

GUIDELINES FOR WALKING THE LABYRINTH

The Labyrinth takes approximately 20-60 minutes to walk the entire 1/3 mile path. The path has no dead-ends, but weaves back and forth, near the center, then to the outside. It encourages thoughts about our own spiritual journey which also may have an up, down, or weaving pattern. One follows the same path in a reverse direction to return to the outside.

- **Pause** at the entry to allow yourself to be fully conscious of the act of stepping into the Labyrinth. Allow about a minute, or several turns on the path, to lapse between you and the person in front of you.
- **Follow your pace:** allow your body to determine the pace. If you allow a rapid pace and the person in front of you is moving slower, feel free to move around the person. Pass at the turns by turning earlier.
- **The narrow path is a two-way street.** If you are going in and another person is going out, you will meet on the path. If you want to keep in an inward meditative state, simply do not make eye contact. If you wish to make contact with another pilgrim, do so in a way that reflects your relationship.

A LABYRINTH IS NOT A MAZE

Mazes offer many entrances, dead-ends, and cul-de-sacs, designed to confound the mind.

Labyrinths offer one path. They are a tool for meditation and represent a spiritual pilgrimage, designed to quiet oneself and to connect with God. By stepping into the Labyrinth we are choosing, once again, to walk the spiritual path. As medieval Christians made a pilgrimage to Chartres Cathedral, we modern pilgrims walk the Labyrinth as one of many tools to enhance our faith, prayer life, and spiritual journey.

We hope you will return again and again. You may find something new each time you walk. Please invite someone you care for to share the Labyrinth. Please sign our guest book in Nunemaker Lobby after walking the Labyrinth.

Donations will be used to support this and other Heartland Center programs.

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WALKING THE LABYRINTH AT Heartland Center



*“Each time you walk the
Labyrinth, it is unique. God has
so much to offer you.”
– A Fellow Pilgrim*

The Labyrinth at Heartland Center was constructed in June of 2006 by the Sr. High Work Camp with tremendous volunteer labor and financial support from Blue Ridge Presbyterian Church of Raytown, Missouri. Together, thirteen youth and over twenty-five adult volunteers worked an estimated 800 person hours, laid 1,120 pieces of stone, 66 tons of crushed asphalt, and over 2 tons of concrete in its construction.

The eleven-circuit Labyrinth is a replica of the Labyrinth found on the nave floor of Chartres Cathedral in France, which dates from sometime between 1194 A.D. and 1220 A.D.

HISTORY OF THE LABYRINTH



Labyrinths are found all over the world and date as far back as 2,000 B.C. Walking the Labyrinth is an ancient spiritual act that is being

rediscovered during our time. During the Middle Ages, Labyrinths were found in many churches and cathedrals in France and Northern Italy. Church Labyrinths, or pavement Labyrinths, are characteristically flat or are inlaid into the floor of the nave of the church. Outdoor Labyrinths were sometimes made of mounds of dirt or hedges which hinder sight.

THE THREE-FOLD MYSTICAL TRADITION

In the Christian mystical tradition, the journey to God was articulated in the *Three-Fold Path*. “*Mystica*” means a direct avenue to God. There is no correct or incorrect way to walk the Labyrinth. However, you may wish to think of this prayer walk moving through three stages:

Stage 1: PURGATION

Follow the winding path to the center. There are no tricks or dead-ends. Breathe deeply and walk at whatever pace you choose. Let go of the details of your daily life and quiet your mind. If you need to go around someone ahead of you, it is acceptable to courteously pass. You need not feel limited to keeping your eyes on the path; look up if you desire.

Purgation is an archaic word (from the root word “to purge”), meaning to cleanse, to let go, or in modern terms, to release. Personally it can mean “shedding.” The mystical word is “emptying.” Purgation is a penitential act, not for punishment, but to humble oneself before God.

Stage 2: ILLUMINATION

Illumination is found in the center of the Labyrinth. After quieting the mind through the first part of the walk, the center presents a new experience: *a place of meditation and prayer*. Stand, sit, or kneel in the center and open yourself to whatever God has to offer. Stay as long as you wish.

Stage 3: UNION

This stage begins as you leave the center of the Labyrinth and retrace the path that brought you in. Many people who have had an important experience in the center feel this third stage of the Labyrinth gives them a way of *integrating* the insights they received. Others feel that this stage stokes the creative fires within.

WAYS TO APPROACH THE LABYRINTH

1. “Gracious Attention” – It is not necessary to have your own agenda, be open to let God speak and for you to listen.
2. Use a word, a song, or a simple phrase to repeat over and over as you walk.
3. Meditate on a passage from scripture along the way.
4. As you walk through the Labyrinth, you may experience changes in mood. Pay attention to what is happening.

Be aware that you may not be aware of what has happened when you walk the Labyrinth. Often results are seen later.