

**Navigating
Dangerous Currents:
Suffering and
Labyrinth Prayer**

**Labyrinth Society
Gathering**

**October 14, 2012
Hudson, Wisconsin**



Presented by ©The Rev. Jill K H Geoffrion, Ph.D.

www.jillgeoffrion.com jillgeoffrion.wordpress.com www.fhlglobal.org

The labyrinth: a symbol, an experience, a tool



photo ©Alain Kilar
Promenades Angeliques
alain.k@sunrise.ch

that can connect us all.



3 circuit labyrinth of earth, stone and bricks Lipandasi Home Bukavu, D. R. Congo

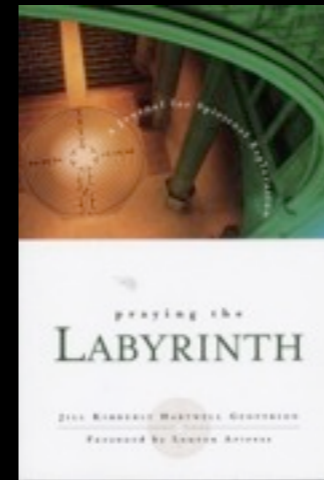
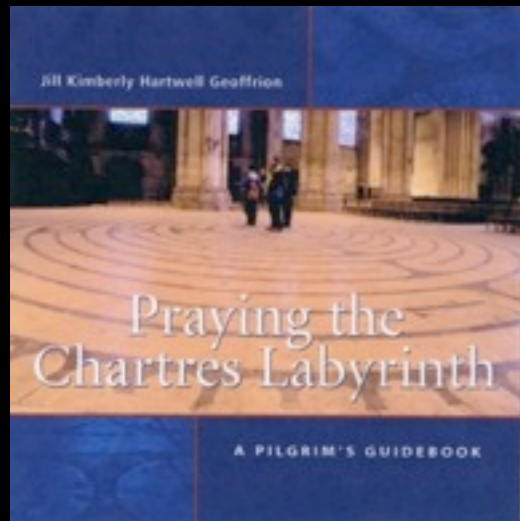


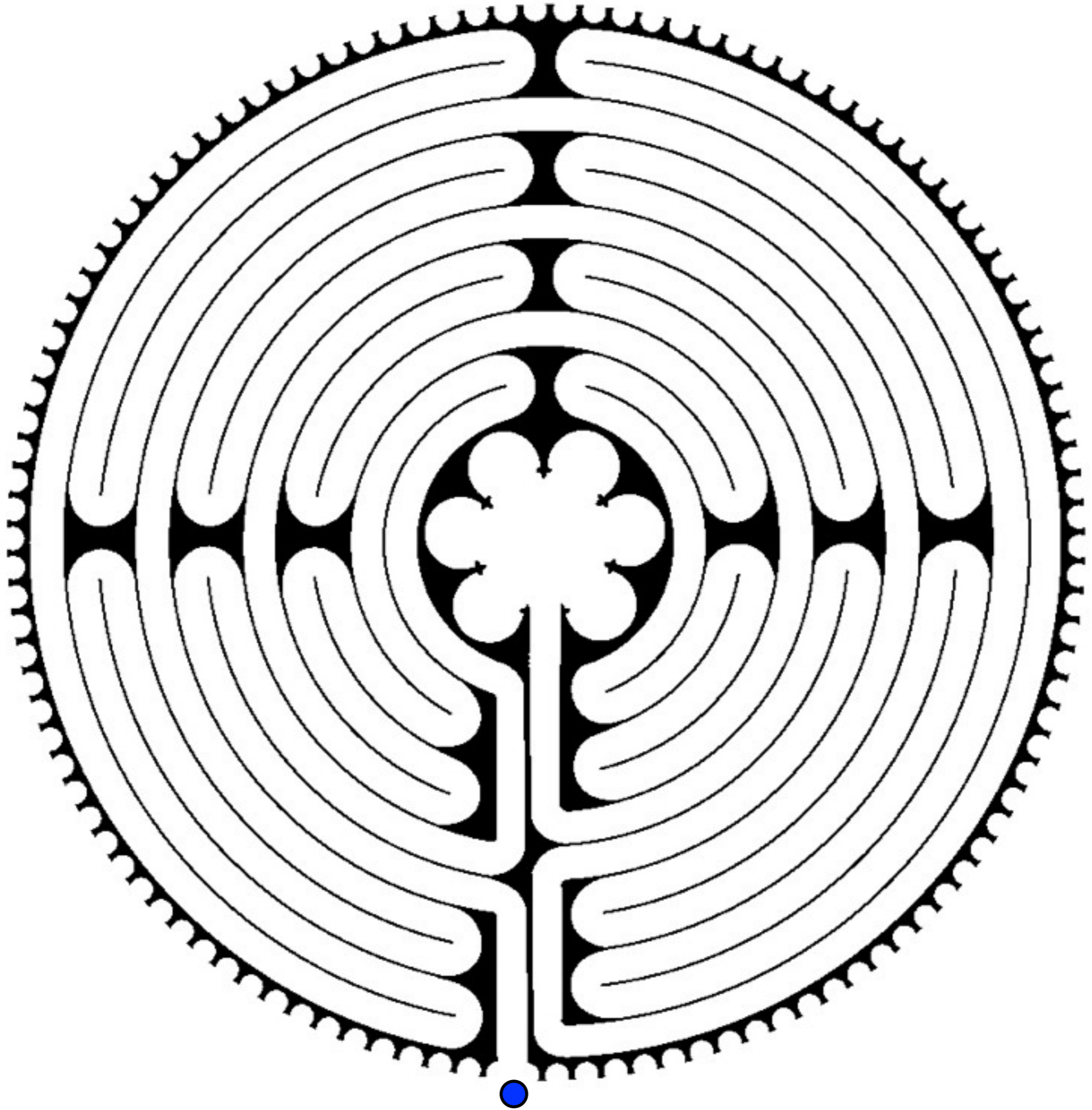
**I would love to live
like a river flows,
carried by the surprise
of its own unfolding.**

**John O'Donohue "Fluent"
(*Conamara Blues*)**

Marin Petroglyph Labyrinth, Spain Approx. 2,000 BCE

The places the labyrinth will take you...







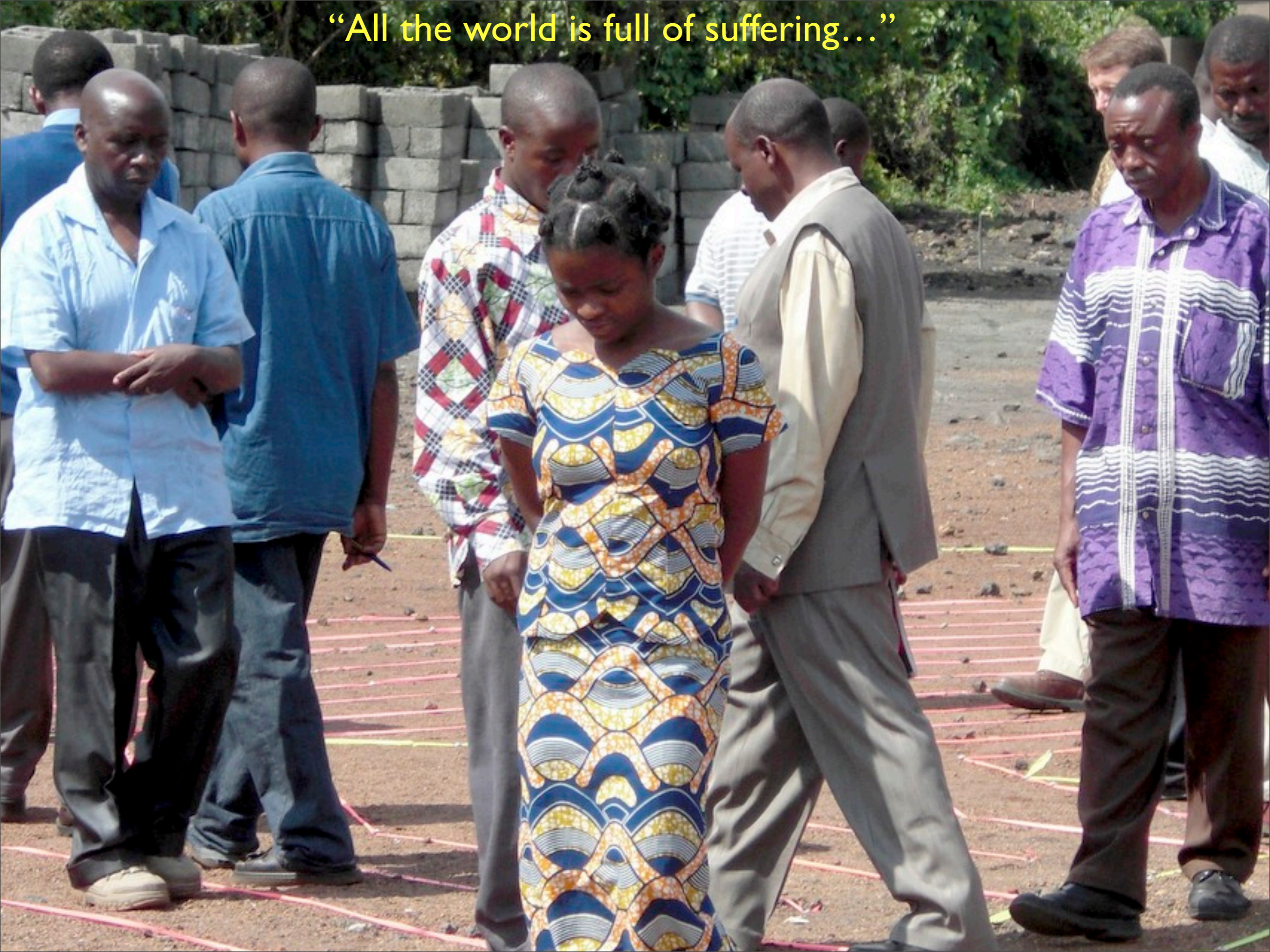
Preparing Ourselves



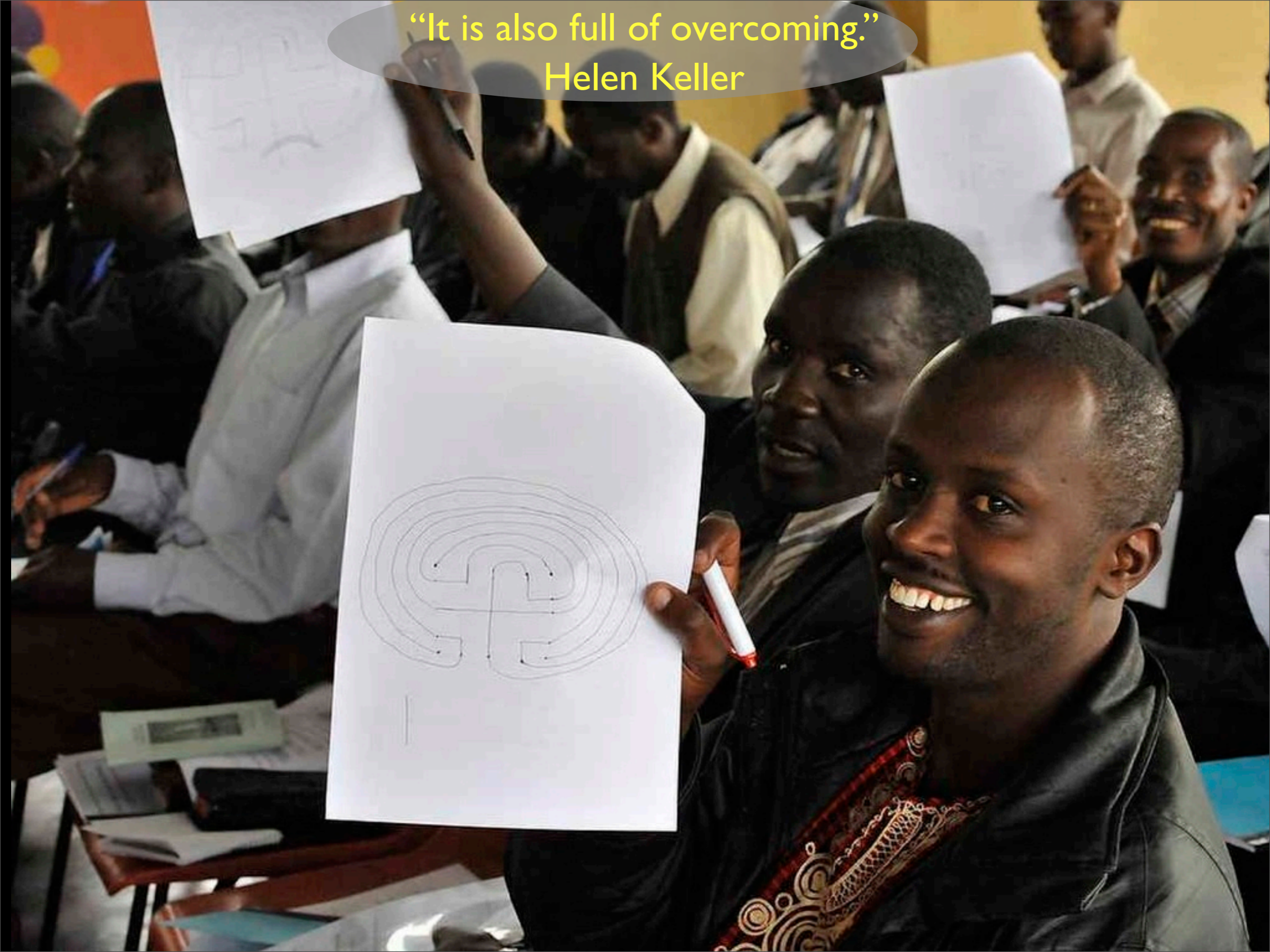
“Life is suffering.”
Buddhist Teaching

**“In this world you
will have troubles...”**
John 16:33 (NIV)

“All the world is full of suffering...”



“It is also full of overcoming.”
Helen Keller



Everyone suffers.



...even the wise suffer, for
suffering is everywhere.
Yoga Sutra II.15



“The truth that many people never understand, until it is too late, is that the more you try to avoid suffering; the more you suffer, because smaller and more insignificant things begin to torture you in proportion to your fear of being hurt.”

Thomas Merton.



Accepting the reality of suffering
frees one to choose a response.

