

Final Thoughts

Pause

at the entrance as you begin, and whenever you are so inclined.

Follow

your own pace. Allow your body to determine the rhythm of movement.

Attend

to your awareness of the living present. Stay in the here and now.

Each time you walk the Labyrinth, your journey will be new. As such, you bring to the experience the person you are in-the-moment: the dreams you cherish, the regrets you harbor, your gifts, flaws, bumps and bruises.

Come as you are. It can be no other way.

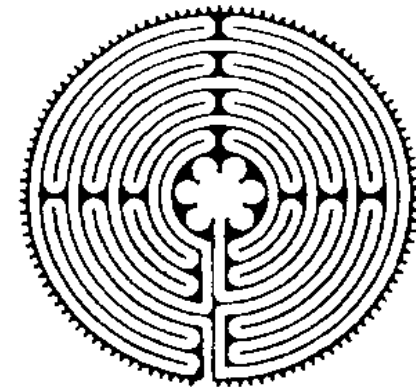
Enjoy.

This brochure is, in part, an adaptation of material contained in
The Grace Cathedral Labyrinth
by Rev. Dr. Lauren Artress, Canon of Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, California.



Walking the Labyrinth A Journey of Faith

Trinity United Methodist Church
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A Pilgrim's Journey

Pilgrims are persons in motion—passing through territories not their own—seeking completion, a goal to which only the spirit's compass points the way.

Richard R. Niebuhr

Throughout recorded history, human beings have discovered personal meaning in specific places. Regardless of the location of one's daily life, it is to Mecca that the Moslem is called; to Sinai, the Jew is called; and, to Jerusalem, the Christian is called. In such places, the story of faith is relived, vital questions are asked and the discernment of truth is sought. As such, whether in body or in spirit, the tradition of pilgrimage is as timeless as religion itself.

In the Middle Ages, when a person committed his or her life to Christ, sometimes a vow was made: to make a pilgrimage to Palestine. However, by the twelfth century when the crusades ravaged Europe and the Middle East was in turmoil, travel became both dangerous and very expensive. In response, the Church appointed seven cathedrals as alternate pilgrimage sites. For many seekers, these places became a "Jerusalem of the Spirit."

In our time, two great festivals bound the "church year". First is Advent/Christmas: the journey to Bethlehem revealing the birth of Christ. In the midst of a darkened world, we seek the light of the promised one. Second is Lent/Easter: the journey to Jerusalem revealing the death and resurrection of Christ. In the midst of personal darkness, the light of the promised one finds us.

The Mystery of Faith

Is life a path to be followed or a puzzle to be solved?

For countless centuries this question has remained a central theme within the human community. On the walls of caves, within great pyramids and cathedrals, the symbols of our journey may be found; in stained glass and clay, upon precious metals and canvas, with chalk and ink, brush and pen, the search for meaning is recorded.

Within the Christian tradition, one such formative symbol is the Labyrinth. Unlike a maze, which may include many obstacles and choices, a Labyrinth reveals no tricks, no dead ends and no puzzles. There is only one path. One such Labyrinth was laid into the stone floor of a cathedral in Chartres France in 1220 A.D. Following a meandering course, the pilgrim is led to a flower-shaped center symbolizing the six days of creation. The experience is an expression of God's call, as well as an invitation to respond.

Walking the Labyrinth is an act of prayer and a search for meaning. The experience is a mirror of personal faith - revealing sorrow and releasing joy, lifting the spirit and opening the heart. It is a pilgrimage of the soul; that is, the journey reveals that which is truly essential. Only one decision is required: to follow or not to follow. The path always leads to the center.

The Three-Fold Way

No one can know God who has not first known oneself. Go to the depths of the soul, the secret place....to the roots, to the heights; for all that God can do is focused here.

Meister Eckhart

In the Christian mystical tradition, the journey to God has often included three stages. The first is “shedding”, meaning to empty or release - beginning as the pilgrim enters the Labyrinth. Here one seeks to let go of the details of life so that the mind may be open and receptive. The second stage is “illumination”, meaning to awaken or receive - beginning as the pilgrim arrives in the Labyrinth center. Here one patiently awaits the presence of the still small voice of God, and whatever truth may be revealed. The third stage is “union”, meaning to reconcile and renew - beginning as the pilgrim retraces the journey from the center to the starting point. Here one seeks to integrate and share what has been learned.

The Trinity Labyrinth

The Labyrinth is a beautiful art form created by a joint committee of persons representing Trinity Church, Dominican Center at Marywood and Aquinas College. Under the supervision of Kurt Kaiser, Trinity Artist-in-Residence, the Labyrinth is constructed of nylon reinforced vinyl upon which is painted the circular pathway leading to and from the center. Thirty-six feet in diameter, it is placed upon the floor of the Trinity Church gymnasium and is also made available to the community for a variety of uses including ecumenical and interfaith worship, spiritual formation workshops for adults, families, youth and children.

Guidelines

A Labyrinth walk is an experience of silence. Hopefully, the absence of conversation will enhance a deepening of personal inner stillness. In this way, the normal pace of life is set aside and distractions are minimized. As such, you enter more fully into the living present.

In order to preserve its appearance, we ask you to remove your shoes when walking the Labyrinth. However, if this is difficult, it is far more important to experience the journey than to take your shoes off.

Following your walk, a Labyrinth “shepherd” will be available to share any thoughts, observations and/or revelations you may wish to share.

In a Labyrinth journey, there are two approaches you may wish to consider. The first is to relinquish all thought and simply follow the path. You may wish to focus upon your breathing, the sound of your footsteps, and/or any bodily sensations you may notice as your walk unfolds. This approach is one of “attentiveness”; that is, simply being aware of the obvious.

A second approach begins with a question. Perhaps a particular want or need is in focus. Perhaps you feel unfinished about something, a lingering doubt, a troubling memory. As you begin your walk, allow this information to reveal a question. Carry this question with you. Allow yourself to converse with God. As you enter the center, open yourself to receiving new information and new insights into yourself and the world around you.

Regardless of which approach you choose, remember this. The Labyrinth is a two-way street. You may be alone in your journey, or you may meet others along the way. If you want to maintain an inward meditative state, simply do not make eye contact. On the other hand, if you do meet someone, a simple touch may be an important acknowledgment of our common journey.