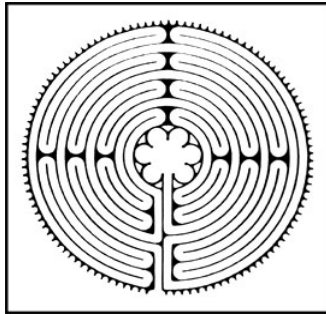


# Did You Know?

## LABYRINTHS

### ▪ A Healing Walk to Your Center ▪



#### What is a Labyrinth?

Labyrinths have been used for walking meditation and inner harmony across history. They are thought to be at least 4000 years old and are found throughout the world in many cultures. They are not connected to any creed, so all people feel comfortable using them. The Labyrinth is thought to be a symbol of the spiritual journey to our center. It's the outward sign of the inner pilgrimage.

Originally found in ancient Crete, the Labyrinth symbol has appeared in many cultures, from Cornwall, England in the year 3500 (about the time of Camelot!) where the design was etched on a rock carving, to the Hopi Indians, to cathedrals in Europe (the floor in Chartres Cathedral is one of the most famous). Recently, there has been a revival in the interest and use of labyrinths for emotional and spiritual

healing by hospitals, churches, and meditation centers.

#### A Labyrinth Is A Mandala

Actually, a Labyrinth is a mandala, which gives it even more meaning for us at Mandala. "Mandala" is a Sanskrit word that literally means "circle," but the deeper meaning is more spiritual and more universal. Circular patterns (or mandalas) involving geometric icons have been used as meditation tools to facilitate contemplation in every corner of the world: Christian "Rose Windows," Native American "Sand Paintings," East Indian, "Yantras," and Tibetan "Mandalas" are some well-known examples.

#### Labyrinths Offer a Sense of Peace and Harmony

Labyrinths have been used in many ways: as a walking meditation, for centering, for quieting the mind, for prayer, for pain relief, for stress reduction, for healing, for protection, in rituals, as a way of creating community, a way of problem-solving, and for connecting with spirit.

You can walk an outdoor Labyrinth with your feet or trace the pattern with your fingers on a "Finger Labyrinth." (These can be made of wood, paper or stone.) In our classroom, the children have the opportunity to use our new wooden Finger Labyrinth during Work Time. Walking a Labyrinth, or tracing the pattern with your fingers, can bring a deep sense of peace and harmony. Perhaps it is because you must focus on one step at a time, trusting that the journey will always lead to your Center, even when it appears you are traveling in the opposite direction.

#### Children and the Labyrinth

Teachers in schools that have labyrinths report that walking the labyrinth can help children calm down. It can help them focus and concentrate. It can help them "quiet their motor" if they are angry. If you hand a Finger Labyrinth to a child of almost any age, they will almost immediately begin tracing the pattern with their pointer finger.

It is thought that moving through the left and right turns of the Labyrinth helps a person shift out of the linear left brain into the right brain, which is more spatially oriented and creative. Our right brain gives us our "Ah ha" moments when we suddenly figure out problems or are able to think outside the box.

Take a walk  
on our new  
**Labyrinth** in our  
Meditation Garden!

Our labyrinth is called a  
"Cretan" style labyrinth.



When children first approach a larger Labyrinth, their first impulse is to run to reach the center! Playing on a Labyrinth can be a blissful release of energy and emotion for children. At Mandala, we want to teach children to appreciate the sacred nature of the Labyrinth, so at first we will guide them to walk quietly on the path and to be respectful of others. However, children may laugh or run or sing or dance through a Labyrinth, and that is perfectly acceptable, too.

The Reverend Diana Wheeler has written a little book for children called *A Young Pilgrim's Guide to Walking the Labyrinth*. This is what she tells them:



*“Walking the Labyrinth can be an adventure. You can feel all different kinds of feelings while you are walking. You can walk it when you’re happy or when you’re sad or angry. The walk can help you feel your feelings. Sometimes walking a Labyrinth can help you think. If you have a problem or need an idea, the walk can help you listen to your creative self. A Labyrinth walk can help you slow your thinking and help you feel peaceful. If you are in a spiritual place, it can help you pray. When you are walking, you are on your pilgrimage. It can help you figure out your questions and listen for your answers. When some people walk, they imagine walking into the warm, strong, loving arms of Mother Earth. It can feel very safe. You might feel like you could tell her anything.”*

### **Guidelines for Walking the Labyrinth**

There is no right or wrong way to walk the Labyrinth. The Labyrinth has only one path to the center, unlike a maze that has many dead ends. It has no tricks. Walk it with an open mind and an open heart. You can’t get lost. There is only one way in and one way out.

- Before you start, take a moment and quiet your body. Clear your mind and become aware of your breath.
- As you step onto the Labyrinth, remember to keep your eyes on the path and just follow your feet.
- Allow yourself to find the pace that your body wants to go.
- You may pass people, or let others step around you, which ever is easiest. Keep your eyes soft as you pass.
- As you walk toward the center, try to let go of any thoughts that are bothering you. Quiet your mind, if you can. If the thoughts won’t go, don’t worry. As you walk, they will quiet down naturally.
- When you reach the center, stop for a while. Feel your body and your feelings. Look around you. Now is a good time to say ask for something or say thank you.
- As you walk out of the Labyrinth, listen to your heart, mind, and body. Listen for any answer you need. Feel the warmth of your peacefulness.
- When you step out of the Labyrinth, turn and stop for a moment. Be fully aware. Say in your heart what needs to be said. Some people feel moved to thank the Spirit of Creation for meeting them there.



October’s Theme for Small Group is “Coming to Our Center”.  
Find a few minutes to walk the Labyrinth with your child.

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### **SOURCES**

*108 Ways To Use Labyrinths in Schools* by Gael Hancock  
*A Young Pilgrim's Guide to Walking the Labyrinth* by Diana Wheeler  
LINC: Labyrinths in North Carolina (internet)

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