

The Labyrinth Story

The labyrinth is one of the oldest tools for prayer and meditation known to humankind. Labyrinths are found in many spiritual traditions and cultures throughout the world. The ancients knew the circle to be a sacred symbol of harmony, wholeness, integrity and grace.

It has appeared in carvings and artwork of cultures separated by continents and millennia. The labyrinth has been used for over 5,000 years for prayer, ritual and personal spiritual growth.

Our labyrinth is a Chartres Labyrinth, named after the pattern set into the floor of the nave of Chartres Cathedral in France in the late 12th/early 13th century. During the Middle Ages in Europe, the practice of making a Journey on foot to Jerusalem was no longer possible due to wars in the holy land. Labyrinths were built in cathedrals for the purpose of pilgrimage. Today labyrinths are being reclaimed world wide as a tool for growth and deepening on the spiritual journey.



You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy, in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

- Psalm 16:11

This brochure reprinted (with permission) in large part from a brochure published by the Labyrinth Ministry Team at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Dayton, Ohio.

The Labyrinth

at
First Presbyterian
Church
Family Camp



"The labyrinth provides the sacred space where the inner and outer worlds can commune, where the thinking mind and the imaginative heart can flow together."

- Lauren Artress

Blessed are those who have set
their hearts on pilgrimage.
- Psalm 8:54

A labyrinth is...

- a **winding path** that leads to a central space and then out again by the same path.
- a **wondrous pathway** that may become a mirror for our own lives and metaphor for our spiritual journey.
- a **circle and a spiral**, each a powerful and ancient symbol of unity, wholeness and transformation.
- a **tool of spiritual growth**, healing and transformation of heart, body, mind and spirit.
- a **spiritual discipline** of setting one foot in front of the other and following a path.
- a **calling forth** of our intuitive symbolic mind and creative meandering spirit.
- a **deeply healing container** where we can touch our joys and sorrows.

The labyrinth is not a maze. Unlike a maze that is designed to confuse you and is full of dead ends and obstacles to overcome, a labyrinth is designed for you to find your way with no wrong turns or dead ends.

"If you want to get to know God better,
take a walk with God."
- Asa, four years old

Walking the Path

There is no single, correct way to walk a labyrinth. The only choice you need make is to enter the path.

As you begin to walk, allow yourself to find the pace your body wants to go. This pace may change as you walk.

If you share the path with others, feel free to pass around one another.

The labyrinth is a two-way path. Those entering will meet those coming out-those coming out will meet those entering. You may choose to acknowledge one another with a smile or a touch as you pass, or maintain your inward focus by refraining from eye contact.

Listen to your body- does it want to walk, dance, skip or run the labyrinth? You may even want to sit quietly in a particular place for a time.

Over the centuries, people have patterned their labyrinth walk in this way:

Going in-releasing
Seek to quiet your mind, soul, heart and body. This is a time of letting go, of releasing, of emptying, of cleansing.

Arriving at the center-receiving
Enter the center with an open heart and mind. Come to this place of rest, prayer and reflection. Sit, stand, lay down-stay a long while or a short while. Seek illumination and inspiration at the center of the labyrinth, the center of ourselves, where we commune with God.

Going out-returning
When you are ready, walk out the same path you walked in. Carry your unique experience out into the world. It may be a refreshed spirit, renewed vision, calm, peace, gratitude, understanding forgiveness...

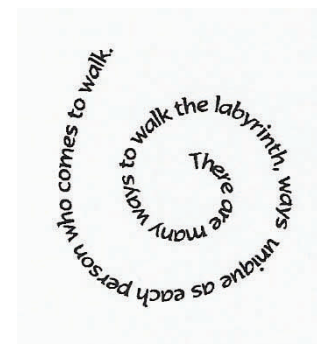
A Simple Way

As you enter the labyrinth you may find it helpful to pause at the threshold, offer a prayer of thanksgiving for this time, and set an intention for your walk. It could be as simple as

I come to...

- experience the labyrinth
- center in my deepest self
- pray and seek God's wisdom
- enjoy the movement of my body
- seek guidance with a decision
- clarify my thoughts/feelings
- honor a transition in my life
- release a memory, despair or grief
- express gratitude to God
- ask a question

As you leave the labyrinth, ponder what touched you, inspired you, challenged you or surprised you. A prayer of thanksgiving may also seem an appropriate closure to this time. You may also wish to let the experience unfold as it will.



"The metaphors within the labyrinth are endless because they are shaped by our creative imagination-whatever our psyches need to deal with becomes the spiritual lesson of the labyrinth."

-Lauren Artress