

Submit VBS details

Vacation Bible schools open to the public will run on the Religion page. Please include the following information: the complete name of the church; address with city or township; time, date and location of sessions; program theme; ages or grades; and whether it's free or there is a fee.

Information should be submitted two weeks before the school's opening or its registration deadline.

Send the information to the Religion Desk by email to religion@vindy.com; by fax to 330-747-6712 and marked for the religion desk; or by mail to The Vindicator, P.O. Box 780, Youngstown, OH, 44501-0780.

For verification, include a name and phone number of a contact person, which will not be published.

Taste of the Faiths

BOARDMAN

Mahoning Valley Association of Churches will sponsor its annual Taste of the Faiths Festival at 5:30 p.m. Monday at St. Charles Borromeo Church social hall, 7345 Westview Drive.

Congregations are invited to prepare specialties from their churches in appetizers, meat dishes, vegetables, breads, desserts, cookies and pizza. Suggested number of portions is 50 that are small enough so that people can sample a variety of offerings. Hot or cold food should be ready to eat.

Silent and pick-a-prize auctions are planned. Entertainment will be featured at 6:30 p.m.

The cost is \$15 per person in advance or at the door by cash or check. Visit www.mvaonline.org.

Prayer team

YOUNGSTOWN

City Prayer Team of Youngstown will meet at 10 a.m. May 12 at Fifth Avenue Community Church, 1361 Fifth Ave., for a prayer assembly.

Gospel Echoes

CORTLAND

The Gospel Echoes will be in concert at 6 p.m. Sunday at Calvary Bible Church, 2878 Warren-Meadville Road.

A free-will offering will be accepted. A nursery will be provided.

Communal anointing

YOUNGSTOWN

The St. Anne Society of Holy Apostles Parish will host a communal anointing of the sick and elderly service at 5:30 p.m. May 17 in Cardinal Mindszenty Hall, 545 N. Belle Vista Ave., which is handicap accessible.

St. Anne is the patron of grandparents.

Light refreshments will follow the service.

For information, call Margie Sams at 330-759-9454.

Spring banquet

HUBBARD

Crossing Paths local TV ministry, founded by Donald G. Reed Sr. and seen on more than 70 cable companies, Channel 27, FOX 17-62 and UHF 29, will have its annual spring banquet at 6:30 p.m. May 18 at the Brentford House, 737 Myron St.

Guest speaker will be Patty Scahill, conference speaker and author.

The event is free and open to the public, but no children younger than 12 should attend. Reservations are required by calling 724-981-7777 by Thursday. Table sponsorship is \$100 for a table of eight.

First sermon

YOUNGSTOWN

Valeria Glean Johnson will preach her first official sermon at 3 p.m. Sunday at Greater Friendship Baptist Church, 646 Lakewood Ave., where the Rev. James C Bowie is pastor.

Johnson, who was born and raised in Panama, moved to the United States and lived in Virginia from 1986-1992 and relocated to Ohio in 1992. She has three children and one grandchild.

Take path of quiet reflection by walking labyrinth at Ursuline Center



JESSICA M. KANALAS | THE VINDICATOR

Eileen Novotny, director of program development at the Ursuline Center in Canfield, and her husband, Ray Novotny, chairman of the Ursuline Center Board, stand in front of the labyrinth outside at the center. During a recent open house at the Ursuline Motherhouse, Eileen Novotny offered a presentation on labyrinths.

PRAYER TOOL

By LINDA M. LINONIS
religion@vindy.com

CANFIELD

EILEEN NOVOTNY CHARACTERIZED a labyrinth as a "prayer form that uses the body."

Designs of the ancient prayer tool are depicted on pottery and stone dating back 5,000 years.

The labyrinth at the Ursuline Center is in its third year.

"Oral prayer uses the left brain," said Novotny, program development and spiritual director at the center.

"Walking the labyrinth taps the right brain ... the more reflective side."

Novotny said the labyrinth at the Ursuline Center is used daily by people "of all faiths." "Prayer itself can be calming," she said, noting that people have told her how "peaceful" they feel after walking and praying the labyrinth.

She said she believed the combination of prayer and being outdoors put people into a "relaxed zone." Novotny said these times of economic uncertainty have made people worry, and the labyrinth provides a respite.

Novotny said each person who walks the labyrinth has an "individual experience." But, she said, comments from those who walk the labyrinth have reflected one similar reaction. "They became more open to whatever came into their lives, she said.

Last Sunday, the Ursuline Center had the first in a series of labyrinth walks on various themes. It was "Journey of Spring." Novotny offered a Power Point presentation in the center while Jim Hall and Ray Novotny, her husband, offered assistance at the labyrinth.

Novotny said the labyrinth fits into the mission of the Ursuline Sisters of Youngstown, who came to the Mahoning Valley 136 years ago to minister to the pastoral and educational needs of the immigrant population.

She said the labyrinth provides an opportunity for "quiet and reflection," a contrast to many people's hectic lives. The labyrinth "is a metaphor for the spiritual journey."

Novotny said the Ursuline Center's labyrinth is based on the 11-circuit design in the cathedral of Chartres, near Paris, France, which dates to 1220. The Ursuline labyrinth is nine circuits in a circular pattern. The path of the labyrinth is called the "Chemin de Jerusalem," that is, the road to Jerusalem.



