

May 24, 2019

Along the Way: We make the path by walking

One sign of spring is the spiral of the fiddle fern emerging from the earth. Spirals show up so often in nature: galaxies, whirlpools, snail shells, flower petals, chameleon tails and the labyrinth on the floor of the Chartres Cathedral. I think humans have an innate attraction to the spiral and its message of renewal. Having just returned from a pilgrimage with Plymouth members to walk the Chartres Labyrinth, I am reminded of how walking the labyrinth brings a renewed awareness and a deepened consciousness. The labyrinth is a metaphor for the journey we are all on. Along the way there are many lessons to be learned.

During this program year at Plymouth Church, we have been in a process of intentional learning about our white privilege and fragility. As I look back, I see great progress even though it has been hard. Often the challenge for worshippers is to leave the security of the sanctuary/chapel and go outward to perform deep, loving service to the world, carrying the gifts and experience of worship to the heart of things. Or we struggle to open our sacred space to be a place of welcome for others.

There is a mythic appeal to walking the labyrinth because it opens us to questioning our habits and certitudes. The same mythic and mystical appeal is at the heart of worshipping together. We are in one point in time in which everything is in transition, the maps no longer fit the terrain, and the terrain no longer fits the map. But there are certain sureties, certain patterns in mind, body and spirit and nature. The spiral can remind us that the one who created us walks with us along the way. And as Antonio Machado has written: "We make the path by walking."

—Paula Northwood