



Gracious Friend
Finger Labyrinth

Created by Bill Ressler, 2010
In memory of our gracious friend Jane Blaffer Owen (1915-2010)

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One “walks” a finger labyrinth with one’s finger or a pen or a pencil. As one explores the Gracious Friend finger labyrinth, which offers one way in and one way out, the following guide provides an explanation to the significant images which are represented.

Take time - and enjoy.

Bill Ressler & Penny Taylor
2010



This finger labyrinth was imagined by Bill Ressler during a visit to New Harmony, Indiana in July 2010. As family and friends gathered to remember and celebrate the life of Jane Blaffer Owen one could not help but reminisce on how Jane opened her house to family and friends near and far. Although words and images fail in defining who Jane Blaffer Owen was, this labyrinth was inspired by our relationship, Bill Ressler and Penny Taylor, with Jane which began with a visit to New Harmony in 2007.

The Path of a Gracious Friend...

As one enters...

At the beginning it is tempting to race directly into the middle, the final end - but oh, so much would not be explored. Our journey with Jane and New Harmony began several years prior to arriving - as students at Chicago Theological Seminary in Chicago our Professor the Dr. Robert Moore, on more than one occasion, recommended a visit to New Harmony, Indiana - the final resting place of Paul Tillich, a theologian we study. Finally in May 2007 an opportunity opened, much like the path opens before one, and we arrived in New Harmony. This short visit to the Inn and Tillich Park raised many questions including: “Why is Paul Tillich buried in New Harmony?” A simple question, but to discover the answer, we were told: “One must speak with Jane.” Upon returning home Bill created the Tillich Park Finger Labyrinth in remembrance of this first trip and sent Jane a copy. Soon we were headed back to New Harmony - this time to meet with Jane and to begin a much appreciated relationship with a very gracious friend.

Before entering the labyrinth - note the surroundings. The path begins by the fence, on the boundary of the unknown, and the fence is decorated with white ribbons - as was much of New Harmony for Jane’s Memorial Service in July 2010. On the right is Jane’s home where Jane and Miss Lilly, her cat, would welcome visitors. Her “boat” (as she called the back room of her house) was a place to meet. To the left is the grassy yard leading to the Poet’s House where Paul Tillich stayed during his visit in the 1960s.

Beginning the “walk”...

As one enters the labyrinth they are met with a winding path in a sea of color, reminiscent of all the flower beds which grace the streets of New Harmony, Indiana. Enjoy the journey deeper into the labyrinth through the garden path.

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Tillich Park...

The first place for reflection is Tillich Park where the theologian/philosopher is interred. It was here during our first visit in May 2007 that Bill was inspired to design the Tillich Park finger labyrinth imposing aspects of Tillich's systematic theology onto the wandering paths. If one has a copy of the Tillich Park labyrinth (available online at BillRessl.us) this would be an ideal moment to rest from this labyrinth, take a "walk" through Tillich Park and then return here.

A ride with Jane...

As one continues one wanders upon the second place for reflection - with Jane at the wheel of her golf cart. On more than one occasion (day and night) Penny and Bill joined Jane as she led them on journeys through town - talking about trees, gardening, and various plants as well as often stopping as she made mental notes where lights were out or where tidying up was needed. We enjoyed these excursions which seemed surreal.

The Tillich Archive...

Circling up the path one comes upon a set of stairs at the Tillich Archive - reminiscent of entering the Mother Superior House with Jane on a hot July day and walking up and down the stairs to the second story as she opened the treasures of her relationship with Paul and Hannah Tillich. It was here, with the graciousness of Jane, that in August 2007 Penny and Bill documented the archive and created the publication "Excerpts from the Paul Tillich Archive of New Harmony, Indiana from the Collection of Mrs. Jane Blaffer Owen" available in the library of the Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois.

The Red Geranium Restaurant...

The journey continues to Jane's table at the Red Geranium Restaurant where she enjoyed many conversations with family and friends. It was here, at the restaurant, where we first met Jane in July 2007 followed by a night time golf cart ride journeying through the streets of New Harmony. Jane's table was a joy to partake in and it was always a pleasure watching Jane create a unique form of communion from her table by the picture. Following in Jane's footsteps, the restaurant staff have always been gracious and professional.

Windsor, the Swan...

The path continues circling the lake and arriving at the European Mute Swan named Windsor. It was at the Red

Geranium Restaurant where Jane together with her granddaughter Ingrid, great granddaughter Sarah, Penny and Bill sat discerning a name for the new Swan - who at the time did not have a name nor a partner. Windsor was decided - seemingly a fitting name for this new addition to New Harmony.

The Cathedral Labyrinth...

The path circles into the Cathedral Labyrinth and Sacred Garden which features a Chartres labyrinth. It was here in 2009 where Penny and Bill walked the labyrinth their final time with Jane.

Gone - but very much present...

The path continues up towards Maple Hill Cemetery and the final resting place of Jane Blaffer Owen. After the Memorial Service had passed and many people had left, we stayed in New Harmony a few extra nights in order to pay our respects and offer one final farewell to Jane. Atop the hill, shaded by a massive tree, among many Owen family members were a gathering of flowers marking Jane's resting place.

As one enters the gathering of flowers on the labyrinth note that the path jogs slightly into the heart - a reminder that although this existence for Jane is completed, the graciousness she exhibited through her life remains to be shared ever in new ways. Before returning back down the path, take a moment and have the courage to face non-being and the possibility of new creations it offers. Then begin the journey back down the path - you now know the story and the path. As you enter the flower paths be aware as you spell the words "Gracious Friend." As you wander towards the end that was once the beginning the word "end" is circled - a reminder that *friendship* never truly ends, it lasts forever reforming itself into a new being. Our relationship with Jane has ended in one aspect but begins anew in another.

Peace and Blessings,

Bill & Penny

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