

The Peaceful Path Project



The seeds for this project were planted by a child's question. She had been watching me walking an outdoor labyrinth at a retreat centre, and asked me what I was doing. I explained as simply as I could, and her immediate response was, 'Can I do it?' I told her she could, and the next minute she was walking the labyrinth with enormous care and concentration. The following day she was back again, this time with 2 young friends, and for the rest of the week these three children hardly left the labyrinth alone. I realised they were deeply drawn to the path, and that this was something I needed to ponder.

I started to work on some ideas for a project to introduce children to the labyrinth. A few weeks later the opportunity to do a feasibility study arose when I was asked to organise a labyrinth day for ninety 7 and 8 year olds at Archbishop Wake CE Primary School. The enthusiastic feedback from both staff and pupils alike led to the setting up of the Peaceful Path Project.

The Peaceful Path Project - Why?

Spirituality. Walking a labyrinth creates a sense of inner stillness and peace, allowing space for reflection and prayer. The fact that this is achieved through walking makes it particularly appealing to children, who due to their natural energy often find it hard to be still and to achieve a sense of quiet reflection. Walking the labyrinth is a form of embodied prayer that allows children to be both physically active and contemplative.

The labyrinth is a spiritual tool found in all major world religions, and as such offers a unique opportunity for children of different faiths and belief systems to walk a common path together, thus contributing to a sense of community. The labyrinth helps to focus our attention on what unites us rather than on what divides us, and is therefore particularly appropriate in schools, where it is usual to find a diversity of beliefs.

Wellbeing and Resilience. Childhood today can be a difficult time, with many children experiencing periods of anxiety and stress-related illness. Walking a labyrinth enables children to release stress and anxiety. The practice of labyrinth walking is therefore gaining increasing respect within schools, colleges and universities as a significant tool for promoting student wellbeing and personal growth.

'It's such a great experience to walk through a labyrinth following your feet and in the middle to get rid of your worries and come back out with none at all!' Alys age 10

The Peaceful Path Project - How?

The Peaceful Path Project offers day workshops in primary schools, offering children the opportunity to

- learn about labyrinths and their uses, both historically and today
- create their own finger labyrinth for personal use
- experience walking a labyrinth in small groups
- express and reflect on their experience creatively through art.

I provide a 24 foot medieval-style portable labyrinth which can be laid in the school hall. Carefully chosen music, candles and incense may be used to help create a sense of sacred space.

The Peaceful Path Project – Who?

I have over 20 years' experience of working with children both in schools and community groups, including leading school workshops and INSET training for DEED (Development Education in Dorset) and running Salisbury Cathedral's Sunday Club. I am a qualified labyrinth facilitator, and have given presentations on the labyrinth in Salisbury Cathedral and Sarum College, as well as holding labyrinth walks in a variety of settings such as the cathedral, retreat centres, schools, parks and beaches.

Price. £150 per day or £100 per half day plus travel. I am happy to negotiate with small village schools.



If you would like to book a workshop or have further questions, I would be delighted to hear from you.

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What teachers say about the Peaceful Path Project.

'My class loved their experience of the labyrinth. The atmosphere you created was beautifully calm. The moment they got into the hall they all got in the reflective and calm mindset. I was especially surprised by one little girl with developmental delay. She normally makes a lot of sounds and yet was silent for at least 10 minutes – incredible! I thought it was brilliant. I also benefitted from the resources sent beforehand.'

Reception

'Fantastic! The children engaged with the labyrinth and remained calm and peaceful the rest of the day. The room was set up beautifully with candles and incense, making it feel very holy and special.'

Year 3/4

'The children loved the whole experience, from listening to your assembly at the start of the day, walking through the labyrinth, playing with the finger labyrinths and looking at the books. The children want us to paint a labyrinth in our playground. We are looking into how much this will cost. We will definitely have you back next year.'

Head teacher

Children's comments.

I loved the labyrinth. I knew God was with me. Tyga

I felt like I had left my sadness behind. Aoife

I was on a journey with God. George

I liked sitting in the middle and thinking. Toby, age 5

I felt like all my troubles went away when I got to the centre of the labyrinth and were replaced with kindness and hope. Mia

We took God away from the labyrinth. He is in my pocket. Henri, age 4

I felt angry when I walked into the labyrinth. Now I feel much better.

It was very quiet in the labyrinth. The classroom is noisy. I liked the quiet in the labyrinth.

It made me feel very peaceful, like stroking my cat.

When we sat down in the middle I prayed for my Grandpa who died.

I had no idea it would be so beautiful here.

I heard my Wise Voice say, 'Be brave and confident.'

When I came to school I was very wound up. My head was full of annoying thoughts saying, 'It's not fair! It's not fair!' But the labyrinth has got rid of all my annoyances.

It's our parent/teacher consultations tonight and I've been feeling very worried about it. Now I feel peaceful.

I'd like to do it again!