



On your marks

This labyrinth was first devised and used on an all-age parish weekend. It is something that, once set up, can be allowed to run on its own, to be visited by individuals or groups at their convenience. The idea is to provide a way of taking time out for a spiritual check-up using the format of a visit to a health spa. Lent is the time for this sort of self-examination and perhaps you could set aside part of the church or a hall for a weekend for this activity at the beginning of this season of the church year.

Get set

Setting up the labyrinth will need some time and thought. You will need eleven spaces at which those travelling this journey can stop, reflect and take part in a simple activity. A traditional labyrinth has these spaces on the way to and from the centre of a winding path. You can find out more about labyrinths and their patterns on the Internet.

However, keep this simple and merely use whatever large space you have and divide it up into a series of 'rooms', with some partitions if possible (even just chairs) and leave enough space for up to three or four adults and/or children at a time in each area.

In each room there are some objects to be placed (see below) and also some instructions about what to do, including an appropriate Bible verse for reflection. If you have the time and equipment, then recording the words on to MP3 players for individuals to use would be a great idea.

The next section introduces the eleven 'rooms' with the objects needed, the instructions and the Bible verses.

Go!

1 Safe space

You are welcome here. This is your space. This is a safe space. A space to remind yourself who you are and why you're here. A space to wind and unwind; to retreat and to advance; to withdraw and to move out refreshed. A space to be apart from other people and yet to be aware that you are sharing the space with them, that they are walking alongside you; that their journeys touch yours. And it's a time to remember who brought you here, who paid for you to come in, who designed and made you and who has a plan for your life; someone who wants only the best for you, the very best.

You are invited to walk this labyrinth at your own pace; to race through or to walk slowly. You might go through it just once or return to it a second time. You cannot do it wrong. The way you enjoy it is the right way for you. You are welcome here. This is your space. This is a safe space.

When you're ready, walk on to the first zone.



Matthew 11:28-29 (CEV)

If you are tired from carrying heavy burdens, come to me and I will give you rest. Take the yoke I give you. Put it on your shoulders and learn from me. I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest.

2 The changing room

Pile of heavy bags/cases and a variety of clothes – some tight and some baggy, some ugly; and a cupboard to place them in

Here you are in the changing room. A place to change. This is a place to leave behind you the things that stop you living life to the full. You can pick them up again later. They will be looked after. Is there anything you would like to take off and put down for a while? Anything that's like a heavy suitcase weighing you down or like a bag that you're ashamed to be carrying? Perhaps you're feeling uncomfortable, as if you're wearing clothes that don't suit you, or that restrict you and cramp your style. Perhaps there are some valuables which are precious to you but which you need to place in safe keeping for a while to allow you to move freely.

Place one or more items into the cupboard to symbolise the things you want to leave behind for a while. Make sure you've left them behind before you move on to the next zone.

Hebrews 12:1 (NIV)

Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

3 Personal trainer

Card file box. Set of filing cards divided into two with healthy habits/unhealthy habits as headings. Pencils.

Imagine meeting a personal trainer. This is someone who needs to know everything about you in order to discover what you really need to change: kind, but clinical, detached and non-judgmental; safe. This trainer may ask incredibly searching and intimate questions, but you can't detect even a trace of criticism, just real and active interest. He or she puts your whole lifestyle under review and is most interested in the things which have become habits: your eating habits, your exercise, and your rest habits. The trainer wants to know what you watch, read and listen to, even enquire about your thought habits! This trainer seems to be asking about everything, including things you'd really rather nobody knew about at all, either because you're proud of them or because you're ashamed of them.

Which of your habits do you think you would feel most uncomfortable about telling them? Which would you feel delighted to share with them?



Take a review card and fill in your healthy habits and unhealthy habits that you think are most significant. You can use drawings or notes that nobody but you will understand. Look at what you've noted. What would you like to have changed if you came back in a year's time? Circle it. Is there anything in particular you would like to remember? Underline it. Either take the list with you, or place it safely in the filing box. Now move on to the next zone when you are ready.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (CEV)

You know that many runners enter a race, and only one of them wins the prize. So run to win! Athletes work hard to win a crown that cannot last, but we do it for a crown that will last forever. I don't run without a goal. And I don't box by beating my fists in the air. I keep my body under control and make it my slave, so I won't lose out after telling the good news to others.

4 Exercise

A piece of a racetrack on a flat surface; pipe-cleaners

We're all at different stages of our journey. What does this stage of your life feel like to you? If it were a race, what sort of race might your life be like at the moment?

A treadmill, a hard slog, getting nowhere and no way of jumping off? A sprint - using every ounce of energy for a finishing line just ahead of you? A cross-country run - gritted teeth, pacing yourself for the long-term goal, conserving your energy, enjoying the scenery? An uphill slog? An exhilarating but out-of-control plummet downhill? A refreshment stop? A relay race, taking on the baton from the last team member, looking forward to handing it on to the next? Hurdles - just one obstacle after another? A three legged race tied to someone slower? Or someone faster?

Make a pipe-cleaner figure of yourself on your race and place it on the racetrack.

1 Timothy 4:9-10 (CEV)

'Exercise is good for your body, but religion helps you in every way. It promises life now and forever.' These words are worthwhile and should not be forgotten. We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of everyone, but especially of those who have faith. That's why we work and struggle so hard.

