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## **Minister rallies Christian parents to pull children from public schools**

By Jeff Huett

COLUMBIA, S.C. (ABP) -- As Moses led the children of Israel out of Pharaoh's bondage in the book of Exodus, a South Carolina minister is hoping to lead Christians out of America's public schools.

E. Ray Moore Jr. of Columbia, S.C., and his home-based Exodus 2000 ministry say America's "government" schools are unsafe "spiritually, academically and physically." Moore says any hope of redeeming public schools is lost, and the only alternative is to remove Christian children into private and home schools.

Public schools are "unconstitutional, unbiblical and un-American," Moore said in an interview. They "cannot be reformed and no effort should be made any longer," he said.

The goal of Exodus 2000 is to have all 12 million evangelical children currently in American's public schools in either a private Christian school or in a home-school situation where Christianity is valued and taught.

"It's my hope and prayer that a fresh obedience by Christian families to the biblical mandate concerning the education of their own children will be the key to the revival of our families, our church and our nation," Moore said.

Currently, about 52 million children attend public schools in the United States, while more than 1 million are schooled at home.

Since announcing his plans at a Promise Keepers rally on the Washington Mall in 1997, Moore has been lobbying for support from the evangelical community.

In a letter to an official with Focus on the Family, Moore predicted that a movement to purge the public schools of Christian children "would literally electrify and invigorate the church as nothing has done in modern times."

"It might trigger the revival we are all awaiting so expectantly," he maintained.

While he has nothing against revival, Lee Berg, a former minister who now works for the National Education Association, says Moore's ideas about public schools are nonsense.

"For 28 years, Rev. Moore has been claiming that the public schools are hostile to religion and to Christians," said Berg, who was a Southern Baptist minister for 23 years. "However, we believe that when parents look closely at their children's schools, they will see a lot of the same teachers actively involved in the church as Sunday school teachers or deacons."

Pointing to equal-access legislation passed in the 1980s, Berg said there is probably a greater amount of voluntary religious expression in public schools than ever before.

"We see the public schools as the foundation of democracy -- a place where a very diverse society learns to cherish freedom, respect each other, share with each other and work together for the common good," Berg said.

Jim Foster, spokesman for the South Carolina Department of Education, said Moore's attempt to discredit the American public schools is "ludicrous."

"Christianity is the major religion in South Carolina, and most of the people who run the South Carolina public schools are Christian," Foster said. "The United States is a melting pot of people and more than anything else, the public schools have been responsible for melding the cultures together into a strong nation."

Put simply, Foster said, children need to be educated and the South Carolina Department of Education is in favor of anything that gets that done -- public, private or home schooling.

Moore said he has received endorsements from prominent individuals including syndicated columnist Cal Thomas, conservative radio talk show host Michael Reagan, TV preacher D. James Kennedy and Southern Baptist leader T.C. Pinckney. Pinckney is a former member (1988-1996) of the Southern Baptist Convention's powerful Executive Committee and is current editor of the Baptist Banner, a conservative newspaper in Virginia.

Pinckney said his own children were educated in public schools, but his 12 grandchildren are being schooled at home. He called home schooling the best alternative for Christian parents. "Government schools have gotten so bad that a person who spends time to educate themselves on the issue comes to the same conclusion on the effectiveness of home schools," he said.

Whether a school is public or a private, Christian school, Pinckney worries about the effect large classes have on the learning process, especially when classes contain slow learners. In a classroom, some students may be on a plateau while others are ready to "step-up" to a higher level. That is not a problem with home schooling, he said, where students advance at their own pace.

Pinckney himself skipped the fourth grade by studying at home over a summer.

"A kid working on his own, with his mother or father there to answer questions, can do in a matter of months what children in classrooms do in years," he said. "There is just so much time wasted when you put children in classrooms."

Pinckney says the Bible also favors home schooling. "Part of God's plan for parents is to educate their children," he said. "Parents are the ones God gave empathy to for their own children."

"The teacher who has 25 children in her classroom has not been endowed by God with a specific understanding of each child -- the mother and father have that," Pinckney said.

Kennedy, pastor at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Ft Lauderdale, Fla., featured Moore and several other leaders of similar Christian-education movements on his Coral Ridge Ministries TV network. The show reaches 35,000 cities in 165 countries.

