

# St. John's Episcopal Church

## Mouse Newsletter Labyrinth Special August, 2022

### Timeline

- April 28 – Committee finalizes and blesses labyrinth site on “T1” property (i.e. Thornhill 1)
- June 1 – Labyrinth Project Introductory Letter from Lilah Greene
- June 10 through June 29 – Friday emails to increase labyrinth awareness and education
- July 22 – Begin collection of rocks for labyrinth. Bless them on July 24. Continue collecting rocks from parishioners throughout August
- August 1 – Second letter from Lilah connecting labyrinth to stewardship campaign, “The Path to Generosity”
- July 25-29 – Prepare labyrinth site (grading, crushed granite base, sand, steel ring)
- Sept. 9-12 – Labyrinth construction by Lars Howlett and parishioner volunteers
- Sept. 25 – Blessing of Labyrinth, St. John's 70th year celebration, ice cream social



### Lilah Letter to the Parish, June 1, 2022



Dear Members, Friends, and Neighbors,

In 1952, St. John's Episcopal Church was moved to our current location after a fire consumed her downtown parish building. The woods of Montclair were specifically chosen as our new home because the congregation understood people needed a special space to connect with the healing powers of the natural world. And the need was profound following the traumas of World War II.

Scott mentioned this in a recent sermon and in listening to that sermon members of your stewardship team heard the echo of the 1950's call in our times today and were inspired.

To celebrate our 70th year in our current home, the stewardship team is excited to announce the gift of a Labyrinth on St. John's property. The intention is to create a spiritual pathway where members and visitors can prayerfully seek healing and strength to live with the traumas and challenges of today.

What does this have to do with stewardship? At St. John's we have used the term to refer to the pledge campaign, but the real task of Stewardship is to manage, appreciate, and support that for which you are responsible - to care for something and in caring become part of it. With a labyrinth, we are connecting our need for healing with our appreciation of the land of which we are stewards.

Over the next months, we will lay the foundations for this gift. The foundation will be two-fold – a physical foundation for a labyrinth next to the parking lot and a spiritual, educational foundation for how this gift can be used by the community. We will explore the history of labyrinths, the relationship of labyrinths to all faith practices, how one walks a labyrinth, what you can bring to the practice and what the practice will give you in return. We will also ask you to contribute rocks to help form the labyrinth which in true Montclair Oakland style will be in the shape of an Oak Tree as a symbol of strength.

In the fall, as usual, we will have a pledge campaign, but for now, we look forward to the 70th year celebration with the addition of a labyrinth in the redwoods to go with our beautiful meditation garden and patio in our spiritual home on our wonderful Montclair woods campus.

Happy to enjoy the journey together and see you on the Labyrinth beginning September 25, 2022.

Lilah Greene

*St. John's vision is to manifest God's love through invitation, inclusion, faith and action*

**St. John's Episcopal Church**

1707 GOULDIN ROAD, OAKLAND, CA 94611 510/ 339-2200



### Walking the Labyrinth – Anne Meyer

Every time I walk a labyrinth it is unique. At the Bishop’s Ranch in the early morning sunrise with birds singing the center mosaic is often obscured by tears. Tears of grief when I remember and tears of release when I give over a problem to God.

On the cool stones in Chartres Cathedral with candlelight and a string quartet accompaniment, I was overwhelmed and unsettled but moved by my connection to centuries of pilgrims seeking their own path to knowing God.

Sometimes I cry. Sometimes I discern answers to questions. Sometimes I just slow down enough to realize that God is with me through all the twists and turns of this life. Margie Bowman told me the first time she walked the Labyrinth in Grace Cathedral she was bored and annoyed that no epiphany was forthcoming. She started thinking about the worms in her garden and continued to walk. And then she had her ah-ha moment.

So. Expect the unexpected. Your labyrinth experience will be yours.



Bishop’s Ranch labyrinth built by St. John’s Mission Group in 2004.

