

Press Release

A MAN ON A MISSION



Meet Clive Johnson – a soft-speaking, unassuming Englishman, who’s on a mission to get Americans walking the labyrinth, an ancient practice that has become a popular focus for meditation during recent years.

Johnson, an Interfaith minister from near London, UK, claims that the idea to take a 24 foot diameter canvas mat on a 10,000 mile road trip around the USA “just came” to him one day, and that despite trying to convince himself that it was a mad idea, “the draw toward putting this fantasy into practice just got stronger.”

“I believe that when you feel you can do something and are drawn to it, then you’d better go ahead and do it!” says Johnson, who is offering his services freely as he takes his

labyrinth from place to place in a large circle around the US. His plan is to visit every state that forms the border of the mainland – 33 states in all.

“The idea is to journey in a large circle, hopefully leaving a trail of positive energy as we go”, enthuses Johnson.

“I guess that I’m in for the journey too,” he admits. “I’m a nomad by nature and love meeting new people, and stopping off at new places.”

As an interfaith minister, he is keen to involve people from as many different backgrounds as possible, and is also keen to stress that labyrinth walking isn’t specifically a religious practice. “This is one of its great appeals,” he remarks. “The labyrinth doesn’t make any judgements, is open to anyone and everyone”.

Asked whether he has any particular goal for the project, Johnson says that he merely hopes to be able to introduce folks to what he believes is a wonderful way to escape from the everyday – along with offering some guidance on how to follow up on labyrinth walking, for those who might want to explore this further, once the travelling labyrinth leaves town.

A list of links on his website is one starting point for finding out more, including an online search facility for locating other labyrinths and finding others who regularly host walks.

Apart from being a traveller and a minister, Johnson is a writer and a retreat host. He says that he likes to pursue projects that allow him to follow his heart, having left the corporate world of management consultancy and IT, which formed the early part of his career. He has written a variety of books, typically exploring his interests in spirituality and mythology. These include new takes on several classic fairy tales, as well as stories from the Arabian Nights, which he believes have important lessons for adults, as well as for children.

He describes his work as an interfaith minister as “helping people of any faith or none to find a connection with their idea of God,” suggesting that being spiritual is about “finding what’s inside you” as much as it is about being religious. “Interfaith work allows a couple from different faiths, or where one doesn’t believe in anything in particular, to find common ground in a wedding ceremony, for example,” he explains. “My role is to help and hold the people who come to me, not to try to convert them to any particular belief of my own.”

With this in mind, he says that he believes that Labyrinth Around America will have much to teach him about what it means to be a minister. “Like many people, I’m learning to know when to be in the background,” he says, “And to notice when there are often simple ways that I can show compassion for others.” He says that silently “holding space” for people takes effort, and that he’s still quite a novice in playing this role.

He was trained by the One Spirit Interfaith Foundation in London (<http://interfaithfoundation.org/>), an organisation that was inspired by the work of the One Spirit Learning Alliance (<http://www.onespiritinterfaith.org/>) in the USA, an organisation which evolved from an interfaith venture originally founded in New York City by a Jewish rabbi, Catholic priest, and an imam.

The journey won't be all made in one go as Johnson has commitments with his ministry work back in the UK. But it's a journey that's being made at a pace – so catch it while you can.

For more information, visit the project's website at www.labyrintharoundamerica.net.

IMAGES: www.labyrintharoundamerica.net/lbpress.html

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