

## A BRIEF HISTORY

In the Middle Ages many Christians vowed to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land at least once in their lifetime. This became increasingly challenging with the Crusades, and other conflicts, making the journey dangerous and costly. As a result, the labyrinth became a popular symbol of pilgrimage with its twists and turns to the centre – a symbolic journey to the New Jerusalem.

### ***Labyrinths are not mazes!***

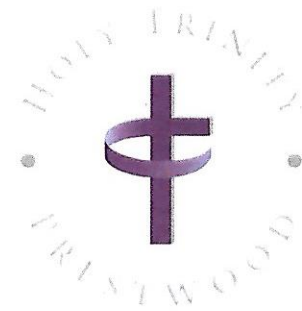
Mazes are designed to disorientate and confuse, placing obstacles (often dead ends) in your way as you journey. Labyrinths have a purposeful path, leading you towards the centre – although at times it may feel like you are being led away from your destination. The labyrinth has only one path, a symbol of our journey through life and towards God.

The labyrinth offers a meditation to those of all faiths, cultures, and traditions. Walking the labyrinth is a form of prayer that engages the whole person.

As you enter the labyrinth, we invite you to bring all that you are as you journey towards the centre, towards God.

“To go on pilgrimage is not simply to visit a place to admire its treasures of nature, art, or history. To go on pilgrimage really means to step out of ourselves in order to encounter God where he has revealed himself, where his grace has shone with particular splendour and produced rich fruits of conversion and holiness among those who believe. Above all, Christians go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, to the places associated with the Lord’s passion, death, and resurrection. They go to Rome, the city of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, and also to Compostela, which, associated with the memory of Saint James, has welcomed pilgrims from throughout the world who desire to strengthen their spirit with the Apostle’s witness of faith and love.”

~ ***Pope Benedict XVI***



## HOW TO PRAY THE LABYRINTH

## THE THREE STAGES

The path to the centre is the path of quieting ourselves inside and out; of letting go of the details, distractions, and busyness of our lives; of moving away from the ordinary routine of daily life; of surrendering control and dependence on our usual ways of knowing; of purification, healing, and forgiveness.

The centre is the place for waiting, listening, and open attentiveness to the Divine Presence within; discernment, insight, and illumination; receiving a Word, a gift, or the grace we are seeking; quiet resting in God.

The path returning from the centre is the path of returning to life with new understanding; of walking at-one-with-God, to live life in deeper intimacy with God than before; of going forth to give as a gift what one has received as a gift; of continuing one's journey with greater wholeness and integrity.

## GETTING STARTED

Begin with a few moments to quiet your body, heart, and mind. Be aware of where you are on your personal journey at this time in your life, and what it is you bring to this time of walking prayer.

Be aware of God's presence with you and invite the Spirit to be your guide.

Quietly approach the entrance to the path. Pause there and, when you are ready, begin your walk.

Listen to your breathing and set your own pace. You will walk the same path both ways.

At each turn you may wish to pause, either for reflection or to offer a specific prayer intention.

When you come to the centre, remain there quietly for as long as you need to - waiting, listening, open, attentive - present to the Divine Presence within you.

When you are ready, return by walking the path back out, carrying in your heart what you have received - again you may wish to pause at each turn to reflect or pray.

## SUGGESTIONS

You may choose to reflect on scripture as you walk:

Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. (Psalm 84:5)

Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:3)

Thus says the Lord: Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it and find rest for your souls. (Jeremiah 6:16)

Or to offer a specific prayer intention:

- ~ for family
- ~ for friends
- ~ for the world
- ~ for the church
- ~ for yourself.