

Emmanuel Episcopal Church
4400 86th Avenue S.E., Mercer Island, WA 98040
(206) 232-1572 emmanuelmi.org

Labyrinth Fact Sheet

Labyrinth Team: Lesley Bain, Bob Baxter, Dorian Bersos, John Brennen, Octavia Chambliss, Jan Clark, Marilee Clarke, Peter Davis, Betsy Eason, Bob Ewing, Cecelia Finnigan, The Rev. Randy Gardner, Elizabeth Hardisty, The Rev. Beverly Hosea, Nathan Ihle, Pete Kangas, Mary Kraft, Sandy Maloof, Emmett Maloof, Mary Maxon, Bobbie Morris, Marilyn O’Neill, Margaret Philbrick, The Rev. Hunt Priest, The Rev. Carla Pryne, Andy Rosane, Anna Studenny

Dates: Between 2002 and 2009, several labyrinths were spray-painted and walked outside on the church campus. In 2010, with donations to cover the anticipated costs and with permission from the vestry, ground was broken on September 24th. After two weeks of work by the builder’s team and a week of finishing work by individuals, the labyrinth was functional by October 19th, 2010.

Design: The eleven-circuit Chartres design is 45’ in diameter, with 18” walkways combining 12” pavers with 6” fills of gravel. Three rows of 12” pavers comprise the outer circuit, for use by people using strollers, walkers, and/or wheelchairs.

Designers: Lesley Bain, Peter Davis and Margaret Philbrick

Material: Cement pavers in terra cotta (12” x 12” x 2 ½”) were purchased from Trend Set, a Canadian associate of Mutual Materials. These were chosen because they are thicker than pavers sold locally. Spaces between pavers are filled with 3/8” terra cotta gravel, with fine sediments included.

Labyrinth Cost: The budget to build the functional labyrinth totaled \$20,000, with \$10,000 from Emmanuel’s Memorials Fund matched by \$10,000 donated by over 40 individuals during the “Clean Sweep for the Labyrinth” in-house fundraiser.

Volunteer Hours and In-kind Donations: Individuals donated hundreds of hours of their time and skills. Examples include two Emmanuel work parties, one Scout Troop 457 work party, a Boy Scout Eagle project, donation of builder’s time, donation of architect’s time, and use of church staff time.

Landscaping: An outdoor “room” surrounds the labyrinth with ornamental perennials, native trees, shrubs and ground covers. Landscaping costs, benches, signage, and lighting were not within the \$20,000 budget, and may be added at a later date.

History of our Emmanuel Labyrinth

I'd like to respond informally to several questions asked of me recently. Please consider carefully before printing or sending on pages 2-4 of this History document. – Margaret Philbrick 02/05/11

We purchased the pavers at full contractor's price through Peter Davis, our builder. The local pavers were just 2" thick, and Peter decided that the thicker ones manufactured and sold in Canada by Mutual Materials would "sit still" the best. So, no, we did not get a discount on them.

However, we have a small wall to build in the labyrinth courtyard, and our estimate from Mutual Materials reflects a "benevolent discount" for Emmanuel. We used their materials before in many of our much larger grounds projects.

The labyrinth committee started small and grew over time. I became the organizing force. Lesley Bain, architect, drew up our plans and helped us work within city tolerances for building on church grounds. Peter Davis, the builder who is also my cousin, owns Peter Davis Builders. The three of us led the way.

Our committee grew to include many people drawn to the project, each of whom contributed an essential perspective or skill. Supporters of the project included a photographer, a sign and wall builder, a landscape visualizer, a number of church elders, a handicapped access expert, a student of labyrinth author Lauren Artress, a thank-you notes writer, several fund-raising leaders, and new friends providing key emotional and spiritual support.

Emmanuel staff supporting the project included the Facilities Manager, the Office and Communications Manager, and clergy. Emmanuel members involved included the Arts Commission chair, the leader of the Lay Weeders, our Green Team chair and the Clerk of the Vestry.

To build the best labyrinth we could offer, we decided that it must be:

- permeable
- handicapped accessible
- causing minimal physical and biological impact to the area
- very low maintenance
- able to fit into space about 50 feet wide
- comfortable to walk on, with the widest paths that would fit into the space
- easily accessible to everyone in our community
- sturdy enough to last at least 20 years
- elegant, with clean, simple lines
- affordable.

We agreed on our final pattern based on our chosen space, measuring 50' x > 50', and because the eleven-circuit Chartre labyrinth is an elegant, traditional pattern recognized and appreciated by many in our congregation and community.

