

Youth Labyrinth Curriculum

Bread for the Journey

by Gailand MacQueen and Joyce Schroeder MacQueen

On the windy shores of Lake Timiskaming, white wooden benches and a white wooden cross mark a sacred place. Chapel Point is reached from the main part of Camp Lorrain by a short path through the woods, just long enough for active campers to find a still place in themselves from which to hear and think and feel. For a week in the summer of 2003, Chapel Point was home to a portable labyrinth in which campers and counsellors explored their own journeys in life and our journey together in faith.

Life Journeys

The program we, as spirit guides, developed for that week integrated the experiences of air travel, the journeys of St. Paul, and the labyrinth as symbols of our own life journeys. Our goal was for campers to learn that

- we are on the journey of life together
- God was with Paul on his journeys
- God is with us on our journey

These themes were explored during one-hour learning periods and celebrated each evening at vespers.

We were also responsible for “morning watch,” a brief time of reflection before breakfast. In this beautiful natural setting, we focused on the ancient idea of the natural elements—earth, air, fire, and water—as reflections of the Creator.

Adapting the Program

We developed this program for 12- to 14-year-olds, and they really enjoyed it. It was rather a surprise that the camp counsellors, who were 16 and up, also joined in enthusiastically, even sacrificing free-time periods to participate. It would take very little adaptation to turn this into a youth program or an intergenerational event.

The program could be adapted for younger children by reducing some of the more difficult discussion and spending more time on the physical activities. We have seen how even quite small children delight in walking (or more likely running) through the labyrinth. The program could also be adapted for families by adding biblical material on embodied spirituality and some history of the labyrinth for the adults.

Introducing the Theme

During the first evening’s vespers, introduce the theme of going on a journey together. We used “A Prayer for the Journey” (*Voices United*, #648).

Read the prayer in unison, or alternate with the leader reading a line that the group then repeats. This prayer could be printed on a sheet of poster paper or bristol board, or painted on canvas or mural paper. (Participants might like to illustrate the prayer in any spare time.)

A Prayer for the Journey

God of the Way,
 you are the road we travel,
 and the sign we follow;
 you are bread for the journey,
 and the wine of arrival.

—Janet Cawley. Used by permission.

As they consider the prayer, invite participants to discuss their journeys to this place.

- What roads did they travel?
- What signs did they see along the way?
- How did maps help them?
- What was the journey like? Did they stop for food or fuel?

Close by repeating “A Prayer for the Journey” (VU #648).

Session 1

Each day, begin with a brief worship at the camp (“morning watch”). This is a time for participants to ponder their thoughts in a quiet time apart.

We chose the four elements—earth, air, fire, and water—as the focus for these times. We held morning watch at Chapel Point, but you could create a worship centre for a different setting. What are the possibilities for wonder, for connection with creation and the elements of earth, air, fire, and water in your setting?

Worship Theme: Earth

In preparation for quiet thought, as participants came into Chapel Point they were invited to take a pebble out of a basket that had been lined with leaves. We explained that these represented God’s material creation and that we are part of that creation, and offered the following thought:

Carry the pebble with you. When you feel the pebble during the day, remember that God is with you.

Small Group Session

It is important to hold the session with small groups—for instance, a cabin group in the case of a camp. If your group is large, you will need to form smaller groups; some people can walk the labyrinth while others participate in a different activity, such as a craft.

Preparation

- The labyrinth was laid out ahead of time at Chapel Point. It was made using painter’s tape on a large tarpaulin, 7.6 m x 7.6 m (25 ft. x 25 ft.) (For instructions, see *The Spirituality of Mazes and Labyrinths*, pages 80–81; see Resources at the end of this article.)
- For music, we had invited a church choir to record the hymn “One More Step along the World I Go” (VU #639), and we used a portable cassette player to play the tape.
- Make airline tickets and folders (see page 4) unless you are doing this as the first activity. Tuck a pen or pencil in each.
- Print the first verse of the hymn “One More Step along the World I Go” on slips of paper, one for each person. On the back of these slips, print the following questions: What new things are happening to me? How am I changing?

Getting Acquainted

Introduce yourselves to one another as participants and spirit guides (leaders).

Airline Tickets for the Journey

These can be made beforehand or with the participants as a first activity, depending on the time you have available.

The “airline tickets” and their folders serve not only as symbols of the journey of life but also as a

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practical place to keep the accumulation of papers (prayer for the journey, hymn lyrics, question-and-response slips) used in the sessions.

