

WHAT IS A LABYRINTH?

Labyrinths are pathways, often large enough to walk upon, that are shaped into twisting, turning designs; they have been used as spiritual tools by Christians for at least 1,600 years.

Labyrinths come in all shapes and sizes. Some are painted on large sheets of canvas, some are stone pathways laid in a court yard, some are mowed into the grass on a lawn, while others come in a myriad of different shapes and sizes and materials.

In today's world, Christians walk the pathways of labyrinths for a variety of purposes including prayer, meditation, for help finding the quiet Center of their living, to facilitate calm and stillness in a hectic world, to find faithful clarity amidst life's challenges and opportunities, to listen for God, as a tool for health and wellness, to get in touch with Spirit, and much more.

An ongoing practice of labyrinth walking can be a celebrated discipline for Christians seeking an authentic life of balanced wholeness in which intimate relationship with God is sought and valued.



WALKING LABYRINTHS

The labyrinth has only one path. It differs from a maze in that there are no tricks to it. From early on within the Christian tradition to now, countless people have walked labyrinths as devoted acts of pilgrimage, prayer and spiritual formation. The following idea is only one suggested way to use the labyrinth; you may want to listen to Spirit as you discover other possibilities, as well. As you follow the winding pathway to the center and back out again, surrender to the journey with an open heart and an open mind.

Four Fold path of the labyrinth

REMEMBERING, You are invited to gather your thoughts as you prepare to begin your walk; remember you are blessed. All that we have, all that we are is a blessing from God. If you are waiting in a line of others for your turn to enter the labyrinth, this is a time for literally counting your blessings.

RELEASING, begins when you enter the labyrinth and ends upon arriving at the labyrinth's center. This is an opportunity for "letting-go" of whatever distracts you. This is a time for quieting, opening, emptying, and shedding. For some, this happens through a mindful slowing and deepening of their breathing, or the silent repeated reciting of a simple prayer.

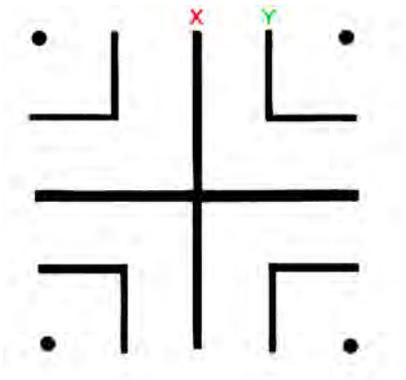
RECEIVING, is a gift at the center of the labyrinth. Having emptied oneself, there is now spaciousness within to receive creative Spirit. Receiving guidance, interior silence, new insight, deeper wisdom, a sense of peace are only a few experiences that can occur on a labyrinth walk. It is different for everyone. You may sit or stand in the center as long as you like. Receive what is there for you to receive and accept such as a divine gift.

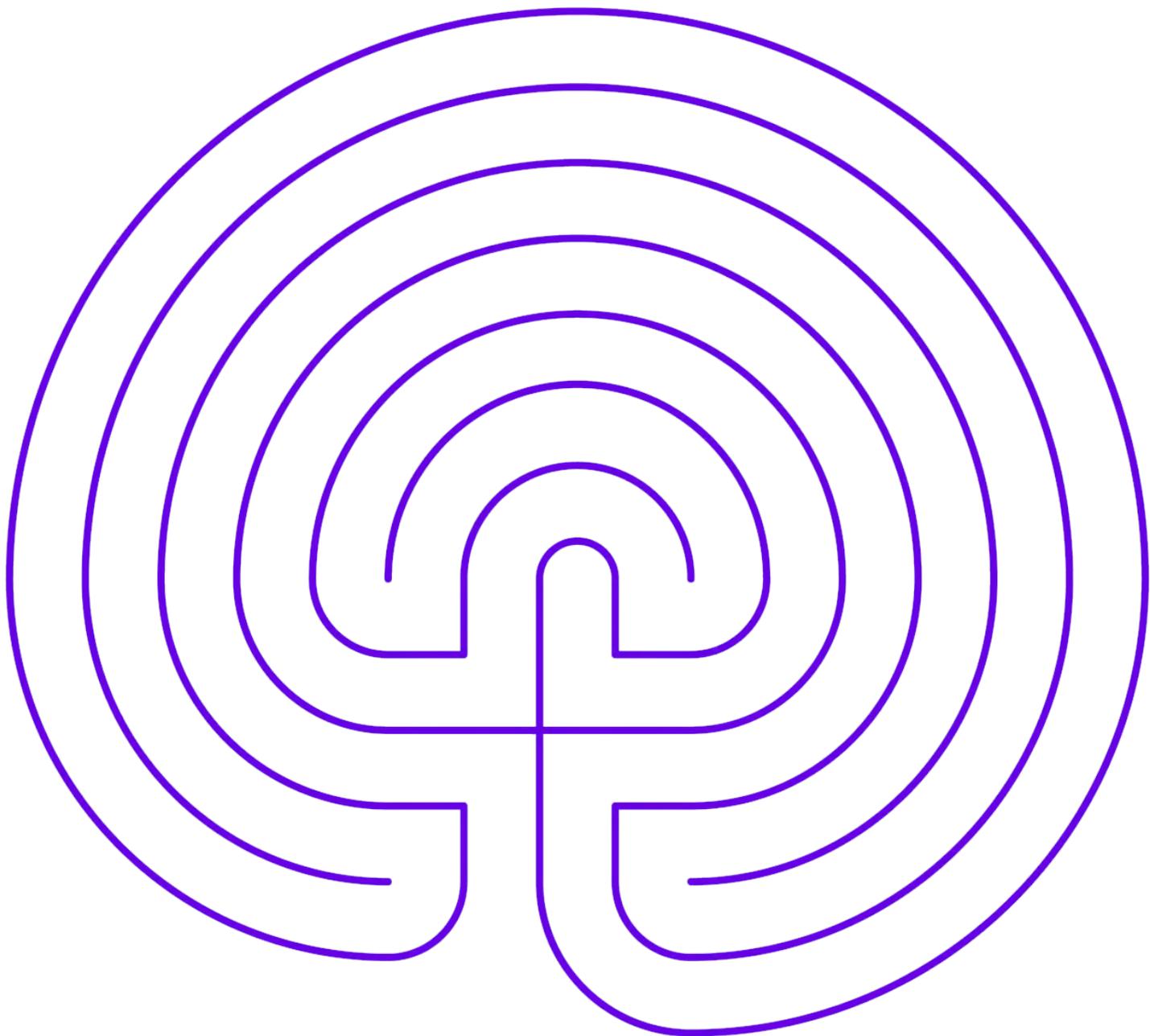
RESOLVE, begins when you leave the center and return on the same path back out of the labyrinth. There are many aspects of this: you can resolve to take a next step in your life, or come to a resolution about something bothering you. Rejuvenation often occurs, or a feeling of rebirth begins. Or, on your way out, you reclaim those responsibilities you set down on the way in, but for which you have new strength to carry them. Often, feelings of strengthening and integration occur. Symbolically, you take back out into the world what you've received.