7-Circuit Baltic Wheel Triple Meander for Crescent City Beachfront Park



Labyrinth Design by Lars Howlett / DiscoverLabyrinths.com

Finger labyrinth used in Anne’s sermon.

Click to hear Anne Meyer’s June 12 sermon. <https://www.stjohnsoakland.org/labyrinth.html>



### Rector’s Letter: Labyrinths of Life

If you feel as though you’re not quite sure what your path is or where it is leading, or you feel lost or confused about what’s next, or you feel like you have seen this same landscape before and wonder if you moving toward or away from your dreams, then just take a moment to study the map below. The story of the exodus of God’s people to the promised land is a reminder to us all that life’s journey is never a straight line, but one complete with twists and turns and the most unlikely of zig and zags.

Every person of faith is on a journey. In fact, a person of faith is someone who understands they are on a journey and embraces it. The 40 year journey the people of God took to the land God had promised was not at all efficient, and looks stunningly insane. But faith is not a static belief. It is a constant trust that God is walking with us each and every day no matter where we are or where our journey is taking us. A labyrinth reminds us of this simple truth, that no matter how twisted or disrupted our journey may feel, we are on a path with God which reveals more and more of God’s love than we could ever imagine. Isn’t that the point of life, to learn and embrace the truth that God is not just with us in an imagined future, but with us right now, at each and every turn along the way? That realization brings profound joy in the present moment. Thich Nhat Hanh put it this way: “Wake up, it’s now!”

I am always comforted when I walk a labyrinth because it gives me a chance to reflect on all the twists and turns in my own life. It helps me remember that there is a purpose to the spiritual landscape through which I walk. We are all heading to a promised land that is ours, but the promises are with us at each and every turn. There are experiences to have and lessons to be learned along the way. I like to think that when the people arrived at the promised land, they had learned that the real gift was the awareness that God was with them. Sure, the land was flowing with milk and honey, but what good is that if you never came to embrace God’s love?

Did you know that the people of God could actually see the promised land from a distance years before they entered it? If they were to walk in a direct line to it (the shortest distance between two points) they would have run into the armies of their enemies and ended up back in captivity. They were so close to the promises they were looking for and yet they had to continue by a longer road before arriving there. For me, one of the more striking experiences of walking a labyrinth is that sense of being near the center but then finding yourself far away from that center once again. It is a reminder that the path we are on, no matter how it feels, is one that God is on with us. Yes,

—Continued on Page 3

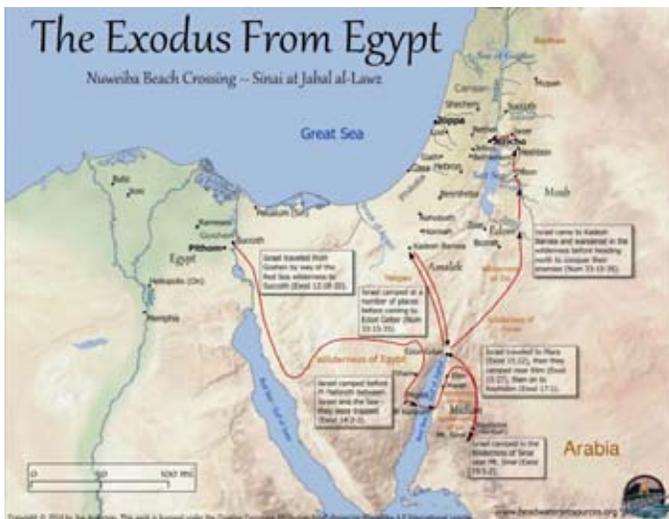
## Got Rocks?

Parishioners are invited and encouraged to bring rocks for the labyrinth. Put them on the tarp near the site or leave them in the wheelbarrow at the church front doors. Any size and shape is good as long as it is easy to pick up.

## Rector's Letter: Labyrinths of Life

get there, but what if “there” is actually the here and now grounded in a deep awareness of God’s presence and love. What is truly assuring is not a promise about the future, but the awareness that the promise keeper is with us on this very day, at this very moment. If we don’t learn to embrace God in the present, what makes us think that we will do so in the future?

