

Press Release

ABOUT LABYRINTH AROUND AMERICA



Labyrinth Around America is a project like no other. “This is not something that crosses my desk every day!” said the charming US Department of State officer at the Consul’s office in London when British labyrinth enthusiast and interfaith minister Clive Johnson outlined his plans to take a labyrinth around the country. “I thought that I should let the visa people know that I was not the average tourist,” he remarked.

The project aims to take a labyrinth – a 24 foot diameter canvas intended for walking meditation – around the 33 or so states that form the border of the United States.

Starting in Minnesota, where Johnson commissioned the labyrinth to be made, the canvas is setting off on a road trip which Johnson explains is “to unknown places and over an unknown timeframe,” stopping at the smallest villages and the hearts of the larger cities along its way.

“I hope to involve people from as many different backgrounds as possible, and to visit many deprived neighbourhoods and off-the-beaten-track locations” says Johnson. “Anyone and everyone is welcome – that’s the beauty of the labyrinth”. He says that he is open to stopping by in prisons, retreat centres, hospices, school yards, or just where ever he can throw open a large mat on the ground.

Unlike a maze, the labyrinth is a single path that leads the walker to its centre without distractions and dead-ends. There are several popular designs, perhaps the best known of which being the one used in Chartres Cathedral in France, a thirteenth century design that was used as the model for a portable labyrinth installed at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco back in the early 1990s, from which the modern labyrinth movement was born.

Labyrinths have been in existence for thousands of years, with ancient examples being uncovered or described in religious writings, drawings on cave walls, and pictures on pottery, and from places as far afield as India, Arizona, and Afghanistan. The cathedral and monastery labyrinths of the Middle Ages offered a place for Christian believers to come to their “New Jerusalem”. But labyrinths appear in Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, and other faith traditions as well, and are now equally popular in secular settings.

“Walking a labyrinth allows an opportunity to escape from the day-to-day for a short while,” says Johnson.

Labyrinth Around America hopes to invite many people who may be unaware of this wonderful practice to have an opportunity to join a walk, as well as providing ideas on how to follow up on walking more regularly, once the labyrinth leaves town.

To this end, the project has developed a list of links and resources on its website – everything from hand-held labyrinths that can be walked with the finger, to considering options about making a labyrinth of your own. “Not everyone can have a large mat stressed out in their lounge!” Johnson explains.

He says that he is keen for other labyrinth enthusiasts to become involved in the project too, helping to host walks, suggest venues, and guide folks who want to discover more about labyrinth walking in their localities.

The project also hopes to leave what Johnson describes as a “trail of positive energy”. “I’d like to think that we’re circling around this great country with a purpose for bringing folks together. And of course, everyone who comes to a walk leaves something of their own energy to it, and is playing an important part in the labyrinth’s long journey.”

Anyone is welcome to join a walk when it arrives in town. There is no cost and newcomers to the labyrinth are especially welcome. Find out more at www.labyrintharoundamerica.net.

IMAGES: www.labyrintharoundamerica.net/lbpress.html

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