

Walking the Sacred Path

O God,
Whenever I walk this sacred path,
I am face to face with your whole universe.
I look North,
And I see a host of familiar faces.
Then I turn East,
And there are other friends.
I slowly walk South,
And, again, there are people
I have met greeting me anew.
Even when the West beckons,
a cloud of witnesses awaits.
I am thankful for friends still closely present,
as well as warmly held in my memory.

I see them all anew as in these short steps
I relive The Journey.
People, Places, Events, Unforgettable Experiences,
all chapters in each of our lives.

Memories have been preserved for me
by those who have whispered words of love into my ears
that I will hear forever.

They make me know deep within
that, like the labyrinth,
the future will bring me once again to
The Center,
where all things are made
New again.

Amen.

Rev. John Winn - April 28, 2012

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through the prayers and gifts of the
Academy for Spiritual Leadership.

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Rev. Carole Cotton Winn
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and vision.

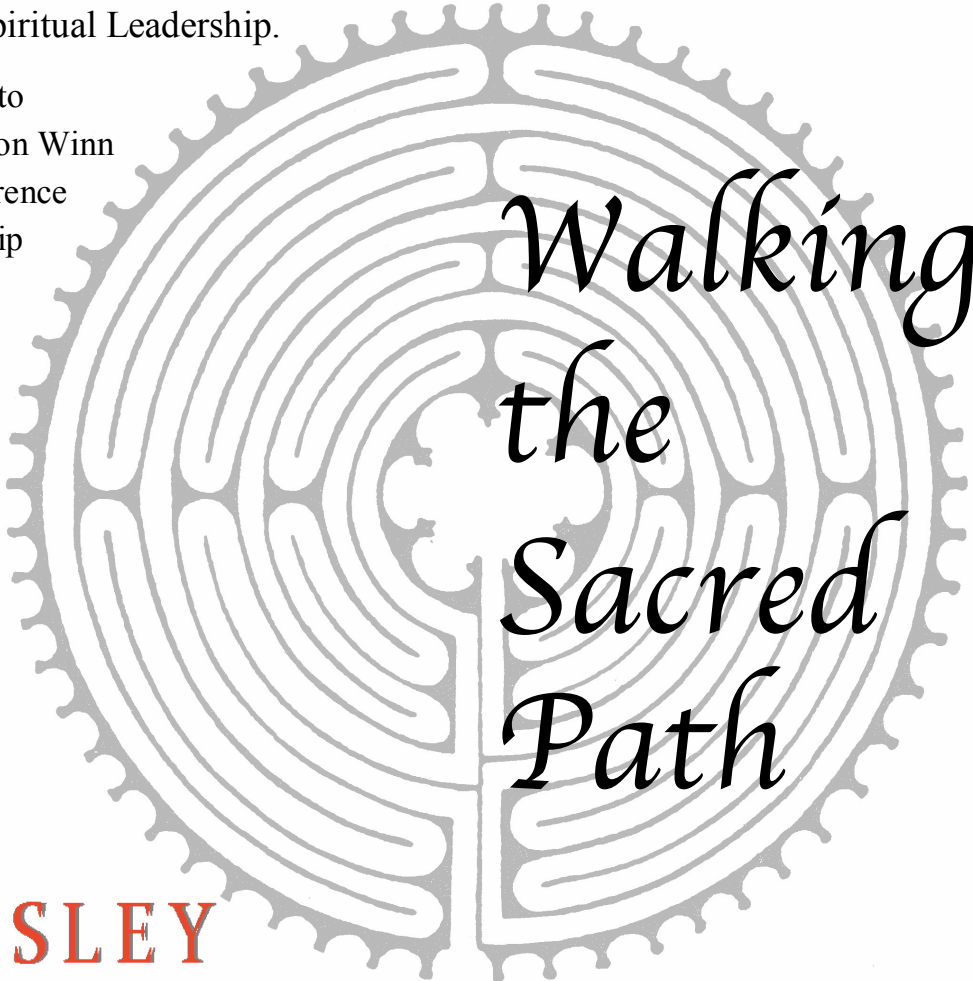
The Prayer
Labyrinth is
nestled in the
woods just 500
feet down the
paved trail from
the Cross.



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of the United Methodist Church*

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*Walking
the
Sacred
Path*

*“...where all things
are made New again.”*

The History of Labyrinths

Labyrinths are ancient archetypal symbols, the oldest of which have been found in prehistoric ruins. Labyrinths have been discovered on every inhabited continent and have been used for a variety of different purposes. Some ancient labyrinths were large enough to be walked; others were created for literary or visual purposes.

In 324 A.D. Christians placed a labyrinth in their church in Algiers, North Africa. Although Christians must have been using the labyrinth earlier, this is the first historical record we have of the Christian use of the labyrinth. Since that time labyrinths have been prayed, studied, danced, traced, and drawn as Christians have sought to use the spiritual tool to connect and draw closer to God.

A labyrinth is defined as a single pathway that turns back on itself before reaching a center. Labyrinths, with only one meandering path, are distinguished from mazes that have multiple paths as well as dead ends. Most labyrinths are built level with the ground, while architectural mazes are traditionally built using hedges or other materials that add a third dimension.

Theology and Labyrinths

The word “labyrinth” is not found in the Bible, but themes of following God’s path, journeying in faith, and enjoying God’s presence - all central to labyrinth experiences - are found throughout Scripture. Contemporary authors link Christian concepts of pilgrimage, resurrection, Jesus as the Way, and Christ’s call to follow, with labyrinth experience. Biblical themes of love, joy, peace, truth, comfort, guidance, service, and wisdom are commonly cited in reference to labyrinth use.

Labyrinths are spiritual tools that facilitate the many varied types of prayer mentioned and illustrated in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, including but not limited to, thanksgiving, intercession, praise, meditation, confession and free flowing conversation.

Labyrinth Usage

When used with a faith perspective, labyrinths are spiritual tools that help people to perceive and connect with God’s presence. A “typical” labyrinth experience involves preparing oneself at the threshold, following the single path to the center, spending time in the center, following the same pathway out from the center back to the threshold, and responding to the experience.

Your Labyrinth Walk

✦Labyrinth prayer quiets the mind and spirit so that you can listen more easily and relate more deeply with God. Walking the Prayer Labyrinth takes 20 to 30 minutes.

Suggested steps for a labyrinth walk:

1. Before you begin, decide what you are going to pray for. Focus.
2. Stand still at the entrance and invite God to walk with you.
3. Move on the path as you pray. One path leads to the center. Go at any pace (fast or slow) that seems comfortable.
4. When you get to the center, rest in Christ’s loving presence. Reflect on what has happened so far on your prayer walk, or simply be aware of what you are sensing.
5. When you are ready, take the same pathway back out. You may wish to continue the prayer with which you started, or pray about how to integrate what God has been showing you into your life and service of others.
6. When you reach the threshold, thank God for whatever has happened during your prayer experience.
7. Afterward, reflect on what happened while you prayed. Write down your thoughts and feelings, or creatively express them in another way (drawing, etc.)