

OLD BLUFF PILGRIMAGE GUIDE BOOK



EASTER 2020

Old Bluff Presbyterian Church
4100 Old Bluff Church Rd, Godwin, NC

OLD BLUFF PILGRIMAGE



Christians can be described as ‘the pilgrim people of God’ and in the Bible this idea of the spiritual life as a ‘journey’ is expressed many times. The outward pilgrimage is a sign of this inner journey – of repentance, resurrection and rebirth – the journey of the heart, held in the Creator’s hands.

As part of our pilgrimage today, we will stop at five places around the church grounds, read a passage from scripture, listen to a reflection on this space, spend some time in silent reflection and say a blessing from the Gaelic tradition. This pilgrimage is based on one from the Island of Iona, and most of the blessings come from the Iona Abbey Worship Book.

OLD BLUFF ENTRY GATE



*For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds,
and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.
Luke 11:10*

The pilgrimage begins at the front gate, where people have been entering the Old Bluff for centuries, whether by climbing the bluff from the river, riding by horseback, camping with hundreds of fellow soldiers wondering when they will be able to return home, church goes walking while carrying their nice shoes, or driving or flying from miles away to say goodbye to a loved one. Many people have come into this church gate, and many more will arrive in the years to come. Many think of the Old Bluff as a “thin place,” a place where heaven and earth meet, where the presence of God is more noticeable than other places. May you feel the presence of God during this pilgrimage.

Ponder for a moment what has called you here in the past, and what you might be called to in the future. As we continue to wander to the next spot, pray to yourself the traditional Gaelic blessing:

**BLESS TO US, O GOD,
THE EARTH BENEATH OUR FEET.
BLESS TO US, O GOD, THE PATH WHEREON WE GO
BLESS TO US, O GOD, THE PEOPLE THAT WE MEET
AMEN.**



“Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same spirit, and there are varieties of services but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

The Old Bluff and its daughter churches have had a history of strong leadership and a variety of different styles. From the founding pastor, James Campbell, to the flowery preaching of John McLeod, to the quiet personality and unrequited love of Dugald Crawford, the revival opposed but engaging Angus McDiarmond, Toe Stomping Allan McDougald, the greatly and widely loved Evander McNair, persuasive and long serving Duncan D McBryde, staunch Presbyterian Andrew M. Hassell, and the powerful preaching of Dr. Angus McQueen who moved the Bluff from this location. The others honored on this marker only served for a year or two or were seminary students, but left a mark in a variety of different ways. We have had many serve the daughter churches of Old Bluff since Angus McQueen, spreading the church to the corners of Cumberland County and Harnett County. The leadership of this church and it's daughter churches are not only from the pastors but the elders, and for a time deacons, beginning with Hector McNeill and Alexander McAllister and continuing now with a number of elders who are working to do God's work in an ever changing world. The vision for this area that the Scots McNeil and McAllister had with their pastor, James Campbell was to have a gathering space for the other Gaelic Presbyterians in the area, and to praise God with Psalms and the Catechism. Today we strive to love the families that have been here since the beginning and our neighbors arriving from all over the world. We strive to lead people to love God, love others, and bring Jesus Christ's ministry to the world.

Ponder now the people who have encouraged your faith, who have answered your questions, listened to you, visited you when you were sick, and preached to you the love and grace of God. Say a prayer of thanksgiving for those people and a prayer for those who strive to do God's work in the world.

**BLESS TO US, O GOD,
OUR SOULS THAT COME FROM
ON HIGH.**

**BLESS TO US, O GOD,
OUR BODIES THAT ARE OF EARTH.**

**BLESS TO US, O GOD,
EACH THING OUR EYES SEE.**

**BLESS TO US, O GOD,
EACH SOUND OUR EARS HEAR.**

**BLESS TO US, O GOD,
EACH ODOR THAT GOES TO OUR
NOSTRILS.**

**BLESS TO US, O GOD,
EACH TASTE THAT GOES TO OUR
LIPS,**

**EACH NOTE THAT GOES TO OUR
SONG,**

**EACH RAY THAT GUIDES OUR WAY.
AMEN.**



"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:39

A Cairn is simply a pile of rocks. The word comes from Scots Gaelic origin and some of the original cairns are thousands of years old. An old Scottish Gaelic blessing is *Cuiridh mi clach air do chàrn*, "I'll put a stone on your stone," a pile of rocks would often mark a grave, and people would place a new one on top each time they passed by in memory. It is also said that as people left the shores of Scotland, they would leave a rock on the hilltop, but once they arrived to America they no longer continued that tradition, they were in a new place now. This specific cairn was built on June 19, 1966. Members of the community placed stones on top of one another in remembrance of those who had died. At least one of these stones comes from the Isle of Skye in Scotland. This cemetery is full of graves of people who passed before us, from the 1700s until recently, of those who founded the church and those who have been part of our church and families in our lifetimes. We are reminded even in death that there is resurrection. We are reminded, as we are every Easter Sunrise on the porch of the Old Bluff, that the resurrection happened in a graveyard, and it is often in places of death and apparent hopelessness that new beginnings are given. Our prayer is that through the self-giving and deaths of the many women and men who have gone before us we may be granted the strength and vision to continue on the journey of Jesus.

