

The Labyrinth at St. Timothy Anglican Church

Welcome to this sacred space. Although this Meditation Garden and labyrinth are on the grounds of a Christian worship site, all spiritual seekers are invited to share in this community resource.

Please respect this garden and the others who come here for quiet reflection. We request that you do not bring anything with wheels except walkers or wheelchairs inside the garden. Please do not litter or leave cigarette butts on the ground. Close the gate when you leave to keep wandering animals out. The garden is a memorial for both those who have their ashes scattered here and those who are remembered by the community.

What are Labyrinths?

Labyrinths and mazes have been found in many ancient cultures. The most famous is perhaps the multi-cursal (many-path) labyrinth of Greek myth in which the famous Minotaur monster was said to be imprisoned. However in modern times a maze is said to have many paths and dead ends while a labyrinth often refers to a walkway with a single path to a centre. This uni-cursal (one path) labyrinth is the form of the one at St. Timothy's.

There are many different forms of the labyrinth, from a simple winding path, or spiral, to the elaborate medieval labyrinths in European cathedrals like Chartres. During its history, the Christian Church has found the labyrinth to be a powerful and multilayered symbol of the Christian journey.

What are Labyrinths for?

Labyrinths have long been used as meditative tools by individuals, as well as in public acts of penitence or worship. Sometimes they were laid in stone on the church floor or in the plaza outside. Sometimes there were carved or painted on a wall to be followed by a finger. By tracing its path prayerfully, a pilgrim could re-enact the "chemin du Jerusalem"- the road to Jerusalem.

The road to the centre takes surprising turns. When we think we are near the goal, the path shifts away and our perspective changes. But when our feet are securely following the path, we cannot get lost. Once we touch the spiritual and inward centre, it is time to walk out to the world again. All who walk a labyrinth open themselves to the possibility of an encounter with the Divine in the journey of their lives.

Suggestions for walking

It is important to find your own rhythm and pace. Some people walk it faster than others. Some people dance! That means it is okay to pass someone if you want to walk at a faster pace than him or her. Going outside the lines to move around someone is perfectly acceptable. If you wish to pause and pray at any point, others may move around you.

There is a single pathway into the centre and the same one brings you out. When you have reached the centre you are half way. Take some time in the centre. It is okay for more than one person to share the centre space. When you are ready, begin the walk back to the beginning rather than stepping out of the labyrinth. The paths are two-way; you will pass people on the way in and the way out.

You may wish to observe the following stages:

1. Acknowledgement- be aware of entering sacred space
2. Purpose – form an intent for walking, offer, a prayer, be aware of your emotions and body as you enter the labyrinth.
3. Openness – to the thoughts and images that come to you. Take time for silence at the centre
4. Closure – as you exit, pause and say “Amen” or “Thank you” or...
5. Reflection – you may want to sit and pray, or journal afterward, or walk slowly around the perimeter of the labyrinth.

The St. Timothy Labyrinth

This form was adapted from a medieval octagonal labyrinth pattern. It was hand-cut in desert sand and charcoal pavers by Campbell Whitehead and his crew of Paraspace Designs in April 2010. This labyrinth and garden are made possible by generous donations and bequests from parishioners of this church. The labyrinth and meditation garden were dedicated on May 9, 2010 by the Rt. Rev. Michael Ingham, Bishop of the Diocese of New Westminster.

Further Resources

Other labyrinths in Vancouver which are open to the public:

Outside at the Vancouver School of Theology www.vst.edu or 604-822-9031;
Chartres labyrinth at St. Paul’s Church www.stpaulsanglican.bc.ca or 604-685-6832.

Artress, Lauren, *Walking the Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool*, is an excellent reference.

West, Melissa Gale, *Exploring the Labyrinth: A Guide for Healing and Spiritual Growth* is also a helpful book.