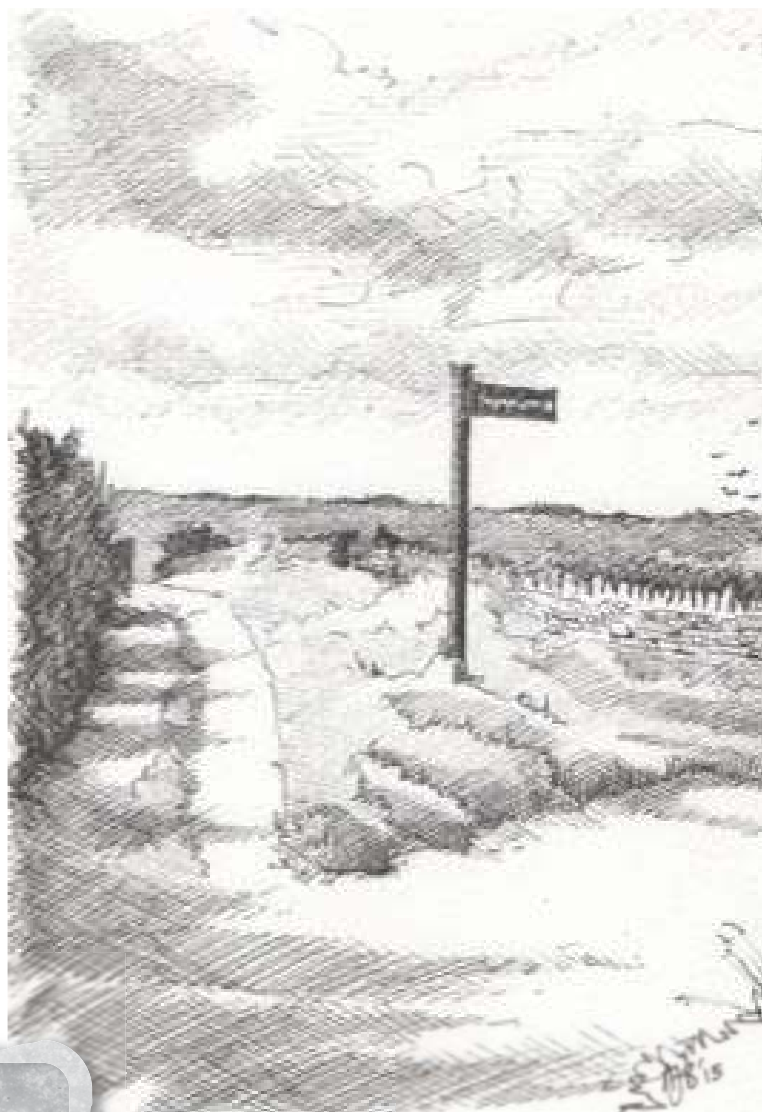
Then Mary Said

"Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

(Luke 1:38)

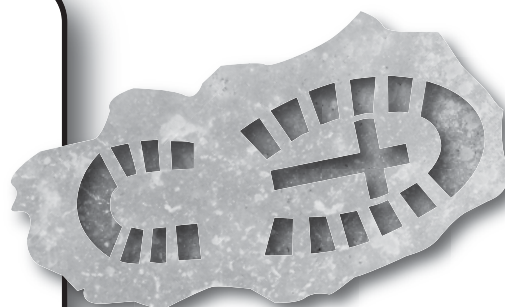
In Medieval art, Mary is shown as sitting very still as the angel shares the news of Christ's birth with her, and part of this wonderful story is about obedience. But this is not the whole picture. Mary travels to see Elizabeth and sings a song whose radical nature is matched only by the Sermon on the Mount. In it she looks forward to a new order, and it is in this spirit that she engages with the life of her son, even to the very end. Our decision to follow Christ should not be that of a passive obedience, but, like Mary, should impel us to go out into the world and work to realise God's will and the coming of his kingdom.

