

THE LABYRINTH – WALKING A SACRED PATH

The Labyrinth is a safe place offering an awakening of the subconscious that by walking this sacred path can be graciously healing both emotionally and spiritually. It is a universal tool of prayer and meditation, a crucible of change, a watering hole for the Spirit. Anyone of any tradition or spiritual path can walk it and through reflecting in the present moment, can benefit from it. It appeals to children as well as adults and special arrangements can be made to accommodate anyone who is physically challenged. Labyrinths can be danced or skipped or crawled; the seeker is asked only to put one foot in front of the other. By stepping into the Labyrinth we are choosing once again to walk a spiritual path.

Fiona Fidgin wrote in the APR (Association for Promoting Retreats) Newsletter in 2005 that Labyrinths are mysterious. We do not know the origin of their design or exactly how they provide the space, which allows for clarity. Labyrinths are not mazes – they are not a puzzle waiting to be solved. There are no tricks, no dead ends, no cul-de-sacs. There is only one path to walk that leads to the centre and back out again. This is what is different about the Labyrinth and sets it apart as a spiritual tool. By following the one path to the centre, the seeker can use the labyrinth to quiet the mind and find peace and illumination at the centre of his or her being.

Walking the Labyrinth is a form of prayer and consists of three stages: the first as you walk into the centre, is a time of releasing, of letting go of the stresses, and strains of life. A time to unwind the body and to quiet the mind. Eventually you end up in the centre. This is not the aim of the walk, but part of the experience. The centre is a time of receiving – a time to be still, to pray and to listen to God. The final stage of following the path back out again, is a time of recalling the insights have I picked up. What words do I hear God speaking to me? It's a time of walking back out again into the world feeling renewed and refreshed for the onward journey. The three stages of the walk mirror the ancient prayer model of purgation, illumination, and union.

A woman admitted, "I thought it would take five minutes and here we are an hour later. I cannot believe that I could be so held for such a long time. I feel such a sense of peace, almost release, but yes, peace".

Another woman spoke of the effect of regularly walking a labyrinth during a period of recovery from a stroke when it was still too difficult for her to walk. She daily traced the path of a wooden finger labyrinth as a symbolic intention of recovering her mobility. Eventually she gradually walked the labyrinth firstly with a stick and then unaided. Step by step her confidence and strength grew until she could manage the whole path. The purely physical healing of her body became her transformational, mental and spiritual exercise of hope.

Labyrinth – Cumbrae – March 2005

Take off your shoes, the ground on which you tread is holy ground.

Cold ground, old ground, ground of our being for the moment.

Present moment, in a whirled

fairground ride, hurled

in trajectory across

the circle.

Outer quadrant,

inner, slowing pace, thought, word.

Taking time, letting go, having heard

grace in threads of life that have made way

for time, space, others, us, reflection... God..

Llandaff Diocesan Spirituality Group has a canvas Labyrinth that is available to use in parishes and schools. If you are interested in holding an event please contact Steve Burgess on 01443 674516 and he will be happy to facilitate the experience.