"I wasn't sure how successful it would be, but I told (Moore) I would endorse it," Kennedy said.

Kennedy has long advocated Christian schooling and home schooling instead of public schools, but with these broadcasts, Kennedy is "poised to become a leading voice among national Christian leaders on behalf of the separation/exodus theme," Exodus 2000 wrote in a news release.

Although the Exodus 2000 founder is a part of the Bible Church movement, he insists that reaching large numbers of Southern Baptist churches is the most important step his ministry can take. But are Southern Baptists listening?

Moore first sought attention from SBC leaders. He said he has spoken with current SBC president Paige Patterson twice about Exodus 2000. Patterson was "kind and warm" and heard him out, he said, but did not issue an endorsement.

Patterson told Knight-Tribune news service the issue could cause division in the nation's largest non-Catholic faith group. "You have a lot of sympathy there, but you also have an enormous number of Southern Baptists who would say, 'Let's not abandon the public schools,'" he said.

This year's Southern Baptist Convention passed one resolution urging churches to support Christian schools and home schooling and another affirming Christians who teach and work in public schools.

David Baker, national pastor adviser for the Southern Baptist Association of Christian Schools, proposed three of a total of six resolutions dealing with Christian schools that were considered by this year's resolutions committee. But instead of rallying for an exodus, Baker said he sees a continuing need for public schools.

"The intention of most of our private schools is not the demise of the public schools," said Baker, pastor at First Baptist Church in Belton, Mo.

Baker said in his work as liaison between the association and the SBC, he travels to Washington yearly to meet with public educators and lawmakers about education issues.

"We're not at a point where I see no hope in public schools," Baker said. "But neither do I see a lot of hope."

Baker said the most fundamental problem with public schools is their inability to adequately involve parents -- an involvement that is basically built in to the Christian schools.

Though not officially endorsing the Exodus 2000 project, the SBC has established a division of its LifeWay Christian Resources to the cause of Christian education and home schooling.

In 1996, LifeWay hired Glen Schultz to organize Christian schools and assist parents by developing teaching resources.

Schultz said he and his six-person staff, as well as about 10 networking partners, are working "as fast as they can" to develop Christian curricula for use by parents who choose to educate their children in a biblical worldview.

Since Oct. 1996, Schultz said, the division has published a middle-school Bible curriculum, literature-teaching guides for children ages kindergarten through eighth grades and an in-service curriculum for Christian-school teachers. LifeWay also has a book titled "Kingdom Education: God's Plan for Educating Future Generations," which is a source on Christian principles that guides the total education of a child, Schultz said.

"We're trying to teach churches how to start Christian schools, and if churches already have them, then we're trying to make them stronger in their biblical principles," Schultz said.

"The options are becoming limited for parents," he said. "They are seeing that in order to teach their children a biblical worldview they must put them in Christian schools or either school them at home."

## **Religious, educational groups endorse school-church partnerships**

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- While the Constitution requires the separation of church and state, that doesn't mean local churches and public schools can't work together in a variety of ways, according to recently released guidelines endorsed by a number of religious and educational groups.

The guidelines state that partnerships between public schools and religious organizations can provide students with crisis counseling, mentoring programs, safe shelters and released-time religious education -- all without violating the First Amendment.

Titled "Public Schools and Religious Communities: A First Amendment Guide," the document was drafted and published by the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, the American Jewish Congress and the Christian Legal Society.

The guidelines state that the First Amendment requires public schools to be neutral concerning religion and that cooperative activities between public schools and religious organizations must be "wholly secular."

While acknowledging that public schools and religious institutions have different missions, the guidelines suggest that "by working together in ways that are permissible under the First Amendment, as interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court, schools and religious communities can do much to enhance the mission of public education."

In many school districts, "the church is the only institution left intact," said Steven McFarland, director of the Christian Legal Society's Center for Law and Religious Freedom. "Yet schools have mistakenly thought the First Amendment requires them to ignore and shun any help from this invaluable resource. And the victims of this misinformation are the students."

McFarland said the new guidelines specify that clergy may provide crisis counseling and teach religion off-campus in released-time programs. Also, churches and other community buildings "can provide a safe place to do homework, play sports, get tutoring and be paired with a Big Brother or Sister."

