

## The St. Ambrose Labyrinth Experience



### **You may ask, “What is a labyrinth?”**

The word labyrinth comes from the Greek word, “labyrinthos”. The labyrinth is a very old meditative tool. Ancient designs that can be identified as being labyrinths have been found on the Asian, European and North American continents, dating back as far as 3000 years. Now they are found on almost every continent. Labyrinths have only one path in and out; they are not mazes.

One of the oldest of the medieval labyrinths was installed on the stone floor of the Chartres Cathedral in Chartres, France during the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Walking a labyrinth during that period of time was a devotional activity performed by monks and people traveling on pilgrimages atoning for sins they thought they had committed.

Now during modern times most people who walk a labyrinth choose the activity for meditative and spiritual purposes. The walk will usually reflect each individual's personal needs and perspective.

### **You may wonder, “Why does St. Ambrose need a labyrinth?”**

Over the years, St. Ambrose parishioners' lives have been intertwined with the lives of its neighbors. In its ongoing advocacy role, St. Ambrose has chosen to initiate a labyrinth to provide its congregation and the Southeast Raleigh community the opportunity to participate in a healing meditative walk that will offer relief from the persistent, ongoing ravages of environmental, economic, physical and psychological discrimination.

How do you connect or reconnect with your spirit? What is your spiritual role within your family unit, community and the world? How do you enable your spirit to break free of constraint and assist you in realizing your “best self”? A “best self” that will allow you to realize and embrace a more positive role on all levels.

Due to our pressure filled lives we are not always able to carve out the space and time that will allow our spirits to flourish. All of us need a well-nourished spirit which will allow us to be successful in our spiritual and secular lives.

Walking the St. Ambrose labyrinth while reciting prayers and offering supplications will revitalize your resilient spirit, pulling you further and further into a meditative state. An increasing inner peace will open and cleanse your heart leading to a state of purification. Upon completion of the labyrinth, you will be filled with a wonderful sense of harmony and a state of unity with God.

### **You may ask, “What are the benefits received from walking the St. Ambrose Labyrinth?”**

- It will allow you to become present in the moment
- It will provide a calming of your mind and spirit; relieving stress
- It will help you focus your attention; providing an opportunity for creative thinking
- You may begin to receive answers to inner questions; leading to a state of deepened self-knowledge
- It will provide spiritual mooring as you recite and offer prayers or supplications
- It may provide a refuge or sanctuary
- It may provide a place to contemplate an upcoming event or benchmark something from the past, such as a birthday or death of a loved one.
- It may provide an opportunity to relinquish individual struggles.
- It will provide you with a place to be seated to reflect or read passages from your selected personal materials.

## **You will have a wonderful, spiritual experience when you walk the St. Ambrose labyrinth.**

- *Walk at your own pace.*
- *Follow the pathway going in one direction. The St. Ambrose's labyrinth starts by entering the pathway on your right.*
- *You may want to recite prayers or play music*
- *Walk the labyrinth's pathways as many times as you like.*

The labyrinth outline or layout reflects an integration of Ethiopian spirituality into the life and worship at Saint Ambrose. The Ethiopian cross is a foundational influence for the St. Ambrose labyrinth's design. The labyrinth has a gently flowing configuration with four lobed walkways. Each footfall on the labyrinth's path will lead you into a state of quiet prayer; purging your mind, body and spirit of any concerns or unwanted earthly distractions.

### **Stepping Stones**



Upon entering the labyrinth's first lobe pathway on the right, you will approach a prayer stepping stone, which states, ***"The Lord is my strength and my salvation"***.

Entering the second lobe pathway of the labyrinth, you will encounter another stepping stone, which states, ***"Nature is the art of God"***, providing you with the opportunity to contemplate the gifts of nature that God affords to each of us.

Upon entering the third lobe pathway of the labyrinth, you will approach a prayer stepping stone which states, ***"Faith is not believing that God can, it's knowing that He will"***.

As you enter the fourth and last lobe pathway of the labyrinth you will encounter another version of the stepping stone that was initially positioned in the labyrinth's first lobe. The stepping stone states, ***"The Lord is my strength and my salvation"***.

You have now completed the labyrinth! Remember you may walk it as many times as you like.