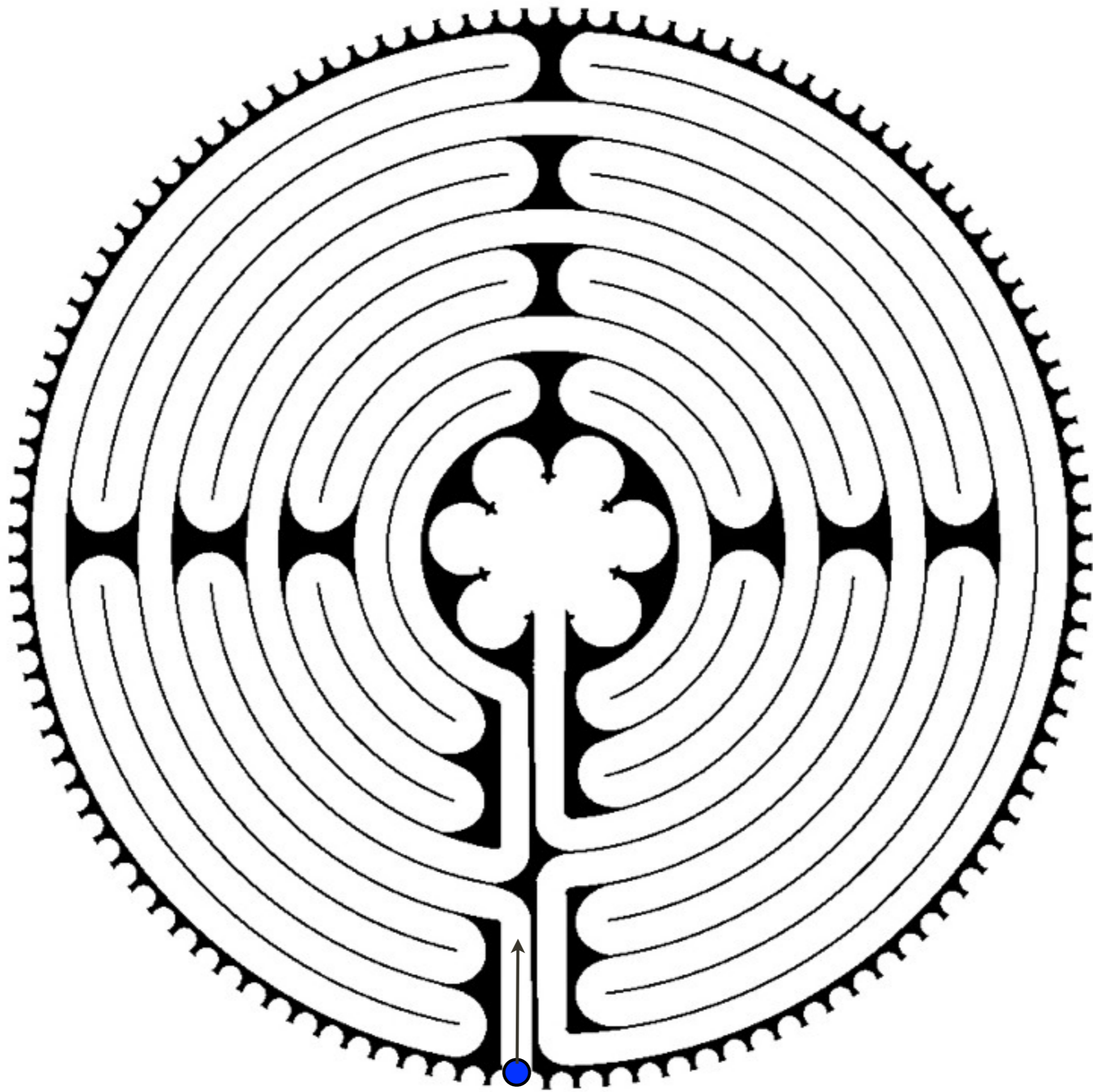
(See Victor Frankl: The Search for Meaning)



Acknowledging
suffering is
just the first step
in moving towards
wholeness.

We “step into”
situations of suffering
-to be present to what is
real,
-to respond as we can,
and
-to be changed so that
we can be of greater
service.

First stone of the Chartres, France labyrinth
shaped like a chalice. Installed in 1201.



Entering...



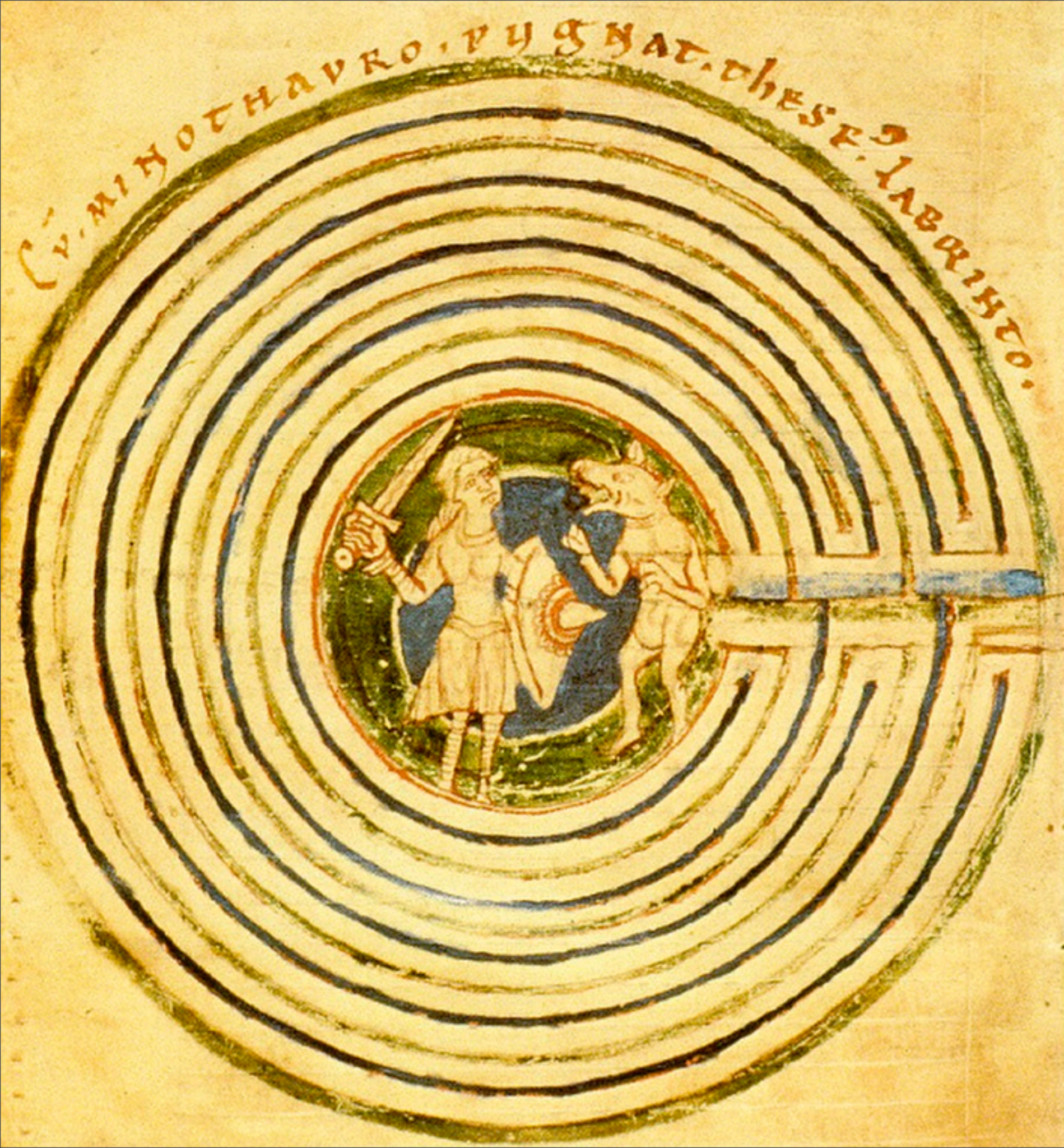
In the Greek myth the labyrinth
is a place of entrapment, danger, and death.



Medieval manuscript with the minotaur



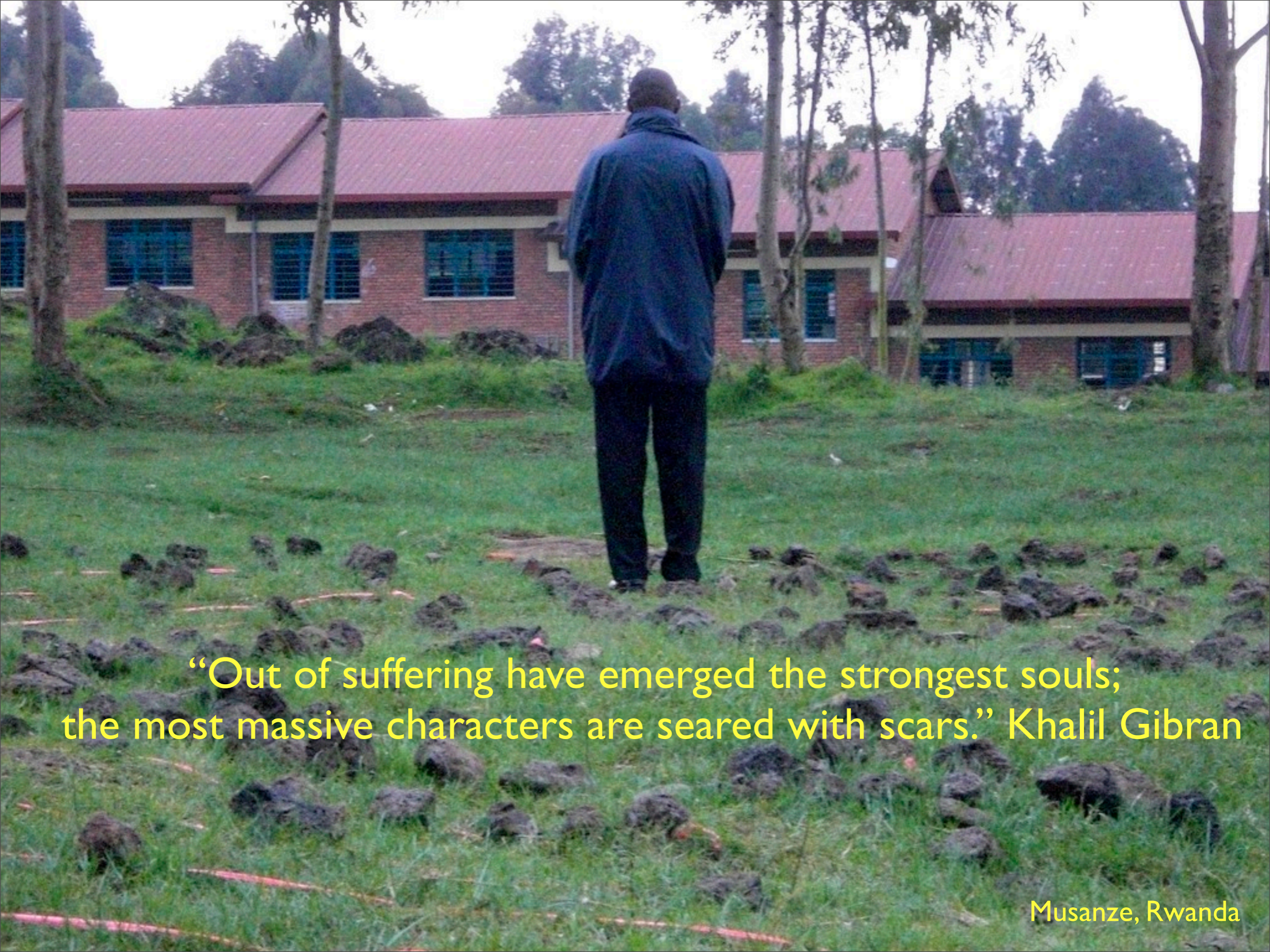
Suffering is elemental to the story.
Roman Mosaic Labyrinth, 275-300 CE Kuntz Museum Vienna, Austria



If suffering
brings wisdom,
I would wish to be
less wise.

William Bulter Yeats

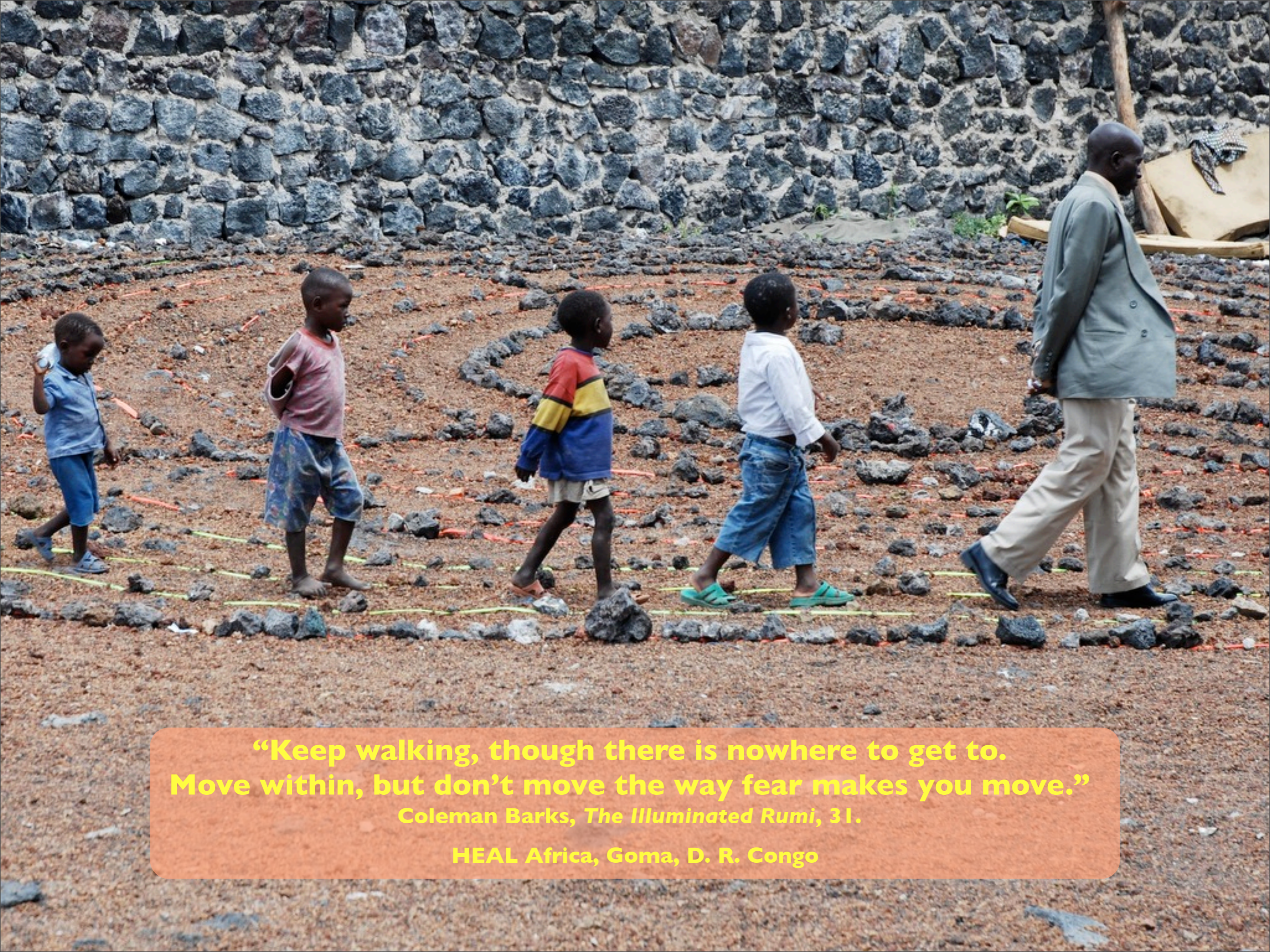
12th century manuscript
Munich



“Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls;
the most massive characters are seared with scars.” Khalil Gibran

Musanze, Rwanda





**“Keep walking, though there is nowhere to get to.
Move within, but don’t move the way fear makes you move.”**

Coleman Barks, *The Illuminated Rumi*, 31.


