

Labyrinth Prayer Practice



Labyrinth Prayer

Pilgrimages to holy sites have been part of the Christian tradition since earliest times. Many people still visit the Holy Land or other holy sites around the world. Some suggest that this ancient prayer practice may have developed around the twelfth century as a substitute for making a formal pilgrimage. Thus, the labyrinth can be seen as a symbolic prayer walk, rather than a long pilgrimage journey. Some medieval cathedrals, for example Chartres in France, which was on the pilgrimage route, have a labyrinth installed in the floor of the Cathedral. Walking a labyrinth is a meditative practice or path of prayer, to embody the desire to make a journey towards God. The journey can be made by tracing a finger labyrinth. See the resource below.

Labyrinths are not mazes; they are unicursal. That means there is one path into the centre and walkers return from the centre along the same path. There are no tricks or dead ends.

The prayer path moves you slowly toward the centre and toward God. At times you are close to the centre, further along the path you may be further from the centre. This represents the reality of the spiritual journey. At the centre of the walk you can stop and rest in the presence of God, listening for God's word to you. With God's word in your heart, begin your journey back to the world. You may like to remember the three-part journey as follows:

- Releasing: on the inward journey to the centre
- Receiving: taking time to receive from God in the centre
- Returning: carrying insight or other gifts back into the world.

How to walk the labyrinth

In this time of mutual distancing it will be best for people to walk the labyrinth individually, as you will not be able to maintain a safe distance passing others. Find your own pace.

There are no right or wrong ways to walk the labyrinth.

- At the entrance, intentionally leave behind the noise and bustle of your life. Prepare your heart to listen to God. Just as you would pack simply for a pilgrimage, offer your load to Jesus as you begin your prayer. A word of scripture may come to mind. Nature may speak to you of God's love and care. Pay attention.
- As you walk intentionally toward God and the centre of the labyrinth consider what you might need to release in order to live more fully in the love and presence of God. When you arrive at the centre, offer these things to God. Leave them in the centre in the hands of God.
- Once in the centre abide in the presence of Christ. Ask for the grace you are seeking as you return to your life in the world.
Receive the comfort, inspiration or word the Spirit has for you.
- When you sense that it is time to leave, slowly and with a quiet mind make your way from the centre back into the world, listening and stopping as you are prompted by the Spirit.



A



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After the walk, take time to reflect on the journey. You may like to journal or draw insights or words received on the walk – do whatever will help retain your experience. Hold onto your insights and carry them into the week ahead.

Where to find a labyrinth:

To find a labyrinth near you, the Australian Labyrinth Network provides a Labyrinth Locator – clickable map with information and access notes.

► www.labyrinthlinkaustralia.org/labyrinth_directory.com

Contact Christina Rowntree, Theology and the Arts Ministry, equipping Leadership for Mission, to borrow a beautiful canvas labyrinth when we are no longer required to maintain social distancing! [chris.rowntree at victas.uca.org.au](mailto:chris.rowntree@victas.uca.org.au), or call 03 9340 8813

Finger Labyrinth Prayer

A finger labyrinth is a good way to engage in the meditative practice of the labyrinth in a situation where you are unable to walk. Print the following page. We have provided the 11-circuit design found in the floor of Chartres Cathedral, France. Follow the same preparation as for walking the labyrinth, but trace the labyrinth with your finger or a pencil. You might like to journal your insights on the blank space around the image.

Resources:

There are a plethora of Labyrinth books and resources available. Labyrinth Apps are available in the Google, Android or Apple App stores.

This online labyrinth www.labyrinth.org.uk includes an audio guided meditation.

Timber or resin finger labyrinths are available to purchase online. Some are made from beautiful Australian timbers.

Learn more about the Australian and global labyrinth movement:

- The Australian Labyrinth Network
www.aln.org.au
- Veriditas
www.veriditas.org

Image annotations

Image A

Labyrinth at St. Margaret's Anglican Church, Eltham.

Image B

The Jessie Mary Vasey Labyrinth located at Austin Health's Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, designed by Simon Normand, integrating Australian motifs and bench seat mosaics of the Wurundjeri seasons designed by Alphington Primary School students.



Prepared for the Banyule Network of Uniting Churches, Holy Habits Lenten Studies by Rev. Sandy Brodine.



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