

Design and Installation

Hallowed Ground Sacred Place

The Grace Prayer Labyrinth is located on property given by Lord Fairfax by a deed dated May 15, 1753, to the members of the first Lutheran congregation in Winchester. Historical records indicate that the congregation initially built a log school on the exact site of the property where the labyrinth is now located.

In 1764, the cornerstone was laid for the first sanctuary. The surrounding property became designated as the Lutheran cemetery. All that remains of the original church structure is the east wall and the headstones, both of which stand to this day as a testimony to this hallowed ground.

The presence of a prayer labyrinth for all people in this community continues the ministry of this historical congregation in this place. As in the past, so for generations to come, this sacred ground will be maintained in beauty, offering once again a quiet and dignified place for prayer and meditation. All are welcomed.

The Grace Prayer Labyrinth was installed by **Jackson Cain**, a member of the congregation, as his Eagle Scout project in the summer of 2012 with the help of his family and friends and in partnership with Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church and its Faith Formation Ministry Council.

The design of the Grace Prayer Labyrinth is based on the design of the Labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral in France (1201 A.D.) with the exception of Luther's Rose located in the center. The Chartres Labyrinth design includes its own rose at the center, with 6 petals, reminding us of Christ, the "Rose of Sharon."

The Grace Prayer Labyrinth has a custom design of the Luther Rose at the center. According to Martin Luther's own interpretation of his rose (1530), the black cross at the center signifies that faith in the crucified One saves us; the red heart shows we are given life through Christ, and is in the center of a white rose signifying that faith gives joy, comfort, and peace. The sky blue field signifies that joy is grasped by hope, not yet revealed; and the gold ring, that the blessedness of heaven has no end, is exquisite beyond all joy and goods.

Grace Prayer Labyrinth Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church Mount Hebron Cemetery Winchester, Virginia

"Solvitur ambulando"

It is solved by walking

- St. Augustine



Located on the sacred ground of the cemetery and the historic site of the original Lutheran church in Winchester, Virginia (in time called Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church), the Grace Prayer Labyrinth is a beautiful, quiet, and peaceful place to pray. It is situated near the remaining stone wall of the church and the Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church Memorial Garden.

What is a Labyrinth?

The labyrinth is an ancient symbol found across many cultures and around the world. With roots seen in nature, such as the tree ring or a fingerprint, the first indications of the use of labyrinths originate as long as 4,500 years ago. One of the earliest known Christian labyrinths dates back to 324 AD.

It is believed that one adaptation of labyrinths in the Christian church was as a site of pilgrimage. Early Christians took a vow to visit the Holy City of Jerusalem at some point in their lives. During the Middle Ages, as the Crusades made travel to Jerusalem unsafe, other means were needed to honor that sacred commitment.

Labyrinths were built in the floors of the naves of designated cathedrals (like the Chartres Cathedral in France) and provided a safe way for Christians to complete their physical and spiritual journeys. The center of the labyrinth symbolized Jerusalem for these early Christians, and walking the labyrinth became an important spiritual practice and a likely substitute for the pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

In recent years, there has been increased interest in the labyrinth as a resource for prayer among Christians around the world. We also see increased use in hospital and school settings.

How to Walk the Labyrinth

There is no wrong way to walk a labyrinth—just follow the path. While some people seek answers to a problem, others find comfort from grief or relief from stress as they walk. It can be a time of simply being open and receptive to the presence of God, without any particular agenda in mind.

The labyrinth path is a metaphor for the journey of life and faith. It is not a maze; there are no blind alleys, just one path in and out. We are not just “traveling” the path to God, but, rather, God, in Christ, is always with us on the journey. Whatever you experience—joy, tears, relaxation, peace—is a gift.

Helpful Information

Focus and quiet yourself; pause and wait in prayer before entering.

Walk in silence as slowly or quickly as is natural to you; be observant. Feel free to pause especially as you reach the turns in the path.

Walk with an open mind and heart.

Move at your own pace. If others are on the path, feel free to step off and go around them, or let them step around you. If you meet someone going in the opposite direction, gently step around one another.

Show respect for the labyrinth and respect for others on the path.

A Simple Way to Pray the Labyrinth

One simple way to pray while walking the Labyrinth is based on a medieval church teaching about prayer:

- ❖ **“Journey in”** – Pray while following the path to the center. Focus on God. Let go of distractions. Release concerns to God. (Purgation)
- ❖ **“Being in the center”** – Reach the center and rest awhile in the presence of Christ. Stay as long as you like. Pray with openness to the Holy Spirit’s light and life. (Illumination)
- ❖ **“Journey out”** – Retrace the same path out and gradually return to thoughts about daily life. Pray for God to help you integrate what you have received through prayer and re-enter our active world for service in Christ’s name. (Union with God)