We walk the labyrinth because it reminds us of the journey we are on, a journey that is not just outward but inward as well. Godspeed.



## Land Acknowledgment Prayer:

Creator, you made all people of every land. We acknowledge that the first people of this land on which we worship today and on which we now begin to create a labyrinth, the Ohlone people, are our brothers and sisters. We honor that the Ohlone people have occupied and cared for this land over countless generations. We offer our respects to their ancestors who are interred in the land. We celebrate the continuing contributions of the Ohlone people to the life of this region. Creator, we repent the mistreatment of the Ohlone people who have been displaced from their homeland. With respectful hearts we pray for forgiveness in your name, in the name of your son and in the name of the Sacred Spirit.

Amen



## Senior Warden Letter

One of my favorite poems is Little Gidding from the Four Quartets by T. S. Eliot. It includes the following lines:

“We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.”

I wonder if Eliot had labyrinths in mind. For part of the charm and the mystery of a labyrinth is that if you follow its path, though the route is circuitous and full of twists and turns, eventually you will arrive where you started.

I am excited about the temporary labyrinth that is under construction here at St. John’s. It has been a joy to witness the creative process that promises to turn the Thornhill 1 property below our parking lot into a counterpart to the meditation garden that we enjoy on the other side of the sanctuary. The labyrinth will be a tool for spiritual exploration and a place for meditation of the walking variety, open to all in our Montclair community.

Our labyrinth has grown from an acorn of an idea planted in the hearts and minds of a few and then a growing number of St. John’s parishioners. An enthusiastic and committed team has been hard at work since February of this year, visioning, planning and bringing to fruition this gift to St. John’s and to the greater community. The labyrinth will be in the shape of a mighty oak tree.

I am looking forward to the blessing of the labyrinth on September 25th as part of our celebration of St. John’s 70th Anniversary. In the meantime, I invite you to explore the information about labyrinths on St. John’s website under the Worship/Spiritual Practices tab and to answer the request to contribute rocks to be used in building our labyrinth.

Judy Kridle  
Senior Warden

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in  
your heart and try to love the questions  
themselves... Do not now seek the answers  
which cannot be given you because you  
would not be able to live them...

Rainier Maria Rilke

## June and July Labyrinth Education

Beginning with Anne Meyer's sermon on June 12 and ending on July 31 with the question, "What is Your Path?" every Friday email blast had a segment that explored the many facets of labyrinths. They are collected here for your enjoyment.

Friday, June 10, 2022

### Spiritual Practices Gathering

A spiritual practice is any regular and intentional activity that nourishes your relationship with God. During last fall's Stewardship discussions many parishioners expressed a desire to explore spiritual practices beyond Sunday worship. These might include Centering Prayer, Taize, Open prayer groups, labyrinth walks, liturgical dance and many more.

Friday, June 17, 2022

### What is a Labyrinth?

The labyrinth is a walking meditation, a path of prayer and an archetypal blueprint where psyche meets Spirit. It has a path that leads from the outer edge in a circuitous way to the center.

The labyrinth is not a maze. There are no tricks to it and no dead ends. Unlike a maze where you lose your way, the labyrinth is a spiritual tool that can help you find your way. Labyrinths invite intuitive pattern seeking. To enter a labyrinth is to choose to enter a spiritual path. Walking the Labyrinth quiets the mind, opens the heart and grounds the body. Some people find answers to questions long asked, some find healing, creativity, or a sense of wholeness. What will you find on your labyrinth journey?"

Friday, June 24

### Brief History of Labyrinths

The history of creating complex pathways to approach the Divinity is evident in many cultures from Native America to Peru to Tibet. Labyrinths have been dated to the Neolithic age in regions as diverse as India, Turkey, and Ireland. All the great religions of the world articulate the journey of the spiritual seeker and the path one must walk.

Although there is no mention of labyrinths in the Bible, as early as the 4th century CE labyrinths were adopted by Christians as a spiritual practice. Christian labyrinths were almost exclusively placed within the sacred spaces of churches. The most famous of the cathedral labyrinths can still be walked today in Chartres, France.