As you stand where the road divides, reflect on the choices that you have made which have brought you to this point. Ask God for the grace to travel faithfully along the path he has set before you, wherever it leads.



Prayer

Challenging God,
Who called Mary to play her part
In your transforming work.
Give us obedience to your word
And the energy and passion to fulfil
Our potential as your children. **Amen**



Creation: The Fields

Rejoin

Rejoin Catsham Lane, where you turn right up the hill and then left on a bridleway across open fields.

At the bottom of the valley is the River Evenlode, with the villages of Chadlington and Spelsbury in the distance. Above you, on the hilltop, lies the start of the Anglo-Saxon Wychwood Forest.



Pause to take in the view



This is a truly lovely view, in every weather, through every season.

The work of human beings and of God is seen laid out before us in the shape of crops and trees, villages and rivers, with the occasional train reminding us of the world beyond.

Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.' And it was so.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.
And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.
(Genesis 1:29-31)

Soil

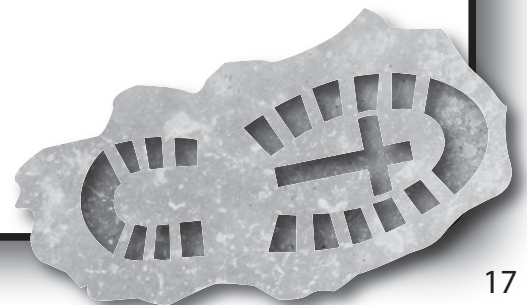
Take some soil from the field near to you and hold it in your hand. Examine it closely – see how it is made up of many different things; tiny stones, mud, plant-based material. Wonder at the potential for growth and nurture contained within this small handful of earth and then look around you to see this potential multiplied again and again. Remember that we have been created stewards of this earth, to care for it and to share its resources with others, and pray for the grace to play our proper part within God's creation.



Prayer

Lord God who has taught us only to ask and it will be given to us,
we give you thanks for the beauties of your creation,
and the love from which it sprang.
We pray for nations and countries,
that seedtime and harvest may endure
until the coming of your kingdom on earth
and the revelation of your true glory.

Amen



Rest

: The Bench

Follow the clearly marked path down and up a fairly steep hill. Just before the tumble-down barns, you will find a bench to the left of the path, with views out across the fields and woodlands.



Pause Here



YHWH

The Hebrew word for God is YHWH. It has no vowels; it is but a breath, the merest expiration, no more than a sigh. But it is the breath that gives us life that sustains us, without which we would perish. From that first breath of God over the chaos of the universe when the spirit of God 'swept over the face of the waters' we have been sustained and supported by the breath of creation, of love, the sighing of YHWH who murmurs "I am" into our troubled turbulent lives, breathing peace and calm, reminding us of his presence, his love.

*God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM";
and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel,
'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14)*

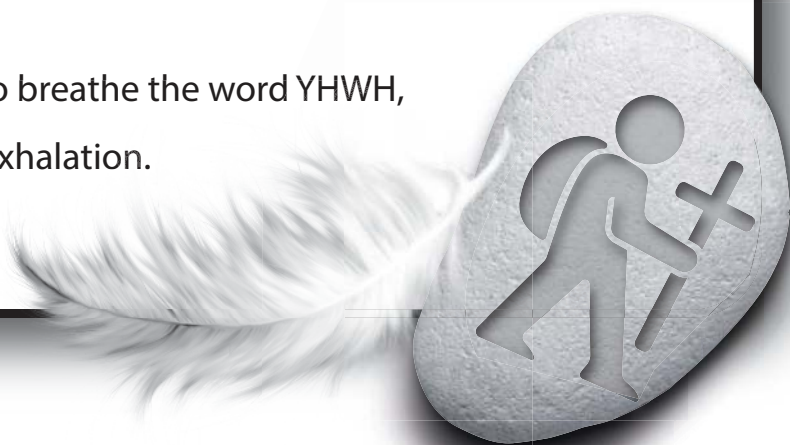
Take some time simply to rest in God's presence. Let your breath become your prayer, your answering call to the reassurance and love of the breath of God as it fills your whole body; 'this is my name forever, and this is my title for all generations' (Genesis 3:15).

