# Mountain Pilgrims – Memorandum of Understanding

## Guiding principles

Mountain Pilgrims is a network of outdoor-based Fresh Expressions of Church, and below are our guiding principles. How they are expressed in any one group may be different to other groups in the network, but it is our shared DNA. It is what makes us Mountain Pilgrims.

- As Mountain Pilgrims, we choose to connect with the physical reality of nature – the rough and the smooth – engaging all our physical senses along with a sense of vulnerability as we experience it. This openness and willingness to be vulnerable enhances our experience of being present to and rooted in nature.
- As Mountain Pilgrims, we share ourselves with others, creating space for openness and friendship with an intentional balance between fun and depth in order to provide opportunities for nurture and challenge.
- As Mountain Pilgrims, we believe that which some call God is present in all of nature – including us. We intentionally seek to increase our awareness of the presence of God through deepening the connections between ourselves, nature and one another. We travel together with an open and curious expectancy of spiritual encounters that will influence the whole of life.

## Joining the Mountain Pilgrims network

For Mountain Pilgrims to remain accountable, to protect ourselves as group leaders and to ensure the safety of the people we work with, especially those who are most vulnerable, there is a process to go through for any group to be part of our network.

## Governance and Accountability

As a Mountain Pilgrims group you need to work out whether you are a local or third space group. The support you need, or the things you might need to consider can be slightly different so it's important to identify which category you fall into.

Local groups are accountable to a local church and receive guidance from the leadership there and fall under the authority of that church. This isn't about control or trying to get people into that church, but about something new being formed in connection with the time-honoured church and the structures that it provides.

Third Space groups are groups which don't have a local church connection. However, these groups still need to have appropriate policies and procedures in place to keep leaders and members safe. These are detailed below.

If your group is connected to a local church, then please adhere to their policies and procedures around:

- Safer recruitment
- Safeguarding
- Insurance

- Risk Assessments (we can provide a model one, that is suitable for the Mountain Pilgrims setting, for them to approve or adapt)
- GDPR

If your group is a Third Space one, then the policies and procedures can be provided by the Carlisle Diocese/Northern Mission Centre. See the details of these below. If you would prefer to not be directly connected to the church in any way, you will need to provide evidence of your governance and accountability measures in order to join the Mountain Pilgrims network.

### Group Leaders

All leaders, and each group needs a minimum of 2 registered leaders, must go through the Safer Recruitment process of the Northern Mission Centre. This includes agreeing to a broad description of your role as a Mountain Pilgrims group leader, collecting references and being checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

You will also need to complete the Diocesan Basic Awareness and Foundations levels of Safeguarding training (free online courses). This will need updating, along with the DBS check, every 3 years.

### Insurance and Risk Assessments

We have a best practice document that you will need to follow prior to a Mountain Pilgrims activity as part of keeping you and other participants safe. An aspect of this is ensuring all are aware that they participate in Mountain Pilgrim activities at their own risk. In this context we are not operating as mountain guides, and this must be stated at the start of each activity. In addition, all under 18s must be accompanied by their own responsible adult.

Under these conditions, 3rd space Mountain Pilgrims groups are insured by the Diocese.

## Communications

Once you have joined our network your contact details will be added to our group communications. This is to make sure that you are included in receiving information, updates and invitations to our Tribal Gathering. If you don't want your details to be visible then please let us know at: nmc@carlislediocese.org.uk

In addition, you are asked to join the Northern Mission Centre and eNews mailing lists to be kept up to date on training and opportunities across the Diocese.

## The Tribal Gathering

This is our place for connection, shared learning, support and accountability across the network. We gather 3 times a year and you are encouraged to attend as many as possible.

One meeting each year will include a review and report of the groups. At that meeting each 3rd space group must be represented but local groups are not formally required to.