Start with coloured construction paper (we used blue), 21.5 cm x 28 cm (8.5 in. x 11 in.). Fold the bottom up 5 cm (3 in.), then fold it in half the long way to create a folder with a pocket at the bottom to hold papers.

Glue the “Air Labyrinth” logo on the right side of the folder so the package resembles an airline ticket folder.

We also made tickets to put inside the folders. These had the Air Labyrinth logo, the name of the ticket holder (participant), and the names of the spirit guides (leaders of the program) signed as ticket agents.

Introduction to the Labyrinth

Share with participants some basic information about the labyrinth and its symbols and meanings. Include instructions on suggested ways participants should enter, walk, and exit the labyrinth.

Labyrinth Activity

Have each participant walk the labyrinth for the first time. As participants exit the labyrinth, give

each of them a copy of the hymn verse. Play the first verse of the hymn, inviting participants to listen, then sing the first verse together.

Ask what the theme of this verse is. (From the old to the new.)

Discuss the questions on the back of the slips of paper:

- What new things are happening to me?
- How am I changing?

Biblical Journey

Read Acts 9:1–9, 19–20 (Paul’s conversion—before and after), then invite participants to dramatize the story.

Next, invite everyone to take the same slip of paper on which the hymn verse is printed and write on the back of it a response to the question “How did Paul change?”

Sing the first verse of “One More Step along the Road I Go” (VU #639).

Read together the first stanza of “A Prayer for the Journey” (VU #648).



AIR LABYRINTH

This ticket entitles the holder to unlimited travel through the labyrinth at all convenient times. Please, no luggage.

Name of ticket holder

Air Labyrinth Agents

Ask participants to place their slip of paper with their response in their airline ticket folder. Collect the folders so they can be ready to hand out in the next session.

Closing Worship (Vespers)

Read the remaining stanzas of “A Prayer for the Journey” (VU #648).

Guide us as we follow in your way,
holding on to each other,
reaching out to your beloved world.

And when we stray,
seek us out and find us,
set our feet on the path again
and lead us safely home.

In the name of Jesus our Companion, we
pray. Amen.

—Janet Cawley. Used by permission.

Discuss with the group ways to use movement to illustrate this prayer in terms of holding on to each other and reaching out.

Repeat the prayer with gestures (such as first holding hands, then reaching out to the world).

Session 2

Worship Theme: Air

With participants in the chapel space or around a worship centre, introduce the theme and invite them to ponder the following in a quiet time:

We can’t see air, but it is all around us and we can see its effects—in moving clouds, in blowing leaves, and in waves. In the same way, God is always all around us.

Small Group Session

Preparation

Print the second verse of the hymn “One More Step along the World I Go” (VU #639) on slips of paper, one for each person. On the back of this paper, print the question for this session: What are the new things I am learning?

Hand out the folders and the slips of paper with the second verse of the hymn printed on them. Sing the first and second verses of the hymn.

Ask what the theme of the second verse is. (More and more about the world I learn.)

Discuss the question on the back of the paper:

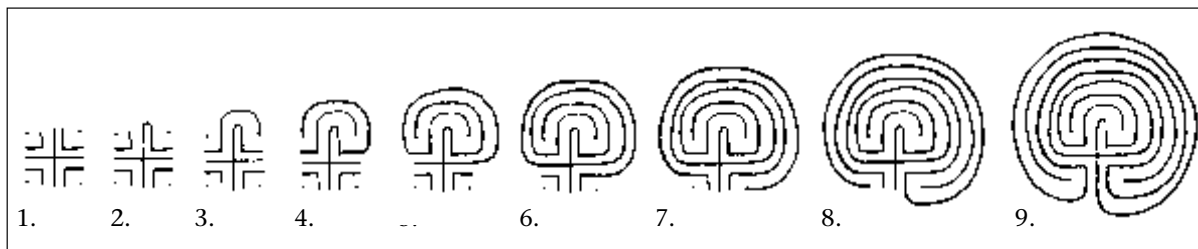
- What are the new things I am learning?

Labyrinth Activity

Participants learn how to draw a seven-ringed labyrinth (see the diagram below). They could use paper and pencil, chalk on pavement, markers on canvas, and so on. The labyrinth can be the size of a sheet of paper or much larger, depending on the time and space available. If possible, also include time for participants to walk the labyrinth.

Biblical Journey

Read Acts 15:6–12. What new thing was Paul learning? (Inclusion and welcome of others into



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the community—no distinction between “them” and “us.”)