Sabrina Gatts, 5, just a few steps in front of her sister, India Gatts, 8, of Austintown, walk the labyrinth on the grounds of the Ursuline Motherhouse and Center in Canfield.

Novotny said she scoured various websites on labyrinth lore for information. She also noted the labyrinth is found in many cultures. Some examples are the Native American "medicine wheel" or "man in the maze;" Celtic "never ending circle;" and the kabala in mystical Judaism.

Some may confuse a labyrinth with a maze. She said a passage that stated "maze is intended to get people lost, a labyrinth is a tool intended to help people get found" summed up the goal of a labyrinth. The labyrinth has a circular path with the way out as the reverse of the way in. The pathway leads to the center then back out.

The importance of the labyrinth in Christianity is demonstrated, Novotny found, in its role for pilgrims. She said during the Middle Ages many Christians vowed to travel to Jerusalem, but by the 12th cen-

tury, conflicts impeded such trips. The church named seven pilgrimage cathedrals in Europe to represent Jerusalem. Walking the labyrinths in these cathedrals, she continued, marked the "ritual endings" of the pilgrims' physical journeys.

Novotny said three basic movements connect personal journeys with Catholic mystical tradition. They are:

Releasing (purgation) is the path of "letting go" and putting our lives in the hands of God. Walk with palms down.

Receiving (illumination) is at the center, where people are in a receptive, prayerful and meditative state and may commune with God.

Integrating (union) is the path out and becoming grounded and integrating our insight. Walk with palms up.

LABYRINTH WALKS

At Ursuline Center

Ursuline Center, 4280 Shields Road, Canfield, will offer labyrinth walks now through September that will alternate between Tuesday and Thursday nights.

Schedule: "Journey of Mary" will be at 6:30 p.m. May 22; "Journey of Summer" at 6:30 p.m. June 21; "Journey of Freedom" at 6:30 p.m. July 24; "Journey of Harvest" at 6:30 p.m. Aug. 23; and "Journey of Learning" at 6:30 p.m. Sept. 25. The last walk will be at 2 p.m. Oct. 21, the Feast of St. Ursula, on the theme "A Journey of Autumn."

Assistance: The center will provide a facilitator for groups. Call the center at 330-799-4941.

Background: The labyrinth is an ancient pattern found in many cultures around the world. Labyrinth designs were found on pottery, tablets and tiles dating as far back as 4,000 years. Many patterns are based on spirals from nature. One shared feature is one path that winds in a circuitous way to the center.

Rebirth: There is an 11-circuit labyrinth of Chartres Cathedral in France. This pattern, once central to cathedral culture, was inlaid into the stone floor in 1201. It has been reintroduced as a spiritual tool.

Use: Labyrinths are being used worldwide as a way to quiet the mind, find balance and encourage meditation, insight and celebration. They are open to all people as a nondenominational, cross-cultural tool of well-being.



Trish Yurckefrodl of Austintown concentrates as she walks the labyrinth. "It's a journey. It has its twists and turns," she said.



Tom Bresko

Qualities listed for home church

My pilgrimage hasn't only involved searching for answers to "big" questions regarding theology, doctrine, or orthodoxy. It's been interesting in other ways too.

For instance, I don't have a "home" church, but hope to find one soon.

To that end I've attended a variety of churches over the past two years to experience different services of Christian faith.

As I sat in numerous pews and participated in the services, I say with great respect that some were good, and some, well, not so much.

Highly personal, I know, but the following three components of any church will be important to my decision.

♦ **Community:** The majority of churches focus heavily on building community within its doors and I felt more welcome and comfortable in some churches than others.

Greeters at the door helped somewhat, but shortly thereafter I would look down the rows at backs of heads, all eyes on the priest or pastor, and feel separated from those alongside me.

I wished they had a platform to share their positive, personal experiences of God (or questions for that matter).

Quite often, the sermon would reassure the congregation that those in attendance were "correct in their beliefs," members of an exclusive club and would one day be with God.

My inference that Jews, Hindus, Muslims and others would not be so fortunate separated me from the many outside the church's doors.

As Jesus taught, I long to be a part of an inclusive community.

♦ **Music:** It helps tremendously.

Sincerity of effort appeals to me more than quality of performance.

I have been equally moved by large choirs accompanied by huge bands as well as small, more personal choirs with a single pianist.

I admire and appreciate all the hours these dedicated volunteers put into practice and their praise of God.

♦ **Sermons/message:** It certainly helps if the priest or pastor is a dynamic speaker who knows how to weave a life-affirming message in a clear, concise manner.

Longer sermons don't equal a better message.

I prefer a preacher who applies Jesus' teachings for daily living that takes me to a higher plane where I feel spiritually enhanced, optimistic, and more apt to love God and my neighbor rather than the fearful talk of "end times."

Specifically, many churches provided a sacred high point.

Services at Mount Calvary Pentecostal Church in Youngstown and the Newman Center in Columbus struck a deep and beautiful chord within me.

A negative experience occurred at the World Harvest Church in Columbus, a mega-church that attracts 5,000 weekly.

The day we attended, the "prosperity gospel" was preached, that is, give to the church and God will give to you materially and spiritually.

My fiancé and I were offended, however, when asked to "take out a piece of paper and write three things you expect from God!"

Really? How about, "What does God expect from us?"

We left the service after the third request for dona-