Labyrinths fell out of favor during the Age of Reason but have enjoyed a resurgence in recent years. Rev. Dr. Lauren Artress introduced labyrinths to Grace Cathedral during the AIDS epidemic. Labyrinths can now be found in a wide variety of settings including parks, prisons, hospitals and schools. People still find their way to the divine along the labyrinth path.

What are you searching for on your journey?

Friday, July 1, 2022

### Labyrinth Practical Practices

There are variety ways to walk a labyrinth. You may walk alone or with others. You may chose to pray or meditate or simply to enjoy the beauty of the surroundings. Remember the walk is yours alone. Relax. Receive. Reflect.

Some helpful suggestions for your labyrinth walk are:

- It is a two-way street. You will meet people on the path. Feel free to move around people. The turns are a good place to pass. If you encounter someone going the opposite direction, simply step off the path momentarily to allow the other person to pass.
- Be respectful of other people's journeys. Some may be celebrating and others grieving. Find space for all walkers and emotions.
- Follow your natural pace. You do not have to walk slowly. Children love to run the path (which is encouraged at the appropriate times).
- Let your gaze be soft as you walk, and let your heart be at peace. See you soon on our Labyrinth path of prayer.

Friday, July 8, 2022

### Walking Your Own Path

Labyrinths invite you to enter with an open heart and open mind. There are as many ways to walk the labyrinth as there are people walking. No one way of walking is for everyone every time. Make the walk your own. As you begin, reflect on where you are in your life at that moment. You may want to approach your walk from one of these perspectives:

- Quieting the mind: Time on the labyrinth can allow you to let go of conscious thoughts and allow a gracious sense of mindful attention flow through you. The simple act of walking can renew and refresh your body and spirit.
- Asking Questions: Maybe there is a burden you are carrying or a decision you need to make. Unspoken questions that only you can hear. The labyrinth experience can open your awareness so that deeper parts of you can speak to these questions.
- Encouraging creativity: Perhaps you are working on a creative project or innovating a solution at work. Walking the labyrinth can restore your energy and renew your creative resources. The labyrinth can be a place to be receptive to images that will deepen the creative process.

As you walk the labyrinth how will you  
Enjoy the generous gifts of nature?  
Enjoy the generous gift of time?  
Enjoy the generous insights of self reflection?

Friday, July 15

## Walking the Path with God

*“Spiritual discipline sets us free to pray, or to say it better, allows the Spirit of God to pray in us.”* Henri Nouwen

Labyrinth prayer is a contemplative spiritual discipline. It involves prayerfully walking a marked path like a pilgrim. Labyrinths have been spiritual symbols of pilgrimage for centuries. A pilgrimage offers us the opportunity to open our hearts and minds and walk humbly with God. On this sacred journey we can learn a little bit more about ourselves, explore thoughts and feelings and discern new ways that might be before us. The labyrinth journey gives us a place to remember, recognize and welcome God’s presence at the center of our lives.

Consider these prayerful ways to walk and pray the labyrinth.

**Meditation.** Meditate on a specific word or short phrase of scripture. Or recite a breath prayer such as “Lord have mercy” or “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

**Conversation.** Have a conversation with God. Perhaps use the path to the center for speaking and the return path for listening.

**Intercession.** Offer prayers for specific people, for the church, for our community and for the world.

**Discernment.** Ask God a question as you enter the path. Then as you walk slowly through the twists and turns, listen for an answer. Let your steps and your silence invite God’s guidance.

**Unburdening.** Lay down your burdens as you walk to the center of the labyrinth. Pause to thank God for taking your burdens on God’s self. Give thanks to God accompanying you on your journey.

How will you find God on the labyrinth path?

Friday, July 22, 2022

## The Path Shared

Whether you chose to walk alone or with others, your labyrinth experience will be a unique and powerful way to walk the path to greater understanding of self, neighbor and God. Please join us on the path.

