

## **A Brief History of Labyrinths.**

A labyrinth is not a maze, it is not meant to confuse or frustrate you. The labyrinth is one of the oldest contemplative tools known to humankind, used for centuries for personal and spiritual growth. This ancient design has been found as far back as 3000 years in a variety of forms and cultures. Some of the cultures where labyrinths have been found are ancient Crete, France, Hopi Native Americans, Norway, India, and the British Isles.

The MCC labyrinth is a replication of The Chartres Labyrinth, an eleven circuit Labyrinth which was built early in the 13<sup>th</sup> century on the stone floor of Chartres Cathedral in France. Medieval Christians would visit the Chartres labyrinth and walk the labyrinth to either be connected with family members who were on Crusades to the Holy Lands or to walk the labyrinth instead of taking a pilgrimage to the Holy Lands.

Today, we find that walking a labyrinth addresses many psycho-spiritual areas of the human condition. The path is helpful in awakening our spirituality, simplicity in our hectic lives, integration of mind, body, spirit and promotes self-reflection and a connection with our community. (West)

This concept has created an awakening and a tremendous resurgence of people utilizing the labyrinth as a spiritual tool to connect the mind-body-spirit and promote health and wellness around the world.

## **Some of the Benefits of Walking a Labyrinth**

1. Beneficial in reducing stress.
2. Helps quiet the mind.
3. Opens the heart.
4. Promotes the interaction of the mind, body and spirit.
5. Fosters creativity.
6. It is a walking meditation.
7. Promotes Wellness.
8. Increases self awareness.
9. Spiritual Growth.
10. Labyrinths are a right and left brained activity.

## **Walking the Labyrinth-**

A purposeful path that meanders to a center and provides personal and spiritual benefits. Labyrinths are a walking meditation and are often seen as metaphors of our life. The walking meditation can be used for reflection and problem solving with the daily issues.

When walking a labyrinth, we discuss the three R's. Releasing, Receiving and Returning/or Reflection.

1. Before you walk, pause and take a few moments to quiet your mind and become aware of your breath. Allow yourself to find the walking pace your body wants to go. Do what feels natural.
2. Releasing- As you enter the labyrinth, you follow the path to the center and try to develop a relaxed, calm state that releases concerns and quiets the mind. This is the time to open the heart and quiet the mind.
3. Receiving- Upon reaching the center of the labyrinth, on this labyrinth it is called the center rose. The rose symbolizes beauty, love and enlightenment. Each petal symbolizes the aspects of creation; mineral, vegetable, animal, human, the spirit world and the mystery of the unknown. The center of the rose is place of rest. This is a place for meditation and or prayer. This is a time of openness and peacefulness; you experience or receive what the moment offers you. Stay here as long as you feel the need.
4. Returning/Reflection- You choose when to leave the center, following the same path. This is a time to review and consider the healing forces at work and how they may apply to your life.