

Walking the Labyrinth: An Ancient Practice for Today



SMPC's labyrinth is located between Mecklenburg Hall and The Cottage, and was completed by Boy Scout Troop 119's Collin Xu as his Eagle Scout Project in 2021.

Labyrinth walking is an ancient practice used by many different faiths for spiritual centering, contemplation, and prayer. While labyrinth walking is not found in the Bible, the idea of following God's way, faith journeys, and enjoying God's presence, which are all central to the labyrinth walking practice, certainly are. A labyrinth looks a bit like a maze, but it is not—you can't get lost. You follow the path all the way in and then all the way out.

Below are some ways to use labyrinth walking as a spiritual practice:

1. Use the labyrinth as a tool of discernment. Ask God a question as you enter the path. Then, as you walk slowly through the twists and turns, listen. You might find that moving your body helps you quiet your mind and open your heart to God's answer. Let your steps and your silence invite the presence and guidance of God.
2. Use the labyrinth as a tool of confession. Make your confession at the entrance to the labyrinth. As you walk, envision leaving your sin behind. In the center, repent, which literally means "to turn around," and set an intention to make a change. Journey out in the knowledge that you are forgiven, and pause at the exit to thank God for such mercy.
3. Consider using a breath prayer as you walk. You might choose to use a different one for each quadrant. Some examples of breath prayers are, "(inhale) Lord, Jesus Christ, son of God, (exhale) Have mercy on me, a sinner," "Humble and gentle one, you are rest for my soul," or even just "Lord, have mercy."
4. Are you feeling particularly weary and burdened? Visualize laying down your worries and burdens on the way in (maybe you will even lay down stones along the way). In the middle, thank God for the ability to cast your cares on God. On the way out, pick up each stone and remember something for which you are grateful.

There are other ways that you can use the labyrinth as a tool for prayer. Sometimes, we think about our faith as something that happens in the mind and forget that God never meant for us to separate our physical selves from our faith. Labyrinth walking can help us remember an embodied faith, and often, we find that moving our body allows our mind to slow down. Blessings on your journey!