

Walking the Labyrinth at Moon Beach



Labyrinths have long been used by mystics and the clergy as a tool for meditation and prayer. Today, more and more people of all denominations are drawn to these contemplative coils.

Labyrinths as a spiritual device are nothing new. Between 3,500 to 5,000 years ago, it was thought that evil spirits could only travel in straight lines. A labyrinth, with its winding circuits, provided protection in a safe, sacred space.

The most well known labyrinth is found on the stone floor of the Chartres Cathedral in France. Created in the early 13th century, this 11-circuit labyrinth is divided into four quadrants and features a six-petal rosette at its center.

Although the words “labyrinth” and “maze” are often used interchangeably, they are not the same. With its intentional twists and turns, false starts and multiple choices, a maze is a puzzle to be solved. Getting lost in a maze is part of the fun, finding your way out means you’ve solved the puzzle.

With a labyrinth, there’s generally only one path to the center. There are no dead ends, unexpected turns or blind alleys. Physically, you leave the same way you entered. Spiritually and emotionally, change can be significant. For many, walking the labyrinth’s rings or circuits quiets the mind; others seek a healing power or a connection to the divine.

The labyrinth represents a journey to our own center and back again into the world. By walking this replica we are discovering a long-forgotten mystical tradition that is insisting to be reborn.

There are three (3) stage of the walk:

There’s no right way to walk the labyrinth, but most people follow the three R’s: *release*, *receive* and *review*.

Release

Upon entering the labyrinth, walkers are encouraged to let go of – or release – their worries and problems. This is an act of shedding thoughts and emotions. It quiets and empties the mind.

Receive

At the center, walkers wait to receive inspiration, staying there as long as they like. It is a place of meditation and prayer. Receive what is there to receive.

Review

Finally, walkers follow the return path to the starting point, reviewing what they received in the center. Each time they walk the labyrinth they become more empowered to find and do the work they feel their soul reaching for.

Guidelines for the walk

Clear your mind and become aware of your breath. Allow yourself to find the pace your body wants to go. You may “pass” people or let others step around you, whichever is easiest at the turns. The path is two ways. Those going in will meet those coming out. Do what feels natural.

Try not to have pre-conceived expectations about the walk. Allow the awareness to find you. Again, receive what is there for you to receive.

There is no right way or wrong way to walk a labyrinth as long as the desire to walk it is consciously chosen. Labyrinth walking is not a perfectionist act; it is often necessary to step outside the lines. Whatever happens during the spiritual exercise of labyrinth walking can be used as a metaphor for our spiritual lives.

The labyrinth is not a maze. There is only one path into the center and that same path is then taken out again. In a maze you lose yourself, in a labyrinth you find yourself.

The labyrinth is a two-way street. When one person is going into the center, another person can be exiting from the center. They will meet somewhere on the winding path. If not aware of this, it can be disconcerting to people who think that they may have made a mistake. When people meet on the path, as they meet in life, they may want to do whatever comes naturally to them. They may want to greet the person or if they are very inwardly focused, that person may choose to keep their eye lowered and continue on their way. This is entirely up to the individual.



It is important to find and honor your own pace on the path, which will often change throughout the three stages of the walk. Follow the pace your body wants to go, not the pace the mind may think you should go. In order to honor your pace, give yourself permission to move around others during the labyrinth walk. Some people are drawn to a very slow pace. Others glide around the turns as if they had wings. Moving around one another is the key to discovering and staying with one's own flow.

This labyrinth was intentionally situated in this little valley for the peaceful setting and privacy it provides. One can hear the breeze blowing off the lake from the west. This is a quiet place, away from the world, where one can immerse themselves in an intentional journey and encounter with God. Nonetheless, the sounds of the world are still heard in the background. We are called back to the world, changed and centered by this walk – called to live our faith in our daily lives.

It is our hope that your visit to the labyrinth will provide peace, solace, a time for experiencing God, and energy to live your faith as you leave this place and go back to your family, church, community, work and life.

Please feel free to ask questions before you begin.