

HOW TO USE THE OAK LEAF FINGER LABYRINTH

Peter Clark designed the full-size oak leaf labyrinth for the York Festival 2023, that inspired me to make an oak leaf finger labyrinth version with Peter.

Tracing the Labyrinth with your finger can give you time and space to let go of worries and just be and listen to God and your own life.

It engages your rational, analytical mind to concentrate on following the Path and at the same time releases your intuitive, imaginative mind, balancing the two, inviting you to 'be', fully immersed in the present moment.

Find a comfortable, peaceful place to sit. Take a few moments to notice how your body is feeling. Breathe slowly and deeply.

REMEMBER God made you, God loves you, God keeps you.

When you are ready, slowly trace the labyrinth path and use a finger on the hand you do not write with, your non-dominant hand. You need only follow the path. There are no dead ends. There is only one path in and out.

As feelings and thoughts surface, try to **RELEASE** tension and let busy thoughts go; you do not have to engage them.

Breathe and trace the path to the centre. When you reach the centre, pause, **REST** and **RECEIVE**.

Be in the moment of this "breathing space. Linger briefly, offer your prayers, concerns and decisions to God.

You are loved as you are and where you are in your journey. Be open to the circle of love that you're invited into.

When you feel ready, trace the journey outwards and **RETURN** to the beginning, taking any thoughts or insights you have received.

When you find yourself back at the beginning, take some time to **REFLECT** and give thanks. You may feel lighter, stronger, and

The Northumbria Community mother and retreat house is in Acton, which means 'oak tree settlement.'

One of the fields behind the mother house has a trinity of oak trees.

THE OAK TREE

held a special place in Celtic spirituality, as it was considered the king of the forest. The oak imparted wisdom, healing, and protection due to its tall, strong, and long-living nature. Its slow growth and longevity made it a symbol of endurance and dedication.

The oak was the most sacred tree in Ireland, and its impressive size and height often attracted lightning, adding to its significance. It was believed that the oak tree, with its deep roots and high branches, connected three realms of Celtic reality - the Underworld, Middle Earth and Heaven.

The term 'druid' was used by Gaelic scholars and spiritual leaders across Europe, derived from their word for an oak tree. To be a druid meant to have the wisdom of an Oak.

Interestingly, the ancient Sanskrit word 'duir,' which means oak, is also the root of the word 'door,' suggesting that the oak was like a gateway to greater wisdom on earth.

Saint Brigid established her monastery at the druid's sacred site of Kildare, also known as the 'place of the oak.'

Saint Columba founded churches in an oak grove at Derry, a monastery at Durrow on the plain of the oaks, and another at Kells, where he lived under an oak tree, proclaiming, "Christ is my druid."

Although early Christian churches replaced any oak groves. St. Columba had a great fondness and respect for oak trees and was hesitant to cut them down. Nevertheless, his early chapel on Iona was constructed from oak sourced from nearby Mull.

St. Brendan was inspired by divine intervention to use oak boards instead of traditional hides to cover his coracle.

*On your path, O my God, and not my own, be all my journeying
Rule this heart of mine that it be only Yours. God's path would I travel,
my own path refuse. May I tread the path to the gates of glory.*

Celtic Daily Prayer



WISDOM FROM THE OAK

Saint Ninian's ancient Celtic catechism says wisdom's goal is to

“perceive the eternal Word of God reflected in every plant and insect, every bird and animal, and every man and woman.”

Go deep, stay rooted

Let your roots grow down deeply in Him, and let him build you up on a firm foundation. *Colossians 2:7*

Oak trees have a remarkable root system that expands far beyond the tree's visible expanse, providing a clue to the Oak's stability. Their roots continually search for water and nutrients to support the growth and health of the tree's branches and leaves. A sound root system naturally supports the maturity and growth of a tree to blossom and fruit.

In our quest for instant answers from God, the Holy Spirit is often working to establish us first firmly in His love and truths. Let us not be in a hurry, but trust that God's plan for us is perfect, and in the hiddenness and silence, Jesus will grow and guide us.

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OAK LEAF FINGER LABYRINTH



Ancient Celtic Christians lived in harmony with nature. They called Creation the Big Book of God and the Bible the Little Book of God. They believed God revealed eternal truths through both books, and Creation taught Wisdom for Living

The Oak Leaf Finger Labyrinth symbolises life's journey and offers a way to reflect on the oak leaf as a symbol of life's journey into a time for embodying prayer for growth and transformation.

Labyrinths provide opportunities for mindfulness, helping us slow down, connect with our inner resources, and catch up with our soul. The oak leaf labyrinth takes nature, represented in the Oak leaf to provide a time for reflective prayer and contemplation.

When I Am Among the Trees

When I am among the trees, especially the willows and the honey locust,
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
They give off such hints of gladness.

I would almost say that they save me daily.

I am so distant from the hope of myself, in which I have goodness and
discernment, and never hurry through the world
but walk slowly and bow often. Around me, the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, "Stay awhile."

The light flows from their branches.