HEAL Africa, Goma, D. R. Congo



St. Edward's Episcopal Church. After the church burned down, a new sanctuary was designed using a labyrinth. The altar is in the center. Long Lake, Minnesota (USA)

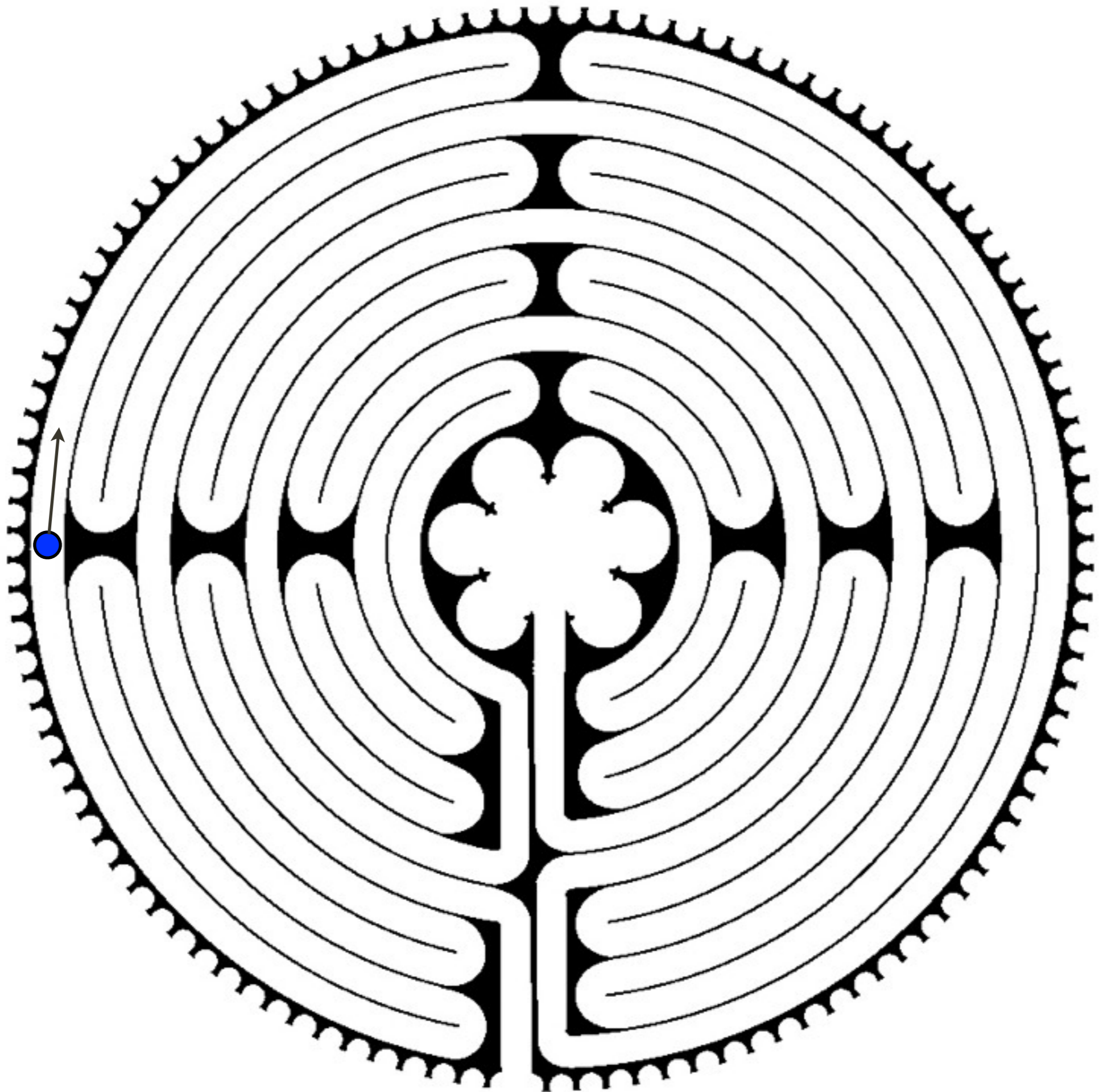


Baptist Church, Goma, D.R. Congo



“God, help me
to find You,
even in
suffering.”

*Labyrinth walk Goma,
D R. Congo*



Shaker Dance Song

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.

When true simplicity is gain'd,
To bow and to bend we shan't be asham'd,
To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.

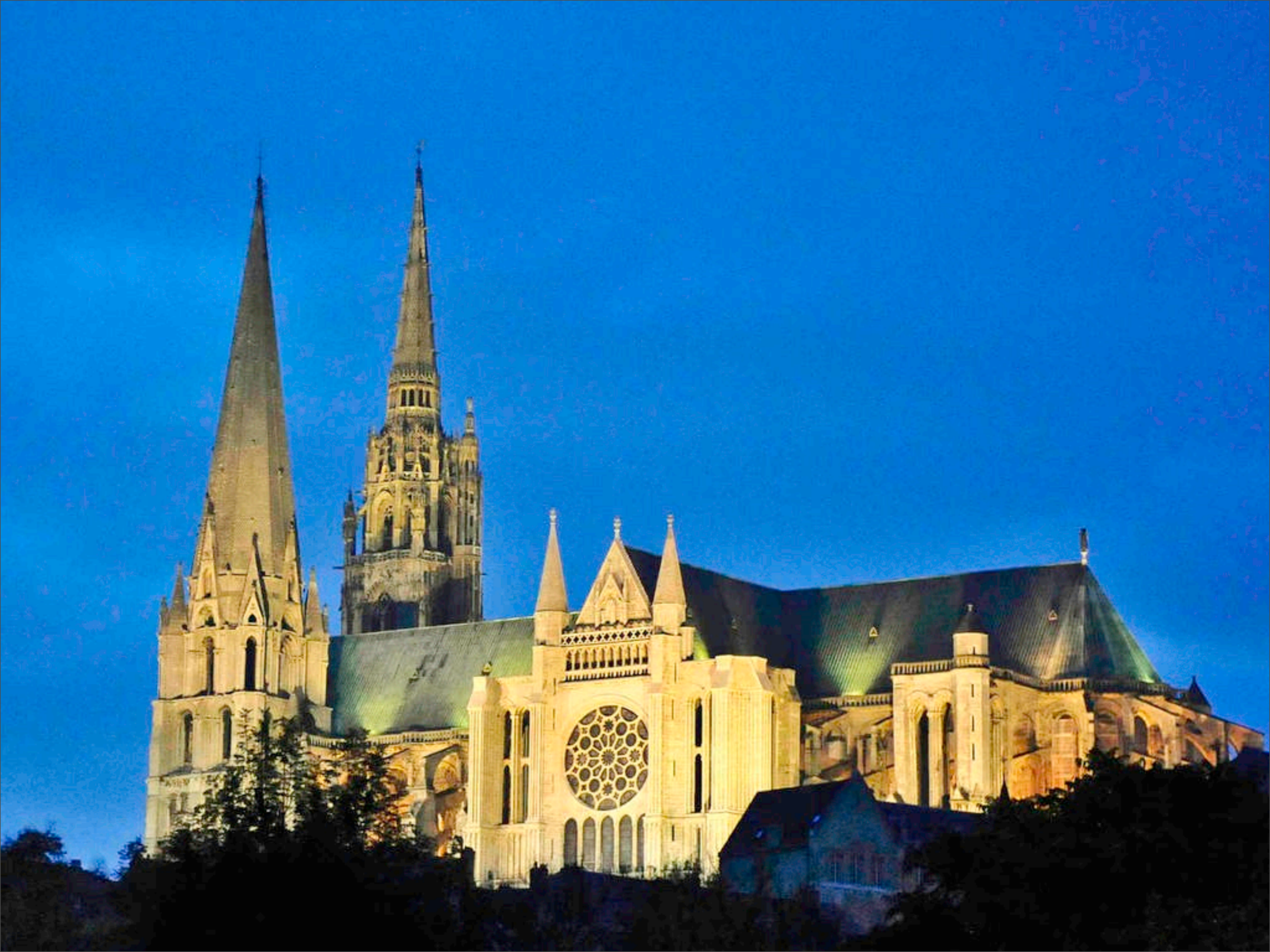
Simple Gifts

Joseph Brackett, Jr., 1848



Following the path...

















Faith, Hope and Love Global Ministries



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Teaching, Inspiring, and Encouraging



Teaching courses, workshops, and seminars



Coaching of individuals, groups, & non-profits



Providing labyrinth experiences, retreats, pilgrimages, and creative opportunities for spiritual renewal



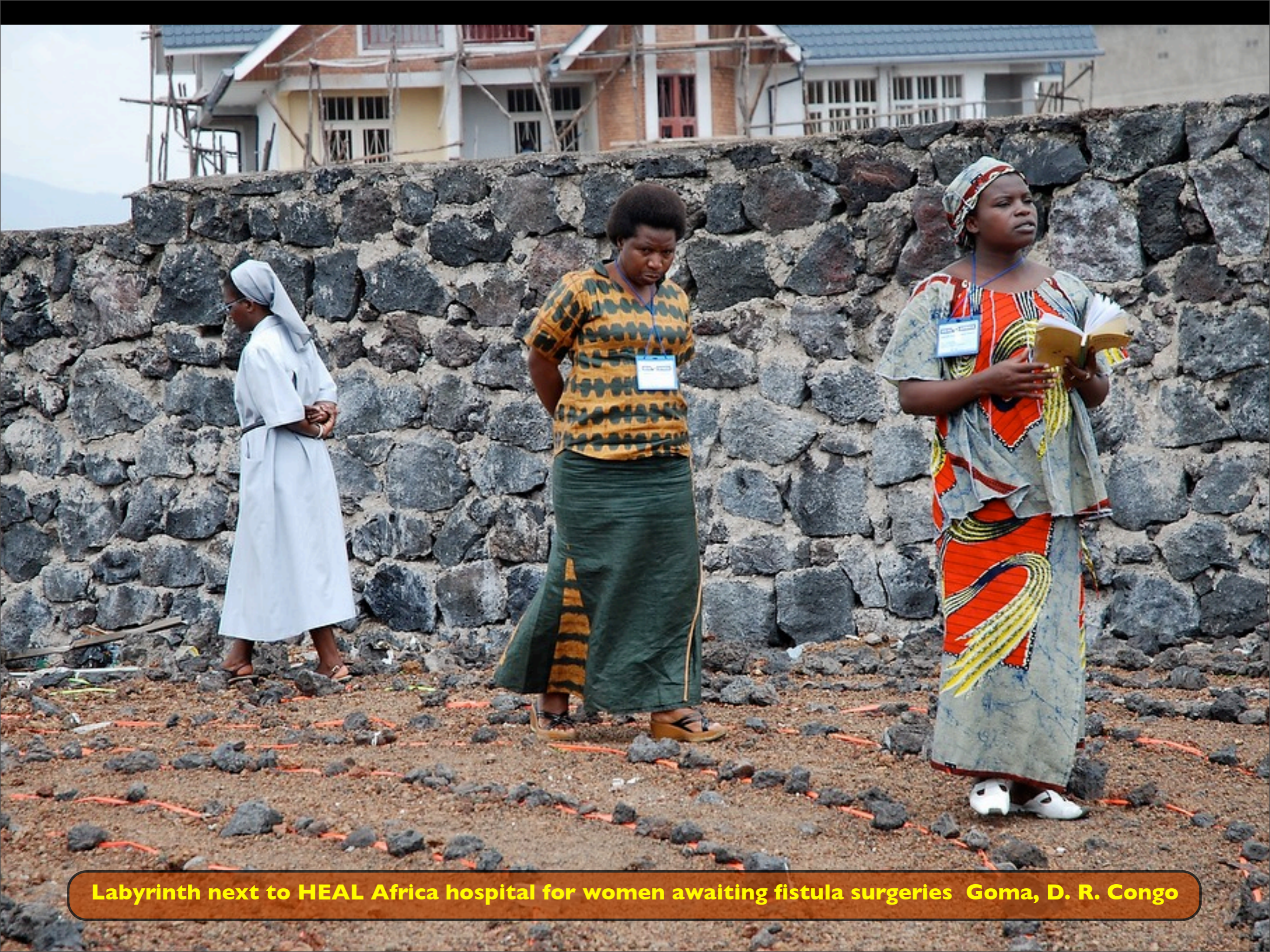
Offering written and web resources www.fhlglobal.org





Honduras 2001





Labyrinth next to HEAL Africa hospital for women awaiting fistula surgeries Goma, D. R. Congo



