

Walking the Labyrinth



Western Heights Uniting Church

www.whuc.com.au

A Guide to Walking the Labyrinth

“An activity that allows the mind to slow down and become quiet can be considered meditation. A meditative state occurs when we step out of the ordinary clock time into dreamtime. We feel at peace and fully present to the activity.”

– Lauren Artress –

There are many ways to describe a Labyrinth. It is a path of prayer, a walking meditation, a crucible of change, a watering hole for the spirit and a mirror of the soul. Some people come with questions, others just to slow down and take time out from a busy life. Some come to find strength to take the next step. Many come during times of grief and loss.

The Labyrinth is not a maze. There are no tricks to it and no dead ends. It has a single circuitous path that winds its way into the centre. The person walking it uses the same path to return from the centre and the entrance then becomes the exit. There is no right way or wrong way to walk a Labyrinth.

Use the Labyrinth in any way that meets what you need while being respectful of others walking. To prepare, you may want to sit quietly to reflect before walking the Labyrinth.

Generally there are three stages to the walk: releasing on the way in, receiving in the centre and returning when you follow the return path back out of the Labyrinth. Symbolically, and sometimes actually, you are taking back out into the world that which you have received.

Walk gently on the sacred earth.
Be open to the Spirit of Life.

Some Helpful Hints

See the time sitting before and after walking the Labyrinth as part of the meditative experience. Give attention to the experience, quieten your mind, let go of “doing” and “be”.

Try to find a natural rhythm and pace to your walking remembering there are other walkers with you. Leave a little space to the next person in front. It is ok to gently pass someone if your pace is a little faster than theirs.

When you meet another person moving in the opposite direction to you, either greet them with your eyes or keep your head down and focussed on your journey. Either option is ok.

When you get to the central area, you might stand or sit or kneel for a little while to savour the journey and the stillness, to attend to what is happening within you as you’ve walked, to simply be

still in God's presence, to pray. When you are ready, begin the outward journey, the same path in reverse, again open to what may come to you.

After walking the Labyrinth, it can be helpful to reflect on the experience. Journaling, drawing or quietly praying are good ways to do this. You may even like to share your Labyrinth experience with another at a later time.

The History of Labyrinths

The Labyrinth is an ancient pattern found in many cultures around the world. Labyrinth designs were found on pottery, tablets and tiles that date as far back as 5000 years. Many patterns are based on spirals and circles mirrored in nature. One feature that labyrinths have in common is that they have one path that winds in a circuitous way to the centre.

Labyrinths are currently being used worldwide as a way to quieten the mind, recover a balance in life, encourage meditation, insight, self-reflection, stress reduction, and to discover innovation and celebration. They are open to all people as a cross-cultural, multi-faith blueprint for well-being.