

Milk Bottle Tops and Methodist Women in Gothenburg in 2021

Why Plastic Bottle Tops?

When I was asked to consider facilitating a Labyrinth Workshop at the Assembly of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women in Gothenburg in 2021, I was both intrigued and excited at the prospect, for several reasons.

Firstly, the Assembly is only held every five years and so the coming together of 500 or more women from across the world is a gathering that is greatly anticipated. This time the Assembly will address the women's involvement in the work of God with the imperative from John's Gospel, to **"Go and bear fruit"**. The Assembly will provide an opportunity to share some aspects of the universal nature of labyrinths which can be found in various forms in many of the countries represented and to make and walk labyrinths with the "world church women" is extremely welcome.

Secondly, the location of Sweden has a very significant place in the history of the labyrinth, with a high concentration of labyrinths on the island of Gotland. Using the seashore, the 300+ labyrinths are usually constructed from large stones to create the circular pathways. I began with the idea that the women from around the world could bring a pebble or small stone with them to Gothenburg, to emulate the Swedish patterns and consider the culture of labyrinth walking as practised for hundreds of years in Sweden.

During the time I was thinking of the possibilities of making temporary labyrinths, a young Swedish woman began to express her concerns in a voice that was being heard around the world on the urgent need for climate change, in order to save the world from an environmental disaster.

In reflecting on the prophetic message from Greta Thunberg, which is similar to what we had been hearing from David Attenborough in the "Blue Planet" series, I began to realise that the scourge of the oceans, plastic, possessed a huge unifying feature for all the countries the women at the Assembly would be drawn from, including the UK. This in turn suggested that I should include plastics into the construction of at least one labyrinth. This would provide a universal statement of concern for the threat that plastic represents, as well acknowledging the global dependence on the use of plastic in everyday life.

As a participant in the Assembly and facilitating labyrinth workshops, I want to reflect the everyday reality of plastic for Methodists in the Yorkshire North and East District and I can't think of anything more emblematic than milk bottle tops, be they red, blue or green. There are over 8,500 church members in the District and it is estimated that almost 6,000 of them are women. I would therefore like to be able to take that many milk bottle tops to the Assembly with which to form a labyrinth.

The Assembly of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women will meet in August 2021 so I should have ample time to accumulate such a total. With the assistance of everyone in the district, and in particular the Methodist Women in Britain groups, local and district, together we can make this a reality. Your tops can be given to the MWiB members in your circuit.

Thank you

Peter Clark