

Walking the labyrinth

Marion McCall, MU Prayer and spirituality Coordinator
tells of using a labyrinth as a tool for meditation with God.

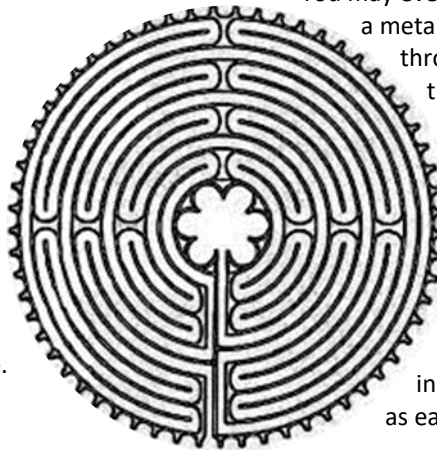
Dear Friends,

*At the last Australian Council in Bowral, I walked the labyrinth. It was a wonderful experience of God's presence for me, and I 'came out' different from 'going in'. I have asked the Rev'd Ann Dittmar-McCollim to write about the Labyrinth, which she has done so prayerfully for us, and I hope someday, you too, will take the opportunity to 'walk the walk'. With much love and blessings,
Marion*

The labyrinth is a unicursal path leading into a centre and out again. It is this single path that differentiates it from a maze, and sets it apart as a spiritual tool. It does not engage our minds as a puzzle, but allows our intuition, imagination and spirituality to come to the fore.

Form

It may be a path outlined in stone, carved in solid rock, mosaic tile, mounds of earth covered with grass; created on tapestry, canvas or concrete. Some well known examples are the medieval labyrinth set in the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France (pictured), and the recently developed indoor and outdoor labyrinths at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco. My first experience of a labyrinth was a workshop at E.F.M (Education For Ministry) trainers conference in 1997, when a group of created our own, by pinning out white knitting yarn on a dark carpet. Since then, I have in many setting, used natural materials such as bark, sticks and twigs and white sand on lawns to form the lines of the simple Roman labyrinth.



So how can the labyrinth work for you?

We often find prayer and meditation hard; stillness, disciplined concentration and silence do not come easily in our busy, noisy, active lives. The labyrinth can help quieten our thoughts as our body moves gently and rhythmically along the path.

A helpful image may be that of a floating leaf, drifting, moving gently down a stream. We too can allow our deepest self to flow in the realm of creative imagination, the stream of the Holy Spirit.

You may even experience the inward walk as a metaphor for the way you move through life: your level of trust in the path and your ability to follow it knowing whether it is the right path. The walk outward give time to confirm the experience, to reflect and to integrate the insight. The same labyrinth walked in a similar way for all of us, will result in a great variety of insights and experience – as unique as each one of us.

How to walk the labyrinth

Take a few minutes to reflect on where you are in your life. As you begin your walk, be aware of yourself, of any tensions or discomfort. As you steady and slow your breathing in rhythm with your steps, let go of the tension and any anxiety, simply seek to be open and receptive. Find your comfortable pace, it may well be slower than usual. You may have a question in your life and while the labyrinth is not a means telling the future, or 'yes, no' answers, you may find clarity and insight as you reflect and pray about that. You may want to use this walk as a means of intercession. Simply to remain open to our wonderful God.