Prayer

Focus your attention on your breath, feeling it enter and leave your body, filling your body with life. Concentrate on the breath as it moves in and out. If your mind wanders, do not become anxious or concerned, simply take notice and return to the breath, in and out.

On your out breath you might like to breathe the word YHWH, allowing it to become part of your exhalation.

Amen



'I am a feather on the breath of God' (Hildegard of Bingen)

Resume your journey



As you resume your journey, you might like to do so in silence, respecting the peaceful surroundings and allowing yourself the space to become absorbed by your environment.

Walcot

Our Community

Join the lane through the settlement of Walcot



Pause just past the cottages and look at the town of Charlbury as it is spread out before you – notice the variety of buildings that come together to make it the place that it is.



Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (Acts 2:43-47)

As Christians we believe that we can only truly flourish as part of a community. We rejoice in diversity and are constantly alert to the dangerous signs of exclusiveness and complacency with respect to our hospitality and welcome.

Pick a stalk of grass and break it between your fingers. See how easily it can be snapped in two. Now twist several stalks together to form a grass cord. This cannot be so easily broken, and a significant amount of strain can be put upon it. So too do we gain strength from our church and town communities, offering our own support in return.

Prayer

Lord God,
You know that we were not meant to live alone
But to share the joys and struggles of life with others.
Help us to work together for your purposes and
To build up each other in love.

Amen

Continue along this lane which leads to the B4437
(Charlbury to Shipton Road).



