

A DEDICATION PRAYER



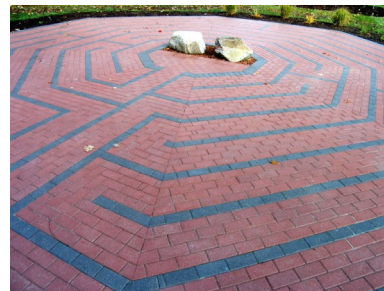
Bless, O Lord, this labyrinth and all who walk upon its winding course. Help us to trust this path as a symbol of our life with you: that no matter how far we feel from you, you are always there at the center, waiting for us and welcoming us home.

Bless our journeys. Help us to remember that you are with us in times of joy and in times of sadness. With each step we take, surround us with your light for with you we do not walk in darkness. Keep our hearts and minds fixed upon your perfect peace that is the center of our life with you.

In you, Gracious God, we find our returning and our rest. Sustain us then with the knowledge of your presence as we journey this sacred path. Lead us closer to your heart and deeper into your love. In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, we dedicate to you this labyrinth.

December 10, 2001, Martha H. Eilertsen
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Upper St. Clair, PA

Dear God, creator of all, be with us today. We pray that all those who come to this holy place to find guidance may be led. We pray that all those who come searching for knowledge may be blessed with wisdom. Grant that all those who come seeking forgiveness may be filled with your grace and so be able to reconcile the past and be released to walk into the future celebrating the gift of life. For those who are troubled may they find peace, and for those who are wounded, may they find healing. We ask that for each of us as we come as pilgrims on the journey of life, that we may be strengthened in our faith. Bless this hallowed place and all those who journey down its path. And let us always be thankful. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen and Alleluia.



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THE LABYRINTH



Welcome to Northbrook's Labyrinth. This is a sacred place—a place of peace and joy, a place of love and healing, a place of understanding and knowing.

Humans have been walking labyrinths for over 5000 years. In the ongoing search for life's meaning, for comfort, for healing, for wisdom, for direction, for communion with the Divine, people have turned to the labyrinth as a spiritual tool, a sacred place to meet God.

What is a labyrinth? Some would say that it is a maze, but a maze is designed so that you will lose your way. A labyrinth is designed so that you will find your way.

A maze requires that you make choices, that you use your head. A labyrinth requires no other choice than whether or not to walk it.

With a maze there are dead ends and wrong turns; with a labyrinth there are no dead ends and no wrong turns. In a labyrinth there is one path which leads circuitously into the center—that same path leads circuitously back out. It is one of the oldest contemplative and transformational tools known to humanity.

Walking the Labyrinth

There is not a right or wrong way to walk the Labyrinth. The Labyrinth is very user friendly. You cannot get lost nor can you fail - there is no right or wrong way to the walk the path.

As you begin your walk, take a few deep breaths at the start of the path, and focus your intentions.

Find your own natural pace as your walk. You can walk slowly or quickly, crawl, dance, skip or pause at any point as you walk to or from the center.

Since the Labyrinth has only one path, you may encounter others and can simply allow them to pass. If you are walking faster than somebody else, you can pass them. It is easiest at a turn.

In the center you can stay as long as you want. You can sit down, kneel, meditate, dance, stand or just leave. Again, follow your own natural pace.

Each experience with the Labyrinth will be different. Sometimes it may feel as though nothing has happened and others you may have a strong experience.

Enjoy your experience. Listen to your own heart and take all the time you need.

"Walking a Labyrinth is a body prayer. It is non-threatening; all we are asked to do is walk."

-Rev. Lauren Artress

Some Suggestions for Walking

There are three movements to the labyrinth, and you are free to make of them whatever you like. Please use these suggestions if you find them appropriate. You might want to select one from each movement and try it.

Moving Inward, Centering, Moving Outward

Walking into the Labyrinth—Release A time to cast off, discard, divest, unwrap, forget

This is a time to release your troubles, clear and quiet your mind. Open your heart to whatever it might feel. Become aware of your breathing. Take slow breaths. Relax and move at your own pace.

1. Discard your many roles (mother, father, wife, husband, sister, brother, student, accountant, teacher, pastor) and simply say "I am."
2. Leave the noise, demands, voices around you, and enter a soothing silence.
3. Unload your guilt, resentment, self-hatred, failures, depression and shame, and forgive yourself.
4. Set aside all the things you think you want and need, hoping to find what God wants.
5. Leave the familiar world of day-to-day living for a different experience.
6. Reject the anxious desire to get the most out of the labyrinth, simply becoming open and expectant.

Reaching the Center—Home—Receive A time to be open, expectant, empty, receptive, as though you were receiving a gift

This can be a place of meditation and prayer. Pause. Open yourself to the Spirit. Listen to that small inner voice. Feel safe and have a heart-to-heart talk with yourself.

1. Enjoy the silence, stillness, waiting and the simplicity of nothing happening.
2. Take time to listen to an inner voice or to nothing.
3. Consider the possibility of the new, the miraculous, the transfiguring entering our lives.

Reconnect with the Outside World — Return

A time to gain direction, satisfaction, comfort, and new energy

This is a time to reconnect with the outside world. When you are ready, begin walking again out the same path you came in. As you follow the path out, experience the sense of well-being, healing, excitement, calm or peace.

1. Decide to continue a journey deeper into the love of Christ.
2. Refuse to take up again the fear, guilt and hatred of the past.
3. Seek a simpler and more focused life.
4. Rest in the knowledge that God loves you...no matter what
5. Move away from anxiety toward peace and faith.
6. Seek the direction of the Holy Spirit.