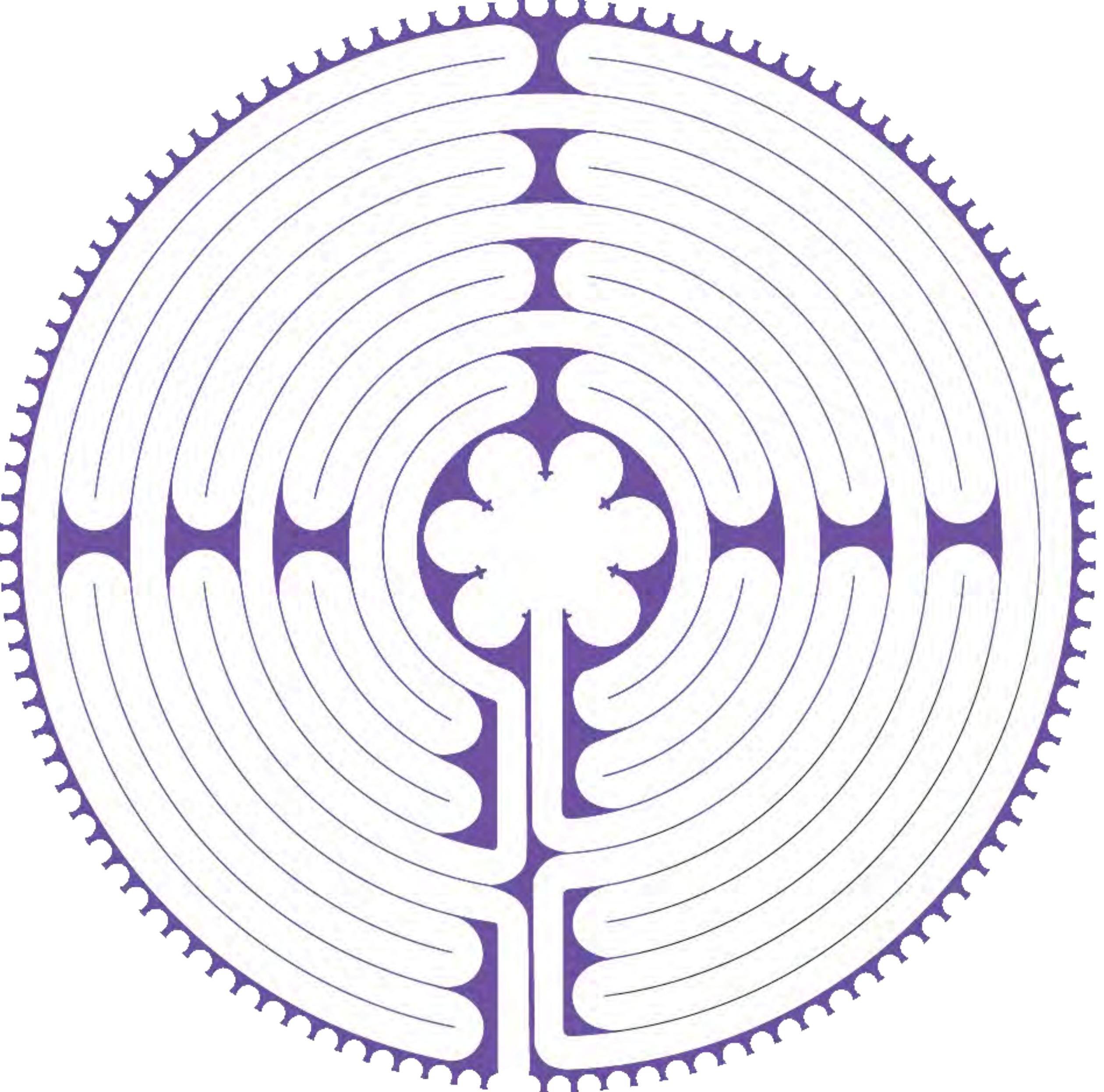
Some wisdom for these Four R's of the labyrinth

This way of using a labyrinth is only a map; it is not the territory. You can allow blessing anywhere on the labyrinth. You can release anywhere on the labyrinth, you can receive anywhere; you can come to resolution anywhere on the labyrinth. The Four's R's is one way of understanding what can happen while you are walking the labyrinth. Do not hold these too tightly; during your walk you will understand the flow.

Classical Labyrinth Seed Pattern







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