As brainstorming with others brings minds together for new ideas, walking the labyrinth with others unifies hearts and minds for new inspiration, hope and clarity of vision.

As the prayers of the people increase our awareness of the presence of God in community and can strengthen our resolve, so also International Labyrinth prayer practices such as Global Healing Response seek to increase worldwide unified intentions for peace, cohesion, and healing.

Sharing our labyrinth with our neighbors, with school children, with people of other faiths and people whose faith is known to themselves alone, will show our unconditional love for and invitation to our neighbors.

**What inspiration might you want to seek in community? In what global prayer effort might you want to participate? Who might you want to invite to walk the labyrinth?**

Friday, July 31

## Going in Circles

What’s your path? What’s my path? What in heck does that question really mean anyway? In the interest of full disclosure you should know this is written by someone who has, over and over, flunked Labyrinth and worried about this question for many years. I like getting things done and am really not good at being asked to move in circles.

But leave it to the Stewardship folks to get my attention with a building project. We are building a Labyrinth, at least partly with our very own rocks. And the best part is that those particular rocks will be placed at the turns – romantically described as “meanders.” Kinda like our real lives! Rocks are starting to look different to me – more interesting, as though it might be nice to come back and visit the ones that were mine to put in place. Or maybe to see again the ones that were rather heavy that I needed to put down. Some of the beautiful ones that I’ll bring I bought from Owen (way before he got so tall) when he was called as a little boy to give them to parishioners and offer the opportunity to donate funds for our sister food pantry in Oakland.

I’m excited about this project for two reasons: At a St. John’s auction a while ago, I won a short course in walking a Labyrinth from Anne Meyer who somehow got through the thicket of my frustration and resistance and sent me off into the experience with a sliver of an open mind. And that experience was astonishing. Second, it was helpful to learn that my path was right where I was standing and that brought me peace.

And there is a third thing: these peaceful walks sometimes answer the question or the problem I bring, but often open up something surprising instead. Kinda like our real lives.

See you there,  
Doubting Thomas

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## RSVP NOW

Labyrinth designer Lars Howlett asked that the parish provide labyrinth rock setters and site helpers from September 9-12.

St. John’s contract states:

Client will provide minimum of four volunteers for three days (8 hours/day) to work with Artist installing rocks. Volunteers can work in shifts, eg. eight people working 4 hours each day. Volunteers must be active and hard-working, able to carry heavy materials and/or kneel for extended periods of time and work outdoors transporting materials and installing rocks, following Artist instructions.

Email Laurie Bennett (lebennett1950z@gmail.com) if you or someone in your family can take a shift. Let’s sign up more than six people to have an awesome work party!



**A Prayer by Thomas Merton**

My Lord God,

I have no idea where I am going.  
 I do not see the road ahead of me.  
 I cannot know for certain where it will end,  
 nor do I really know myself,  
 and the fact that I think I am following your will  
 does not mean that I am actually doing so.  
 But I believe that the desire to please you  
 does in fact please you.  
 And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.  
 I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.  
 And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right  
 road,  
 though I may know nothing about it.  
 Therefore will I trust you always though  
 all may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.  
 I will not fear, for you are ever with me,  
 and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Amen



Some of the labyrinth planners: Jerry Moran, Lilah Greene, Bob Davidson

**Where is T1?**

In July, 1997, St. John's purchased 5928 Thornhill Drive (T1). It was a single family residence with a large backyard that abutted St. John' House (1670 Alhambra) and St. John's parking lot. It was originally a rental property. After the adjacent 5914 Thornhill house was bought in 1998 and also turned into a rental, they quickly became known as T1 and T2.

The Time To Build Up campaign of 2002 envisioned T1 as the site of a bridge crossing Temescal Creek and a parking grove that would serve as a new entrance for St. John's church.



The T1 residence deteriorated over the decades as it had always been slated for demolition. The clearing finally happened in November, 2017, and it has been vacant until now – but still referred to as “T1”.



