

# What is a Labyrinth?

*The labyrinth is a walking meditation. It is a tool that enables us, in the midst of the busyness of life, to be still and focus our thoughts and feelings. Labyrinths can be found in cathedrals all over Europe and have been used by Christians for hundreds of years as a means of meditation and experience of the Divine Presence.*

*To enter a labyrinth is like entering a cathedral. You sense the presence of The Holy.*



## History of the Labyrinth

*The Holy Trinity Labyrinth is modeled after the stone Labyrinth embedded in the floor of the Chartres Cathedral, France., in 1220 A.D. Christian pilgrims would walk 20 or 30 miles from their home, ending up on the three-part prayer path in the cathedral. As they walked the long winding way in, they would shed everything on their mind; all of their worries, fears and concerns.*

*In the rose shaped (Holy Spirit) center they would be still and wait for illumination or healing or a sense of God's presence.*

*As they walked the winding way out, they felt at one with God, self, others, and nature. This is the three parts of spirituality throughout the ages; known theologically as: purgation, illumination and union .*

*Labyrinths go back almost 5,000 years, long before Christianity. As with many pre-Christian symbols, the labyrinth was converted for Christian use. As a result, church labyrinths have developed a specifically Christian tradition that dates from the early Middle Ages. The process began in the fourth century, 11 years after Constantine made Christianity legal. At that time, Roman Mosaic Labyrinth was placed in a church in North Africa and Christianized by adding the words "sancta ecclesia" (holy church) in the center. The Chartres Labyrinth represents the culmination of the Christian design incorporating the cruciform image, rosette center, and small circles around the perimeter for a lunar calendar to calculate the date of Easter.*

# Why do people walk labyrinths?

- \* *to relax and feel at peace*
- \* *to let go of their worries and concerns*
- \* *to cope with grief and loss*
- \* *for insight on specific problems*
- \* *for healing of relationships*
- \* *to open the flow of creativity*
- \* *for vocational discernment*
- \* *for forgiveness*
- \* *to express thanksgivings to God*
- \* *recovery from illness or before an operation*
- \* *new beginnings , such as marriage or the birth / adoption of a child*
- \* *friends and family*
- \* *the beauty of the earth*

## How to Walk the Labyrinth

In the English language, the words maze and labyrinth are used interchangeably. The labyrinth differs from a maze in that it only has one path and there are no dead ends. The path winds throughout and becomes a mirror for where we are in our lives, touching our sorrows and releasing our joys. Walk it with an open mind and an open heart.

Quiet your mind and become aware of your breath. Allow yourself to find the pace your body wants to go. The path is a two-way street. Those going in will meet those coming out. You may (pass) people or let others step around you . Do what feels natural when you meet. Allow about one minute between people as you enter the labyrinth.

## Stages of the Labyrinth Walk

### PURGATION (RELEASING)

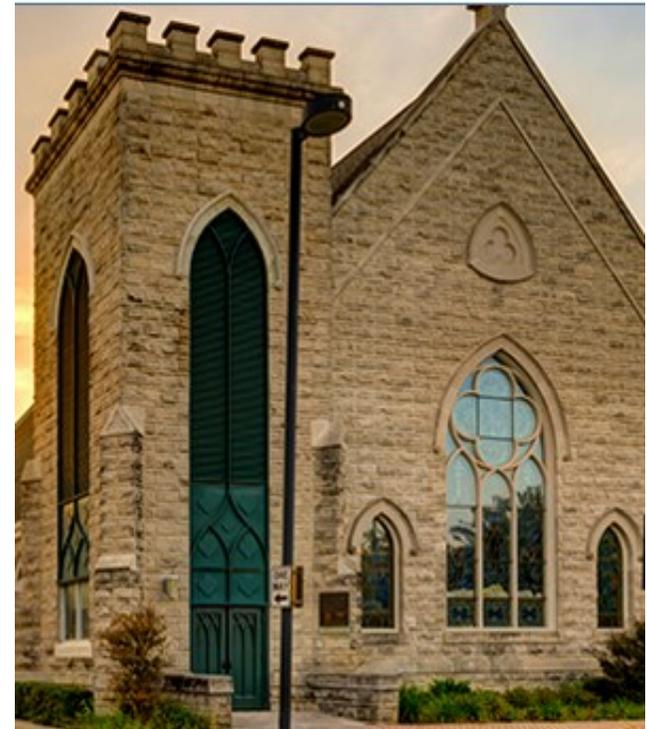
The act of shedding thoughts and distractions enables you to let go of the details of your life. This is a time to open your heart and quiet your mind.

### ILLUMINATION (RECEIVING)

At the center, stay there as long as you like, sit or stand, meditate or pray. Allow yourself to receive guidance.

### UNION (RETURNING)

To leave the center, follow the same path back out. There can be a strange sense of strengthening and clarity. You become more empowered to find and do the work you feel your soul calling for.



# The Holy Trinity Labyrinth Guild

