

MEDITATION WALK

WELCOME

We **WELCOME** you to walk the grounds of Trinity Presbyterian Church. There are 14 places where you are invited to pause, meditate or reflect and perhaps engage your senses as you experience this lovely outdoor space. (You may take paper and pencil with you, if you like.)

Draw us, O God, into your creation. Awaken our spirit and our senses to experience your presence in this place. Life is full of joy and sorrow and we recognize both as we walk these grounds. As we acknowledge this reality, help us to trust that you take our brokenness and weave it into strands of your wholeness. In these moments, teach us the grace of looking, the grace of listening, the grace of being, the grace of loving, and the grace of seeing your fragile beauty so close at hand. Let us experience your JOY. Amen.

Station One – Front Steps

Stand or Sit on these steps.

This house was built in 1825. Many feet have come up and down these steps. But before there were steps ...there were other people who came and went. Trinity Presbyterian Church gathers on land that was part of the ancestral home of various groups of Indigenous peoples. Trinity Presbyterian Church gathers on land that was once a Plantation run by enslaved people. This home was occupied in 1864 by Sheridan's Union soldiers. We acknowledge with gratitude the stewards of the land through the ages. And, we acknowledge the painful realities of our heritage as well.

Consider: "As God calls us to move prayerfully through this space, we must pause to acknowledge the theft that has made our presence here possible. We walk on the stolen land of the Indigenous Monacan Nation and Manahoac People that has been enriched by the labor of enslaved Black people. Our ongoing presence here is part of violence that continues to dispossess Indigenous peoples and is entangled with legacies of anti-Blackness which the church was integral to creating and enforcing. God calls us to examine how we are enmeshed in these violent structures, how we actively and passively benefit from them, and how our prayer and worship can concretely undo this dispossession. This land is not our own, stewarded since time immemorial by the care of the Monacan, Manahoac, and their relations and ancestors. We are debtors here. May our prayer help us dream of how to make it not so."

Station Two – Memorial Garden

Memorial Garden - Walk down toward the circular garden. Stand in the paved space or sit there or on the wall.

If flowers are blooming, drink in their fragrance, their beauty. Here among the flowers and shrubs lie some of the 'saints' of Trinity. We acknowledge with gratitude their lives of faithfulness and their generosity of spirit. We miss those we love and cannot see. Recall those you have loved who have gone on before you. Give thanks for their presence in your life.

Gracious God, heal the wounds that may linger from the loss of relationships with those dear to us. Renew us with hope and new beginnings that offer us a sense of your presence. You are at our beginning and at our end. Walk with us on our journey, we pray.

Station Three - Labyrinth

Labyrinth - From behind (High Street side) the Memorial Garden, walk straight ahead to the Labyrinth.

(If you are unable to walk the Labyrinth today, pause and consider your life as a journey. What distracts you from walking toward or with God. What keeps you moving in that direction?)

Walking the labyrinth is a journey of prayer.

Take a deep breath and quiet yourself as you prepare to enter.

There is a clear path toward the center of the labyrinth and a clear path out. You will not get lost.

While walking the path you are invited to let go of your thoughts and the things that distract you. You may choose to repeat a prayer like the Lord's Prayer or a scripture passage as you walk to help you focus on listening. When you reach the center take a moment to linger in the presence of the Holy.

Return slowly to the world and ordinary life.

Station Four – Public Witness

A Space for Public Witness – Walk toward the southeast corner of the property. Notice the Pole with Peace written in multiple languages and the multiple signs offering encouragement and assistance.

Through the years, this space has been a place for Public Witness. In 2020 there were 200 white flags representing the 200 people who died of COVID in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County in that year. In 2017, there were 33 T-shirts hung to recognize the 10th Anniversary of the Virginia Tech massacre and to remember those who died there. Vigils for the Prevention of Gun Violence have been held here and in 2013 the church hosted the Carnival de Resistance, a week-long event. God calls us to seek justice. As you stand near this ‘crossroad,’ what issues do you think the church needs to address? How would you imagine using this space to raise awareness of that issue?

Pray for insight and for healing using these words of Richard Rohr:

Loving God, you fill all things with fullness and hope that we can never Comprehend. Thank you for leading us into a time where more of reality is being unveiled for us all to see. We pray that you will take away our natural temptation for cynicism, denial, fear and despair. Help us have the courage to awaken to greater truth, greater humility, and greater care for one another. May we place our hope in what matters and what lasts, trusting in your eternal presence and love. Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our suffering world. (Please add your own intentions...) Knowing, good God, you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God. Amen.