# Let's Build a Labyrinth

For many decades, the idea of a labyrinth on parish property has been discussed... and tabled. But in 2022 the idea has become a reality. In March, Lilah Greene started conversations with groups who had a history with the Thornhill 1 property – Strategic Planning Advisory Group, Campus Committee, current and former Vestry, and Staff. And the planning took off. Here is a pictorial view of the project.



April 21 after weed whacking - deciding on the labyrinth size and location  
L-R: B. Moran, L. Greene, J. Kridle, L. Bennett



Meeting with designer on April 28  
L-R: J. Moran, A. Meyer, R. Davidson, L. Greene, Lars Howlett



Final design July 9



Alfredo Garay begins clearing T1 on July 25



Gravel arrives on July 26. Perimeter ring is set, gravel is spread and compacted



July 28 - Sand is delivered, spread, and covered. Now it rests until next phase.



Lilah Greene's July 31 letter to the parish

## The Journey continues – the foundation is being laid.

The St. John's labyrinth will be dedicated and blessed as we celebrate 70 years in Montclair on September 25. It will be located on the southwest corner of the property known as Thornhill 1, close to St. John's house. The oak tree shaped design will be 34' in diameter. The meanders at the turns in the path will be filled with your contributed stones and rocks. There will be a railing to create safe and easy access. A bench near the pathway will allow for the rest, reflection and contemplation that is needed during the spiritual journey.

On this site, we will welcome our neighbors, school children, people of other faiths, people whose faith is known to themselves alone. This will be a sacred ground for St. John's to witness its commitment to "All are Welcome."

This has been an exciting and inspired time so far for those of us on the ground preparing for the St. John's Labyrinth. We hope you have all enjoyed the messages in the Friday emails. Now begins the work to explore another aspect of walking meditation – building the foundation of a generous and open heart. Our Stewardship vision for our land and our spiritual home - The Path of Generosity.

This next part of the journey was inspired by another of Scott's sermons. In that sermon, Scott shared the Dalai Lama's assertion that generosity is ultimately the source of wealth. He shared Mother Teresa's observations regarding the poverty of independence without interdependence and the spiritual wealth created in a community of love and compassion. Scott emphasized that Inner Wealth is the only wealth you can really have. As we move towards growing our inner contentment and communal strength with walking meditations, we want to explore the role generosity of spirit will play in strengthening our community.

The paths we are taking will lead us to the celebration of the labyrinth, our 70th anniversary in our woods and ultimately to our pledge campaign. We will be sharing meditations on generosity in the Friday emails through the month of August and continuing through September to the date of celebration September 25th.

Enjoy the journey ahead.

In gratitude and love,

Your Stewardship Team

## Worldwide Labyrinth Organizations

World Labyrinth Day on May 7, 2022 was organized by an Australian labyrinth society. This photo montage shows labyrinth walkers and dancers all over the world.

[https://youtu.be/a5b\\_xeHBxjI](https://youtu.be/a5b_xeHBxjI)

Global Healing Response is an international effort through which countless labyrinths are made available worldwide for people to walk during times of crisis disaster or trauma. Walking with a unified intention to bring peace and coherence.

<https://globalhealingresponse.com/>

The most recent event spurred by mass shootings asked people to walk with the question "What can I do to make a difference right now, and in the future, to create change that will contribute to ending this senseless violence."

Imagine walking our very own labyrinth and joining our prayers and intentions with a global labyrinth community with the goal of being the change we want to see in our world. Taking our labyrinth walking prayers into action, the church will definitely have left the building.

Veriditas, founded by Lauren Artress and based in Petaluma, "is dedicated to inspiring personal and planetary change and renewal through the labyrinth experience".



Our designer, Lars Howlett, is a Veriditas Faculty Member and Certified Advanced Labyrinth Facilitator. Anne Meyer is a trained labyrinth facilitator, too. We are so fortunate to have these resources so close. Much more information is here. <https://www.veriditas.org/New-to-the-Labyrinth>

## LABYRINTH DEDICATION

Sept 25th after 10 a.m. service



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