The guidelines say schools may call on a wide range of qualified counselors -- including religious leaders -- to help students deal with a sudden crisis, such as the accidental or violent death of a student or teacher.

The stipulation is that religious leaders cannot be the only grief counselors invited on campus during a crisis and that clergy may not otherwise be given routine access to students during the school day.

The guidelines also spell out that religious institutions, along with other community institutions, may also serve as "safe shelter" from threatening situations and provide mentoring programs.

In addition, public schools may allow students with parental permission to leave campus for religious instruction under "released-time programs." The Supreme Court ruled such programs constitutional nearly five decades ago.

Education groups endorsing the guidelines include the American Association of School Administrators, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National PTA and the National School Boards Association.

The guidelines were also endorsed by religious groups, including the Baptist Joint Committee, the National Association of Evangelicals, the Council on Islamic Education, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. and the U.S. Catholic Conference.

Brent Walker, general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee, called the guidelines a "reasoned, balanced attempt" to be faithful to the First Amendment while seeking to promote the well-being of public school children.

Walker said the guidelines offer a better response to tragedies such as the school shootings in Littleton, Colo., than do proposals to return state-sponsored prayer to public schools.

The cooperative activities outlined in the guidelines, he said, "will help make a difference, and, most importantly, make a difference in the right way."

Oliver Thomas, special counsel for religious and civil liberties of the National Council of Churches, noted that through such activities as literacy classes and before- and after-school tutoring programs, "churches can provide invaluable resources to neighborhood schools."

The new guidelines, he added, "will provide a blueprint for structuring such creative partnerships in ways that are both constitutionally permissible and educationally sound. The ultimate beneficiary of this joint effort will be the millions of children who attend public schools."

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## **Carson-Newman administrator named president of Campbellsville**

CAMPBELLSVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Carson-Newman College administrator Michael Carter has been named 10th president of Campbellsville University, effective Aug. 1.

Carter, 44, was the unanimous choice of trustees of the Baptist-affiliated school in south central Kentucky, officials announced July 8. He will succeed Kenneth Winters, who announced plans last fall to retire after 11 years as Campbellsville president.

Carter has been associated with Carson-Newman, a private school affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention, for 14 years. Since 1989 he has been provost and vice president for academic affairs, making him the college's second-ranking administrative officer.

"This is truly a great day for Campbellsville University," said trustee chairman Larry Noe, who also chaired a presidential search committee. Noe said the search committee knew it had its work cut out in finding someone to fill the shoes of the previous president. "But we genuinely believe that God has led us to that person," he said, predicting Carter "will take our institution to the next level."

Carter, a native of Huntington, W.Va., holds a bachelor's and master's degree from Marshal University and a doctorate from Ohio State University. He has been an associate pastor at Baptist churches and taught previously at Judson College in Elgin, Ill., and Warner Southern College in Lake Wales, Fla.

He and his spouse, Debra Ann Carter, have three children: Eric, 23; Alicia, 17; and Wesley, 9.

Campbellsville, a private school founded in 1906, enrolls about 1,600 students. It has been one of the fastest-growing educational institutions in the Southeast during the last decade and has been listed as a "best" college by U.S. News & World Report and Money magazine. It is affiliated with the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

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-- By ABP staff

## **Study by conservative group links youth violence with music**

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Hard rock music is a "virus" in American culture that contributes to youth violence, charges a report released July 8 by Paul Weyrich's conservative think tank the Free Congress Foundation.

Eighteen religious leaders endorsed the report, including Southern Baptist Convention president Paige Patterson. Elected officials representing communities that have experienced youth violence also endorsed the report, including Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, a former pastor and past president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

The 18-page report, titled "There Is A Virus Loose Within Our Culture: An Honest Look at Music's Impact," includes 140 footnotes with references to social and behavioral-science research, survey data and other information.

While it does not endorse any specific policy proposals or action strategies, the report "will provide a solid, factual basis for whatever approach concerned parents and citizens wish to pursue to help America's youth," says its author, Thomas Jipping, director of the Free Congress Foundation's Center for Law and Democracy.

Jipping says the report "absolutely demolishes" the music industry's claim that popular music does not negatively affect youth.

After 15 people died in a high school shooting April 20 in Littleton, Colo., Gov. Bill Owens said "there is a virus loose within our culture," referring to visually powerful elements of youth culture such as television, movies and video games. Jipping's report set out to examine whether non-visual media like popular music might also incite young people to violence.