Democratic Republic of Congo (in the center of Africa)

2007-2012





Women's march in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo



Sign Condemning Violence Against Women, Congo





Rwanda-

East of Congo, north of Tanzania & Burundi, south of Uganda





Rwanda: An invitation at the border 2007; a response 2009

Kigali, Capital City of Rwanda

Génocidaires returning from a work project, 2010





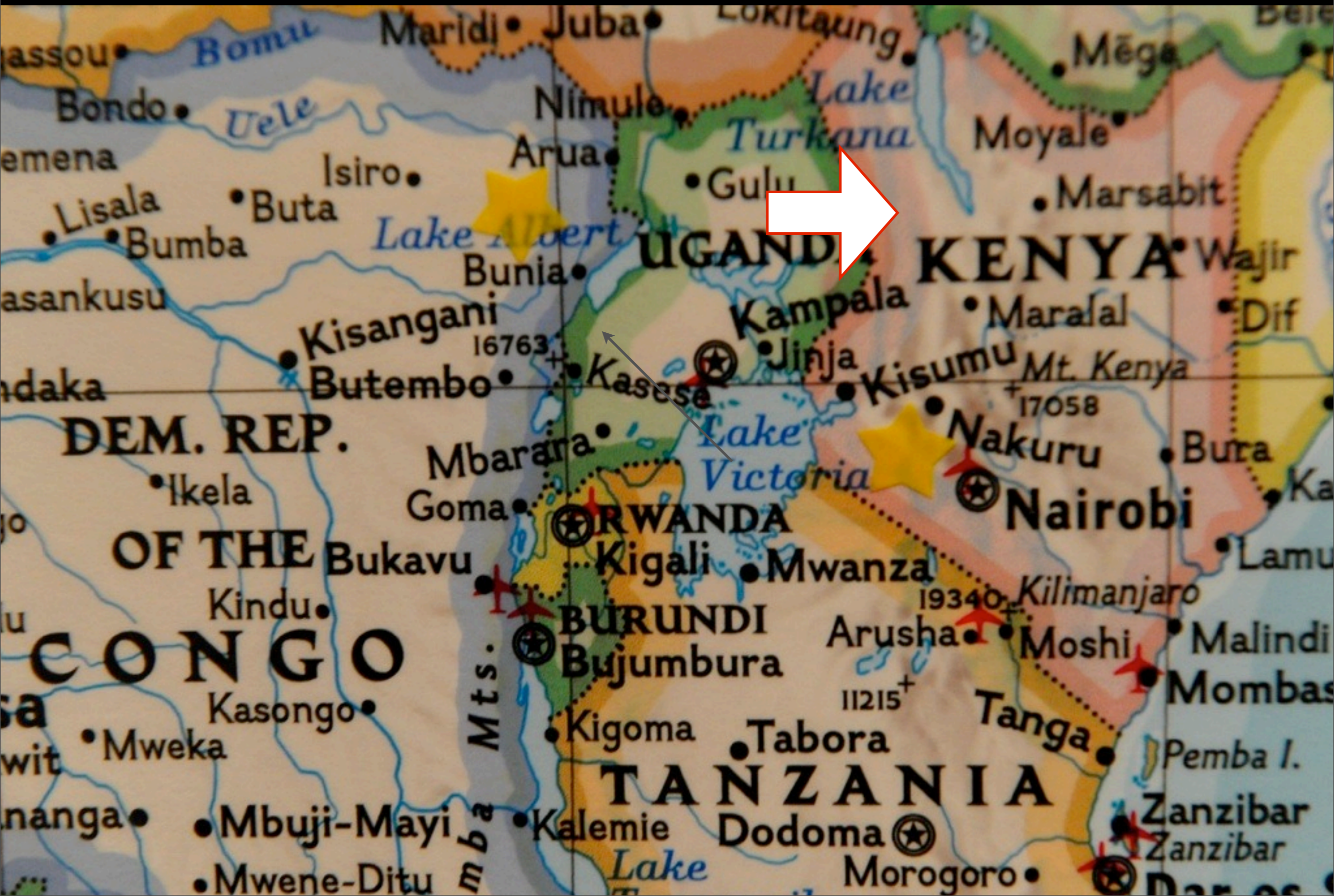
Ministers pray on a labyrinth Musanze (Northern), Rwanda 2009







Kenya- Central East Africa



Eagles' Wings Retreat Center Green Park, Kenya

. "I have dreams of teaching about the labyrinth and offering prayer walks, using the labyrinth for spiritual and devotional reflection." Deb Snell

"This will really help us." Mwangi
(after building the labyrinth and then walking it.)



Materials:

Sulti-twine,
4 1/2 kg spool
(\$2.00)

Sheet metal nails
(4 1/2 kg)

Hammer

Added later:
Absidian stones
(above), replaced
by glass bottle
bottoms.

Myanmar

(bordered by China, Thailand, Laos, Bangladesh and Malaysia)







AUNG SAN SUU KYI

WINNER OF THE 1991 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

Letters from Burma

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY FERGAL KEANE

Aftermath of the Nargis Cyclone May 2, 2008
135 MPH Winds Fatalities: 138,366; Damage \$10.1 Billion



Life is suffering:
metaphor of a Buddhist “wingaba”







Women's groups from individual churches met to learn about praying the labyrinth.



Teaching classes in different disciplines (faculty invitations).





**Ecumenical
Women's
Groups**

28.1.09
MACS မှ အဖွဲ့ဝင်များ အား
January ၂၈ ရက်တွင် Honorarium
အဖွဲ့ဝင်များ အား Office-1
If you would like to help build a prayer labyrinth
for the MIT community, join Jill in front of the Diamond Jubilee
building at 8:00 AM on Friday. ☺



Building the first permanent labyrinth at the Myanmar Institute of Theology



GOD, IN YOUR MERCY HEAL OUR LAND

2 HRO. 7:14; MATT. 10:8; EPH. 2:4



MYANMAR INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY

PEACE STUDIES CENTER

PEACE AND ART PROGRAM

"LABYRINTH PRAYERS FOR PEACE"

Resource Person: Jill Geoffrion

Feb. 28, 09

MIT

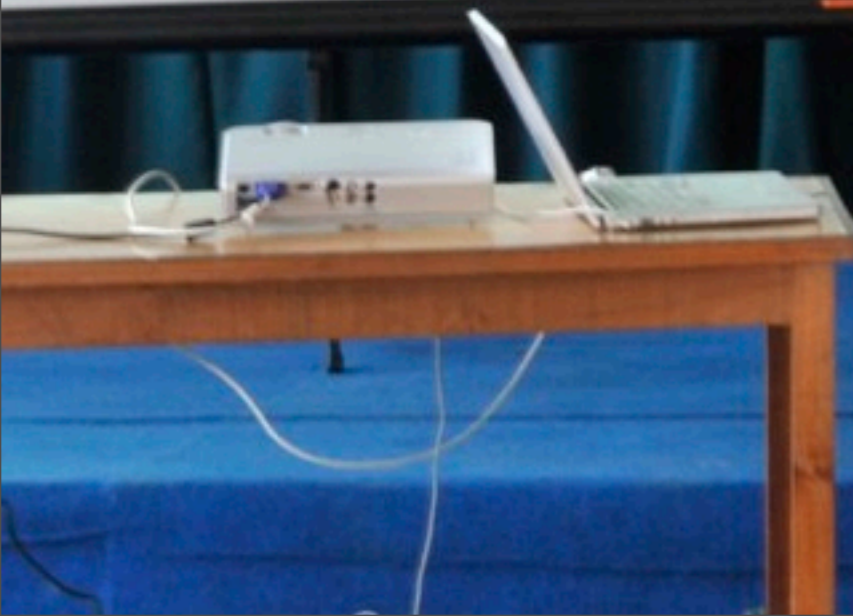


Labyrinth Prayers for Peace

Peace Studies Center

Myanmar Institute of Theology, Yangon

February 28, 2009



Leadership workshop offered by the Judson Research Center





**The Spirit-Led Leader:
University of the Countries of the Great
Lakes of Central Africa
Four labyrinths installed 2008- 2010
various campuses in Goma, Butembo
and Bukavu**



**Free University of the Great Lakes Region
Goma, D. R. Congo**

**Butembo,
D. R. Congo**







**Free University of the
Great Lakes Region
Goma, D. R. Congo**



Anglican Archdeacon Retreat, Northern Rwanda



**Women's Leadership Event
Local church compound
Goma, DR Congo**



Seminary Chapel
Yangon, Myanmar



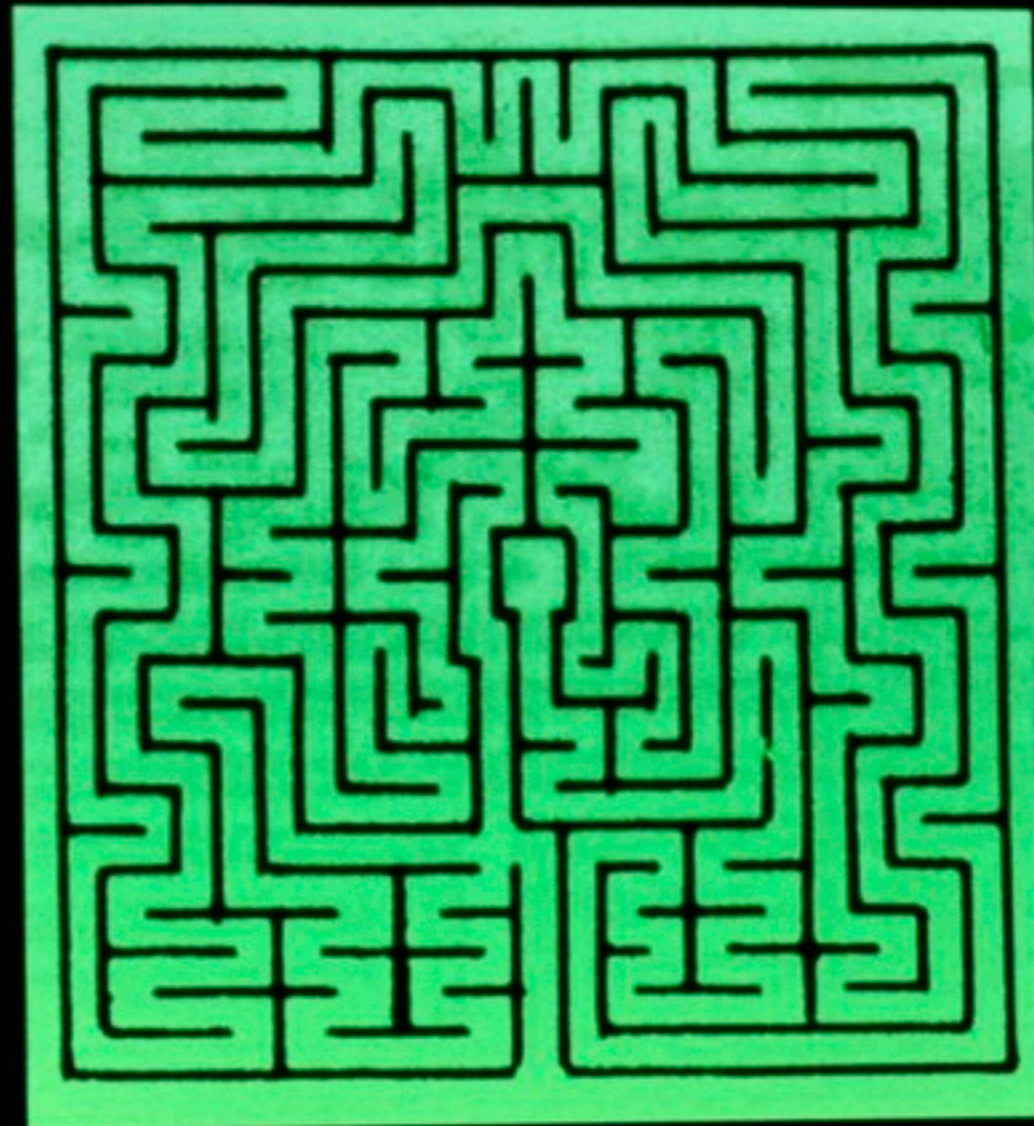
Nous ne connaissons pas exactement l'origine des labyrinthes, mais nous pouvons les suivre tout au long de l'histoire.

Concepts historiques du labyrinthe:

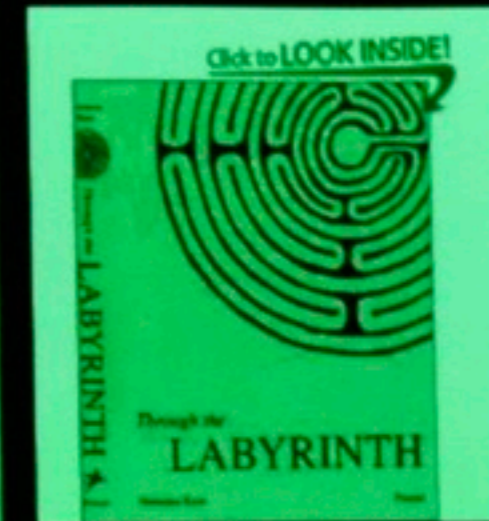
1. Les formes du mouvement (danse)

2. Les références littéraires (chemin torturant)

3. Les dessins graphique



Tracé du labyrinthe de la cathédrale de St.-Omer. Copie de 1843 d'un labyrinthe médiéval dans l'Abbaye de St. Bertin à Saint-Omer.



Voir Hermann Kern, *Through the Labyrinth* (New York, Prestel) page 27.



Sharing the labyrinth to a group of french guides from the Chartres Cathedral, France



Quelques textes à méditer,
à prier, sont à disposition,
comme du bon pain pour la route...



«Tu m'apprends le chemin de la vie.
Devant ta face, plénitude de joie.»
Psaume 15, 11

«Prends soin de ton corps
pour que ton âme ait envie de l'habiter.»
Basile de Césarée

«Voici ce que produit l'Esprit:
l'amour, joie, paix, patience, bonté,
bienveillance, foi, humilité, et maîtrise de
soi. Puisque l'Esprit nous fait vivre,
laissons-nous conduire par l'Esprit.»
Galates 5, 22..25

Le labyrinthe,
dans la grande Tradition Biblique
du chemin,
du pèlerinage...



S.A.V. 2012 texte C.Soupeaux; photos ©JKHGeoffrion.

