

Sacred Garden

WELCOME TO

A PLACE OF WORSHIP AND REFLECTION

As a place of worship, those who visit the Sacred Garden are asked to refrain from:

- speaking loudly
- using inappropriate language
- participating in recreational activities
- consuming food and beverages
- smoking
- bringing pets (service dogs are allowed)

Children are welcome in the Sacred Garden when accompanied by an adult.



My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. — Thomas Merton from Thoughts in Solitude

ACCESSING THE SACRED GARDEN

The Sacred Garden will be open on Sunday mornings and may be accessed through the front gates. Monday-Friday, the garden will be open during the church's business hours. At those times, the gates will be locked and access will be through the church. Visits at other times must be arranged in advance through the church office. Please be aware that the garden may be closed during a private worship service.

We welcome members of our community who wish to utilize this space for prayer and contemplation. Labyrinth Docents are available to provide hosted walks for individuals or groups. If you have questions or wish to schedule a group visit, contact the church office at 828.252.4781.



First Baptist Church of Asheville
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Freedom. Friendship. Faith.

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF ASHEVILLE SACRED GARDEN

The Sacred Garden of First Baptist Church of Asheville is an outdoor sanctuary - a place for prayer, reflection, renewal, and the celebration of life. This sacred space allows members of our congregation and the broader community a place to slow down, to enjoy beauty, and to worship in every season of our journey with God.

ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

WALKING THE SACRED GARDEN LABYRINTH

The Labyrinth design in our Sacred Garden is based on the 11-circuit Chartres Cathedral Labyrinth found in France, which dates from around 1201 AD. The medieval design was used exclusively in cathedrals throughout Europe.

The labyrinth paths are made of a sandstone from Tennessee. The voids are Pennsylvania bluestone. The central design in the inlays is made of Etowah marble from northeast Georgia, which is the same stone that is featured throughout the church, including the steps at the entry to the sanctuary. It took about 2 1/2 months to fabricate the labyrinth and 2-3 weeks to install it. More than 60 tons of stone were used.



WHAT IS A LABYRINTH?

The labyrinth offers us a way of journeying, inviting us into a sacred and quiet place. It is a place where we can abandon the busyness of life. It invites us into the presence of the Holy and to reflect on our inner being. To walk the labyrinth is to make a pilgrimage to discover something about ourselves and God. The

labyrinth is full of mystery and produces different results for everyone. A person simply brings her or his personal thoughts, spiritual needs, or important questions to the journey.

The labyrinth is not a maze. There are no tricks to it and no dead ends. It has a single circuitous path that winds its way into the center. The person walking it uses the same path to return from the center and the entrance then becomes the exit. The path is in full view, which allows a person to be quiet and focus internally.

HISTORY OF LABYRINTHS

The labyrinth is sacred in many traditions, serving as a pattern of initiation and formation. Labyrinths pre-date Christianity, but for hundreds of years, churches have featured these winding designs in their sanctuaries and churchyards. Christians have been using the labyrinth since the fourth century, most notably in the great medieval cathedrals of Europe. One of the last remaining labyrinths in one of these cathedrals is in Chartres, France.

The labyrinth became a part of Christian history out of necessity. Unable to make their desired pilgrimage to Jerusalem, medieval pilgrims went instead to one of the great Gothic cathedrals in Europe, many ending their journey by walking the labyrinth formed of stone and laid in the floor of the cathedrals.



WHY DO PEOPLE WALK THE LABYRINTH?

- To slow down
- To quieten the mind
- To celebrate or give thanks
- To grieve
- To release stress
- To seek discernment
- To listen to the the Holy Spirit
- To ask for forgiveness
- To pray for oneself, others, the world



HOW TO WALK THE LABYRINTH

There is no right or wrong way to walk the labyrinth. The experience of walking the labyrinth is different for each person, each time. Whatever you experience, it is *your* experience. Trust the Spirit. Here are some suggestions to make your journey more meaningful.

- 1 Before you begin, take a few deep breaths and set an intention for your journey through the labyrinth. **Remember** that you are blessed and beloved.
- 2 If someone enters before you, wait until they have completed three or four turns before you start your walk.
- 3 Let your body naturally set the pace as you proceed into the labyrinth. Go slowly and reverently, or quickly and playfully, whatever is most comfortable. As you walk inward, **Release** or let go, quietening the mind from distractions.
- 4 Use everything that occurs in the labyrinth as a metaphor. Allow for surprises and insights.
- 5 You may carefully pass others who are moving more slowly or step aside to let others pass you.
- 6 In the center, **Receive** the deep love and peace of Christ and anything God gives you. Spend time in meditation or prayer.
- 7 As you return from center, **Resolve** to do something new or different, experience **Rejuvenation** in your spirit, **Reclaim** something that you have neglected within your soul. Symbolically, and sometimes actually, you are returning to the world which you have received.
- 8 Following your walk, **Reflect** on your experience. Some find it helpful to write down their thoughts. Sharing your experience with someone or listening to another's story about her or his journey can be important.