

Alabama Pilgrimage

Report to Diocesan Convention 2025

Submitted by the Rev. Canon Bobbe Fitzhugh

1. Mission / Purpose Statement

The purpose of this pilgrimage was to increase racial understanding, healing, and reconciliation as the Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming journeys forward toward Becoming Beloved Community. The Diocese has held a number of Sacred Ground Circles and is focused on the need for formation in racial reconciliation. This transformative pilgrimage helped grow a community of reconcilers, justice-makers, and healers who brought back a passion for leading their own Sacred Ground Circle and/or pilgrimage in the future.

2. Summary of Current Year's Activities

In April 2025, twenty-five pilgrims embarked on a five-day Social Justice and Racial Reconciliation Pilgrimage to Alabama. The pilgrims represented twelve of the churches in Wyoming, two non-affiliated participants, and three diocesan staff. Eight of the pilgrims were clergy.

The pilgrimage, led by the Rev. Canon Bobbe Fitzhugh, served as the “required” Iona School pilgrimage since no bishop-led pilgrimage has been possible for several years. The group visited sites significant to the social justice and racial equity movement in the United States and spent time in reflection, processing, prayer, and reconciliation.

A highlight was worshiping at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, with fiery preaching, a baptism, an altar call, and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

Through the eyes and heartfelt experiences of their guide, Rubye Braye—who grew up during the 1960s in Montgomery as a Black child—participants gained powerful insight and perspective.

Key sites visited included:

- Birmingham Civil Rights Institute – featuring artifacts such as the jail cell door from where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote Letter from Birmingham Jail, a Ku Klux Klan robe, and segregated drinking fountains.
- Kelly Ingram Park (Birmingham) – emotionally powerful sculptures depicting the civil rights struggle, including police dogs attacking Black children. Pilgrims read Dr. King’s Letter from Birmingham Jail in this park.
- 16th Street Baptist Church – the site of the horrific 1963 KKK bombing that killed four young girls during a worship service.
- Equal Justice Initiative Legacy Museum (Montgomery) – tells the story of slavery in America from the Transatlantic Slave Trade through Jim Crow and mass incarceration.

- Freedom Monument Sculpture Park – honors the courage and resilience of the 10 million Black people enslaved in America.
- National Memorial for Peace and Justice – memorializes more than 4,400 Black people killed in racial terror lynchings between 1877 and 1950, including at least five from Wyoming.

This pilgrimage reminded us that assuming the moral arc of the universe leans toward justice can lead to passivity and complacency. To bend the moral arc toward justice, we must march, organize, resist, and vote. Our biggest takeaway: we need to look in the mirror and get to work.

3. Financial Report

Item	Details	Cost
25 Pilgrims (5 days, 4 nights, all inclusive)		\$65,000
Single supplements (2)		\$1,000
Total Pilgrimage Cost		\$66,000
Registrations paid (\$750 each)		\$18,750
Group leader travel (Fitzhugh)		\$2,900
Net Diocesan Funding		\$44,350

4. Plans and Projections for the Coming Year

Participants are discerning ways to expand this work within their own communities, including leading Sacred Ground Circles and developing future diocesan pilgrimages focused on justice and reconciliation.

5. Gratitude / Acknowledgments

Dear People of God, we stand in the shadow of the prophets crying out for justice and peace. God calls us to be a people of reconciliation, serving a world in need. Courageous women and men have taken the risk of standing up and speaking out for the least and the lowest. This work involves risking ourselves for the sake of God's love, moving beyond ourselves in order to seek and serve Christ and one another. We are all called to the work and ministry of social justice and reconciliation. Amen.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Canon Bobbe Fitzhugh