PAR LE CHEMIN, AVEC LE CHEMIN, ET EN CHEMIN...



Il n'y a pas une manière «correcte»
de parcourir le labyrinthe,
c'est un chemin avec Dieu,
selon la tradition biblique.
La seule exigence,
le respect de l'autre,
du Tout Autre
qui consacre ce lieu.

Dehors avant d'entrer!

Se préparer pour le voyage.
Apaiser sa respiration
pour ramasser son cœur.
Abandonner pour un instant
les pensées, les fardeaux, le stress.
Se poser.
Quitter ce que l'on sait.
Pour avoir une vie digne de ce nom,
il faut aussi croquer,
parler dans l'incertitude.



Prenez le pain!

Entrez. Accepter de suivre
le chemin où il mène.
Partir à la découverte
d'une source cachée,
source qui murmure au cœur de
l'homme dans la nuit étroite de la foi.
Croire à l'avvenir d'un amour
pour aimer,
Croire à la moisson pour semer,
Croire à la force du bien
pour se dévouer,
Croire au but du voyage
pour se lancer.

Et ce n'est pas un détail pour ce chemin,
c'est un labyrinthe pour se trouver.



Dehors après le parcours:

Réfléchir à ce que l'on vient de vivre.
Exprimer comme on le sent (écouter,
deviser...) ce qui est arrivé.
C'est peut être une question,
un doute, une certitude,
ou encore un merci!

En centre!

Ecouter bien, attendre avec Dieu,
recevoir ce qui est donné,
ce qui rejoint l'être profond.

Sortir par le chemin en sens inverse,
ou traverser pour avancer
et monter vers l'autel du Dieu vivant,
ou vers Notre Dame du Piliers.



Like bread for the journey,
may these texts nourish you.



«You show me the path of life.
In your presence is the fullness of joy.»
Psalm 16: 11

«Take care of your body
your soul longs to live within it.»
Basil of Caesarea

«...the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace
patience, goodness, kindness, generosity,
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
If we live by the Spirit,
let us be guided by the Spirit.»
Galatians 5:22,23,25

The labyrinth
on the floor of the Chartres Cathedral
grew out of a scriptural understanding
of God's guidance and presence
with those on the way.



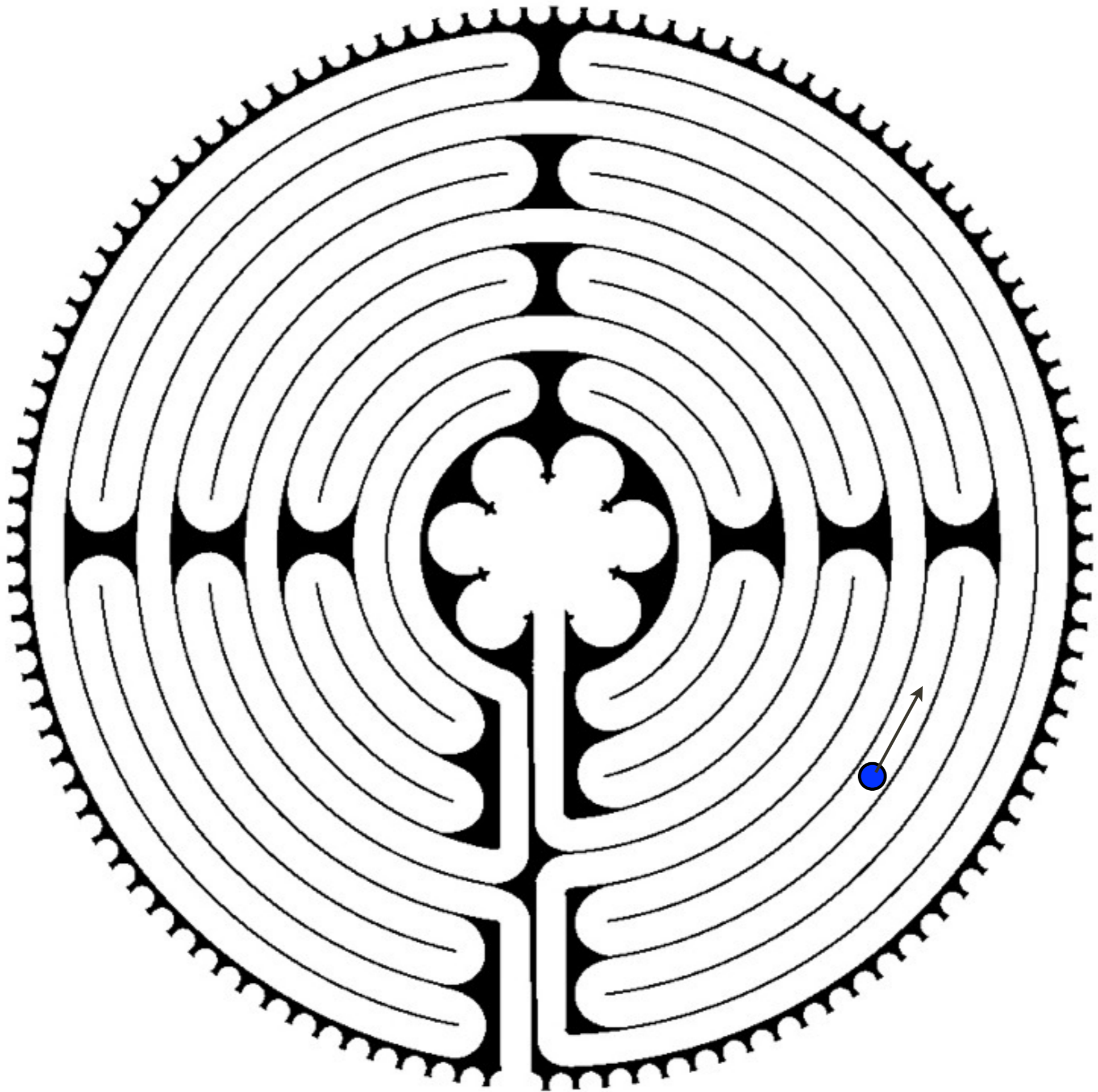
S.A.V. text C.Soupeaux & © photos JKHGeoffrion 2012


THE CHARTRES LABYRINTH



Following the ancient biblical
tradition of pilgrimage,
you are invited to journey with God.

There is no one "right" way to walk
the labyrinth in the cathedral.
Let love guide you.



A high-angle, rear-view photograph of a man sitting on a light-colored floor. The floor is marked with a large, dark, circular pattern that resembles a stylized 'C' or a large letter. The man is wearing a dark, ribbed sweater and blue pants. The lighting is bright, casting a shadow of the man onto the floor. The overall mood is contemplative and isolated.

**Suffering
magnifies
a sense of
isolation.**

**On labyrinths
we walk alone
in community.**

**We can share
our sense of
suffering.**





T



**Our bodies carry
our suffering...**

**Our bodies
are also
capable
of
releasing
our
suffering.**



**Interfaith studies
faculty member,
Myanmar
Centering Prayer class**

**Turning with ones eyes or one's body
(rounding the 28 semi-circular turns)
may help with the healing of trauma.**



Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR)

“Life is difficult. This is a great truth, one of the greatest truths. It is a great truth because once we truly see this truth, we transcend it. Once we truly know that life is difficult—once we truly understand and accept it—then life is no longer difficult. Because once it is accepted, the fact that life is difficult no longer matters.” M. Scott Peck





**...but hear, all you peoples, and behold my suffering;
my young women and young men have gone into captivity.
Lamentations 1:18 b&c**

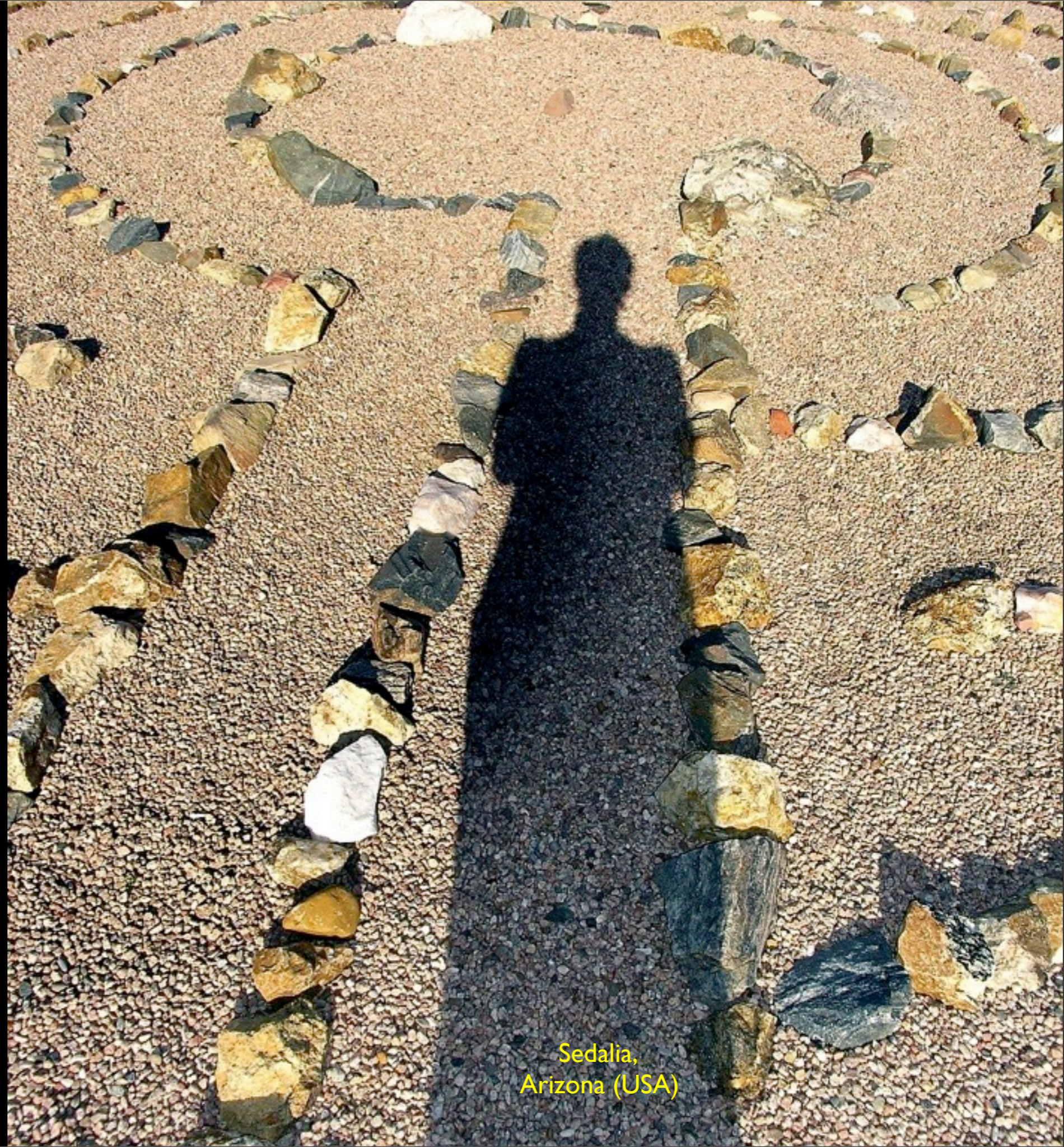


They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great. Job 2:13 (Hebrew Scriptures)



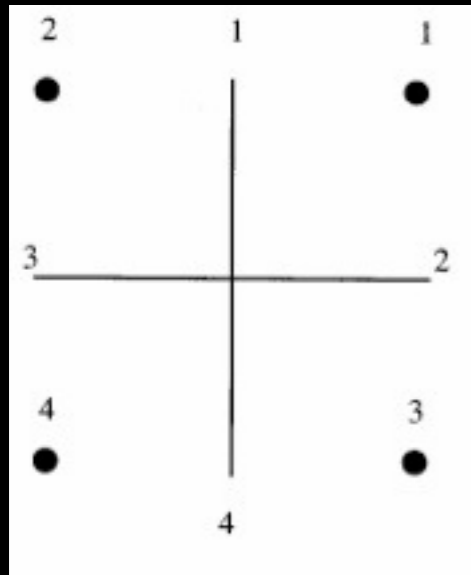
The labyrinth
often
functions
as a
mirror.

We can look
at our
suffering,
without
overidentifying
with
it.

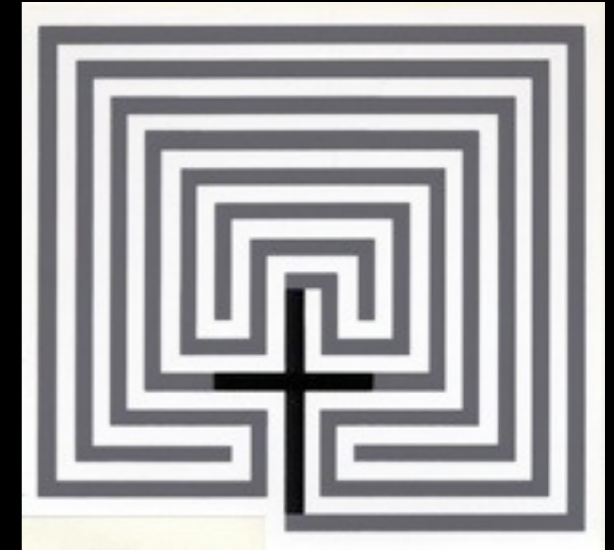
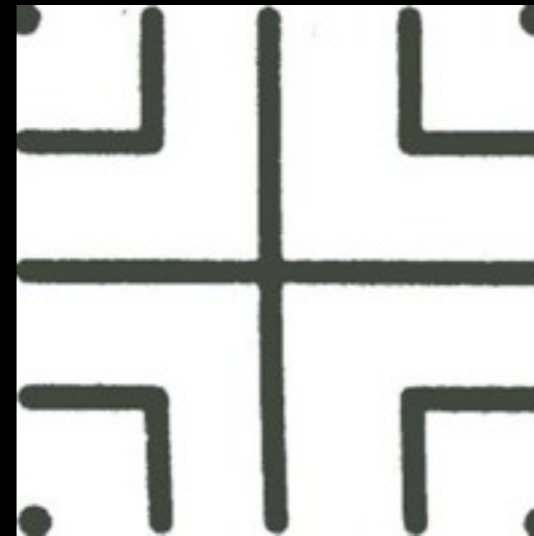


Sedalia,
Arizona (USA)

The notion of “grounding” is embedded in most labyrinth patterns. Labyrinth usage can “ground” our suffering. We can literally walk it out.