Follow the journey on a map. For instance, you could draw a map of the eastern Mediterranean as it was in Paul’s time on a tarpaulin or old white bedsheet large enough to cover a table. Help participants identify the major places where Paul travelled.

Invite the group to create a drama of Acts 15:6–12.

Remind them of the question on the back of the second verse of the hymn. Invite them to write on the slip of paper their ideas about what Paul learned. Sing the first two verses of the hymn.

Repeat the first two stanzas of “A Prayer for the Journey.”

Collect the airline ticket folders to use in the next session.

Closing Worship (Vespers)

Read the last two stanzas of “A Prayer for the Journey.”

And when we stray,
seek us out and find us,
set our feet on the path again
and lead us safely home.

In the name of Jesus our Companion, we
pray. Amen.

—Janet Cawley. *Used by permission.*

Discuss these questions: God always seeks us out and sets our feet on the path again. What is your experience of this? How does this happen?

In a circle, hold hands and repeat the entire prayer.

Session 3

Worship Theme: Fire

To ponder in quiet time:

The energy for all life on earth comes from the sun; the sun’s energy comes from the big bang. So all the energy there is was already there in the fires of creation. Look into one another’s eyes and see the fires of creation.

(We developed this idea from Brian Swimme’s book, *The Universe Is a Green Dragon*, and one of his videos. See Resources.)

Small Group Session

Preparation

Print the third verse of the hymn “One More Step along the World I Go” (VU #639) on slips of paper, one for each person. On the back of this paper, print the questions for this session: What hard choices have I made? What hard choices will I need to make?

Hand out the airline ticket folders, including the slips of paper with the third verse of the hymn.

Sing the first three verses. Ask what the theme of the third verse is. (Making hard choices.)

Discuss the questions on the slips of paper:

- What hard choices have I made?
- What hard choices will I need to make?

Labyrinth Activity

Walk the labyrinth.

Make “luggage tags” by drawing the labyrinth on tags. (We purchased white metal-rimmed tags from an office supply store.) Some participants may wish to make necklaces or bracelets from their tags.

Sing the first three verses of the hymn again.

Repeat the entire “Prayer for the Journey.”

Biblical Journey

Tell the story of Acts 27:1–44; 28:1, using the large map. Then read Acts 27:33–38 again. Invite participants to dramatize the story.

Have participants write on the back of the slip of paper the hard choices that were made in this story. Remind them to return the paper to their airline folder when finished.

Collect the folders to be ready for the next session.

Closing Worship (Vespers)

Set up a small table with a loaf of bread and cups of grape juice in the centre of your worship space.

Recall the story of Paul from this session:

- enduring the terrible storm for two weeks
- not eating, perhaps because of fear and seasickness

Read Acts 27:35–36.

Break the bread and distribute it, saying to each person: “Jesus is bread for the journey.” Give out the glasses of grape juice, saying: “Jesus is the wine of arrival.”

In a circle, hold hands and repeat “A Prayer for the Journey.”

Session 4

Worship Theme: Water

To ponder in quiet time:

Look at the lake [or a picture of a beautiful lake] and consider how it changes minute by minute and day by day—ever changing, yet

ever the same. Remember that God is with us through all the changes of our lives.

Small Group Session

Preparation

Print the fourth verse of the hymn “One More Step along the World I Go” (VU #639) on slips of paper, one for each person. On the back of these slips, print the question for this session: What troubles do I have to deal with?

Hand out the airline ticket folders and the slips of paper with the fourth verse.

Sing all four verses of the hymn. Ask what the theme of the fourth verse is. (God is with us when the world is rough and tough.)

Discuss the question on the back of the verse:

- What troubles do I have to deal with?

Labyrinth Activity

Make finger labyrinths and “walk” them.

A finger labyrinth is a small, textured labyrinth that is traced with a fingertip. Draw the labyrinth on a 15 cm x 15 cm (6 in. x 6 in.) piece of cardboard using a glue gun. Pour on a mixture of fine sand, salt, and glitter, then shake off the excess to reveal an outline of the labyrinth. The glue dries very quickly, so it’s best to construct the path a little at a time.

If there is enough time, some participants may want to make paperweights by drawing a labyrinth on a stone.

Sing the hymn again and repeat “A Prayer for the Journey” (VU #648).



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Biblical Journey

Read 2 Corinthians 11:25–27; 12:10.

Have participants write on the back of the fourth verse some of the troubles Paul faced.