The report notes that the Columbine killers idolized shock-rocker Marilyn Manson, and so did other perpetrators in recent incidents of teen violence. The music industry, Jipping says, dismisses that as a coincidence and contends music reflects violence in culture but does not cause it. His report strongly disputes that contention.

"No one, of course, argues that popular music is the sole cause of youth violence," the report says. "Something as complex as human behavior does not have a sole cause. The question is not whether popular music is the exclusive cause of youth violence (something no one seriously argues), but whether there is any 'basis in truth' for the proposition that some popular music makes a real contribution to youth violence (something only the music industry denies.)"

According to the report, music surpasses television as an influence in teenagers' lives. Studies show that teenagers listen to an estimated 10,500 hours of rock music between the seventh and 12th grades -- 500 hours less than the total time they spend in school over 12 years.

Studies indicate that some kinds of music can negatively affect behavior, both directly by increasing discomfort in family situations and poor academic performance, and indirectly by presenting values, worldview and attitude that guide individual behavior, the report says.

The report says consumers of negative or destructive messages listen and internalize them more than those who listen to more neutral messages. It contends that themes such as glorifying violence, sex and drug use "are now the rule rather than the exception" in popular rock and rap music.

The report claims the music industry "simply ignores all the evidence of harm ... and claims that this is all about differences in musical tastes." It quotes Marilyn Manson as saying musicians are being unfairly "scapegoated" and that Elvis Presley was subjected to the same "age-old argument, scrutiny and prejudice."

"Elvis never glorified violence or urged young people to seek revenge," Jepping replies. "The truth is that what makes today's popular music different is the greatest source of concern; its advocacy of violence and other destructive behavior."

"In his song 'School Days,' Chuck Berry once sang of teaching the Golden Rule and of students studying hard and hoping to pass," the report says. "In their song, 'School Daze,' the group W.A.S.P. (We Are Sexual Perverts) depicts the classroom as a 'juvenile jail,' a 'blackboard jungle,' and a 'homework hellhouse.'" The report quotes liberal syndicated columnist Ellen Goodman, who observed, "Rock lyrics have turned from 'I can't get no satisfaction' to 'I'm going to force you at gunpoint to eat me alive.'"

The 18 religious leaders who have endorsed the report represent the evangelical, Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish communities. They include John Cardinal O'Connor, Archbishop of New York, and Paige Patterson, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, the country's largest non-Catholic denomination. Others include former SBC president Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., and Jerry Falwell, pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va.

Elected officials adding their endorsement include Gov. Mike Huckabee (R-Ark.), author of "Kids Who Kill: Confronting Our Culture of Violence." More than 200 grassroots organizations have also endorsed the report, including numerous Religious Right organizations.

The Free Congress Foundation was founded in 1977 by Paul Weyrich, its current president. According to its Web site, the organization advocates "cultural conservatism" with a main focus on America's "Culture War."

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-- By ABP staff

## **Growing up with divorced parents, Miss Alabama learned to rely on God**

By Jason Skinner

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- It was the moment every pageant contestant dreams about -- being on stage in front of thousands, holding hands with the other five finalists and anxiously awaiting the winner to be announced.

So why wasn't Julie Smith nervous? "I remember thinking, 'Why am I not freaking out about all this?'" Smith recalls. "I just had a huge peace about this pageant."

Smith, 23, who was crowned the 1999 Miss Alabama June 19, says her strength, poise and confidence are derived from a number of sources, including her family, her friends and -- most importantly -- her faith.

Smith was 8 when she went into her mother's bedroom one evening and told of her desire to accept Jesus into her heart. She had learned of God's love and forgiveness while growing up at Huffman Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., where her mother led the Acteens group.

"I've always told people I started going to church nine months before I was born," jokes Smith. While her family was always involved in church, Smith found out early in life that even Christian families aren't immune to problems. Her parents divorced when she was 6, leaving her mom to raise Smith and her younger twin sisters, Jill and Jennifer.

Smith says it wasn't until seventh grade that she forgave both of her parents and dealt with the hurt caused by the divorce. Years later, when a best friend's parents separated, Smith learned that God could use her situation to bring healing to others in need.

"God really opened up a lot of doors for me to help friends," Smith says.