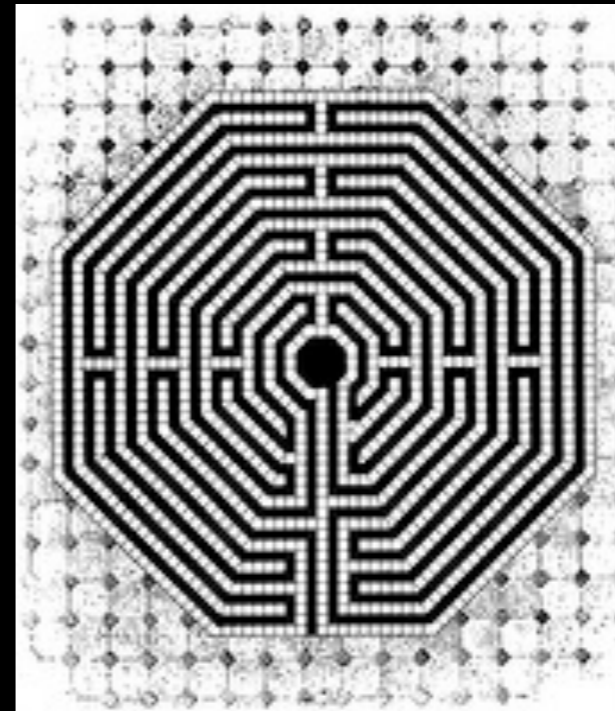


Seed pattern and 3 circuit labyrinth



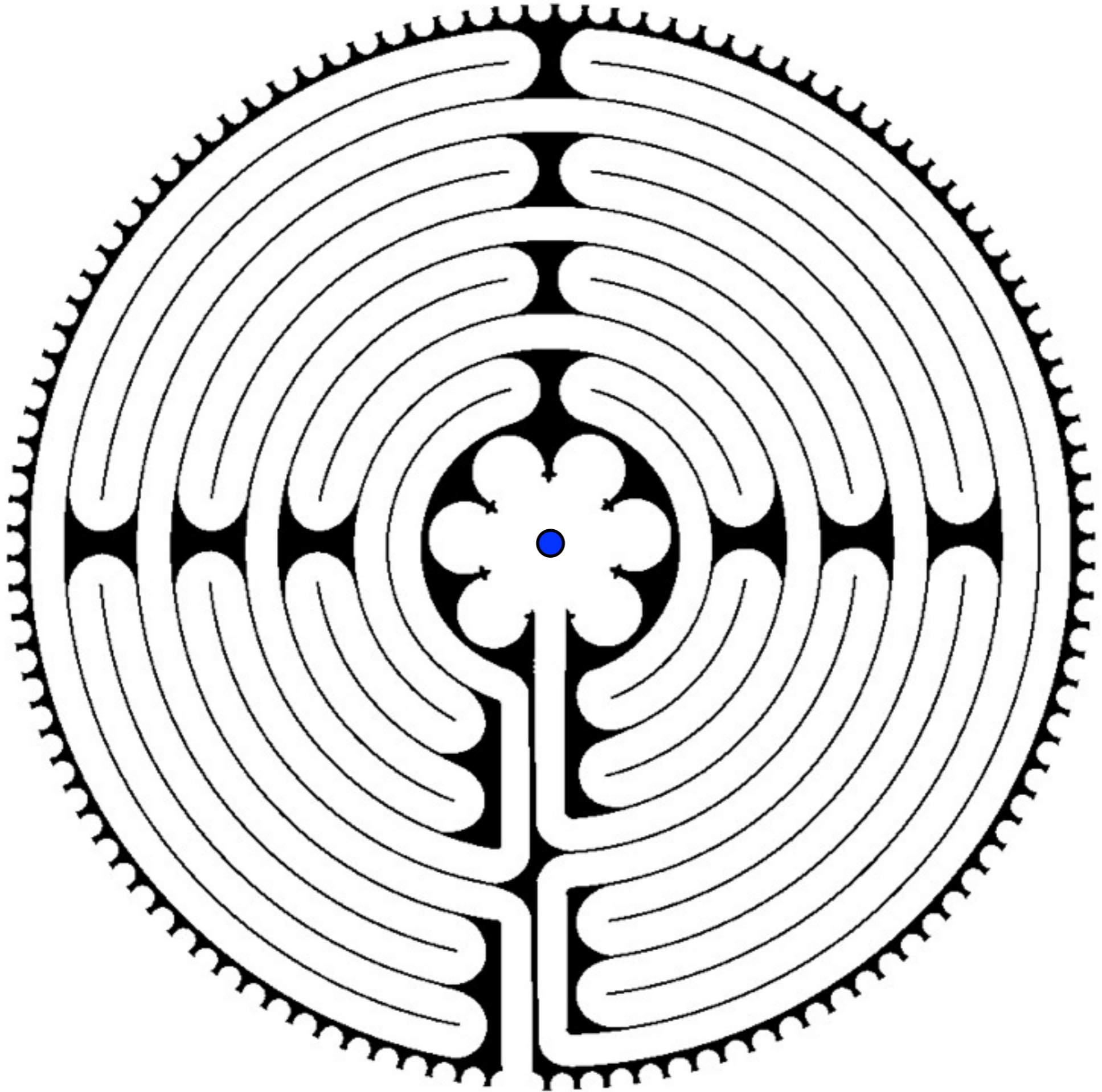
Seed pattern and 7 circuit labyrinth

**Circular Labyrinth
Chartres, France**
Drawn by Robert Ferré
labyrinth-enterprises.com



**Octagonal
Labyrinth
St. Quentin, France**
©Cindy Pavlinac
sacred-land-photography.com





Savoring the center...



**Finger labyrinth prayer.
Theological student
Kampala, Uganda**













HEALING...

mental shifts

reconciliation

restoration

physical cures

feeling
forgiven

emotional release

reduction of anxiety

spiritual connection

feeling whole

peacefulness





“When I started walking the labyrinth, I felt lifted up and carried. I had never felt this before. Even though I was worried about my weak heart, my blood pressure remained normal-- even in the 90 degree heat. I don't know what to think.”

Retired Chief Anesthesiologist, Yangon Hospital

Mental Freedom & Healing



**“This was the first time
my mind had been free of distractions
in two or three years.”
Seminary professor**



Emotional shifts were experienced as these Chin women used the labyrinth. Many reported, "I came feeling burdened and now I feel great joy!"



Emotional Healing
“I was released from stress bondage.”
Participant, Pastors’ Leadership Workshop

Spiritual Healing



When the Peace Studies Centers offered a labyrinth retreat, a senior member of the seminary administration spoke openly of seeking God's forgiveness, of asking for another chance.



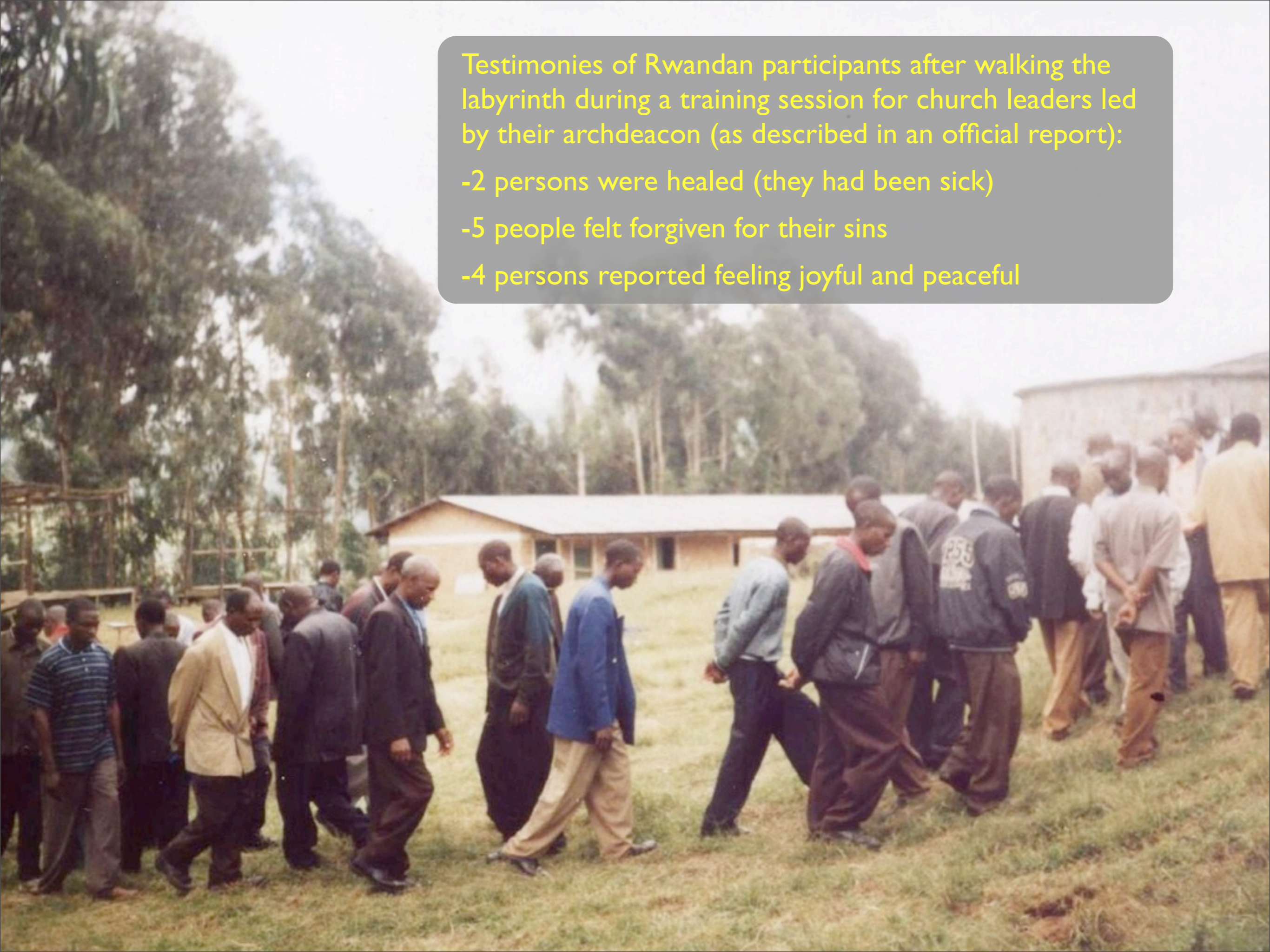
“In the labyrinth, I was able to lay my sense of despair about what is happening in our country down.”

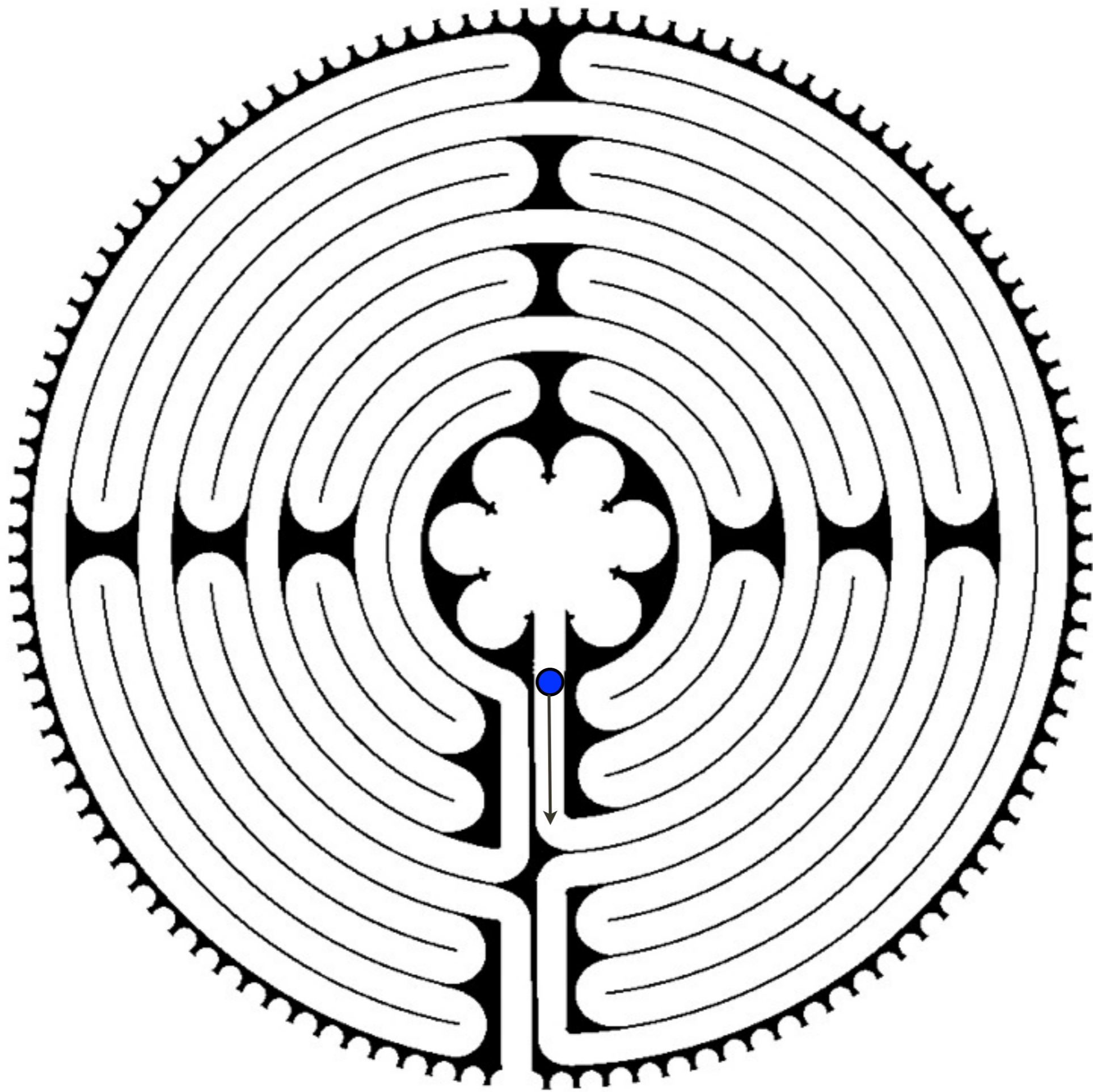
Testimonies of Rwandan participants after walking the labyrinth during a training session for church leaders led by their archdeacon (as described in an official report):

-2 persons were healed (they had been sick)

-5 people felt forgiven for their sins

-4 persons reported feeling joyful and peaceful





Returning from the center..

