

Labyrinth

We are all on the path... exactly where we need to be. The labyrinth is a model of that path.



A labyrinth is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. The Labyrinth represents a journey to our own center and back again out into the world. Labyrinths have long been used as meditation and prayer tools.

A labyrinth is an archetype with which we can have a direct experience. We can walk it. It is a metaphor for life's journey. It is a symbol that creates a sacred space and place and takes us out of our ego to "That Which Is Within."

Labyrinths and mazes have often been confused. When most people hear of a labyrinth they think of a maze. A labyrinth is not a maze. A maze is like a puzzle to be solved. It has twists, turns, and blind alleys. It is a left brain task that requires logical, sequential, analytical activity to find the correct path into the maze and out.

A labyrinth has only one path. It is unicursal. The way in is the way out. There are no blind alleys. The path leads you on a circuitous path to the center and out again.

A labyrinth is a right brain task. It involves intuition, creativity, and imagery. With a maze many choices must be made and an active mind is needed to solve the problem of finding the center.

With a labyrinth there is only one choice to be made. The choice is to enter or not. A more passive, receptive mindset is needed. The choice is whether or not to walk a spiritual path.

At its most basic level the labyrinth is a metaphor for the journey to the center of your deepest self and back out into the world with a broadened understanding of who you are.

There is no right way to walk a labyrinth. You only have to enter and follow the path. However, your walk can encompass a variety of attitudes. It may be joyous or somber. It might be thoughtful or prayerful. You may use it as a walking meditation.

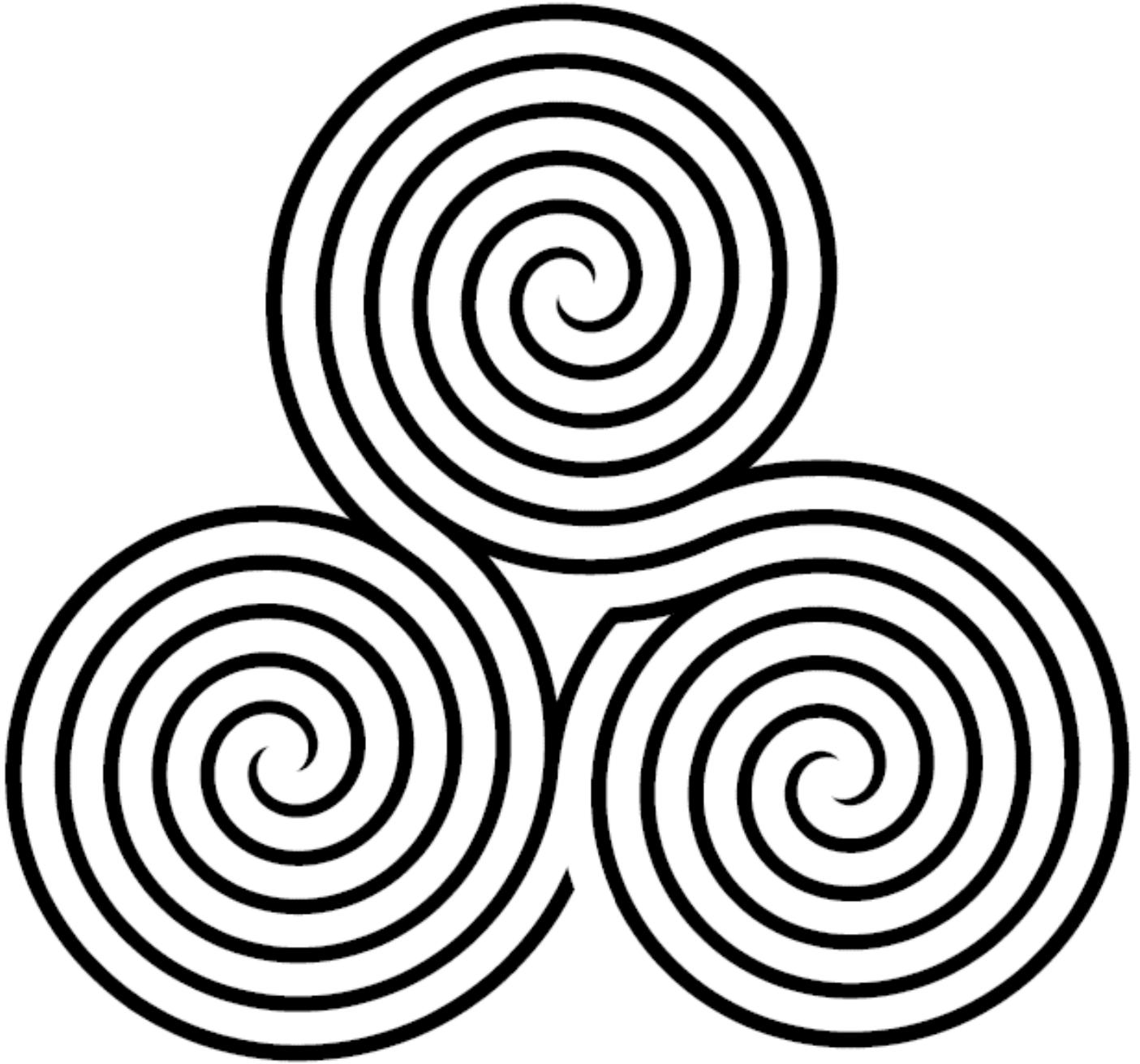
Adults are often serious in the labyrinth. Children most often run in and out as fast as they can in a playful manner. When you walk a labyrinth choose your attitude. From time to time choose a different attitude. Make it serious, prayerful, or playful. Play music or sing. Pray out loud. Walk alone and with a crowd. Notice the sky. Listen to the sounds. Most of all pay attention to your experience.