Our maintenance plan remains very simple. We purchased several extra bags of terra cotta gravel, so we can refill the 6" wide channels as the existing gravel settles. The crushed rock works very well so far. It includes all the "fines", the fine-sized pieces, which wash down between the larger pieces to create the integrity of the whole. With spring coming, a few plant volunteers can be seen in the gravel. So far, we easily loosen that bit of gravel and pull the plants out, roots and all. If grass, moss, or weeds start to take over in a couple of years, we will likely just weed-eat or mow the labyrinth and enjoy it that way.

My first encounters with labyrinths were in support of Emmanuel's high school Journey to Adulthood (J2A) program. My daughter was one of an active, fun, and thoughtful group of teens, led in the program by their excellent teacher, Andy Rosane. Through walking labyrinths and trails together, Andy tied the J2A experience in a physical and spiritual way to the idea of pilgrimage. Long before traveling together in summer of 2002 on their own pilgrimage, the kids in the group chose the labyrinth as a symbol of their own journey to adulthood.

Over two years, the group visited many local labyrinths. I learned how to use Emmett and Sandy Maloof's paint-stripping machine, designed to line parking lots. I used it to create labyrinths on driveways, parking lots, and grassy areas.

The J2A group invited me as a chaperone on their pilgrimage to Maui, where we stayed in Kula at the invitation of The Rev. Heather Fitch. We accomplished service work at her church and with a ranger in the rainforest. We hiked into Haleakala Crater to spend an overnight.

The switch-backs on the hike into the crater reminded the group again of walking a labyrinth, this time with the dimension of depth added to width and length. This was a real path, leading them to an unknown destination, and together, with faith, they would eventually get to somewhere safely for the night.

After that experience back in 2002, I started encouraging Emmanuelites to build a permanent labyrinth for Emmanuel and our community. The right time for this project presented itself when Emmanuel celebrated its centennial in 2010.

Once more, I painted the labyrinth in the place where several of us thought a permanent one could be built. Over six months, we held labyrinth walks, served hot cider with cookies, included labyrinths in Adult Education, circulated books and articles on the subject, and put up an empty display board with pictures of paths: in the mountains, on the beach, in snow drifts and in the desert.

We worked together to draw up rationales, conditions, and plans for building the best labyrinth we could at the site we had chosen. We shared those plans with the Arts Commission, who recommended the vestry approve them. They did so.

I then sought vestry permission to fundraise for a permanent labyrinth, and they said to go ahead. They approved a \$10,000 gift from the Memorials Fund. I decided to try to match that with another \$10,000 collected through fundraising. I purchased good brooms of a type the Kitchen Guild sold years ago. "Clean Sweep for the Labyrinth" brought in \$10,000 from the parishioners by offering a broom to each donor giving \$100 or more or giving whatever they could afford.

With the funds and plans in hand, we received permission from the vestry to go ahead and build the labyrinth. In three weeks, our labyrinth was up and running.

The labyrinth is available for public use at all times. We have no desire or means of closing the area off from our community. All who come in peace are welcome. A bright spotlight in the parking lot sheds a shadowy light onto the labyrinth at night, which is enough light for some people. Others use flashlights. In the future we hope to place solar or low-voltage lighting around the edge of the labyrinth.

I received, as a gift from my brother, an introduction to meditation when I was in high school. In the summer of 2008, I took a refresher course from him. Then, in the fall of 2008, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Through diagnostic biopsies, surgery, chemotherapy, radiation and reconstructive surgery, I counted on meditation to keep me calm and strong. I dreamed of building a labyrinth someday, so that I could walk outdoors and meditate at the same time. That dream has come true. I now walk and meditate, starting with the Cascades at my back and the Olympics ahead of me.

Landscaping the labyrinth area continues. Several steps are included in our plan, and include development of the adjacent overlooked grass courtyard.

We will define the outdoor "room" with more perimeter plantings. We may change some of the existing sprinkler system to a drip irrigation system to more efficiently sustain newly installed plants. We may provide low lighting for ease and safety of walking the labyrinth after dusk. Where there were rotted railroad ties, we will create a berm separating the courtyard from the parking lot. The parking lot side will have a short wall of Roman Stack Stone. The inside of the berm will lower to the lawn in the courtyard. Wooden benches will provide relaxed outdoor seating.

A sturdy sign at the entry point will inform our visitors about the labyrinth. Another sign, at the labyrinth or in the church lobby, will list donors of time, talent, and treasure who gave this labyrinth to all who come in peace and goodwill.