

Some Guidelines for walking the Labyrinth

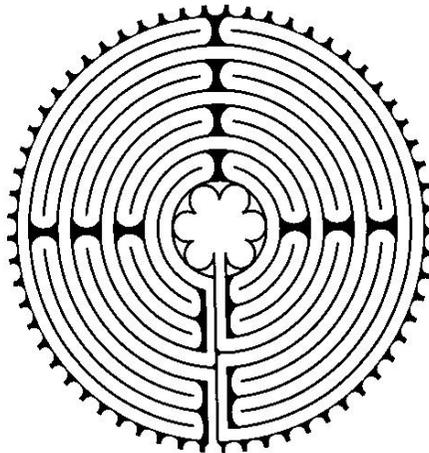
Solvitur ambulando

(it is solved by walking) St Augustine

The rediscovery of the ancient Labyrinth has provided us with a spiritual resource, a walking meditation that for many will transcend the limits of still meditation.

“Walking the Labyrinth has emerged today as a metaphor for the spiritual journey and a powerful tool for transformation. This walking meditation is an archetype, a mystical ritual found in many religious traditions. It quiets the mind and opens the soul, evoking a feeling of wholeness.”

Lauren Artress.



The Labyrinth is an archetype, a divine imprint, found in most religious traditions in various forms around the world. By walking a replica of the Chartres Labyrinth laid in the floor of Chartres Cathedral around 1220, we are rediscovering a long-forgotten mystical tradition that is insisting to be reborn.

This labyrinth has only one path so there are no tricks and no dead ends. The path winds throughout and becomes a mirror for where we are in our lives. So walk it with an open mind and an open heart.

There are three basic stages to the walk:

1. The path in to the centre
2. The centre
3. The path out of the centre - the same path you walked in on

In Western Christian tradition, the mystical path is traditionally called The Threefold Path:

1. Purgation - a releasing, a letting go of the details of your life. This is an act of shedding thoughts and emotions. It quiets and empties the mind.
2. Illumination - is when you reach the centre. Stay there as long as you like. It is a place of meditation and prayer. Receive what there is for you to receive.
3. Union - which is joining God/dess, your Higher Power or the healing forces at work in the world. Integrate your experience as you walk back from the centre *along the same path that brought you there*.

However you may be more comfortable thinking of the three stages more simply as;

1. Releasing
2. Receiving
3. Returning

There is no right or wrong way to walk a labyrinth. If you are open to experience the walk as a metaphor, then anything that happens can serve as an insight. Allow the labyrinth to be a mirror for your soul: You find yourself confused and 'lost' on the path. You have an awkward moment as you meet a fellow walker on the same path. You become irritated that there are too many people in the labyrinth. You are determined to find the 'answer' but instead experience 'nothing'.

Walking . . . balancing . . . people . . . perseverance . . . On the path we meet every and all things. Allow these metaphors to speak to you.

- Unless you need the support of shoes, please remove your shoes to walk a cloth labyrinth
- Pause at the entry to allow yourself to become fully conscious of stepping into the labyrinth.
- Allow your body to find your natural pace. Your pace may change during different stages of the walk.
- Become conscious of your breath. Let it flow smoothly. It can be co-ordinated with each step – as is done in the Buddhist walking meditation – if you choose.
- The narrow path is a two way street. If you are going in and another person is going out, you will meet on the path. If you want to maintain an inward meditative state, simply do not make eye contact. You can ‘pass’ people on the labyrinth, or allow others to pass you. Allow spaciousness within and honour your pace.
- Pause at the exit to allow yourself to become fully conscious of stepping out into the world.
- Nurture your quiet mind. Don't be tempted to ‘talk the experience away’ or over analyse it. Honour your experience as you travel home and step back into your routine.

The best way to learn about the labyrinth is to walk one with an open heart and an open heart and mind. Then allow your experience to guide you as to whether this will be a useful tool for you.

One way to walk the labyrinth is to choose to let all thought go and simply open yourself to your experience with **gracious attention**. Usually – but not always – a quieting of the mind happens in the first stage of the labyrinth walk. After the mind is quiet, you can choose to remain in the quiet.

Another approach to the labyrinth walk is to **consider a question**. If you are seeking a clue to one of life’s puzzles, you can concentrate on a particular question as you walk to the centre with an open heart and an open mind you are receptive to new insights. You may ask a question: “What is it that I need to know?” “What healing needs to happen here?”

The labyrinth may be a prayer or mediation path as you

- Reflect on scripture, read a psalm or other sacred text.
- Intercede for the world, for other people, for yourself.
- Let go – just the river that flows without being pushed!
- Use a mantra – repeating a helpful word, phrase or prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit

I am a child of God

Jesus, Saviour of the world, have mercy

May I dwell in the heart of God

May I be healed

May I be filled with love

May I be at peace

The God who made the world and everything in it . . . made all the nations to inhabit the whole earth, and allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live; so that they would search for God . . . though indeed God is not far from each one of us. For 'in God we live and move and have our being.' Acts 17: 24a, 26-28