

Conference Explores Labyrinths as Tools for Transformation

BY THE REV. SANDY GRUNDY



Lauren Artress' experience of the labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral in France so transformed her life that she returned to her own church, Grace Cathedral in San Francisco and painted the design on canvas. When the Cathedral opened it to the public, people stood in line for hours to walk that labyrinth. The Rev. Dr. Artress, Episcopal priest and pioneer of the labyrinth movement, now shares her personal experience of the labyrinth as a transformational spiritual practice worldwide.

In her recent talks at the Arvada Center for the annual Spiritual Direction Colorado conference, she used the image of the "Path" to talk about the spiritual journey. One of the most remarkable parts of the conference was that in the same room

in which Dr. Artress was speaking, were two canvass labyrinths with some of the participants walking the labyrinth as she spoke. Seeing the prayerful and quiet walking added an amazing richness to the event.

The labyrinth is an ancient pattern found in many cultures around the world. Labyrinth designs were found in pottery, tablets and tiles that date back as far as 5000 years. The labyrinth design used by Dr. Artress is a replica of the eleven-circuit medieval labyrinth from Chartres. The pattern, made of Beauce quarry stone and an unnamed black stone to delineate the path, was inlaid in the stone floor of the Cathedral in 1201. For the last 250 years, it has been forgotten and covered with chairs until Dr. Artress led a small group of people into Chartres Cathedral to remove the chairs to experience the meditative walk first hand.

She speaks of the Labyrinth as an archetype, a divine imprint, found in various forms in many religious traditions stating: "By walking a replica of the medieval eleven

circuit labyrinth, laid on the floor of Chartres Cathedral, we are discovering a long-forgotten mystical tradition that is insisting to be reborn.

"The labyrinth has only one path so there are no tricks to it and no dead ends. The path winds throughout and becomes a mirror for where we are in our lives. It touches our sorrows and releases our joys," she says.

She spoke of the search for an "authentic spirituality" in the world today. She described the labyrinth as a "pause button" allowing people to slow down and become connected with the spirit. She spoke of the metaphor of "The Path" in spiritual discovery citing numerous Scripture references to the path. "Walking a spiralized path, winding to a center, quiets the mind. It is a metaphor of our journey to God."

According to Dr. Artress' website Veriditas.org, labyrinths are currently being used world-wide as a way to recover a balance in life, encourage meditation and are open to all people "as a non-denominational, cross-cultural blueprint for well-being."

In addition to the traditional walking practice, labyrinths can also be found in hand held models, small and portable, or even lap size, crafted from wood or pewter.

The walking labyrinths can be found in medical centers, parks, churches, schools, prisons, parks, cathedrals, retreat centers as well as people's backyards. Many Episcopal churches in Colorado have labyrinths and one is located in a corporate center in the Denver Tech Centre. Dr. Artress' center, Veriditas, trains labyrinth facilitators including several in Colorado. For more information about the labyrinth and Dr. Artress' work, please contact Veriditas.org which has a labyrinth locator. Trained facilitators in the Denver area include Rev. Michelle Danson at michelle@contemplativebeehive.com and Joann Mast at jomast@earthlink.net.

The Rev. Sandy Grundy has been a priest in the diocese for 24 years. She is a spiritual director and member of Spiritual Direction Colorado.

St. Timothy's Explores Innovative Worship for Lent

St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Centennial is partnering with Kate Eaton of St. John's Cathedral in Denver to design "Living Water," a deeply spiritual, candle-lit Lenten worship service on March 10, at 6:30 p.m. Eaton has created the look, feel and sound for the Sunday night Wilderness services at St. John's Cathedral, a compelling mystical experience, which has drawn a new and unique congregation to the cathedral the past two and a half years, and which provided one of the worship services at last fall's diocesan convention in Pueblo.

Eaton and her music team are beginning to share the success of this creative liturgy with other congregations in the diocese and potentially beyond. The hope is that each congregation will use the Wilderness experience as inspiration to deepen their faith experience and to expand the use their own creative resources as well. For example, St. Timothy's is integrating liturgical dance into the service featuring their own talented dancer, Lauren Packard, and using a fresh, simple but elegant liturgy for the Lenten Eucharist borrowed from the Cathedral's service.

The Rev. Sandy Blake, associate rector and creative liturgists from St. Timothy's and Eaton have been working closely over the last month to create this special service. To-

gether, they are transforming the unique worship space at St. Timothy's with candle light, icons, projected images on the walls and ceiling and ambient moving light throughout the sanctuary. A scrim will be hung in front of the altar, using special lighting to reveal a glowing tabernacle, which represents our waiting for the new life of Christ at Easter. Eaton has arranged traditional hymns with a world music sound at the Cathedral's Wilderness service, which she and her music team will share with the "Living Water" service at St. Timothy's.

Eaton recently released a CD called ARISE, which features hymns and prayers used in the Wilderness worship. In order to spread creative liturgy far and wide, Eaton has also founded Mishkhah, a non-profit organization, whose mission is to help congregations design and develop their own unique services and re-image their worship. Mishkhah is an Aramaic word that means "anointing." The name has special resonance because the use of myrrh from the Holy Land, with its unique fragrance, which has been a hallmark of the Wilderness.

GET MORE DETAILS

For more information about Spiritual Direction Colorado, including future events, go to www.spiritualdirectioncolorado.org.

For more information about Kate Eaton's CD, Arise and the Wilderness worship experience, go to www.kateeaton.com.