And they call again, "It's simple," they say,
"And you too have come into the world to do this,
to go easy, to be filled with light, and to shine."

Mary Oliver

Every Pilgrim Path payer labyrinth & sphere is 3D printed
from ecologically and sustainable plant based PLA
material.

WISDOM FROM THE OAK

Be You

"Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your life." Galatians 6:1-3, MSG

A tree glorifies God by being itself, obeying His will and reflecting His creative love. No two created beings are the same, but their individuality is perfect.

"This particular tree will give glory to God by spreading out its roots in the earth and raising its branches into the air and the light in a way that no other tree before or after it ever did or will do" *Thomas Merton*

Each tree and human with its unique characteristics and identity, gives glory to God by being what God wants them to be. Their unique inner nature represents their holiness, the imprint of God's wisdom and reality in them.

Don't despise the small things.

Does anyone dare despise this day of small things, small beginnings? They'll change their tune when they see Zerubbabel setting the last stone (of the temple) in place!" Zechariah 4:10

Everything needs a small beginning. Every oak tree starts life as an acorn. Each acorn contains just one seed, when this germinates, it produces a root, an anchor to hold onto the earth. In the spring, it pushes through the leaf litter with a shoot for a leaf.

AN ACORN IS JUST A LITTLE NUT THAT'S HELD ITS GROUND !

WISDOM FROM THE OAK

Interconnection in community.

"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you" (Romans 15:7).

"Instruct one another" (Romans 15:14).

"Agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

"Serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13).

The phrase "one another" is derived from the Greek word *'allelon'* which means "one another, each other; mutually, reciprocally." It occurs 100 times in the New Testament. It expresses the mutuality and community that is an inextricable part of our faith.

Trees are not just solitary beings standing alone in the forest. They have their own hospitality with ways of communication and cooperation that can teach humans a great deal about symbiosis. A network of fungi connects trees to their neighbouring counterparts underground, similar to the neural networks in the human brain. This underground network allows trees to share resources and information and even warn each other of potential dangers. They embody equality, each tree deserving of the same respect and care.

In a forest, trees share crucial information for the well-being of the entire ecosystem. They communicate through chemical signals to alert and safeguard each other from potential dangers. Moreover, they have been observed to transfer nutrients to support each other during need. Often, trees are connected through an older "Mother" or "Hub" tree, forming a network that ensures the forest's health.

The mother hub trees are crucial in connecting young and old trees of different ages. Through this network, young seedlings can benefit from the vast resource capacity of the established trees. In addition, the older trees provide much-needed carbon, nutrients, and water to the young seedlings at critical stages of their growth, significantly improving their survival chances.

WISDOM FROM THE OAK

Go with the seasons.

There is a season for everything and a time for every purpose under heaven. There is a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to harvest. There is also a time to heal, a time to break down and a time to build up. It's a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance. Ecclesiastes 3.

Oak Trees have no option but to be in each season: times of letting go of leaves, times of being still but still moving, times of remarkable fecundity of blossom and flowering and bearing seed, and back to times of letting go again.

Most oak trees will only produce a good crop of acorns once they are around 50 years old. Over the next hundred years, the young tree matures into a majestic adult. A mature tree can grow up to 45 metres tall and spread almost as wide.

At 700 years old, the oak has reached old age. It produces fewer acorns and only grows very slowly. At 1000 years old, the oak is nearing the end of its life. Parts of the tree start to die. Over its lifespan, an oak tree can produce as many as 10 million acorns. Some of these will grow into a new generation of oak trees.

God used oak trees as a powerful picture of what we could grow into as we live fully in each season of growth, apparent stillness and even loss; ***'They will be called Oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord's splendour'. Isaiah 61:3***

*Advice from an oak
Stand tall , Go deep.
Stay rooted,
Go out on a limb,
Drink plenty of water
Be content with your natural beauty
Enjoy the view*

WISDOM FROM THE OAK

Go slowly

Move slowly when you're making significant decisions. The book of Proverbs says a lot about this. Proverbs 21:29: "Selfish people use subterfuge and deception their way, but God's people think before they take a step" Proverbs 21:29.

"Think about, meditate on, carefully consider the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure" Proverbs 4:26

Oak trees demonstrate the power of investing in long-term, sustainable growth. They dedicate more resources to developing robust and durable wood and extensive root systems, allowing them to compete effectively in mature forests and withstand harsh environmental conditions. Although their initial growth rates may be slower, their resilience and persistence pay off in the long run. By prioritising their foundational roots and patiently waiting for opportunities to thrive, oak trees remind us of the importance of perseverance and wise planning in life.

If you want your dream to be, Take your time, go slowly
Do few things but do them well, Heartfelt work grows purely
If you want to live life free, Take your time, go slowly
Do few things but do them well, Heartfelt work grows purely.
Day by day, stone by stone, Build your secret slowly
Day by day, you'll grow too, You'll know heaven's glory.
If you want to live life free, Take your time, go slowly
If you want your dream to be,, Take your time, go slowly.

Donovan Leitch

"The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in their shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life."

Rabindranath Tagore