Tell the participants you will try to answer any questions or concerns they may want to bring to the next session.

Closing Worship (Vespers)

Set up the labyrinth in your chapel or worship space. At its centre, place a large jar holding pebbles, water, and a floating blue candle that is lit.

At the exit of the labyrinth, place a large, sand-filled flowerpot with a labyrinth outlined in pebbles in the sand.

Give everyone an unlit taper candle as they enter the chapel area, and ask them to form a circle around the labyrinth.

Explain that the contents of the jar represent earth, air, fire, and water. All the elements of creation are at the centre of the labyrinth, which is a symbol of the journey of life.

At a signal from the leader, participants—one at a time and in silence—walk straight to the centre of the labyrinth and light their taper from the candle there. Then they walk the path of the labyrinth out to the exit and place their taper in the sand-filled flowerpot.

When everyone has completed walking the labyrinth, hold hands in a circle and sing the first verse of the hymn. Then repeat “A Prayer for the Journey.”

Session 5

Worship Theme: Earth, Air, Fire, Water

To ponder in quiet time:

God is with us throughout the whole of our life’s journey.

Small Group Session

Preparation

Print the last verse of the hymn “One More Step along the World I Go” (VU #639) on slips of paper, one for each person. Include copies of “A Prayer for the Journey” (VU #648) in the airline ticket folders.

Hand out the folders. Ask participants to check that it contains all the verses of the hymn, the prayer for the journey, and their luggage tag.

Have participants write the following on the back of the prayer:

The labyrinth is a symbol of the journey of life. Jesus is with us on the journey.

Discuss this statement. You might ask questions such as: How is the labyrinth like the journey of life? In what ways do you share the journey with Jesus?

Ask whether there are any questions or concerns the participants would like to discuss.


Labyrinth Activity

Complete any crafts left over from previous days. Some participants may wish to make garden rocks by drawing labyrinths on large stones.



In small groups, walk the labyrinth in whatever way seems fitting to the participants—walking, running, crawling, dancing, and so on.

Sing all four verses of “One More Step along the World I Go.”

In a circle and holding hands, repeat “A Prayer for the Journey” for the last time. 

Gailand MacQueen is the author of *The Spirituality of Mazes and Labyrinths* (Wood Lake Books, 2005). Gailand is a retired professor of religious studies from Huntington College of Laurentian University. With his wife, Joyce, he has been conducting workshops on the labyrinth for adults, youth, children, and intergenerational groups, as well as workshops on the writings of Florence Nightingale.

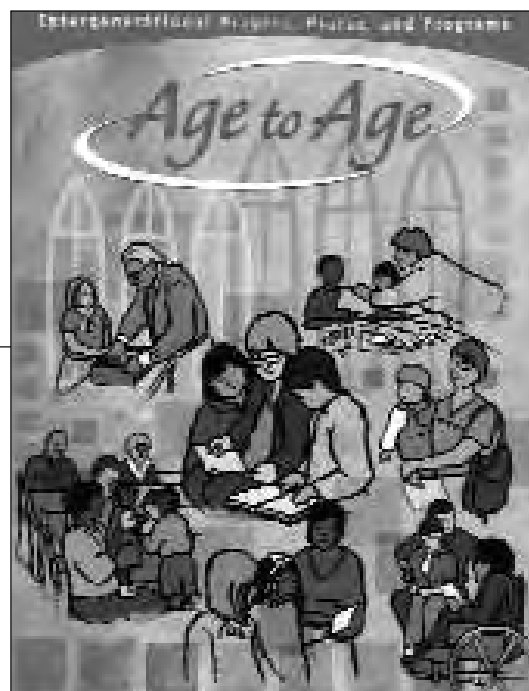
Joyce Schroeder MacQueen is a retired nursing professor from Laurentian University who has since taken up history. She has a grant from Associated Medical Services to work on the life of Florence Nightingale; she is writing about Nightingale's nursing for a forthcoming book in the *Collected Works of Florence Nightingale Project*.

Resources

Dodd, Patricia, “Walking the Labyrinth,” *Exchange* (Fall 2000), pp. 19–22.

MacQueen, Gailand, *The Spirituality of Mazes and Labyrinths* (Kelowna, BC: Wood Lake Books, 2005). Stocked by UCRD and participating presbytery resource centres (#1896836690).

Swimme, Brian, *The Universe Is a Green Dragon* (Santa Fe, NM: Bear & Co., 1986).



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