Station Five – Ash Tree Bench

The Ash Tree Bench...Walk towards the log and stump bench between the mature trees and the grove of new trees and rest on the bench for a while.

You are sitting on a bench that was a stately white ash tree that looked over this lawn for maybe 85 years. It sprouted during the Great Depression and shaded and hosted countless visitors both humans and wildlife. Birds and squirrels nested in its limbs or carried its twigs for nests elsewhere. The ash wood is hard and strong and used for baseball bats and tool handles. This tree was strong and withstood many storms of wind and snow and ice. Insects ate of its leaves and bark, but never did any real damage. That was as nature intended, but man stepped in and before we knew what had happened, the emerald ash borer was allowed to spread from overseas and all white ash trees in the region have succumbed to this voracious insect. They die back from the tips of the branches downwards as the borers advance from the stems towards the trunk in successive generations. In life this tree reminded us of God's amazing love through Creation, bringing life and renewal each year. Its spirit lives on and upon its sturdy fibers we can sit and reflect on how our lives are intertwined with all Creation and enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of this land.

Prayer for Earth Awareness

Soul of the earth, we are nourished by your living Presence. We draw upon your spirit for strength all of our days. With your soil you formed our being, you molded us from clay. We are but a strand in the web of your Creation. All life draws from You and reaches to heaven for the Light of life.

Just as we lift our hands in prayer, all trees and plants seek the Source of life. You shine on our days and warm our hearts with your Presence. Your Spirit is the wind, making us feel alive and free. It whispers and stirs us to new awareness or it may roar with might.

Your waters bring new life and joy to all Creation. Your dew and fog and gentle rain cleanse our souls. The seeds and acorns awaken, connecting earth to sky. The

earth opens to receive Your blessing of liquid love and thus You nourish her green skin and provide Living Water to all life.

When our days are over our souls return to You. Bone and sinew to dust, leaf and fiber to soil, to feed life anew. Your Spirit lives and abides in all things and blesses our being. Amen

Station Six – New Tree Grove

Grove of Newly Planted Trees.

All of our projects at Trinity are intended to soften and enrich our relationship to nature and our neighborhood. Some, like the playground, are intended to draw out the exuberance of children, to reveal the presence of the Holy Spirit in their play. Others, like the labyrinth, are built as centering spaces where in active contemplation we might more fully sense the presence of a divine symmetry in the 'maze' of everyday life. The addition of trees to the campus above all serves multiple ecologically-friendly purposes such as less mowing, creating shade for rest and conversation, and providing food and shelter for birds and small animals.

We limited ourselves to hardy native species, emphasizing longevity and natural beauty. Among the new plantings beyond the rustic bench made from the ash stump, you will find a young Swamp Oak, one of the most rapidly growing oaks with a unique papery bark. You'll find also a young Red Oak, likely to live four centuries, providing gorgeous red foliage every fall. There is a tulip poplar, the tree that will eventually reach above the others by as much as fifty feet and at maturity will, each May, send a shower of yellow blossoms to the ground.

Trees are also about memories of those whom we love and have lost. Shawn's gingko tree tells you that you are entering the Trinity arboretum. Next is Laura's oak, already more than twenty-five feet tall. We have added several new White Oaks, just beyond Laura's. Once the white oak was one of the primary canopy trees in our region, and there is no more patient and enduring tree. Nor is there a more generous one. No other provides more nutrients and shelter for a greater variety of species than the white oak. If there is a tree that symbolizes the breath and diversity of God's munificence through Nature, it is this tree.

Finally, at the edges of the recent plantings, there are new serviceberries that will provide food for birds. They can thrive in partial shade. The serviceberry is an amelanchier, though you might also know it as shadblow, shadwood, sarvisberry, juneberry, sugarplum, wild plum, Saskatoon or chuckley pear. The first tree to bloom in spring, its many names sing out with the promise of renewal. John's tree, anchoring opposite side of the lawn, is a serviceberry.

Give thanks for the gift of trees. Do you have a favorite kind of tree? Or simply a 'favorite tree' that holds a memory for you? Ponder the place that trees have played in your life. Give thanks for trees!