Pause now to remember those who came before you. Remember the people for whom a stone you would like to place on a stone. How does the strength of those people support you for future service?

**MAY GOD BE A BRIGHT FLAME
BEFORE YOU,
BE A GUIDING STAR ABOVE YOU,
BE A SMOOTH PATH BELOW YOU,
BE A KINDLY SHEPHERD BEHIND YOU,
TODAY, TOMORROW, AND FOREVER.
AMEN.**

THE OLD SPRING



"Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty, wrapped in light as with a garment. You stretch out the heavens like a tent, you set the beams of your chambers on the waters, you make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the wind, you make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers. You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal; By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches. I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord."

Psalm 104: 1-2, 10-12, 33-34

We are now at the sign marking the stairs down to the Old Spring. The spring is no longer in use, and there are many stories about why it is no longer working. Some say there was vandalism, some say someone tried to fix it and broke it instead. Either way the spring that was once flowing is not anymore. This area is protected land, with rare plants and a pathway to the river. We remember that long ago people climbed this bluff to get to church, collected water from the spring for their household. People still fish from the river, and enjoy time in God's creation. In our reverence of God's creation, we also recognize that we often don't do what we can to take care of it, we notice litter in the old spring and along the path, we remember that the river waters rise during hurricanes, and that somehow or another a natural spring is no longer working. We are reminded that we can do better in caring for God's creation.

Take a few minutes to read through the scripture passage again. Use it as a prayer. Wander around this area and pay attention to the nature, the trees, the spring, the sound of the river and birds. Say a prayer of thanksgiving and ask God to give you the guidance to care for the Earth. Say the blessing below as you walk to the next place of meeting, the Old Bluff Church.

**O CHRIST, THERE IS NOT PLANT IN THE GROUND
BUT IT IS FULL OF YOUR VIRTUE...
THERE IS NO FORM IN THE STRAND
BUT IT IS FULL OF YOUR BLESSING.
THERE IS NO LIFE IN THE SEA,
THERE IS NO CREATURE IN THE OCEAN,
THERE IS NOTHING IN THE HEAVENS
BUT PROCLAIMS YOUR GOODNESS.
THERE IS NO BIRD ON THE WINGS,
THERE IS NO STAR IN THE SKY,
THERE IS NOTHING BENEATH THE SUN BUT
PROCLAIMS YOUR GOODNESS. AMEN.**

THE CROSS OR THE FRONT STEPS



“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’” *Mark 16:6-7*

It was early in the morning, in a place of death, that the disciples first learnt that Jesus had risen; and that their friend and teacher was so much more than they could possibly have imagined. Today, those who have gathered in this place remember that first Easter morning: when desolation turned to hope, grief turned to wonder and life triumphed over death. During this time of social isolation we are reminded that the resurrection happened in a place much like this, with nobody around. It happened with tears, and silence and even some fear. It happened with strange messengers, mistaken gardeners, and beloved disciples. Women were the first to hear the message. They were the first to deliver the message, but there was still uncertainty, fear, disbelief. Jesus appeared to the disciples in a number of ways after the resurrection, on a beach, at the dinner table, on a road, in a locked room. Be reminded today that no matter where you are, Jesus is beside you, as you pilgrim along to your next destination.

Take a moment, sit on the steps and ponder confession. Confess the ways that you have strayed from God. Ponder the ways people in this space have betrayed the true grace and love of God through the years. If you are here on Easter, pick up a dogwood flower and place it on the cross, reflecting on what it is you are putting aside, and what beauty you will take with you. If you are here on a time other than Easter, pick up a rock from the ground around the church, ponder on what it is you'd like to leave behind. Throw the rock (carefully) as a sign that you are leaving it behind, and then pick up another rock to take with you.

**EACH THING WE HAVE RECEIVED, FROM YOU IT CAME, O GOD.
EACH THING FOR WHICH WE HOPE, FROM YOUR LOVE IT WILL BE GIVEN.
KINDLE IN OUR HEARTS WITHIN A FLAME OF LOVE TO OUR NEIGHBORS,
TO OUR FOES, TO OUR FRIENDS, TO OUR LOVED ONES ALL,
FROM THE LOWLIEST THING THAT LIVES, TO THE NAME THAT IS HIGHEST
OF ALL. AMEN**