5 Diet

A tray of pieces of chopped fruit, vegetables, bread and sweets

Food and a healthy diet are crucial to allow you to be the person you're meant to be. Try some of the foods here... give your taste buds time to sense them fully. How much do you enjoy them? Keep trying them as you think... People don't just need food to live on; they need every word that comes from God. God gave Moses and his people bread, meat and water in the wilderness. Daniel and his



friends refused the rich diet of royal food, because it compromised what they believed in; they ate only vegetables and they stayed healthily. Jesus turned down the possibility of satisfying his hunger in the desert because magicking up food would have been the easy way out for him. Yet he fed the 5000 in the wilderness with more than they could manage to eat. He became a miracle and offered himself as living water poured out, as the bread that gives daily life, as the wine poured out for our forgiveness. These ordinary everyday foods keep not only our bodies going but our whole human selves in every part of us. Are you what you eat?

John 4:13-14 and John 6:35 (NIV)

Jesus said, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life'.

Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.'

6 The jacuzzi

Either have a few foot spas to use or simply comfy chairs to sit on. Bubble mixture and wands.

Jump into the jacuzzi! There you sit in the lap of luxury, warm, scented water lapping around you, which starts quietly to churn and bubble until you are gently pummelled and massaged on every side! You can feel each part of your body being soothed and relaxed. You have all the time in the world. You become very conscious of each of your limbs... toes... feet... ankles... shins... knees... thighs... bottom... hips... waist... stomach... chest...neck... face... head... shoulders... arms... wrists... hands...fingers... You are a delicate yet tough machine, a beautifully balanced piece of art, an intelligent, sensitive, marvellous, incredible detailed organism. Some parts of you have taken a knock or two over the course of your life. Some parts don't work as well as they used to. But what a wonder you are!

A poet marvelled at his own self. As you hear his words, blow some bubbles in this jacuzzi and as they pop, give thanks for the different parts of your body and the wonderful way they work together.

Psalm 139:1-16; 23-24 (NIV)

O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.

You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord.

You hem me in - behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand



will guide me; your right hand will hold me fast.

If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body.

All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be...

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

7 The temple

A picture of a 'red' carpet leading up to a temple door, divided into squares to colour in; some crayons

You are a safe space. You are a space where holy things can happen. A space where beauty and mystery dance together. A space so irresistible that the Spirit of God delights in moving in and setting up house. Location, location, location! A space designed for worship. Like the temple on the hill in the city, your life lights up the lives of those around you at work and at school and at home, because of the dynamic energy of the Spirit of God inside you. Your body is a temple, not of getting more stuff, not of scrambling to the top of the tree, not of being the best at everything but a temple of the Holy Spirit, where God loves to hang out. Like a pearl necklace hidden in the darkness inside a clay pot. Like the CPU of a PC. Like a SIM card in a mobile.

How would you walk into this temple? How would you expect other people to walk in?

Colour in the red carpet... a sign that because of God's spirit in you, you are someone to treat with respect, and someone who treats themselves with respect.

1 Corinthians 6:19 (NIV)

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God?

Ephesians 2:22

And in him [Jesus] you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

8 Jesus on the cross

A set of objects, some designed for luxury and some for torture, for example, cotton wool, sharp

nails, velvet, thorns, silk, a (safe) plastic knife.

Look at these things. Some of these you would pick up carefully so as not to hurt yourself; you would be anxious if you saw a child anywhere near them. Some are designed for softness and luxury, to make you feel good. Some are designed to damage and destroy a body. It's hard to imagine someone choosing to put themselves on the receiving end of things that hurt.

Carefully pick up and feel the different objects here.

Isaiah 53:2-9 (NIV)

He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

9 Jesus in majesty

Full-sized pictures of Jesus in majesty with postcard-sized copies to take away

The last time the women saw Jesus' body, as it was wrapped in cloths and placed in a cave, his body had been broken and useless, ugly and untouchable. But three days later, they saw him again, transformed, renewed, remade; the same but different. Scarred but complete and whole; filled with energy and beauty beyond their wildest dreams. Not just better, but healed and complete, so that through him the world can be healed and completed. Artists have tried to show what this risen Jesus is like: they draw him on a throne or holding a sceptre, a symbol of power and authority.

Here are some examples. Which do you like best? Can you imagine how it would feel to be best friends with this person?

Take a copy of the picture you like best as you journey out of the labyrinth, to remind you of the way



he is both ruler of the universe and at home in your life.

Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

10 The team

Lengths of string in different colours and lengths; the start of a web tied on to a cross

As we turn towards the outside world, we begin to think of our life outside the labyrinth. We don't leave Jesus behind us; instead he comes with us, goes before us, and walks beside us wherever we go. And he gives us all the amazing resources of his church to support us on our walk with him - the different people both local to us and in the church across the UK and across the world to stand by us as brothers and sisters in a great web of relationships, where we are needed and loved and valued.

Tie some pieces of string on to the web as you thank God for members of the church who have supported you, and commit yourself to being a support to other people in this great worldwide family.

Colossians 3:15 (NIV)

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Ephesians 4:2-3

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace

11 The vision

Small mirrors; a light

Use the mirrors to make the light dance across the walls. Where's the darkest spot to light up? Jesus asks us to join him in stepping out towards a world in need, bringing his light to dark places at



home, at school, at work, in the places he can only go through us. He longs for a world full of wholeness and health, full of that deep down 'shalom' peace that comes from being at peace with God himself. As you let the light dance, think about the different people you'll meet today, tomorrow, in the coming week and imagine Jesus' light dancing into their lives, perhaps through something you say or do. Imagine it bringing wholeness and healing and peace. Let the light dance on to you. And as you go out into the world, take away with you the knowledge that although you can't see it, that light of wholeness and healing and peace goes with you wherever you go.

When you're ready, go in the wholeness and healing and peace of Christ.

Luke 4:18-19 (NIV)

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.