

Ladue Chapel Labyrinth

A labyrinth is a sacred path; a journey in our spiritual formation used for prayer, meditation and contemplation. It is an ancient form of walking prayer and meditation for those seeking God. Walking a labyrinth has been scientifically shown to ease stress and grief, as well as aid in physical and mental healing. Mind, body and spirit are together focused on following a single path that leads to and returns from the center. Unlike a maze, a labyrinth has a single path to the center and back. Walking the labyrinth is a gift we give ourselves, often leading to discovery and insight.

The Chartres-like labyrinth at Ladue Chapel is twenty-six feet wide and is made of canvas. Paper templates were ordered from a labyrinth company in Connecticut and the canvas was seamed and hemmed locally. The process of creating the labyrinth was quite extensive. The canvas was stretched taut using bungee cords, tarp clips, and heavy objects such as cinder blocks and stacks of chairs. Members cut out the templates, carefully traced them onto the canvas, taped the lines, and painted the path. Twenty five members from our church and other local churches worked from one hour to as many as thirty four hours, creating this prayerful path in five days: April 18-22, 2018.

Presbyterian theologian Craig Dykstra observed, “You can also ‘know’ things while meditatively walking the circuitous path of a canvas labyrinth which you can’t know sitting still. The very action of walking serves to still our thoughts, allowing space for God amid the usually jam-packed confines of our minds. The unpredictability of the labyrinth’s twists and turns helps us to relinquish our need to feel ‘in control’ and to acknowledge our dependence upon God. The certainty of reaching the center inspires us to trust in God’s providence. All of these things can serve to draw us into a genuine experience of prayer – of allowing our hearts to lay ‘open before God.’”

Labyrinths are found in all cultures and all religions. Many Gothic cathedrals housed labyrinths in medieval times. The Ladue Chapel labyrinth is an eight-

circuit version of the Christian design in the nave of the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Chartres, completed in 1220. The labyrinth, with its twists and turns, symbolizes the spiritual journey, a path for pilgrimage. The pilgrim seeks the presence of God. Walking the path offers to us all the possibility of insight, wisdom, transformation and renewal.

Walk the labyrinth at your own pace. Give yourself a gift by using your “walk” for meditation, prayer or working through a problem or concern that has been on your mind. “Open walks” will be held at Ladue Chapel on occasion throughout the year.

*We walk
With open hearts and minds
Ready to receive wisdom from the Holy Spirit
Letting go of our burdens
Aware of our needs
Asking for God’s guidance and grace
Grateful for God’s presence and providence.*

Three stages of the labyrinth walk

Release: As you begin, quiet the mind; let go of the details of your life. Walk the path at your own pace and open yourself to God.

Receive: The center is a sacred place for your meditation, prayer and illumination. Pause in the center to welcome and accept what God offers you.

Return: As you walk out, claim the blessing, insight or wisdom you have received. Pause again before leaving the path; offer a prayer of gratitude and take the labyrinth’s gift to your life and the world.