

Meditations on a Food Labyrinth

By Joyce Thompson Graham



Our food labyrinth was laid out in a 28 foot circle in the auditorium of an old elementary school, now neighborhood cultural center. The sounds of busy highway traffic could be heard, but inside the auditorium was a circle of light with mid-winter sunshine streaming through the tall windows and marking the well-worn floors.

Throughout the afternoon, with notes of classical guitar or soprano saxophone or serene harp wafting through the space, visitors came and went and the labyrinth began to be lined with cans and boxes of food.

I sing, I pray, I talk to God throughout my days, often pulling aside from busy moments just to breathe a “Thank You,” but I’m not much for organized, disciplined religious practices. So, I walked the labyrinth because I felt I should be supportive. It was, after all, an event for my concern, a food pantry. When first I entered the labyrinth, I noticed the foods; the peanut butter, tuna, cereal, soup, and pineapple. The next time through I became aware of areas where the food was sparse, and then, in ten steps, or further, it might become plenteous again. It was not hard to find meaning in that, to see the bounty and then to imagine those with very little.

People continued to filter in, some pausing on the path for reflection, for prayer; others carried a candle; some stood silently and took in the music . . . and the labyrinth filled. The next time I walked the path, I could not hold back tears and I don't know if they came because there was so much more food or because the labyrinth itself was speaking to my soul.

As I stood in the glimmer of the lights in the dark room, in all the prayers and good intentions of all who'd passed through that room in those hours, I felt it in my bones that the place had become sanctified by our thoughts on the poor, on hunger; our thoughts on our neighbors and friends who would be nourished by that food. We had brought to an old school auditorium a certain holiness, for that moment.



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