



Labyrinth Network Northwest News

Labyrinth Spotlight:

Parkview Center Labyrinth--McMinnville, Oregon

The first time Genne Sherman walked a labyrinth several years ago (it was a canvas one in a basement at Camp Magruder), there were no *fireworks*: “There were no bells ringing or whistles blowing; it was just a nice quiet time,” she told me on a recent cool, dry day in McMinnville, Oregon.

But in today’s loud and busy world, a ‘nice quiet time’ can be a rich, rare treat. And that walk must have made quite an impression on Genne because in the ensuing years she has been one of the driving forces behind the construction and ministry of a large 11 circuit turf and gravel labyrinth at Parkview Center, a short drive from downtown McMinnville. The labyrinth is a project of McMinnville Cooperative Ministries and is located 325 NE Burnett Road.



Genne and I sat on two cement benches to talk about her work on the labyrinth. She told me first of all that the journey from labyrinth dream to labyrinth reality was not always easy (like Bilbo Baggins discovers fairly early on in *The Hobbit*, journeys are “not always pony-rides in May-sunshine”). Permission to build the labyrinth came fairly quickly—but with no funds attached. So the work was all volunteer and most of the accessories had to be procured through donation or discount. And then there was the weather—near-Biblical rain (which actually turned out to be a blessing, softening the ground for the trench digger), followed by hot sun. About fifty people gave time and energy to the project. Chief among the workers were Genne and her husband Dick and their friends Gene Osborne and Susan Means Osborne. The initial trench digging

was hard and arduous work, the men operating the digger and the women transporting hunks of sod into the ditch by the road. In the end, it came down to two weeks before dedication and there was some panic over whether the labyrinth would be ready in time. Genne and Susan shed some tears over that—but in the end, the men’s sweat and the women’s tears got the job done and the June dedication was a success. So this labyrinth was born, as many good things are, of the tension of opposites: sweat and tears, hope and doubt, sun and rain, dream and hard work.

The Parkview Center labyrinth is large—a good forty feet in diameter at least. The gravel paths are generous, the green grass lines between them are rich and full and clear. A ring of small pines and deep red barberry bushes marks the circumference of the labyrinth. An archway at the opening provides a clear portal into *temenos*. The two cement benches and a birdbath just outside the archway provide a lovely place to sit and reflect either before or after a walk and a third bench beneath a nearby tree, with herbs planted around it, offers another good spot for reflection. The center of the labyrinth is large with an ample refuge made of



concentric pavers with six large grass petals around it, reminiscent of the center of the Chartres labyrinth. On the day that I visited there were stones in the center of the labyrinth with evocative words printed on them: Smile, Love, Journey, Joy, Care, Peace.



I asked Genne where the seed of the idea for the labyrinth at Parkview came from and she had this story to tell: “One day in services, the pastor asked the question, “What are you passionate about?”” And that question resonated with Genne and wouldn’t leave her alone, so she meditated on it. One day, while she was mowing the five acres at Parkview Center (a considerable, mesmerizing job), the answer came to her. “This! This Land! I’m passionate about this land!” she realized. She too had felt that it was sacred ground and gradually it came to her that a labyrinth would be a perfect feature to allow others to experience that sacredness.

So the work began—the hard work, the dreaming, the wild imagining of how the labyrinth would shape up. And help came from all directions in many forms—things were offered (trees, benches, birdbath), and things appeared (the plaque, the angel in the rock), and people of all kinds arrived with rolled up sleeves and ideas of their own. So the labyrinth that Genne first imagined has been delivered by many hands.

The Sunday School of her church recently invited the kids’ class to the labyrinth. The day scheduled for the event turned out to be a rainy one and the teachers wondered if they should cancel and hold the retreat indoors on a canvas labyrinth when the very wise bus driver pointed out that he’d *never known children to melt in the rain*--and so on they went. And it turned out to be a magic time of dripping umbrellas bobbing and circling and many delighted children having their first taste of life in the labyrinth.

While we talked, Genne wondered aloud how she might let more people know about the location of the labyrinth, how to get the word out and attract people to it. Near the end of our interview, a woman walking two small white dogs appeared and was delighted to see the labyrinth. She lived nearby but hadn’t realized the labyrinth existed until she’d read an article about it. She wondered if her worship community might use the labyrinth for their own rituals. She and Genne exchanged information and the dogs walked with their owner into the labyrinth for a brief and lighthearted attempt at walking its path. We were both delighted at this clear case of posing a question, being open to an answer and receiving one with astonishing speed. As the woman walked away, happy and full of plans forming, Genne and I shook our heads and smiled.

In the future, the Shermans and the Osbornes hope to install signs to alert passersby to the location of the labyrinth and to attend the Robert Ferre Facilitator Training to learn more ways to use the labyrinth with groups. The Parkview Labyrinth is a lovely sacred spot and I highly recommend that you take the time to visit it if you’re ever near McMinnville, Oregon.



Parkview Labyrinth is located a 325 NE Burnett Rd., McMinnville, OR
For directions or information you may call McMinnville Cooperative Ministries at 503.472.5622 or go online to www.mac-coop.org/ and click on the link “Related Ministries.”

LNN Proudly Presents

Robert Ferre's New Look

Surprise! He's cut his hair!
It's a new Robert!



Be among the first to see
Robert's New Look at

Public Lecture
Robert Ferre
Chartres Cathedral:

Its Relevance
Yesterday and Today
Friday, April 25, 2008

7 - 9 PM

\$15

Community Health Education Center
Legacy Meridian Park Hospital
19300 SW 65th Ave.
Tualatin, Oregon

Save the Date Summer Labyrinth Pilgrimage - July 19



The LNN Summer Meeting is scheduled for the Saturday, July 19 beginning at noon.
It will consist of a field trip to two labyrinths in Northwest Portland.
Details to be announced. Check the LNN Calendar.

KIDS ON THE PATH



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW
TO BRING A LABYRINTH
PROGRAM TO A SCHOOL

How to Order Kids on the Path Video

At the October LNN meeting, we previewed the video "Kids on the Path" about school labyrinths created by the Labyrinth Resource Group of Santa Fe, New Mexico. The DVD contains a photo history of labyrinths, an introduction to school labyrinths, and a brief description of the steps to create a school labyrinth program. A manual containing 32 pages of lesson plans and classroom ideas is also available.

A flier and order form for this DVD and manual are now available in the document section of the LNN Resources page.

<http://www.labyrinthnetworknorthwest.org/resources.html>



Joe Smith in the News



Our friend and neighbor Joe Smith and his labyrinth in Chico, California were featured in the *Chico Enterprise Record*. Joe made many friends when he attended the first Northwest Regional Labyrinth Gathering in 2006.

Read this article in the document section of the LNN resource page.

<http://www.labyrinthnetworknorthwest.org/resources.html>