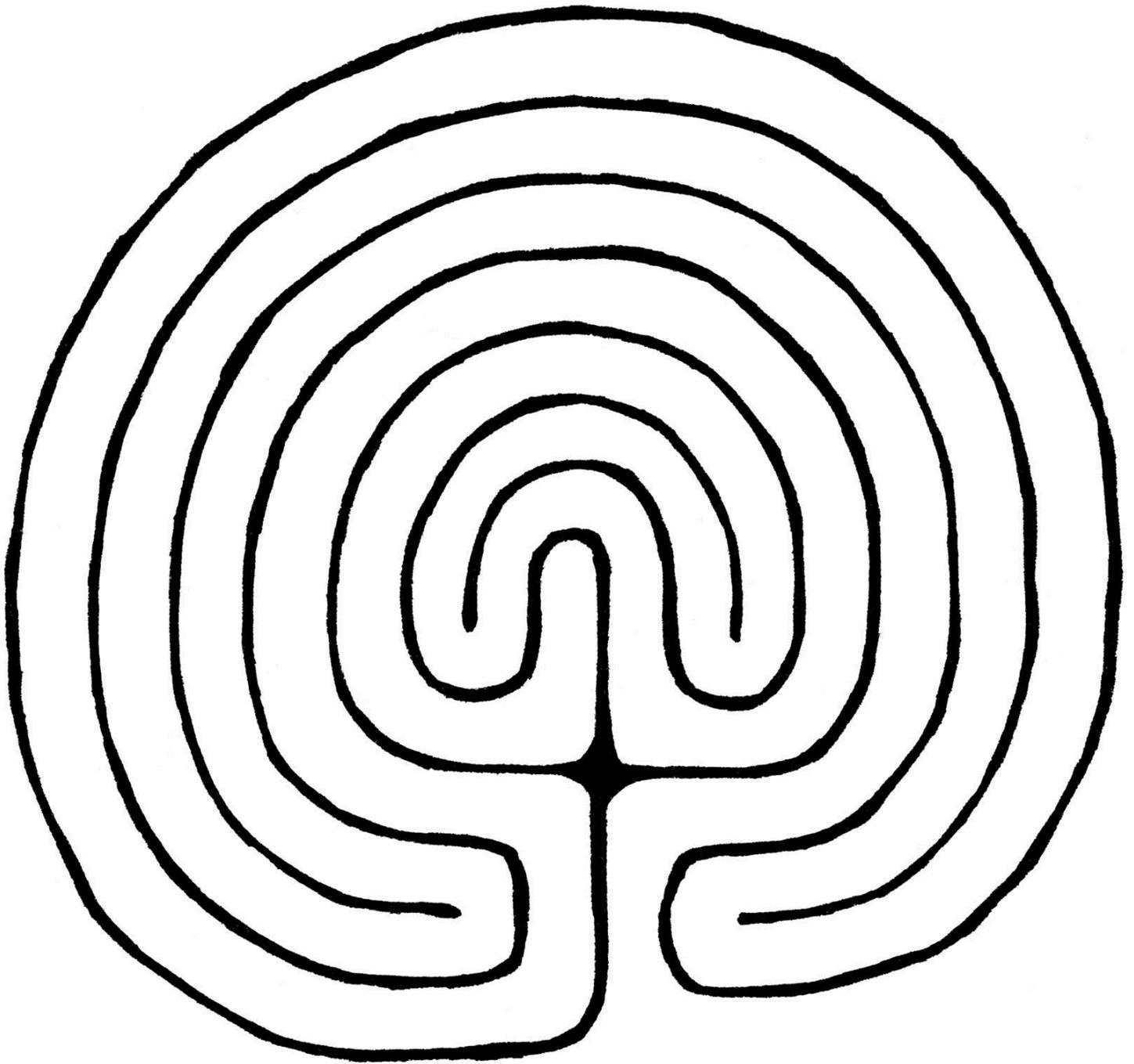
Some general guidelines for walking a labyrinth are:

1. Focus: Pause and wait at the entrance. Become quiet and centered. Give acknowledgment through a bow, nod, or other gesture and then enter.
2. Experience: Walk purposefully. Observe the process. When you reach the center, stay there and focus several moments. Leave when it seems appropriate. Be attentive on the way out.
3. Exit: Turn and face the entrance. Give an acknowledgement of ending, such as "Amen."
4. Reflect: After walking the labyrinth reflect back on your experience. Use journaling or drawing to capture your experience.
5. Walk often.



*Created by the Rev. Christine Tillman and Ms. Genevieve Callard, in the Episcopal Diocese of Western Michigan.
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