

Prayer toolkit

prayer labyrinth

AIM

To explore praying with labyrinths.

INTRODUCTION

Let me tell you...

Late one night whilst my father was in hospital, I walked a labyrinth at Swanwick. I had been worried about him and distracted during the evening prayers that had not really settled me or sunk in. But I found the labyrinth in a quiet part of the garden and in the quiet dusk I put down my things and began to walk around it. I concentrated on slowly putting my feet one in front of the other as I wove my way around. In the centre of the labyrinth was a small bubbling water fountain. The gentle musical sound accompanied me as I walked. I began to feel calmer and when I got to the centre I spent several minutes first watching the water bubble up from the fountain and then taking some in my hands and letting it fall on my arms, my face and my head. With the water gently dripping from me I walked out of the labyrinth.

What is it?

A labyrinth is a prayer path. Sometimes called a prayer labyrinth or meditation labyrinth is a maze like patten made on the floor through which a participant travels in order to pray or mediate. As you travel towards the centre you are lead in prayer towards God.

PRAYING WITH A LABYRINTH

The website <http://www.lessons4living.com/drawing.htm> shows how to draw a labyrinth. If you are more ambitious and want to build one then visit <http://www.lessons4living.com/build.htm>. You can mark out your labyrinth with stones or rope and anything else you happen to have. What about thinking of something you could recycle to make a labyrinth. Small labyrinths which you can 'walk' with just your fingers can also be made for individual use. Here's some thoughts about what you can do with a labyrinth.

Movement towards the centre

It is usual to walk around the labyrinth. But dancing, crawling or any other movement are all fine. Consider how wheelchair users or others with limited mobility might access your labyrinth when you set it up.

Three stages

According to the invitation to enter the WCC labyrinth at their HQ in Geneva, there are three stages of the walk into the labyrinth:

- Purgation or releasing – as we walk into the labyrinth we let go of the thoughts and distractions of life so as to open the heart and quieten the mind;
- Illumination or receiving – we when get to the centre of the labyrinth we stay there as long as we like in meditation and prayer receiving what God has prepared for us there;
- Union or returning – we take the same path out as the one by which we came in but this time we join with God in the work God has for us in the world, particularly the work of healing.

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The repeated act of going in and out of the labyrinth is empowering and each time we receive more and feel empowered as we find what we have been searching for.

Thoughts

You may want to provide material for meditation or prayer. This might be about the journey of life, a particular time or place on that journey or linked to part of the Christian Year. Some people like to repeat a simple prayer as they walk others like silence or quiet music.

Song

It's a gift to be simple, it's a gift to be free, it's a gift to come down where we ought to be and when we are together in the place just right, it will be in the valley of love and delight.

This simple Shaker song from the US seems ideal for labyrinths. You might sing it together before you start or at the conclusion of you walk. It goes to the tune for Lord of the Dance.

Resources

You can arrange to borrow a portable labyrinth from the North West Synod. The contact is Leo Roberts: 0161 789 5174

Some places have labyrinths you can walk if you visit: There is one at Westminster college Cambridge and also Wyedale Hall, near Scarborough has one as does The Hayes at Swanwick.

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer_labyrinth for more resources and photos about labyrinths, their origins and where to find some today.

For a world wide list of labyrinths see <http://labyrinthlocator.com/>

Prayer, before entering the labyrinth

Turn, turn to everything there is a season.

Leading God, you call us towards you, nearer and nearer.

As we approach, help us to leave our fears and anxieties behind.

May we put down the burdens we carry

and with a spring in our steps give us courage to walk your way today and forever.

EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

THE NEXT STEP

If you want more summer items please revisit the website.

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HOW TO FEEDBACK TO VISION4LIFE?

If you wish to offer any feedback – brickbats and bouquets are equally welcome! – you can do so in various ways.

You can email the Vision4Life steering group about general or website V4L issues via the website or at admin@vision4life.org.uk

If you have comments and particularly contributions to the prayer year, you can email the V4L prayer year coordinator via prayer@vision4life.org.uk

If you want to make contributions or ask questions about other V4L years you can email:

Year 3 – Transformed for Evangelism: evangelism@vision4life.org.uk