

## PRESS RELEASE

### GILBERTSVILLE KY

Groundbreaking for an outdoor labyrinth is set for later this month at St. Peter's of the Lakes Episcopal Church near Gilbertsville. The 45-foot-diameter labyrinth, to be constructed of crushed stone dust and recycled red bricks, will be situated on church grounds adjoining the Memorial Gardens, and will be open to the public, as well as to St. Peter's parishioners, for walking and meditating. The site will be wheelchair accessible.

The project, first proposed nearly five years ago, will be accomplished with a combination of donated labor and equipment as well as hands-on work by members of the small western Kentucky congregation. "We started out with some donations and memorials earmarked for a labyrinth," noted the Rev. Nick Jaeger, priest associate at St. Peter's of the Lakes, "but the project got a real boost with the help of an offer for the use of machinery and labor from one of our members who has a construction company. Once the ball got rolling, the labyrinth took a giant step to becoming a reality."

Plans for the labyrinth include excavating and ground preparation, then using a fabric-like template to set the pattern of spiral walkways, center circle and borders, followed by additional landscaping. According to Fr. Jaeger, a group from St. Peter's visited the labyrinth at New Harmony, Indiana, for inspiration. Like the proposed St. Peter's facility, the New Harmony labyrinth has only one path that winds throughout. "It becomes a mirror for where we are in our lives," he added. "It is our hope that our community and visitors to the Lakes area will visit the site and find rest and renewal. They would be welcome to visit the church, too, but the labyrinth will be a separate area on the church grounds."

The idea of a labyrinth dates back to prehistoric times and is perceived as a sacred space. Today, labyrinths are used throughout the world as meditative and healing tools. A labyrinth is a design consisting of a single continuous path from an entry point to a central goal that twists, turns and folds back on itself-- the longest possible distance between two points. Though dictionary definitions are virtually identical, most people distinguish a labyrinth from a maze, which has branches that force the visitor to choose which way to go next.

According to the KET “Kentucky Life” program aired in 2009, mazes are “puzzles, designed to challenge and even frustrate,” while the labyrinth, with its one clear path, is meant to “calm and focus the mind.” The program noted that by the Middle Ages, labyrinths were a feature of many churches, and pilgrims walked them as an act of devotion. Outdoor labyrinths, similar to the one proposed at St. Peter’s of the Lakes, can be found at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Louisville, Cliffview Catholic Retreat Center in Lancaster KY and at Danville’s “Pathway of Peace.”

According to Christina Onnybecker, the St. Peter’s of the Lakes project coordinator, a labyrinth, often called a “Path of Grace,” is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness. “It contains the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path,” Onnybecker explained. “The labyrinth represents a journey to our own center and back again out into the world.”

She noted that the St. Peter’s labyrinth will serve as a direct experience for participants. “We can walk it. We can stop and meditate. It is a metaphor for life’s journey, and you receive what is there for you to receive.”

St. Peter's of the Lakes is located at 47 Black River Road, just off Highway 641, north of Draffenville. It is near the entrance to Kentucky Dam Village State Park. "Just take a turn at the flag," said Fr. Jaeger.

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