



“Spiritual Origins, History and Pilgrimage”

Andy Evans, St Laurence Parish Church member

The last 12 months of Covid restrictions and lockdowns has, of course, interrupted the momentum generated at St Laurence by the activities and events that it has hosted. But it has also given us the opportunity to pause and reflect and adjust to the new post-Covid reality that we will all face in due course.

We attempted to articulate something of this adjusted vision in the film “A Contemplative Christmas”. Central to this revised vision is the realisation that the core of the space that is today’s St Laurence has likely been a ‘sacred’ or ‘special’ place for all sorts of people from ancient times – long before the first small Christian chapel was built on the site in the 13th century – and way before the town of Stroud was eventually to emerge and develop.

A sacred place that nestles between the foothills and valleys at the edge of the Cotswolds, and that lies at the confluence of the waters pouring off the south-western edge of that escarpment, flowing around and under the site since time immemorial. And, today, exerting its ‘pull’ through the iconic spire which can be seen from miles around.

This draws us towards the sense of that sacred space being a site of pilgrimage - a shared space, where people of all sorts of spiritual and other sensibilities have made their way to find solace and peace since the dawn of time; and which can have the same, continuing positive value today and tomorrow.

I like a simple definition of pilgrimage as a journey where a person goes in search of new, expanded or re-enforcing meaning about their self, others, nature or a higher good, and finds this through the actual experience itself.

It is more than just attending a particular event, at a particular place, on a particular date. The Christian priest, Frank Fahey, distinguishes ‘pilgrimage’ as having one or more of the following elements: faith, penance, community, sacred space, ritual, votive offering, celebration, perseverance.

We have called our sacred place of pilgrimage “Meridian Stroud” – and describe it as a creative journey to ‘Stroud Point Zero’ – using the universal language of art, music, movies, sculpture, poetry and the like, to imagine and deliver a sustainable space at the spiritual heart of the area, and, going forward, to act as a permanent counterpoint to the isolation and separation of the last 12 months.

Meridian Stroud

Reconnecting with the sacred land on which St Laurence's was built

A community arts project, for Covid days and beyond, that incorporates the reimagining of St Laurence's as the spiritual heart of the town: a space for all



A creative journeying into Stroud Point Zero, a sacred site to which people have made their way since the dawn of time. A sanctuary on which, in the course of time, a small chapel and then a church was built. The chapel was the cradle from which the town emerged. (The story is attached).



Using the universal languages of art, music, movies, sculpture, poetry and the like to imagine a sustainable church space for all at Meridian Stroud, during these Covid19 days of isolation and separation

