

WALKING THE LABYRINTH

Makemie Woods is pleased to offer an outdoor labyrinth as a spiritual tool that can be used in prayer and meditation. The path is unicursal, one path, with no splits or dead ends. The labyrinth is not a maze; it is one path from entrance to center. One returns from center to entrance by the same path. Walking the labyrinth can be a metaphor for your own spiritual journey. Notice how walking the labyrinth is a non-linear experience. The journey is not to figure out how to get to the center, but how to take the next step with God.

Guidelines for Walking the Labyrinth:

- Prepare yourself by clearing your mind of expectations, quiet your thinking, focus on your breathing, and open your heart to God.
- Reflect on what you bring to this invitation for intentional time with God.
- Pay attention to your breathing and your body. Pace yourself in prayer. Walk, skip, run, dance or crawl as the Holy Spirit is with you.
- Feel free to gently pass or to let another pass you on the path, or hug if you feel it is appropriate. Go at the pace the Holy Spirit guides in you. You cannot “get lost”-- you will walk either to the entrance or to the center, as it is a single path.
- After your walk, take time to journal, ponder or meditate on your experience.



Some people walk a labyrinth repeating and meditating on a verse of Scripture. Some walk focusing on a particular image or a noticing in nature to allow the Holy Spirit to guide them.

Some walk in prayer using the ancient Christian Three-fold Path of Prayer:

1. **Purgation** (release). Pray for release of your fears, blockages, and resistances. This is the emptying phase. Pray for release as you journey in toward the center. “I let go and let God.”
2. **Illumination**. Pray for illumination in the center of the labyrinth. The center can be understood to symbolize the evolutionary process of the Spirit coming into matter. Here is the in-filling. This may be on a subconscious level for you. Later, in the nights and days to come, you may come to know consciously God’s messages for you that you received in the center of the labyrinth. Stay as long as you are called to be in the center praying for illumination. “Breathe on me breath of God; fill me with life anew.”
3. **Union**. On the return path pray for integration of that which you received, consciously or beyond your conscious mind. Pray that the Spirit’s guidance be integrated or manifested in your life. Pray, “Thy will be done.”

Suggested Scripture Texts for Meditation and Repetition:

Exodus 13:18 - “So God led the people by the round about way of the wilderness.”

Deuteronomy 5:33 - “You must follow exactly the path that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you are to possess.”

Job 31:4 - “Does he not see my ways, and number all my steps?” (Job is speaking of God.)

Psalms 25:4 - “Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.”

John 14:1, 4 - “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me ... I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

The Makemie Woods Labyrinth is a seven-circuit Cretan pattern. It was constructed in March 2002 using donated bricks and the volunteer labor of supporting churches. We also have a portable labyrinth on a tarp that can be used indoors if the weather is inclement, or it can be borrowed by churches interested in this prayer model.

Why walk a labyrinth?

“People come to labyrinths for a multitude of reasons, but most find that walking a labyrinth can be a transformative experience. As people tread through the turns and counterturns of the labyrinth, the world begins to drop away. Walking, breathing, being - things that we never think about in the day-to-day whirl of life - become conscious and deliberate. The spiritual and physical merge into a walking meditation. Our pace becomes a background rhythm against which we are able to clear our minds. As one moves toward the center, one senses one is approaching a spiritual center as well. Intuition deepens. Healing occurs. Some say they hear the voice of their own truth, experience guidance, or feel a sense of grace or transcendence. Some feel they have brushed against the Eternal, or touched the Divine. Such experiences are the goal of any meditation, but some believe it is easier to reach them on the labyrinth than in other meditative practices.

“A couple in Connecticut walks a labyrinth every year to mark their anniversary. An emergency room nurse in San Francisco finds it helps her prevent job burnout. A New York City man walks the labyrinth to bring more depth to his practice of praying. A computer analyst in Rhode Island just likes the peace and quiet. Some families walk the labyrinth together every year on important holidays, as an annual ritual. Some people walk to commemorate solstices and equinoxes and the change in the seasons. Some walk to celebrate the New Year. Some walk to reconnect with loved ones, present or not. Some walk to try to focus their energies on a problem in their community or the world - and to attempt to discern what their response to the problem should be.

“Many walk the labyrinth to work on a specific issue in their life. While we often find concrete help for day-to-day concerns through labyrinth walking, sometimes the healing is much more dramatic. According to labyrinth builder and Labyrinth Society member Marty Cain, a thirteen-year-old boy who had never before spoken in full sentences described the experience of completing his first labyrinth walk in a paragraph’s worth of words.

“People do things on labyrinths that they might otherwise never do in public. They might step aside, smile, and greet a stranger approaching on the path; hug someone they’ve been at odds with for weeks; drop into a sitting meditation position or kneel in prayer to contemplate the center; recite a mantra or sing aloud.

“People say they feel like pilgrims seeking truth when they walk the labyrinth. This is not new: Labyrinth walkers in the medieval cathedrals are believed to have walked the labyrinth as a symbolic pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

“*Solvitur ambulando*, it has been said. “It is solved by walking.” People all over the world are discovering that the ancient practice of walking labyrinths not only solves problems, but also soothes the nerves, calms the soul, mends the heart and heals the body. It can help bring us into balance, giving us a sense of wholeness that is much needed for all of us whose lives ache with lopsided discomfort. Labyrinths offer the opportunity to walk in meditation to the place within us where the rational merges with the intuitive and the spiritual is reborn. Quite simply, labyrinths are a way to discover the sacred in everyday life.

“The beauty of the labyrinth walk is that it is open to anyone at any stage, or any spiritual path, and from any religious tradition. It is a symbol open to your intentions. In the rhythmic process of putting one foot down, picking the other foot up, and putting it down, and in the change of turning to the left, then right, on the circuitous path, people discover the sacred within themselves. Within the energy of the twists and turns, of the going into the center and the coming back out again, people find resources within themselves that they never before knew they had.”

—from Helen Curry, *The Way of the Labyrinth*. Penguin Compass, New York, 2000.