

Walking the Labyrinth

This model for walking the labyrinth with children could be used anytime but would be especially effective during Lent.

Advance Preparations

Create the "What Is a Labyrinth?" poster and the activity cards for each of the stations. See the activities below for other materials you'll need.

If groups of children will be walking the labyrinth, position youth or adult facilitators at each activity station to help non-readers. Families could also be encouraged to walk the labyrinth together with parents assisting their children. The facilitators should be seated quietly nearby and provide support only as necessary so as not to intrude upon the meditative atmosphere.

A labyrinth can be created on the floor of a wide open space using masking tape or stones, or if weather allows, create one out of doors. Many books and websites offer labyrinth patterns, including the Awakenings website (www.lessons4living.com/drawing.htm).

Place unscented votive candles in holders or battery-operated candles around the room and dim the lights. Play quiet, sacred music and invite users to take off their shoes before entering in order to create a holy atmosphere. A host at the door can help to slow down and prepare people to enter the space in a calm and quiet manner.

What Is a Labyrinth?

(These words can be on a poster at the start of the labyrinth.)

A labyrinth is a bit like a maze; but with a major difference. Mazes have lots of "dead ends" and are a puzzle to be solved. There is only one path in a labyrinth that leads from the beginning to the end. You cannot lose your way although you may lose worries, stresses, or problems along the way. In medieval times, many labyrinths were marked out on the floors of cathedrals. People use labyrinths for prayer and for "thinking time"—walking slowly and peacefully from the beginning toward a central point and then out again to the end. Sometimes people feel closer to God during and after walking a labyrinth.

When walking the labyrinth, it is most important to walk quietly and slowly, hoping to feel closer to God. This is a time to be silent and to spend a little while thinking about who you are and what is important to you. Life is busy and it is sometimes difficult to find time to slow down. As you walk this labyrinth, you will find places to stop, sometimes just to think about particular things, and sometimes to do something active. Walk this labyrinth with an open spirit, hopeful that you will learn something about yourself.

Allow the person in front of you some space before you begin your turn. If you need to pass someone along the way, lightly touch him or her on the shoulder. If someone touches you on the shoulder, pause for a moment and let her or him pass. It is not a race to finish the labyrinth, and some people need more time as they walk and meditate.

Activities

Place the activity stations at varying turns along the labyrinth.

Activity 1 (before stepping onto the labyrinth)

Materials: small table, pencils, paper, and large urn or container

Have you been hurt by someone? Or have you hurt someone's feelings? Stop here and write or draw a picture to describe the hurt. If you want to let go of those feelings, put your paper in the container. Remember as you walk that you are loved...freed...forgiven.

Activity 2

Materials: large metal box or tray filled with sand, small taper, votives, Christ candle, and snuffer. An adult seated closeby to ensure safety and provide guidance.

Your life is a journey of discovery. God is always travelling with you, but sometimes you are so busy you do not see God or recognize God. God is love and goodness and is often described as "light." Using the taper, light your candle from the Christ candle and place it carefully at the edge of the sand in the tray. Remember the light and warmth of God's love as you continue your walk.

Activity 3

Materials: table, map, magnets and compass

On the table in front of you is a map. In the centre is a compass. The needle of the compass points directly north. Also on the map are some small magnets, or "false" norths. Try moving these magnets around the compass. See what happens. The "false" north pulls the needle away from the "true" north. Imagine that God is "true" north; what "false" norths in your life distract you away from God? As you name these "false" norths, move the magnets to the edge of the map. Refocus on the "true" north. Begin to focus on God.

As you continue to walk the labyrinth, tell God about those things that get in the way of coming close to God. As you walk the path, think about how you can grow by taking away things that get between you and God.

Activity 4

Materials: two tables in the centre of the labyrinth—this activity will take the longest time. Each table should have a standing mirror, crayons, and paper, with a basket for completed drawings.

When you look in the mirror, what do you see? Ask God to show you the real you, the YOU that God sees. Draw a picture of yourself and use the crayons to show your amazing colours!

You are now on the journey that takes you out of the labyrinth. You have been to the Holy Space and received God's light and love. Can you take this away with you and share it with others? How can you be a sign of God's light to others? You do have a choice. You don't have to do anything, but you can change and make a difference if you want. As you journey

on, begin to think of ways you can share with others what you have discovered, and ask God's help in doing so. How could you serve God in your neighbourhood or in your relationships with others? Think about the light given to you by God and how you might take it out into the world. Stand up for others. Look for ways to help and to share God's love.

Activity 5

Materials: large pot filled with moist potting soil, bowl filled with seeds, bowl of water, and a hand towel

Imagine that you are out in space floating high above the planet Earth. Everything can be seen so much more clearly from a distance. From here, it is difficult to see the different countries. No map colours mark boundaries. Just rocks, seas, forests, and deserts. This is God's creation. This is God's gift to us. This is the place many creatures, many plants, and many people call home.

Take a seed from the dish on the table and hold it in the palm of your hand. This seed contains all the information it needs to reproduce itself. Plant the seed in soil. Feel the moist earth. The seed is now in darkness-out of the darkness will spring life.

You and God together can create life. As the seed grows and flowers, it is a symbol of your love and care for nature, creation, the plant, and home.

Activity 6 (at the end of the labyrinth)

Materials: a large, low, sturdy plastic box filled with sand; a towel or mat for dusting off feet

In front of you is some sand. Stand in the sand and leave two footprints. Step out of the sand and look at your footprints. Where you have walked has left an impression. As you leave this labyrinth and continue on your own journey, think about the impressions you leave behind for others to see and for others to remember you by.