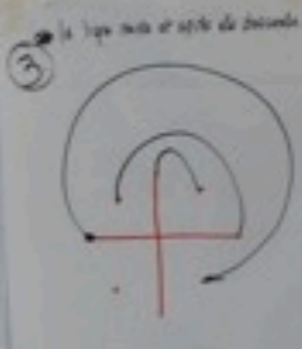
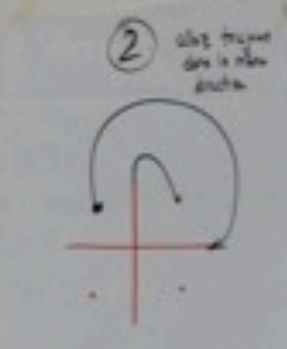
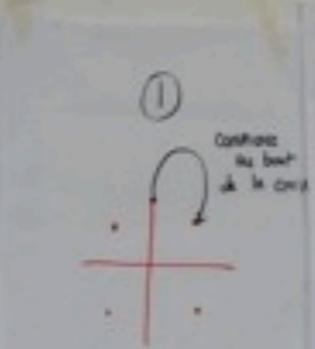
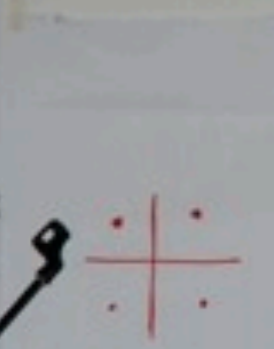


**When people find a labyrinth helpful,
they want introduce others to it,
or to build one for them.**



One morning I greeted several pastors who were out by the labyrinth drawing a sketch of it. They asked, "How do you make this?". I began to show them. As I outlined the seed pattern and steps to follow, more and more pastors gathered around. That's when I realized I needed to teach everyone how to draw (and hopefully build) a labyrinth. Many thanked me afterwards, promising to send word when they had built a labyrinth in their community.

ACTES de la semaine
3
[La Croissance]
9
commencer les feuilles
la prière
la lecture de la Bible
explorer le terrain en forêt
distribuer les objets
de l'Église. Retraite.



Alors, je me suis dit...
1. Je commence par un cercle de prière
2. Je commence par un cercle de prière
3. Je commence par un cercle de prière
4. Je commence par un cercle de prière
5. Je commence par un cercle de prière
6. Je commence par un cercle de prière
7. Je commence par un cercle de prière
8. Je commence par un cercle de prière
9. Je commence par un cercle de prière
10. Je commence par un cercle de prière

Les 1
1. Méditation
2. Prière
3. Lecture de la Bible
4. Prière
5. Lecture de la Bible
6. Prière
7. Lecture de la Bible
8. Prière
9. Lecture de la Bible
10. Prière



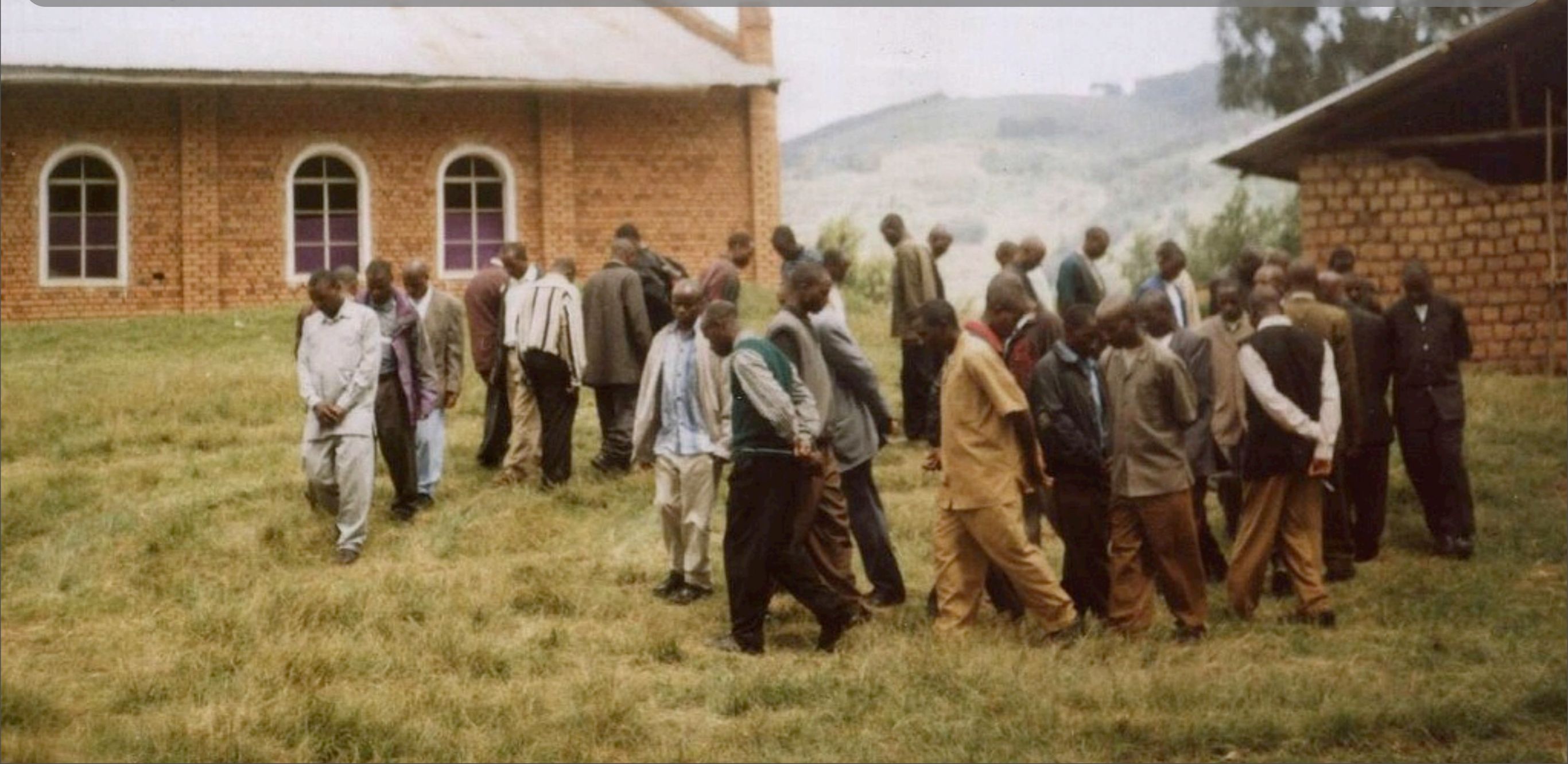




Teaching labyrinth construction by building a labyrinth together



“Here is our good news. Our labyrinth is already finished! The rains caused the bricks to be delivered late, but we started on January 18, 2010. It was difficult to lay out the ropes. After that, we dug the bricks into the ground. Next, the bricks fell apart (they weren’t made correctly). My wife and I decided to sell our goats so that we could buy more bricks, and pay for them. Now, we are teaching our choirs how to pray the labyrinth. They are very happy and are glorifying God. In Rwanda, our parish is the first to have a labyrinth. Tell us about other labyrinths in Africa. Personally, I am very happy to be a part of the history of the labyrinth.” The Rev. Jean-Damascène Nsabimana (Rwandan mountains)



Activities

Women for Peace Workshop: Domestic Violence January 20-22, 2010



Women for peace! With this claim, another workshop on Domestic Violence was held from January 20-22, 2010 in Shan Baptist Church, Muse Township in Northern Shan State, under the funding of Mennonite Central Committee, USA. Although two resource persons were expected, only Rev. Dr. Maung Maung Yin, Vice-principal and Professor of Christian Ethics of MIT, could make it there.



Walking prayer in the Labyrinth

Essentially, topics on issues related to family violence and roles of the church were tackled progressively within three days under the resource person's facilitation. Methodology accompanied with inductive Bible study also made the workshop more dynamic and multidimensional from Christian perspectives in regard to addressing family violence. The workshop was attended by 31 participants from different nationalities and Christian denominations. ☺

Human progress
is neither automatic nor
inevitable...
Every step
toward the goal of justice
requires sacrifice,
suffering,
and struggle;
the tireless exertions
and passionate concern
of dedicated individuals.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Shan State, Muse Township
Myanmar



“Here are some photos of the temporary labyrinth that we constructed here at the Dina Orphanage for street girls. The students like it.

Freddy Byemba et Birhange Matthiass
Goma, D. R. Congo



“Thank you to visit one day!”



Lushoho Village, Kalehe Territory, D. R. Congo
Community Development & Fertilizer Labyrinth

© Yehuda G. 2017



FHLGGM + SOMA
TO EMPOWER D.R CONGO
WALK WITH

Teacher with AIDS orphans
rural North Kiva,
D. R. Congo

Chin Hills Pentecostal Church



Northern, Myanmar "Black Zone"



Catholic Church Labyrinth



Maullum, Myanmar Baptist Church



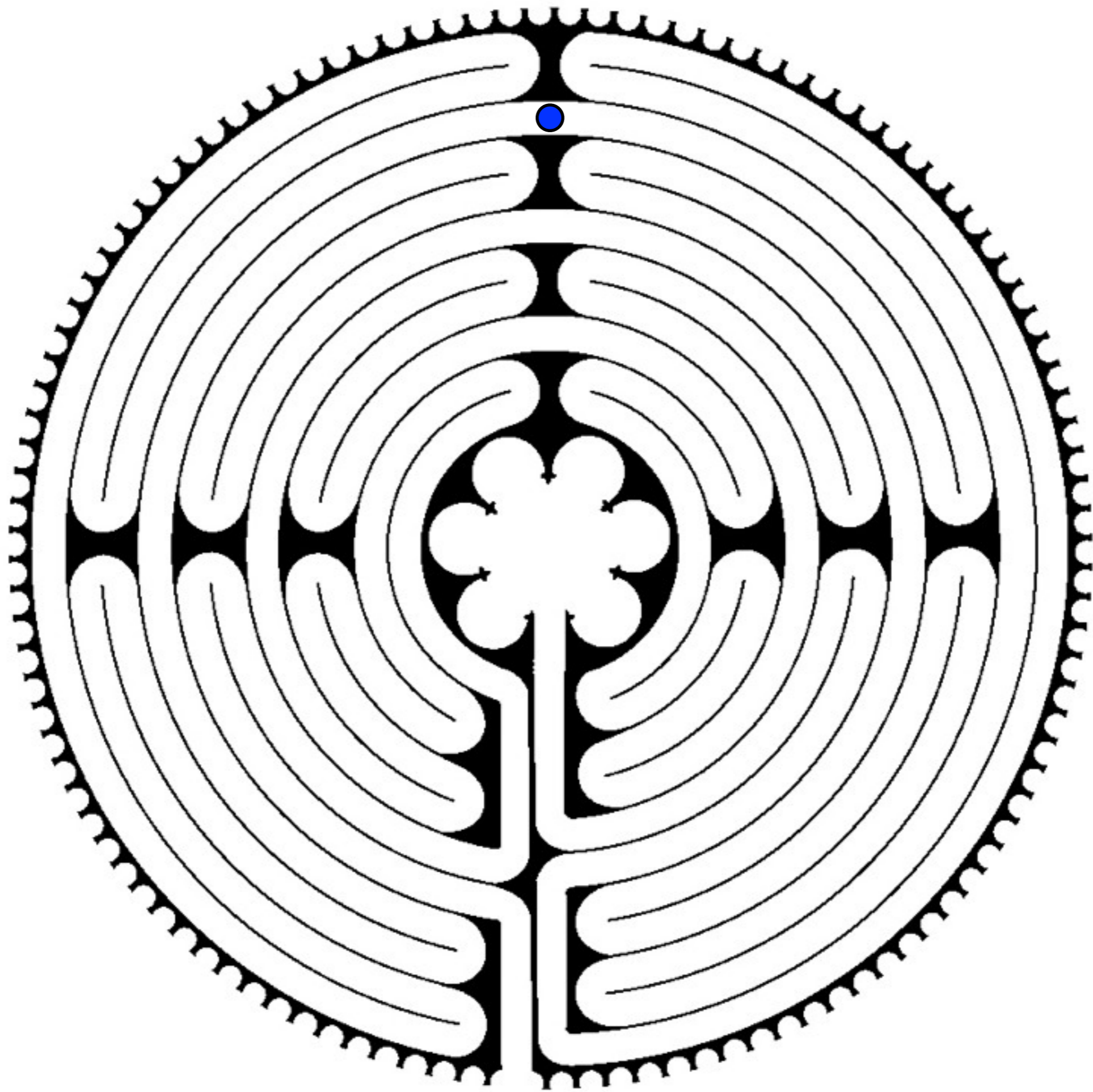


Congolese Development Training Labyrinth
Muhongoza Village, Kalehe Territory, D. R. Congo





Widow's sewing class D. R. Congo



Stopping to catch our breath...
a break from suffering!



