Station Seven - Compost

Compost. Walk toward the back of the property. To the left of the playground and behind the shed...you will find the Compost Bin. Pause here to reflect on the 'gift' this is to creation.

Trinity shows hospitality to our neighbors and community in numerous ways. One of these ways is composting, leaving organic matter like orange peels and coffee grinds to decay and using the by-product as a nutrient rich soil conditioner.

Three composting bins: one for cover material, one for food scraps, and one for the finished product, the “black gold.”

- What do you smell in each bin?
- What kinds of food waste do you notice?
- What are some organisms that break down the food waste? How many do you think there are?
- Why do you think too many lawn clippings are not good cover material?
- Get a palm full of finished compost. How does it feel? How does it smell?
- How will food grown with “black gold” taste differently from store bought food?

There are numerous environmental benefits to compost including:

- Strengthens soil's ability to retain water
- Reduces landfill waste
- Helps carbon sequestration
- Reduces need for synthetic fertilizers
- Reduces soil erosion

Food waste in America

Each day in the United States approximately one pound of food per person is wasted. This equates to 103 million tons (81.4 billion pounds) of food waste generated in America in 2017, or between 30-40 percent of the food supply, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). **Aug 25, 2020**

“My whole life has been waiting for an epiphany, a manifestation of God’s presence, an experience that lets you see your place in the big picture. And that is what I had when I had my first [compost] heap.” Bette Midler (actress and environmental activist)

Living God, May I feel your presence in this gift from the earth to the earth. May I understand and appreciate how food waste hurts the environment that you so perfectly created. May I help heal the hurt by restoring food waste back to the soil. And bring honor to your holy name. Amen.

Special thanks to great neighbors who maintain the composting bins.

Station Eight – Picnic Table

Picnic Table

As you sit at this table, notice what is around you, above you, below you.

What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? What do you feel?

When you sit at this table do you have memories of other tables where you have sat or where you do sit?

Chris Tomlin wrote a song about God's table which can be found here.



What do you bring with you to this table? Where have you found God's grace, healing, refreshment at table? How is God meeting you in this place/at this table?

Station Nine – Pollinator Garden

Pollinator Garden – Walk back toward the garden. Take in the beauty of this spot. Breathe deeply of the fragrance.

Trinity planted this pollinator garden in the spring of 2021 with funds from an environmental bequest. The establishment and management of a garden for our native pollinators and naturalized honey bees is an act of faith for the present and hope for the future. Pollinator loss is a substantial obstacle our world now faces. As well as bringing beauty and continued life to the ecosystem, pollinating insects, birds and bats contribute billions of dollars to agriculture each year: eighty percent of US crops are pollinated by honey bees. Our pollinators are in decline due to habitat loss, pesticides, diseases, and introduced species. In this pollinator garden there are native plants that attract, feed, and provide nectar and habitat. The garden allows us to provide hospitality to our tiniest of neighbors such as bees, butterflies, moths, ants, wasps, and birds. Please take a moment to pray: “Thank you God, for the complex connections of our natural world. Let us learn, contemplate, and act on the ways that we can be the best stewards of your ecosystem. Amen.”

Station Ten - Playground

Playground – Find your way to the Playground.

Close your eyes and either imagine or listen to children playing and laughing here. Sometimes children will push the limits on a playground – climbing “up to the sky”, swinging high and fast to touch the branches of a nearby tree, running hard.

- Where/When do you find joy in movement?
- When/Where do you push limits just to challenge yourself?
- Where/When/How do you play?

This space invites you to play! Maybe you would like to try out the swing. Perhaps you might like to sit on the ground and “play” in the gravel there.

Gracious God, thank you for the squeals and laughter of children who remind us of the joy of play-full-ness. Give us playful hearts open to the wonder of your creation and the exuberance of swinging high, sliding down a slide, or simply abandoning oneself to playfulness!

Station Eleven – Back Door

**Backdoor of the Church House - Walk toward the door (beneath the balcony.)
Sit on the bench and reflect on this 'Threshold'**

We come and we go through doorways. Doors open to the world, to home, to sanctuary, to the unknown, sometimes they bring surprises, sometimes welcome, sometimes relief, sometimes fear. Think about the doors and doorways you have encountered in your life. What meaning have you found in doorways you have walked through? What doorways are/have been scary to face? What doorways bring/ have brought you security, relief? When have you been surprised as you opened a door? When do/have you found welcome, peace, belonging through a doorway?

