

## THE LABYRINTH

Labyrinths have been used for spiritual purposes as far back as 5,000 years. Archeological digs have found them among ancient Cretans, Etruscans, Normans, Hindus and Native Americans. One labyrinth pattern found on a figurine in the Ukraine was dated to 15,000 B.C.

Labyrinths became popular among Christians during the Middle Ages, though the oldest existing labyrinth was placed in the Church of Reparatus in Algeria in the 4th century. Walking a labyrinth became an alternative prayer pilgrimage when the Crusades made visits to the Holy Land too dangerous.

Unlike mazes, in which there are multiple path ways and unforeseen dead ends, a labyrinth has a single path leading to the center. You cannot get lost in a labyrinth. It always leads you home.

This is a great metaphor for a life of faith. Somehow, despite all the twists and turns of life, God is always there to be found, waiting to embrace us in times of joy, or sorrow, or sheer bewilderment, and ready to guide us forward.

## WORSHIP AT SARDIS

**Congregational Worship**

**Sundays @ 11 AM**

**Sunday School**

**Sundays @ 9:45 AM**

**Sardis Academy**

**Periodic Wednesdays**

**Dinner @ 5:45 PM**

**Programming @ 6:30 PM**

*See our website for details*

***SardisBaptistCharlotte.org***



**Sardis Baptist Meetinghouse**

**5811 Sardis Road**

**Charlotte, NC 28270**

**704.362.0811**

**SardisBaptistCharlotte.org**

## WALKING THE LABYRINTH

*Rediscover prayer through the ancient  
spiritual practice of pilgrimage*



**THE PRAYER PILGRIMAGE**

There is no right or wrong way to walk a labyrinth. A child’s playful run through the channels is in its own way a prayer of thanksgiving to God. Your labyrinth walk is your own personal act of prayer. Pray as you feel led.

You may want to consider using a three-fold act of prayer that was used by Christians a thousand years ago. It fits nicely into the labyrinth pattern.

**PREPARATION**

Take time to prepare for your walk. Sit on one of the side benches. Observe. Listen for the birds. Look up at the trees. Take long, slow breaths. You may want to take off your shoes.

**FIRST MOVEMENT – ENTERING**

The first step is letting go. Ancients called this “purgation.” As you walk into the labyrinth let go of worries, busy thoughts, and emotions. You may want to confess sins or set aside regrets you’ve been carrying. These “purging” prayers are a way of cleaning your spiritual windows.

**SECOND MOVEMENT – CENTERING**

When you reach the center of the labyrinth, rest. You may want to sit down, or lay back on the millstone, looking up at the trees. Here, you are seeking “illumination.” Now that you have cleaned your windows, let the light come. Seek a word from God. Turn your mind to vivid images of God, or memorable passages of scripture. Receive a blessing as God’s child.

**THIRD MOVEMENT – RETURNING**

As you retrace your steps through the labyrinth, remember that the presence of God goes before you – like the cross an acolyte carries out of the sanctuary following worship. Reflect on the insights or blessings you’ve received. Seek “union” with God as you unwind and return to what you left behind – strengthened by the provisions you received from God.

**BENEDICTION**

Stop for moment at the other side bench. Put your shoes back on. Pick up items you left behind. Watch the traffic along the road. With a new blessing from God, think of how you will return to your schedule. As you stand to walk away you may want to say, “AMEN,” which essentially means, “So be it!”

**LECTIO DIVINA**

Another avenue for your journey may be Lectio Divina, or praying the scriptures. This practice involves reading a scripture passage three times, with silent interludes.

First, read the passage at one of the side benches. Let it wash over you as if you’ve heard it for the first time. As you walk into the labyrinth meditate on the whole passage. Replay the images in your mind. Remain focused on the story until you reach the center of the labyrinth.

Second, when you reach the center, read the passage a second time. This time hold onto the thoughts or images that stand out to you. When you are finished reading, focus your attention on one word, or phrase, or image from the passage. Rest for awhile on the millstone, holding that word or image.

Third, read the passage a final time. Then, as you begin re-tracing your steps out of the labyrinth, talk to God about that phrase or image you held in your mind. What does this mean? Is God saying something to you through it? Or is this a prayer you are saying to God? If you need more time for clarity, sit on one of the side benches. Conclude your conversation with God with an AMEN of thanksgiving.