

**U.C.C. WELLNESS MINISTRIES TOOLKIT**  
**Section 3**

**Exemplars of Wellness Ministries Activities**

**Spiritual Health and Wellness**

**Title:** *Walking a Chartres Design Labyrinth*

**Age group served:** Youth and Adults

**Reason for development and implementation:**

A labyrinth provides a meditative path for walking prayer designed to bring one into awareness of their relationship with God, of their wholeness in body, mind, and spirit. The labyrinth design is a 'unicursal' path that leads into the center and back out again. Unlike a maze, there are no dead ends, no intersecting paths.

The oldest documented labyrinth design is from Crete and dated to 3000 BCE, or about 3,000 years ago. The only surviving original labyrinth of the Middle Ages rests in the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France, built in 1201.

A labyrinth walking experience provides a time for meditation and reflection. If there is an outdoor labyrinth, it may be utilized at any time. Access can be provided regularly or during special religious holidays if it is an indoor labyrinth. Written instructions and workshops are often offered to attendees before their first walk.

**Sharing the story:** A Meditative Journey

Good Friday is often observed as a day of quiet reflection. The congregation and the community were invited to walk the indoor canvas labyrinth on Good Friday between noon and 7:00 pm. A facilitator of the experience was available during that time. Paper shoe covers were available for those who couldn't remove their shoes. Gentle, quiet background music sets the mood for contemplation.

The guidelines given to participants were:

1. When you move through the labyrinth, allow your mind to determine your natural rhythm.
2. Ask yourself: What do I need? What do I seek?

Think of this walk as being comprised of three segments:

1. Walking In: Release - allow for letting go, quiet your mind, and be open to what comes. Be attentive to whatever thoughts or feelings may come up for you.
2. In the Center: Receive - Stay in the center until satisfied. Then, be open to receiving what is there for you: peace, clarity, awakening, insight, and guidance. When in the center, the person may select a remembrance of this journey from a small bowl. On Good Friday, it is often a pocket-size wooden cross.

3. Walking Out: Return - Allow yourself to take back into the world whatever experience this labyrinth walk held for you. Give yourself time for communion, reunion, and remembering.

After exiting the labyrinth, some people chose to keep on walking right out the door. Others choose to use the materials available on tables for journaling or sketching.

### **Evaluation:**

- Participants, members of the congregation, and others from the community ranged in age from nine to their 80s. Some were experienced labyrinth walkers; for others, it was their first experience.
- Some walked and then continued out the door. Others walked and then remained in the atmosphere drawing or writing for more than an hour.
- Those who wished to have the experience but were hesitant about walking with shoe covers on the canvas were provided a handheld labyrinth they could “walk” with their finger.

### **Next steps:**

- Continue to offer open labyrinth walks on significant religious holidays.
- Offer labyrinth walks to confirmation classes and other groups within the congregation.
- Have regularly scheduled labyrinth walks and workshops available to the congregation and the community.
- Scheduled labyrinth walks for the congregation or extended community when dealing with a stressful situation.

### **Resources used:**

- Biblical quote - *Stand by the crossroads, look, and ask for the ancient paths where the good way lies, and walk in it and find rest for your soul.* Jeremiah 6:16 placed at the entrance to the labyrinth.
- Book - Artress, L. (2006). *Walking A Sacred Path: A Guide to Walking the Labyrinth to Heal and Transform*, NY, NY: Riverhead Books.
- The [Grace Cathedral](#) in San Francisco, CA, is the home of the Modern Labyrinth Movement and two labyrinths. The website provides pictures, relevant information, and links.
- [Labyrinth Walking - Steps to achieve inner peace](#), written by Maggie Spilner explains the health benefits of walking a labyrinth, steps to doing it, and how to create your labyrinth.