

St Barnabas – A Haven of Contemplation, Solace and Peace

One of the things we are most missing is the opportunity to be inside our beautiful church building. We are a congregation that delights in the beauty of holiness and in being in sacred space, on sacred ground. Your rector and vestry have been prayerfully considering how we might be able to enhance and make available our outdoor spaces, given that we've been unable to gather together in church these last many months.

One of our parishioners and one of our assisting priests came to me contemplating building a labyrinth on the grounds of St. Barnabas. Their thoughts? *A labyrinth is a "spiritual tool that reduces stress, quiets the mind, and opens the heart. It is a walking meditation, a path of prayer and a blueprint where psyche meets Spirit."* (Rev. Lauren Artress) *Given the current situation with COVID and the political unrest in the country, a spiritual tool that is outside and accessible to all of us to use for meditation and prayer seems like a great and timely idea. It would provide our parishioners a safe place to worship on St. Barnabas grounds [and] could also connect us to the community at large. We would have a beautiful labyrinth that is easily walkable to downtown Bainbridge.*



The Orcas Island Emmanuel Episcopal Church labyrinth.

All sorts of information has been gathered, from construction to materials to bids and builders. Your vestry asked good and important questions as they prayerfully considered the possibility. *"Should we spend \$10,000 on a project that isn't essential when there is so much need right now?" "What benefit would our St Barnabas community receive from this project?" "How could this be an invitation to the wider community to enjoy the beauty of the St Barnabas campus?"* These are just a few of the questions they asked.

The vestry has been prayerfully holding this possibility for some months now. At our last meeting, the vestry decided they would like to move forward with this project. Here are some of the things your vestry has concluded...

I believe that having a labyrinth on the grounds will be a great way for our church community to incorporate nature and faith more fully, especially in these times when being indoors together is risky. I also believe it may be a draw to bring people of the community into our faith, through the labyrinth experience. For me, walking a labyrinth encourages my connection to my own faith and ability to bring the tenants, beliefs and spiritual essence into my being, for a more contemplative internal experience. Vestry nominee, Judith Hanna

The opportunity we have with the Labyrinth goes well beyond aesthetics. The Labyrinth gives parishioners and community members a way to physically interact with the church within COVID guidelines. I also think it is a great way to memorialize this period for the St. Barnabas community. Having the Labyrinth outdoors is a reminder of the COVID-induced exile from our buildings and the introspective nature of the Labyrinth can be symbolic of how we used this time to reflect on social injustice and to grow. Dave Teves, vestry

The labyrinth will benefit both congregants and the wider community. For parishioners in the time of pandemic it offers an opportunity to come to the grounds of our beloved St Barnabas to pray and reinvigorate our

contemplative lives with a practice that might be new to us. For those unfamiliar with St Barnabas, it welcomes them onto our campus and speaks to the importance we place on prayer, contemplation, and inner work. If newcomers walk the labyrinth, they might decide to walk a little farther one Sunday and join us in worship.
Angie Bickerton, vestry

One of my memorable Labyrinth walks was while I was at the Women's retreat at St Andrews House. Another at Emmanuel Episcopal Parish on Orcas Island. It would be a lovely to have Episcopalians and others discover ours at St Barnabas. Rosalys Peel, vestry

The Labyrinth will provide a lovely finishing touch to the St. Barnabas Memorial Close. I really like to envision the spirit of my mother walking in company with all those on the path of the labyrinth. She will welcome the company! Will Nickum, Senior Warden and son of Bettie Nickum, to whom the Madonna statue in the Close is dedicated.

I love labyrinths. There's no such thing as too many labyrinths (I can think of 6 on BI). Education around the beauty of the journey, the endless metaphors, the history, the usefulness, the outreach will be needed. Its design will need to enhance our surroundings. Vestry nominee, Barbara Bolles

I think it would be good for the church to have [this] project to work on. The Labyrinth could in some ways serve as a long-term reminder, a memorial to the terrible events of 2020. I think it would be a good use of the space; I looked at it, and I think a small Labyrinth would look nice there. It is something that people could use now, provided proper spacing is observed. We have the funds - some commitment from existing funds (\$3,600) and a healthy balance in our unrestricted savings. Kirk Eichenberger, member of the vestry and finance committee

I fully support the creation of a Labyrinth to be installed near the Memorial Close of the church. I believe a Labyrinth would serve our congregation especially well during the COVID pandemic when we cannot use our church. Also, I believe the intricate combination of paths or passages are particularly useful for contemplative prayer or other reflection. Steve Schmitz, vestry

We see the labyrinth as a key element of connection with our God, with our community, with the wider community and with ourselves. It will be another beautiful focal point of a contemplative and welcoming campus. The vestry is also working toward the full restoration of the Liz Orr Memorial Trail and Rev. Jim has offered to create a video showing the walk along the water from the ferry to the St Barnabas campus and labyrinth.

All that's left is to hear from you. We'd like to know what you think about this project and hope you will let us know. Please email info@stbbi.org with your thoughts. We are very excited about this project and the possibilities it brings to our church. Faithfully, Karen†