

LENT & LABYRINTHS by Joanne Robblee:

INSTALLMENT #1: "A Path for Prayer and Meditation. A tool for Transformation and Healing. A Walk with your Soul."

During Lent many of us seek ways to deepen our faith by fasting, praying, performing acts of kindness, or learning more about our faith. Might I recommend that our parishioners take advantage of one of our church's hidden treasures – our labyrinth - to deepen your Lenten experience. If you didn't know we had a labyrinth, it's located immediately behind the church, off the parking area.

Just to share briefly how we came to have a labyrinth: The labyrinth project began in 2011, when Barbara Luton, then a new member to our church, suggested that we build a labyrinth. A group of committed people came together, raised the funds, developed landscape and labyrinth designs, and hired a stonemason. The extensive project involved removal of a fence, clearing considerable debris, moving playground equipment, getting permission from Washington & Lee to use some of its land, and other preparatory work. The labyrinth was dedicated on May 13, 2012.



Early on labyrinths or mazes were of pagan origin and only later did Christianity fully embrace labyrinths. More recently labyrinths have been linked to Christianity in a variety of ways. They were used as a symbolic pilgrimage for the faithful. Rather than making the arduous and dangerous trek to the Holy Land, the faithful would make a "mini-pilgrimage" to a nearby labyrinth. It is believed that walking a labyrinth has healing effects, helps to unravel problems, and offers a powerful path to promoting contemplation and reflection. The Stages of the Cross ceremony, oftentimes performed during Holy Week, is considered a form of walking a labyrinth.

This dedicated group also created an excellent pamphlet to provide information about our labyrinth to visitors. It also offers suggestions as to how to "walk" a labyrinth reciting prayers. Please see the link below.

LINK

LENT & LABYRINTHS by Joanne Robblee:

INSTALLMENT #2: "Whether you turn to the right or the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way, walk in it." Isaiah 30:21

Last week I wrote briefly about how Grace Church came to have our beautiful labyrinth. This week I hope to share more information about labyrinths and what makes them such a powerful tool for reflection, mediation, and prayer.

Early on labyrinths were usually mazes. They were full of dead ends and "trick" turns. The person walking the labyrinth/maze was focused on how to get in and out of the puzzle. You had choices as to which way to turn. The labyrinth/maze was more of a game and the goal was disorientation.

With a modern-day labyrinth there is only one path. The path always leads to the center and out again. The focus is on inner thoughts, prayer, or problems. You cannot get lost. It is a place for internal contemplation. The goal of walking the labyrinth is orientation and inner focus.

There are different kinds of labyrinths. Ours is based on the labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral in France.

CHARTRES LABYRINTH

- **Built in early 13th century**
- **Pilgrimage site**
- **Left-handed**
- **11-circuits**
- **Rose in the center symbolizes the Holy Spirit**



The labyrinth is a walking metaphor of the call of life to the innermost place where you find yourself and God, where you receive what you need to journey back to the world to make it a better place.

The link for the pamphlet on our labyrinth is below.

LINK

LENT & LABYRINTHS by Joanne Robblee:

INSTALLMENT #3: "The Labyrinth is the way through, the way to, the way home, or simply: The Way."

This week I want to share some suggestions about how to walk a labyrinth. There is no wrong way to do this. Each person will decide what works for him/her. One very wise person, smarter than I, shared insights into how to think about the process of walking the labyrinth:

STEPS IN WALKING A LABYRINTH

- **PURGATION – enter the maze,
emptying or letting go, shift focus
from the world around you**
- **ILLUMINATION – time in the maze
clarity, insight, and peace**
- **UNION – walking out
initiative, integration, action in the
world**

I really appreciate this quote as it helped me to realize that walking a labyrinth is not only a time commitment, but also a mental, emotional, and spiritual commitment.

Another quote shares different ways to pray while in a labyrinth:

FOUR WAYS TO PRAY IN A LABYRINTH

- **Ask God a question as you enter.**
- **Start your journey to the center.**
- **Recite a "breath(ing) prayer" as you walk.**
- **Lay down your burdens as you walk**

As mentioned above, there is the technique of quietly reciting a Breathing Prayer as you walk through the labyrinth. This involves softly repeating a short prayer as you breathe in and out. This helps to keep both your mind and body focused as you slowly walk the path into and out of the labyrinth.

Two brief examples of a breathing prayer are:

"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

"My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth."

There are many examples of breathing prayers on the Internet. Choose one or two that you feel responds to your spiritual needs at that time.

To access the church pamphlet on our labyrinth, please click on the link below.

LINK

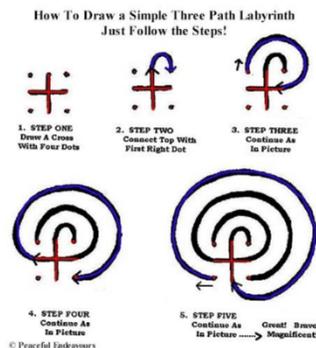
LENT & LABYRINTHS by Joanne Robblee:

INSTALLMENT #4: "When you enter a labyrinth, you enter at the same point. When you leave a labyrinth, you usually are returning to the world at a different place each time."

This final week I want to share ways you can "walk" a labyrinth while sitting comfortably at home in your chair. You can use a finger labyrinth and simply slowly drag your finger through the labyrinth and recite your prayer or quietly reflect on your faith. If you wish, you can cut and paste this graphic below and enlarge it before printing it out.



Another option is to draw or create a labyrinth of your own. This might be a great family activity. There are wonderful examples on the Internet of labyrinths made with Legos, candy, paper clips, Cheerios, and other fun ways to include your children in this spiritual activity.



I hope you visit our labyrinth or walk your own labyrinth at home. Walking a labyrinth at any time of the year can be a very special practice that, I think, can be meaningful for you. I know it is for me.

I hope you will access the link to our labyrinth pamphlet below and visit our labyrinth during Lent or anytime.

LINK