

Labyrinth Talk – 20-year celebration 9/22/24  
Laurie Grimes

If we look around the USC campus, we find many examples of unique spaces - contemplative areas, functional yet lovely halls, attractive gardens, and so forth. These were all created through the power of imagination!

We know imagination as the faculty that brings the formless into form, shapes substance, and is also linked to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Unity principle: Thoughts held in mind create after their kind.

It should then be no surprise that this is how our beautiful labyrinth was created. It was a Divine Idea, to which was added faith and prayer, a lot of hard work (putting feet to those prayers!) - plus a little bit of magic – some might call it Serendipity, Grace, or Divine Timing.

What particularly stuck me in looking back at that time 20 years ago when the labyrinth came into being was that last component – all the numerous serendipitous events that took place in the process of creating the labyrinth.

A couple years before it was built, Rev. Stan Smith came to me, because I was the Board president, with the idea of creating a labyrinth. The Board decided it was a great idea and so we did it! We made our first labyrinth – painted on the patio behind the Spirit room, and then also we had a labyrinth painted on canvas for indoor events.

Of course, if you knew Stan, he had in mind something bigger! But there was no space....

Enter **Divine timing event #1**. The property two doors to the west (later known as Prosperity House) became available and the church decided to purchase it. It was to be used for a completely different reason having to do with the expansion of our campus and potential use as a parking lot (which is another story!) The lot just happened to have a nice chunk of wooded land out in back.

I can still remember how excited Rev. Stan became when he realized that there were four giant oaks on that wooded lot, and that they would be great anchors for the labyrinth he envisioned. He was even more thrilled when he got out his tape measure and found there was enough space for a 90' labyrinth with 11 circuits. This was his dream!

I finished my terms on the Board and continued on the labyrinth committee. Eileen Burns went on the Board and agreed to head the Building and Grounds committee. This was **Divine timing event #2** – the involvement of the Burns family. Eileen was mentored by Rev. Geraldine Murray, who was a Unity minister in Columbus who taught about labyrinths. Eileen came to understand how transformative labyrinths could be and thus really caught on to Rev. Stan's vision. She agreed to head up the labyrinth committee.

The building commenced! Eileen involved her husband, Jack, in clearing the proposed site. Jack trailered his bulldozer from where they were living in Vermilion. The site slowly took shape with over 40 hours of his excavating, grading, smoothing, and the addition of gravel. Jack and Stan, along with Ron Lancaster, Bob Gates and others laid out the grid for the labyrinth.

In the meantime, the committee went back and forth on what to use for the grid lines. We decided to use bricks and someone did the math and figured we would need a lot of them! We appealed to the congregation one Sunday for donations to purchase bricks or donations of any amount of bricks. That very Sunday **Divine timing event #3** occurred – a couple attending USC for the very first time that day came forward and told Rev. Stan they would donate 3100 bricks – the needed amount! They wanted to remain anonymous and had the bricks delivered shortly thereafter. Rev. Stan said that was the first and only time the couple came to Unity. They never came back (to our knowledge) and we never learned the identity of our brick angels!

Many volunteers came forward and helped place the bricks in the gravel. I created the 7 hexagonal stained glass chakra-colored pavers in the middle and also decided to put what I felt was needed at the entrance – a white cleansing (now known as a “pausing”) stone for people to stand on when they entered – to clear the mind and set an intention before walking the labyrinth.

Sophie Pace and I collaborated on creating the design, which we intended to represent a melding of many of the symbols of the world's great religions. Also reflected in the design were petals of an opening rose, which is also the pattern at the center of this Chartres labyrinth. The rose represents the Holy Spirit, which is the breath of God moving in us.

Charles Fillmore said, “the Holy Spirit is ready to be poured upon all who look to it for guidance. Its mission is to bring all men into communion with God, to guide men in order that they will not mistake the way into the light.” (The Revealing Word) As you may know one of the traditional ways to walk the labyrinth is to ask a question going in, receive guidance by walking, and come out with an answer. This guidance is a gift of the Holy Spirit within us – not to mention one of our 12 powers (wisdom).

By the way, I had gone to Buffalo to purchase a special cement which was recommended for stained glass pavers which would be used outside. It was supposed to extend the life of the stones a little longer than regular cement, to about 3-5 years. My intention was to bring them in every winter so they would not have to stay out in the Ohio weather, which might cause them to break up. However, they also had to be “floated” in sand so people could stand on them and not crack. Jack Burns helped me install them on sand and also anchored them in place so they wouldn't move. I had to trust that they would be okay left out in the elements. Well, they've lasted 20 years now, with just a few minor chips, which I think is truly amazing!

One more story. The picture of the labyrinth from above was taken before drones! A family friend of Terri Brewer (who was also on the Board at the time) had a construction company and agreed to supply the rig with the bucket that lifted the photographer up above the labyrinth. Terri asked congregants to come out after the service that Sunday to walk the labyrinth.

I really think it was just short of a miracle what the power of imagination brought to our Center and how all the right people and resources lined up to create the beautiful labyrinth we still have today – and aren't we blessed!