

Labyrinth weeken

By **Mary W. Cox**, editor

"The labyrinth is for everyone," the Rev. Dr. Lauren Artress told participants in the opening session of the May 26-30 labyrinth weekend at the Duncan Center. "It's a wonderful spiritual pattern, firmly in the Christian tradition, but open to everyone."

More than 40 people attended the first night of the labyrinth retreat, focused on the theme "The Labyrinth as Living Parable." A few participants were Episcopalians, but many were from other traditions.

Most had walked labyrinths — some had even built labyrinths — but some were new to the practice. There were clergy and academics on sabbatical; a physical therapist; and a couple who own funeral homes and want to learn to use the labyrinth as a way to help people deal with grief. Some were dealing with transitions in their lives and others were trying simply to clear away "clutter" and stay centered in a period of turmoil.

Artress, who is founder of Veriditas, the organization that has reintroduced the labyrinth as a spiritual practice, began the retreat with an informal presentation on the history of the labyrinth in ancient cultures and religions. She spoke specifically about the 11-circuit labyrinth laid in the



Artress

d offers “parables” for the journey

floor of Chartres Cathedral in France in 1201. The Chartres design is the pattern for both labyrinths at the Duncan Center.

She explained that the labyrinth is a parable, a metaphor for each person's spiritual path, and urged each person attending the retreat to find the parable for his or her own life in the labyrinth experience.

The labyrinth is a practice in which there is no division between body, mind and spirit, she said, and can satisfy our “hunger for direct experience with Ultimate Reality.”

On Friday evening Artress asked that the whole group walk the labyrinth in the Schofield Chapel together. On Saturday, the schedule allowed free time for individual walks on either the chapel or the outdoor labyrinth, for journaling, reading, reflection or conversation — even, Artress suggested, for a nap. Dreams, she said, could be “walked” as part of the labyrinth experience.

Sunday afternoon 32 clergy attended a session led by Artress on “Opening the Divine Imagination.”

On Monday and Tuesday, May 29 and 30, 17 persons — some of whom had attended other parts

of the weekend — participated in Labyrinth Facilitator Training. The assignment for those trained is to find at least three groups to lead in a labyrinth walk during the next year.

• The Rev. Dr. Lauren Artress will return to the Duncan Center Nov. 30-Dec. 3 to conduct another series of labyrinth events.

A retreat Nov. 30-Dec. 1 will focus on the theme “Opening the Divine Imagination” and a Labyrinth Facilitator Training will follow on Dec. 2-3.

For more information, contact Veneta Lorraine at the Duncan Center, 561-496-4130 or email vlorraine@adelphia.net.

Computer consultant Kip Barkley, a member of St. Gregory's, Boca Raton, who has led labyrinth walks for church and other groups, participated in both the retreat and the training.

“I liked the stories of what has happened to others on the labyrinth,” he said. “I liked the

‘everything on the labyrinth is a metaphor’. When I would lead retreats before, the engineer in me would come out. I'd tell people how to build [a labyrinth] and then say, ‘Just go walk it’.”

The engineer's “Just go walk it” was not a bad start: Artress reminds all pilgrims on the labyrinth that there's no right or wrong way to walk it.

“A labyrinth is a great way to get reconnected to the path,” she says.

For more information on labyrinths and the work of labyrinth facilitators, go to www.veriditas.net.