

# WALK THE LABYRINTH AT DAMASCUS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



## THE DUMC LABYRINTH

THE DUMC Labyrinth was built in May 2011. It is an archetypal image found throughout history from ancient Egypt to Crete and in Celtic, Scandinavian, and Native American cultures. The Christian roots of the DUMC Labyrinth date back to the Chartres Labyrinth, laid in the floor of northern France's Chartres Cathedral in 1220.

**The DUMC Labyrinth is available from dawn to dusk  
for all who wish to walk the sacred path.**

## WHAT IS A LABYRINTH?

The labyrinth is an ancient sacred symbol of pilgrimage to the Divine. Early Christians took a vow to visit the Holy City of Jerusalem at some point in their lives, but during the Middle Ages, travel was unsafe, and other means were needed to fulfill that sacred commitment. Labyrinths were adopted by the Roman Church to offer a way of fulfilling the sacred pilgrimage vow.

Unlike a maze, the labyrinth has only one path which leads to the center and out again. There are no tricks, dead ends, cul-de-sacs, or intersecting paths. There are no choices to be made, other than the primary one: the decision to enter the path. The path winds throughout and becomes a mirror for where we are in our own lives. Walking the path is a letting go of daily concerns and opening ourselves to God's healing presence in the center. The insights we receive are then taken back out the path into our lives.

Walking the labyrinth just naturally causes our attention to start turning inward, focusing in the present moment. Labyrinths can be used as a spiritual practice to help relieve stress, to help people work through grief, and also to provide comfort during illness. At the most basic level, walking the labyrinth focuses the attention, stills the mind, and quiets the breathing.

## PREPARATION FOR THE WALK

- Take time before you begin to disengage from your day and relax. Consider the issues, concerns, questions, or dreams you want to take with you on this walk. Or, simply decide to clear and quiet your mind and put yourself in a receptive state.
- Maintain silence throughout your walk for your own and other's reflection.
- Move at your own pace. Feel free to pause at any place. You may pass others who are moving at a slower rate. The path is two ways: those going in will pass those coming out.
- Upon reaching the center, you may sit, kneel, stand, meditate, face several directions, pray, or read something you brought along with you. Stay in the center as long as you wish.
- Walking out of the labyrinth is a time for integration and gratitude for the gifts received.

- Feel free to take some time after your walk to remain in the area for further reflections and meditation until you are ready to leave.
- Please no food or drink in the labyrinth.
- May God abundantly bless your journey!

## THE EXPERIENCE

There are three stages of the walk:

1. The 'inward' journey, as you enter the labyrinth: The theme of the inward journey is letting go of things which hold back our wholeness and inner approach to God.
2. The 'center': The center of the labyrinth is a space of meditative prayer and peace.
3. The 'outward' journey, as you exit the path: The theme of the outward journey is relationship – with ourselves, with others and with the earth – seen in the light of our relationship with God.

## PRAYERFUL WAYS TO WALK THE LABYRINTH

- **Walk with Openness:** Lord, what do you want me to know? What do you want to show me? Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.
- **Walk as Intercessory Prayer:** Lord, may I tell you about this person, situation, need? Lord, I place in your tender care ...
- **Walk to honor a significant date or transition:** Lord, it was just a year ago that ... Lord, thank you that I have this new opportunity to...
- **Walk using a prayer phrase:** Repeat one of God's names that has deep meaning for you (Abba, Savior, The Great I Am), repeat a spiritual word that has significance for you (Peace, Hope, Trust, Love), or repeat a short phrase (Your will be done; Jesus, Remember me).
- **Walk to reflect:** Think about something in particular that is concerning you right now.
- **Walk to observe:** Lord, help me pay attention to what I see, what I feel, everything I sense during this walk. What do I see? What do I hear? Where are you, Lord, in all of this?
- **Walk to let go:** Lord, what do you invite me to release into your care?
- **Walk with a question:** Lord, what is my next step?

*“Why does the labyrinth attract people? Because it is a tool to guide healing, deepen self-knowledge, and empower creativity. Walking the labyrinth clears the mind and gives insight into the spiritual journey. It urges action. It calms people in the throes of life transitions. It helps them see their lives in the context of a path, a pilgrimage. **They realize that they are not human beings on a spiritual path, but spiritual beings on a human path.** To those of us who feel we have untapped gifts to offer, it stirs the creative fires within. To others who are in deep sorrow, it gives solace and peace. The experience is different for everyone, because each of us brings different raw material to the labyrinth. We bring our unique hopes, dreams, history, and longings of the soul.”*

Dr. Lauren Artress,  
who brought the labyrinth to Grace Cathedral in San Francisco

If you would like to share the story of your labyrinth experience with us, please contact:

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### Testimonial

*“I really felt the power of God's presence as I walked the labyrinth.”*

11 year old male



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