And while growing up in a single-parent household meant the girls "didn't always have new clothes," Smith says her mom did a great job providing for her children and always kept the house filled with more than enough laughter and love.

"I never felt we were growing up without something," she says.

Smith also received an outpouring of support from her church family. Women offered to keep Smith and her sisters after school, while men in the church acted as "father figures," she says. One "father figure" who stands out in Smith's mind is her former youth director, Terry Slay, who is now minister to students at Hunter Street Baptist Church in Hoover, Ala.

"He was a huge influence in my life," says Smith. She calls Slay "a wonderful example of what a godly husband and a father should be."

Like those who modeled Christ for her as a teenager, Smith now hopes to be someone young girls can look to for an example of a woman after God's own heart. "Middle school and high school is such an impressionable age," Smith says. "It is real important to have strong role models."

One way Smith encourages seventh-12th grade girls to develop their spiritual awareness is through Acteens, the church-based organization for young girls sponsored by Woman's Missionary Union.

Smith was heavily involved in Acteens while growing up. She went on to serve as a camp counselor for both Acteens and Girls in Action after graduating from high school. She was selected as a national Acteens Top Teen in 1993, served on the national Acteens advisory board and performed theme interpretations with a drama group during the 1994 National Acteens Convention in Birmingham.

In addition, Smith was featured in a video about Acteens years ago and in August 1993 was pictured, along with her two sisters, on the cover of Accent, WMU's magazine for young girls.

Marti Solomon, who served as Acteens consultant for WMU when Smith served at the national level, said of her then, "She is one of the finest Acteens I have ever worked with ... very poised and articulate."

Jan Turrentine, editor of Accent magazine during the same time period, says of Smith: "She was -- and I assume still is -- a very fine young woman, very talented and focused."

Smith says her life experiences -- her parents' divorce and coming up short in previous pageants -- have taught her to "take joy out of the struggles." She finds this attitude taught in James, her favorite book of the Bible.

"All that matters is that you do your best in life, no matter where God has put you," she says. "He puts all of us here for a reason." And now, as Miss Alabama, Smith looks forward to the travel, to meeting new people and to the opportunities that lie ahead to share what God has done in her life.

Smith says Miss Alabama is different from most pageants in that there are "so many Christian people involved." Smith, who graduated cum laude from Samford University in Birmingham in May 1998, qualified for the Miss Alabama pageant by winning the title of Miss Leeds Area. For her talent, Smith played the marimba, a large wooden percussion instrument resembling a xylophone.

Smith's platform issue is breast-cancer awareness: "Early Detection ... Giving the Freedom to Fight." Her career ambition is to be a corporate media-relations director, specializing in broadcast journalism, print and electronic media and marketing promotions.

## **Labyrinths help Baptists develop spirituality**

By Annie Lewis

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- In a harried age when the busiest person is deemed the most successful, two Baptist churches in Virginia are using an ancient tool that requires their members to slow down and ponder their spiritual journey.

River Road Church, Baptist, and First Baptist Church, both in Richmond, are using the labyrinth to help their people get closer to God.

In 1995, River Road rented a portable labyrinth to use as a meditative tool, at the suggestion of a member active in Chrysalis, a non-profit educational organization in Richmond that constructed the first labyrinth on the East Coast.

Last January, a 40-foot square canvas arrived at River Road, and six volunteers began drawing and painting the church's own labyrinth. They finished it the weekend of Palm Sunday. On Good Friday, the labyrinth was open for six hours, and 25 to 30 people walked it.

First Baptist rents a labyrinth from Chrysalis during certain religious holidays. Last Easter weekend around 100 people, mostly single adults, experienced the labyrinth, according to Ralph Starling, minister to singles.

The emergence of the labyrinth predates Christianity by more than a millennium. The most famous labyrinth in ancient times was in Crete, the lair of the mythological Minotaur.

Labyrinths have been discovered in almost every time period and culture since.

The Hopi Indians of North America based their medicine wheel on the classical seven-path labyrinth. In ancient England, Germany and Scandinavia, labyrinths made in the turf are thought to have been linked to local deities and fertility rituals. In Jewish mystical tradition, the Kabbala, the tree of life, is an elongated labyrinth based on the number 11.

