Memorandum

Date: December 16, 2013

To: Land Use Committee

From: Peter Krumm, Laura Proescholdt, Jane Wilson; Environmental Philosophy Students

Re: Luther College Labyrinth Project

Overview

We propose that a labyrinth be installed on the Luther campus. We are trying to address the fact that there aren’t many places in students’ lives that are designated solely for meditation and spiritual reflection. Many students spend a significant amount of time during their college careers feeling stressed and overwhelmed. A labyrinth would provide a place of refuge free from distractions (such as cell phones, laptops, and homework) to be quiet and find peace through deep breathing or prayer. We also propose that this labyrinth act as a memorial to students who have passed away during their time at Luther College. This labyrinth could be a place to reflect and remember these students.

Background

The idea of a labyrinth has been tossed around in the campus consciousness for some time. We were told that a labyrinth was actually included in the original design for campus. Pastor Mike Blair has also expressed a desire to find a way memorialize students who have lost their lives during their time at Luther. We feel that a labyrinth would be a good way to bring together these ideas and an addition to campus that would contribute to Luther’s past and its future.

Activity

Late September

- Asked Pastor Mike Blair to be our faculty advisor for the project
- Walked around Upper Campus with Pastor Blair to determine possible labyrinth locations
- Took photographs of possible locations with the canvas labyrinth from the CFL

October

- Contacted Lisa Gidlow Moriarty, from Paths of Peace Labyrinths, to discuss how to go about the process of constructing a labyrinth, and how to determine size
- Met with Emily Neal, coordinator of Luther summer camps, to discuss alternative options for the Olin Oaks area
- Researched potential cost for the project

November
• Visited proposed labyrinth sites with head of Grounds, Paul Frana, to discuss possible concerns and considerations, maintenance issues, and materials
• Met with head landscaper at Luther, Perry Halse, to discuss plantings and to obtain a landscaping cost estimate
• Met with Greg Lonning to discuss fundraising opportunities
• Discussed fundraising with Pastor Blair
• Met with Ann Peterson from the Development Office to discuss possible donors/sponsors
• Presented proposal to the Land Use Committee to determine a tentative location

Recommendation

We propose that a labyrinth be installed in one of the following five locations:

• Olin Oaks
• Down from Sunnyside hill, near Pioneer Memorial
• Behind Olin, right outside the circle of oaks
• Near SHL and the Decorah Pool

The labyrinth would be somewhere between 40 and 60 feet in diameter and consist of paths made from some sort of paver (limestone or otherwise). In between the paths would be Winona Stone. Encircling the labyrinth, we visualize a variety of native plants including prairie grasses, flowering bushes, etc. The labyrinth would act as a memorial to students who have passed away during their time at Luther.

We feel that “Olin Oaks” is the best location because of its accessible, yet still quiet atmosphere. It is also an aesthetically pleasing location because the oaks make a perfect circle that would echo the circular nature of the labyrinth. It is also a relatively flat location that wouldn’t require tree removal. The location at the bottom of Sunnyside hill is attractive because it is a space that is not currently in use. It also has rich soil that would be conducive to landscaping. Finally, it is a space that is accessible because it is near the road.

Rationale

Part of our rationale for this project is that the use of a labyrinth could extend to many groups on campus as well as individuals and members of the Decorah community. We expect that the following groups are part of the many that could benefit from the use of a labyrinth:

• Individual students
• Community members
• Counseling Services
• Campus Ministries
• FOCUS
• Soul Food (Eucharist)
• Active Minds
• Fitness and Wellness students
• Environmental Philosophy students
• History, Art, Religion, Physiology, etc. classes
• Could be useful to student research (topics including archeology and history, healing, stress management, spiritual practices, etc.)

**Next Steps**

We still need to determine what type of pavers we would use for the labyrinth path. We have been considering limestone pavers, however, we would need to talk to some Decorah area stonemasons to determine the best type. Price is also a consideration with these pavers. Going forward, we also need to solidify the dimensions for the labyrinth. This will be determined after the potential site is decided upon. Another important consideration is whether or not we should light the labyrinth.

We also need to consider how the memorial aspect of the labyrinth will function. It is possible this will require a policy change, where the name of the deceased student is automatically engraved into a stone. Names could also be engraved after a gift to specifically do so from the family or an individual.

After deciding upon a potential site, we would need to enter in to Luther’s process of obtaining bids from construction companies.

**Information from Land Use Committee:**

After meeting with the Land Use Committee on November 26th, it was determined that a labyrinth would fit into the overall campus concept/the campus Master Plan. Committee members suggested the area behind the CFL as a location to consider in going forward. They expressed concern that the location down from Sunnyside Hill (on Leif Erickson Dr.) would see too much vehicular traffic. The committee also eliminated the area near the pool due to flooding issues and the area behind Olin due to the conflict with summer camps. We agree that the CFL would be a good location to consider, however we feel that the location near Leif Erickson Dr. would actually be best. We feel that the light vehicular traffic in this area would be less disruptive than the pedestrian traffic behind the CFL. We also feel that the area behind the CFL would present difficulties because it is not level and contains memorial trees where excavation would need to take place.

To go forward with this project, we would need to decide between the area behind the CFL and the area down from Sunnyside Hill on Leif Erickson Dr. To do this, we would need to be in further contact with the Land Use Committee. After deciding this, we would need to determine the size of the labyrinth to fit the area that we’ve decided upon. After determining size, we would need to decide on the materials we would like to use and get an estimate on cost. From this point, we could look into how the project could be funded through contact with the Development Office, Campus Ministries, etc.
Contacts
Pastor Mike Blair, Campus Ministries; blairmic@luther.edu
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Appendices
Appendix A- Luther Map with Proposed Locations
Appendix B- Photos of Proposed Locations
Appendix C- Labyrinth Design Template, Labyrinth Example (Boston College Memorial Labyrinth)
Appendix A: Campus Map with Proposed Locations

First Choice
Second Choice
Third Choice
Appendix B: Photos of Proposed Locations

Location 1: Olin Oaks

Location 2: Sunnyside Hill

Location 3: Pool/SHL
Appendix C:
Labyrinth Design Template (from Paths of Peace)