Doors can be locked as a barrier to moving in a direction we might think is desirable. Doors can also open to opportunities and possibilities we haven't imagined. What barriers or opportunities are around the doors that you are praying about or long for. Reflect on the doorways that have shaped your life.

Psalms 121:8 assures of God being with us as we use doorways: "The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever more."

Close your eyes and imagine the doorways in your life. Notice the times when the Divine has walked through the doorway before, behind and with you. Use this Psalm/ blessing to pray over the doorways in your life and for your coming and going through them.

Doors

Doors

Thresholds

Liminal spaces

between one place and another

An open door bids 'Welcome!'

Closed...it provides shelter, protection.

The 'wardrobe of each heart'* has a door

to wonder...to mystery...

A door

to keep open to holiness

The 'wardrobe of each heart' has a door

to longing...

Longing for that which is absent

both from us and...

within us...

A door

one would rather leave shut!

Closed to the hurts

of so many losses

some BIG, some small

some Welcome, many Not!

Closed to the deep grief

of a loved one lost

permanently or ambiguously

Curiously, this door of longing is...

A door

that invites us to 'people' the
empty spaces of our lives
with our imagined presence...

A door

that creatively invites one
to 'enter the story'
to enlarge horizons
to go where you have not been before...

A door

to openness
to exploration
to new discoveries...

The 'wardrobe of the heart' has a door

A 'thin space'

A numinous threshold that
calls us to Come!

Come!

To him who says,

'I am the door'

the door to abundant life!

COME!

Station Twelve – Meditation Garden

Meditation Garden – Walk toward Maryland Ave. to the end of the white fence...turn to your left and find the door into the garden. Walk in and enjoy the beauty of this quiet space. Sit on the bench and gaze into the room before you.

This is the Sanctuary of Trinity Presbyterian Church. What does the word **Sanctuary** mean to you? According to Webster's Dictionary, a sanctuary is *"a holy place: a building or place set aside for worship such as a church or a temple...a particularly holy place within a church or templea place of refuge or protection ... a reservation where animals or birds are sheltered for breeding purposes and may not be hunted or molested."*

From its beginnings, Trinity has proclaimed that, *"We can be the church when there is no building; we can see the holy when there is nothing religious around; we can hear the call to mission when there is no church program directing us; we can dance to the joys in God when there is no music; we can take off our shoes aware that we dwell in the presence of God. As you sit here, ponder where you find sanctuary.*

Where have you been surrounded by or encountered God's presence? Is your home a sanctuary for you? Have you provided sanctuary for another? In the beginning, God walked in the garden with God's people. Feel free to use this time and garden space as a place of sanctuary - a space to meet and *talk with the Holy One.*

Listen to the words of this hymn: "Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true. With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you." 1 Corinthians 3:16 reminds us that *"...you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you."* Go from this place aware of how special YOU are and of God's presence within YOU. May you BE a 'living sanctuary' a welcoming space to all whom you meet.

Here you will find some quiet music as a way to help settle into a quiet space in the presence of the Divine.



Station Thirteen – Bike Rack

Bike Rack – As you leave the Meditation Garden and walk toward Maryland Ave., you will see the bike rack.

This is a place of welcome. This is a place where the world meets sacred space. This is a place to park movement, purpose, and agendas. It is a place of invitation.

- What sacred space are you being invited to in life?
- Where do you find a space to park your agendas, purpose, and busyness?
- Where do you find an invitation of welcome and “come sit a spell”?

Offer a prayer of gratitude for the sacred spaces of welcome you experience.

Station Fourteen – Front Porch

Front Porch – Please walk around to the front of the Church House. Leave these pages in the box where you found them so others can find and enjoy the walk.

Thank you for visiting our grounds. We hope you will come again and find solace here. Go with this Irish blessing:

“May the road rise to meet you;
may the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face
and the rain fall softly on your fields.
Until you come again
May God hold you in the hollow of God’s hand.”

This Meditation Walk is offered by CENTERING SPACE - A Space for Centered CARE: Contemplation, Action, Renewal, and Expression – a ministry of Trinity Presbyterian Church. You can learn more by visiting the website: www.centering-space.org

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