Though no one is entirely sure, it is thought this ancient symbol was introduced to Christianity during the Crusades. At the time, Christians took holy vows to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but the Crusades made Palestine too dangerous for such a journey. As a substitute, several cathedrals had labyrinths inlaid in the floor so that Christians could use them as symbolic replacements for a pilgrimage. In lieu of traveling to Jerusalem, people would simply walk the labyrinth in a local cathedral.

The most famous of these labyrinths is in Chartres Cathedral, a Gothic church that looms above the French countryside 60 miles outside of Paris. Construction of Chartres began in 1194 and was completed in 29 years.

The labyrinth at Chartres is an 11-circuit design. It has served as a model for other labyrinths, including those of Chrysalis and River Road Church.

Lauren Artress, canon of Grace Cathedral Episcopal Church in San Francisco, is responsible for reintroducing the labyrinth as a spiritual tool to modern-day Christian churches in America. At a retreat, Artress rediscovered the tool, which had "dropped out of human awareness more than 350 years ago." Since Artress brought the labyrinth to her cathedral in late 1991, over a million people have walked it.

Artress is also the creator of Veriditas, the worldwide labyrinth project ([www.gracecathedral.org](http://www.gracecathedral.org)), and has written a book, "Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool." Artress says her belief that humans have "lost our sense of connection to ourselves and to the vast mystery of creation" led her to develop the project and to write the book.

Bob Dibble, minister of education at River Road Church, described the labyrinth as "a large experiential metaphor for the spiritual journey."

"There is something mystical about it," Dibble said. He also noted "a growing interest in matters pertaining to the devotional life" in the last 10 years. In a hectic world, he said, "Matters spiritual get crowded out."

"People hunger for tools to help them with this," Dibble said.

Starling agreed. "In the busy world we live in, times of slowing down, centering and silence are needed," he said.

For members of both churches, the labyrinth is a tool that helps fill a spiritual void. Though the labyrinth is "a little new for most Baptist folks," Starling said that many people at First Baptist have really taken to it.

Dibble has received similar positive reactions. "The labyrinth may be out of the normal comfort zone for Baptists, but those who have participated in our church sing its praises as a tool for developing their spirituality," he said.

Christine Radano is a member of River Road Church and a student at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. This past Easter, she served as a hostess for the labyrinth, greeting people and orienting them to the walk.

She believes that the rise in popularity of the labyrinth among Protestants "emanates from a less aggressive attitude toward the Catholic Church."

"There is now a movement to say that Catholics do have something to offer us," she explained. "They are advanced in spirituality."

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-- Annie Lewis of Richmond is an intern at the Religious Herald this summer. She is a student at Vanderbilt University.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Grace Cathedral Episcopal Church in San Francisco offers on its Web site a database to find the location of a labyrinth near you or sells a \$125 kit to build you own. To access the labyrinth project, go to <http://www.gracecathedral.org/labyrinth/index.shtml>

## **Walking the walk: 3 stages of a labyrinth**

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- There are three stages in a labyrinth walk.

The first is purgation, as the walker releases the worries of everyday life by winding on a set path towards the center.

Once the pilgrim reaches the center, the illumination stage begins. The center of the labyrinth is a place for meditation and prayer.

Bob Dibble, minister of education at River Road Church in Richmond, Va., said people often "will bring their own journals or Bibles." Walkers may stay in the center for as long as they like.

The third stage, union, occurs during the walk back out from the center. During this stage, pilgrims reflect on what they've experienced and prepare to enter the outside world.

Dibble clarified that a labyrinth is different than a maze. "There are no dead ends, no tricks. There is only one way in and out."

While mazes require logical, analytical thinking, Lauren Artress says, "labyrinths invite our intuitive, pattern-seeking symbolic mind to come forth."

Churches may vary slightly as to how they set up the labyrinth walk.

First Baptist in Richmond plays soft music or Gregorian chants as people walk by candlelight. Some walkers choose to sit on the edge of the canvas mat to prepare their hearts and minds for the experience. Often people bring along Scripture to read once they reach the center.

Ralph Starling said that the experience brings out different emotions in people; "some need a little Kleenex."

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-- By Annie Lewis

EDITOR'S NOTE: A series of stories on "multicongregational churches" that ran in ABP July 8 should have been accompanied by an editor's note indicating they appeared previously in FaithWorks magazine. They are used with permission.

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