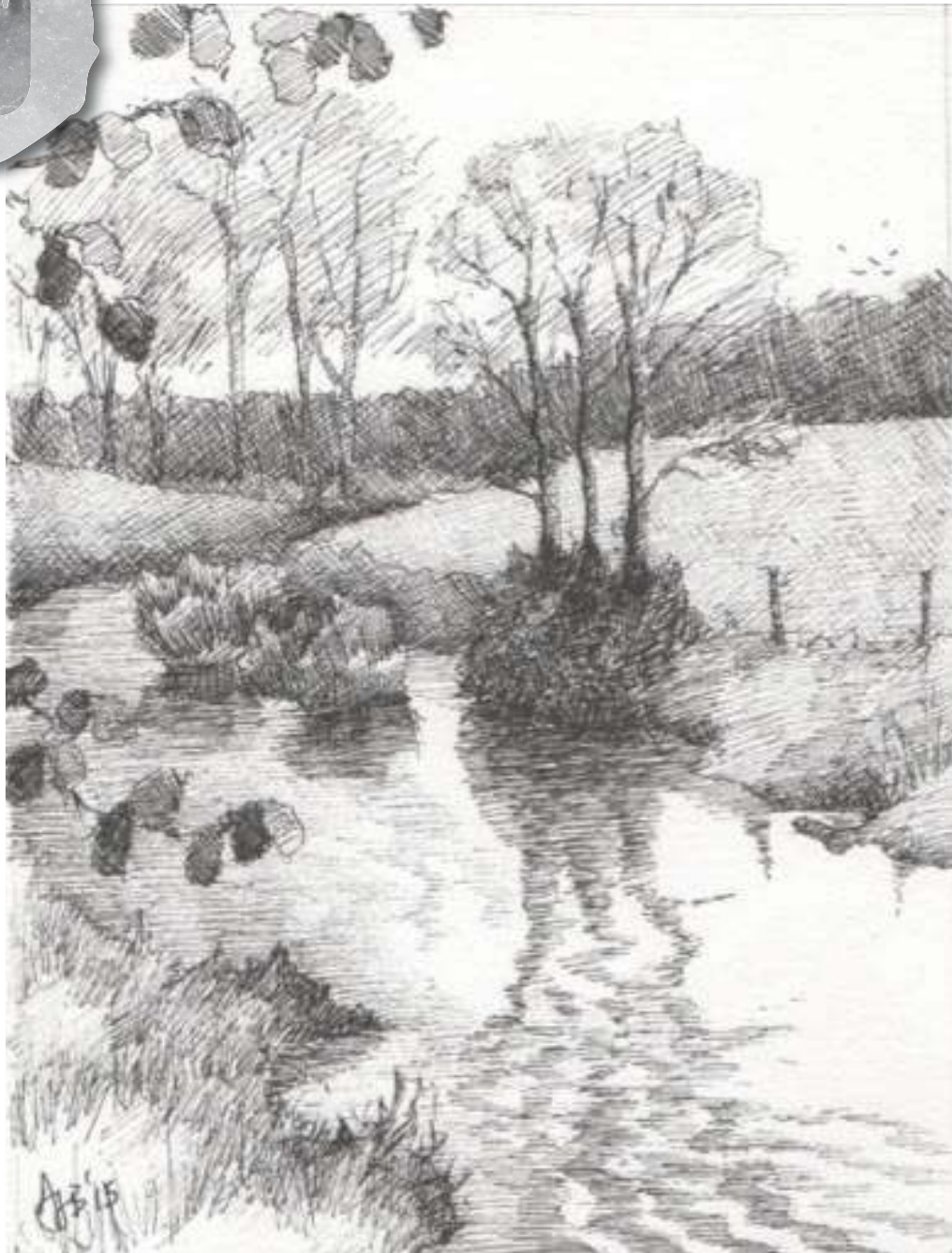
Return : The River Evenlode

Turn Left

Turn left and walk down the road, past the station on your right and back across the Evenlode.



Pause on the bridge



Drop a stick or twig into the river from the bridge and watch it as it jostles and bobs its way downstream. Our lives too have unsettled and disordered times, or times when it seems as if we are going round in circles. But these are only temporary disruptions as we follow our course towards our destination.

Continue

going uphill to return to St Mary's Church via Church Lane on your right.

*Set up road markers for yourself,
make yourself signposts;
consider well the highway,
the road by which you went.
(Jeremiah 31:21)*



Ending

And so our pilgrimage ends where it began, at the church door. We have taken time away from our everyday preoccupations, our normal habits, and sought God. And if we have sought him diligently, we will find him, often where we least expect to, right in the middle of our ordinary lives, filling our daily occupations with his love and his light until they are transformed.



*To see a world in a grain of sand
And heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.
(from Auguries of Innocence, William Blake)*

Prayers

We gather at the end of the journey
Meeting together to rest in your peace
As the sun sets on our travels, Lord
So may the light of your love guide us through the night.

We give thanks for our pilgrimage,
For its joys and discoveries,
Its learning and encounters.
Guide us and guard us as we journey on
And keep us always mindful of the constancy of your presence.

Amen

We confess the times that our ways have been crooked, the occasions when we have strayed from the path of righteousness.



Silence

We are precious and God loves us. Let us continue on our journey as forgiven people.
Let the word of God be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

New Testament Reading: John 10:11-15 (The Voice)

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep in His care. The hired hand is not like the shepherd caring for His own sheep. When a wolf attacks, snatching and scattering the sheep, he runs for his life, leaving them defenceless. The hired hand runs because he works only for wages and does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep, and My sheep know Me. As the Father knows Me, I know the Father; I will give My life for the sheep.

Silence Silence



Grace

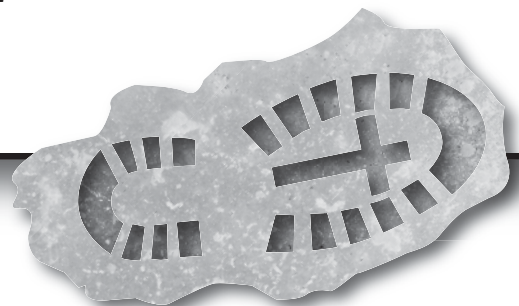
*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love
of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all,
evermore, Amen*

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Notes

