

GROWING Together

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THE LABYRINTH: AN INNER JOURNEY

The labyrinth is an ancient and unique approach to prayer. Walking a labyrinth is an experience of the Spirit's work. Just as Jesus accompanied the disciples on their way to Emmaus after the resurrection, God walks with us as we walk the labyrinth.

Every few centuries, the labyrinth is rediscovered. Found in all religious traditions, it has been called a *divine imprint*. The oldest labyrinth,



probably 4,000 years old, was discovered in northern Egypt. The earliest Christian labyrinth dates back to 4th century Algiers. Labyrinths are found in most of the 12th century European cathedrals in the floor or in the pavement leading to the church. This long-forgotten tradition is being reborn, from California to Saskatoon, from France to Australia. Now labyrinths can be found in parks, churches, playgrounds, prisons, backyards and on the Internet. They may be painted on canvas and rolled onto a gym floor, or formed with rocks and gravel outdoors. A small version made of clay allows the fingers to “walk” the labyrinth.



A labyrinth is not a puzzle; nor is it a maze with its hidden places and dead ends. The labyrinth has one path which winds around and back and forth, leading us to the centre then out again. Its design represents our human passage through time and experience. We walk and turn. We take the next step; the direction is seldom obvious. God travels this road with us and will never abandon us.

When walking a labyrinth one's inner world slows down so that body and spirit move together. The path of the labyrinth may help us discover wholeness and healing. Busy lives and schedules are left behind. Our inner thoughts can now emerge, opening to God. We may slowly repeat a prayer we know. Or, we may simply gaze at our feet as they move step by step, finding a rhythm that connects body and spirit. Slowly, slowly, we walk back and forth into the heart of the labyrinth and out again into the world where God calls us to live. We may experience stillness, wonder, or simple delight in the awareness of God's intimate love. Perhaps we may hear God.

Walking the labyrinth is more about the journey than the destination, more about opening to God than about the actual walk. Walking the labyrinth is a peaceful journey that allows God to be truly present. Walking the labyrinth is being with God.

GROWING TOGETHER is a series of five monthly Sunday bulletin inserts for the ecumenical education of Christ's faithful.



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