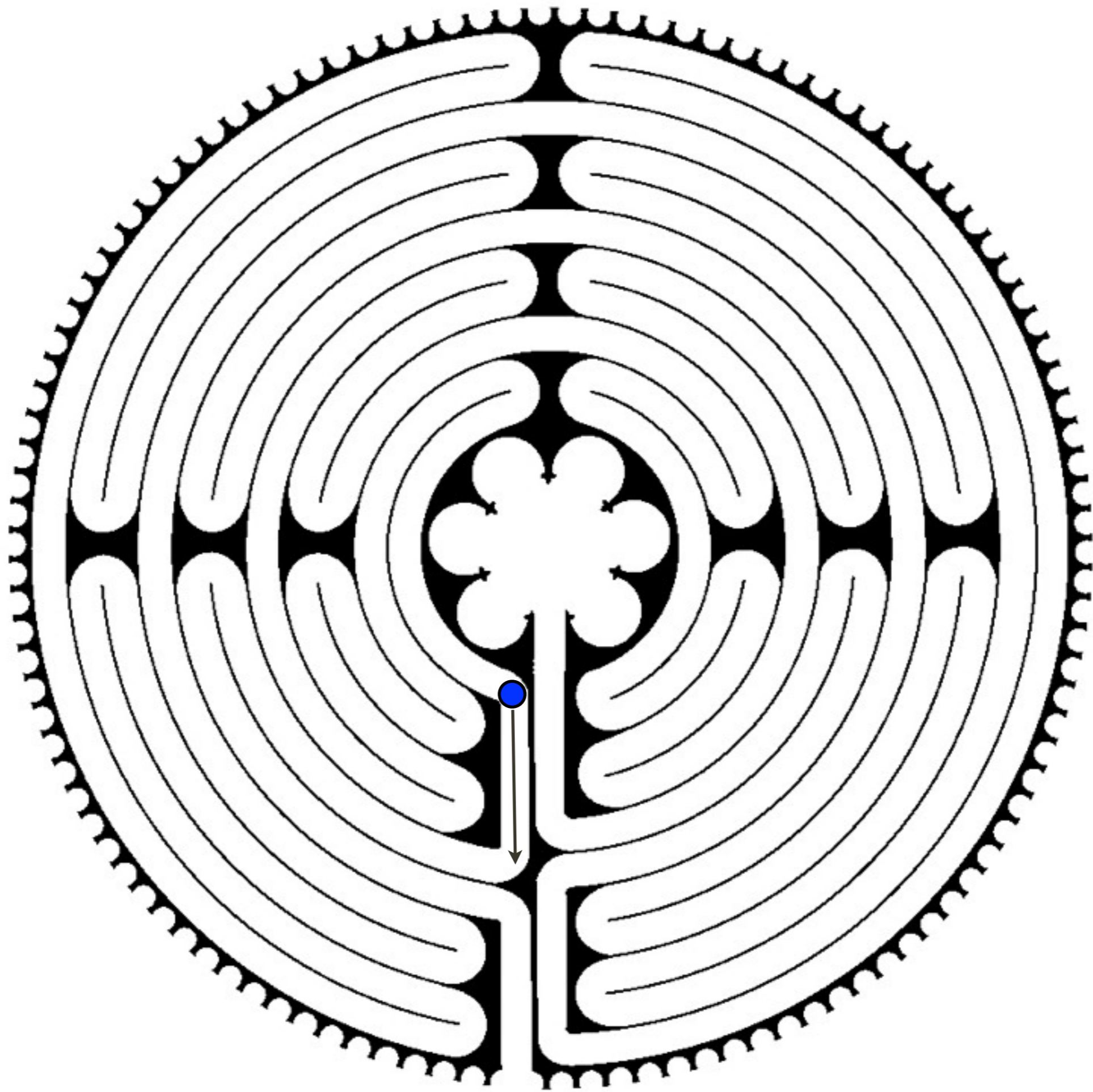






Snow and ice labyrinth (shoveled on a frozen lake) Wayzata, Minnesota (USA)





ALL SING

I've got peace like a river,
I've got peace like a river,
I've got peace like a river in my soul.

I've got peace like a river,
I've got peace like a river,
I've got peace like a river in my soul.

(African American Spiritual)

Followed by
One minute of silence.

**Pause. Take a breath.
Listen with your heart.**



In their own words





Rev. Bizimana
Mulera Gaston









“In the center of the labyrinth I was joyous and prayed, thanking God. It felt like I had joyously arrived right on the top of the mountain and had come into God’s presence.”

**London,
organizer of
FHLGM teaching
Bukavu, D. R.
Congo**







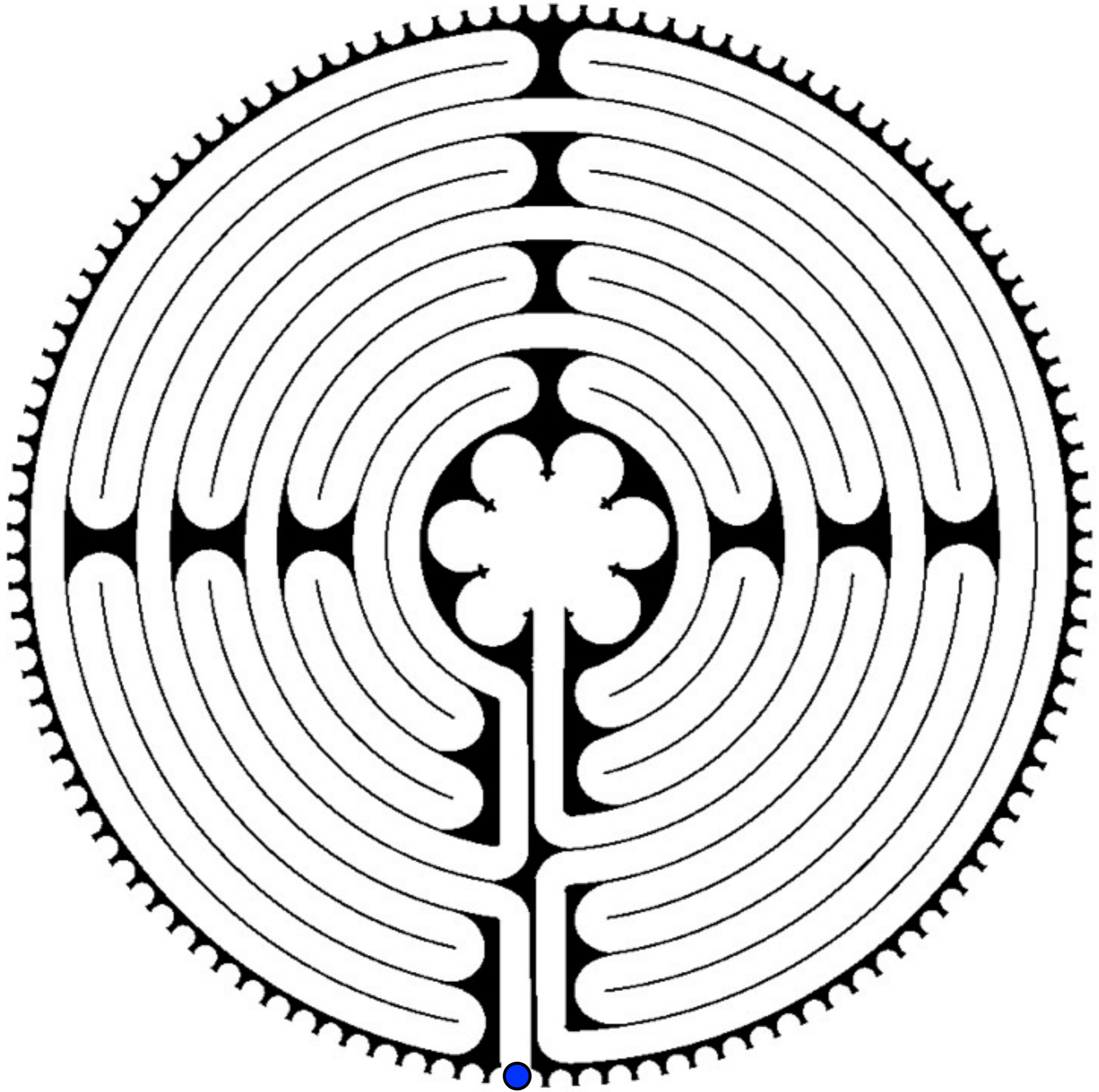






Chaplain from HEAL Africa





Pausing Before We Leave...



You can hold yourself back from the sufferings of the world...
but perhaps this very holding back is the one suffering you could avoid.

Franz Kafka



Patmos Island Labyrinth, Greece

What suffering
troubles YOU?

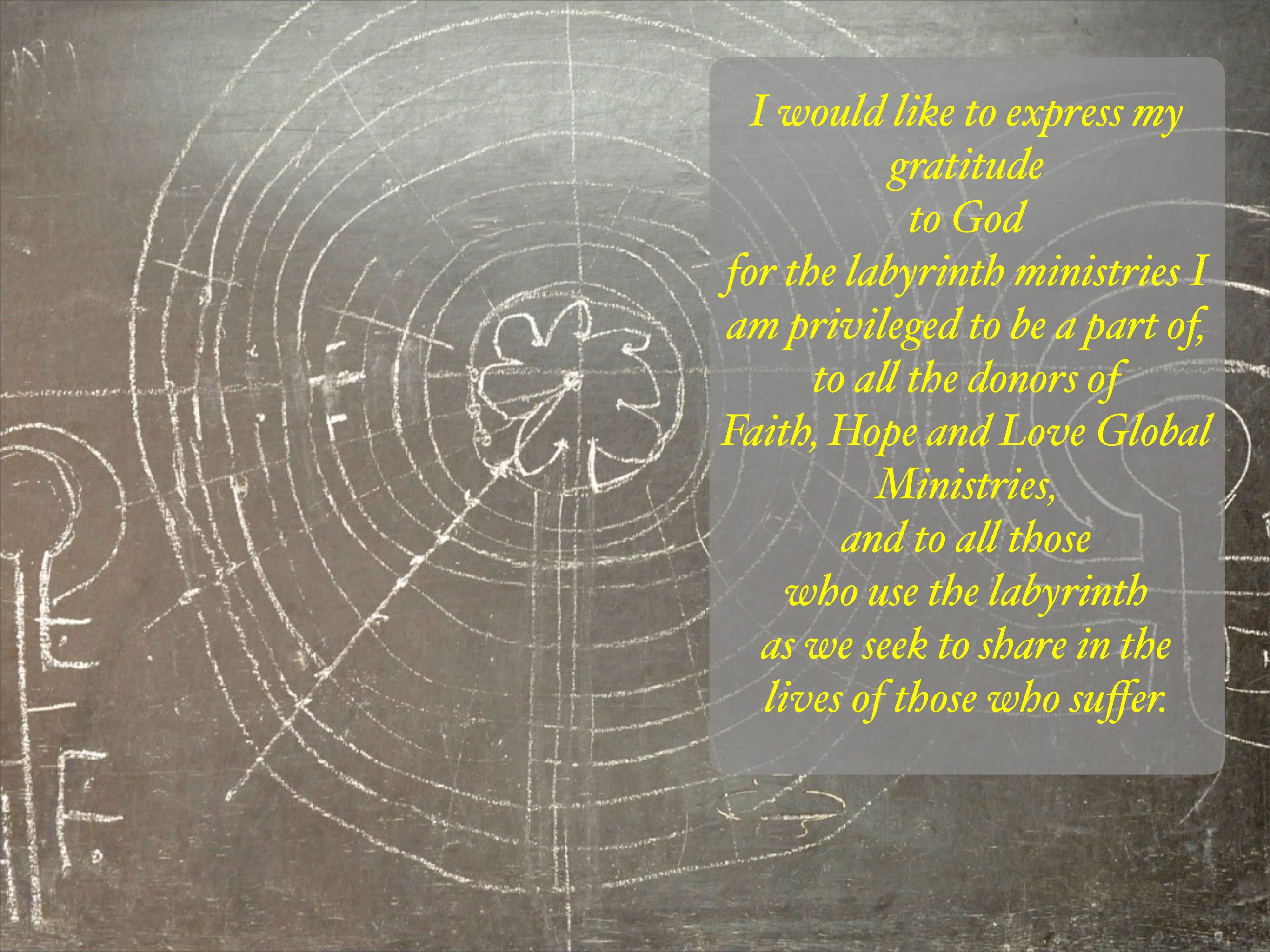
Could labyrinths be
of service?



Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, California (USA)

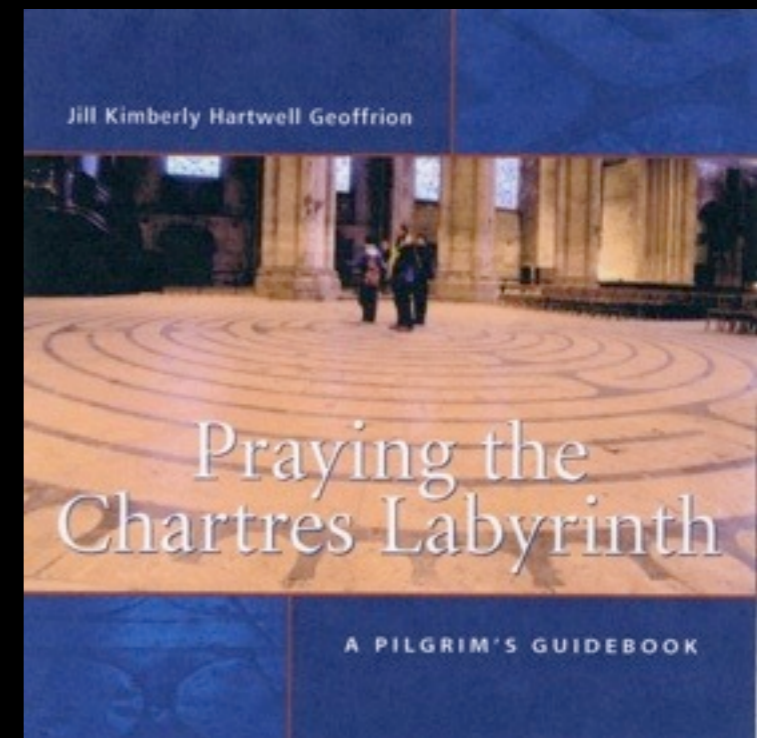
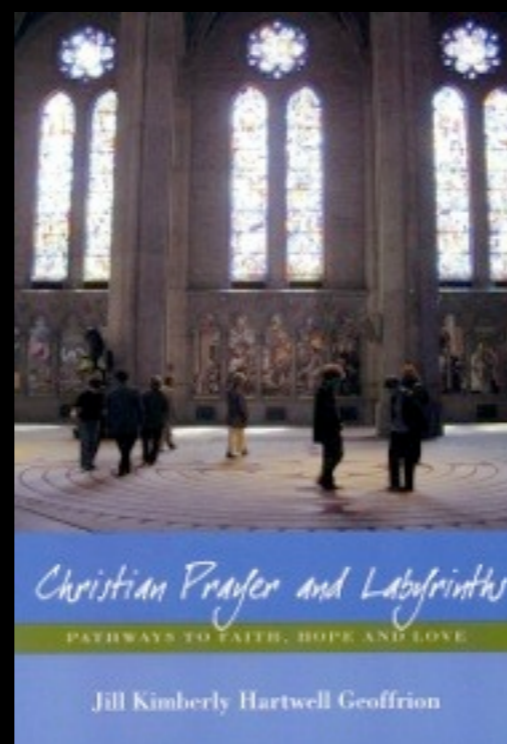
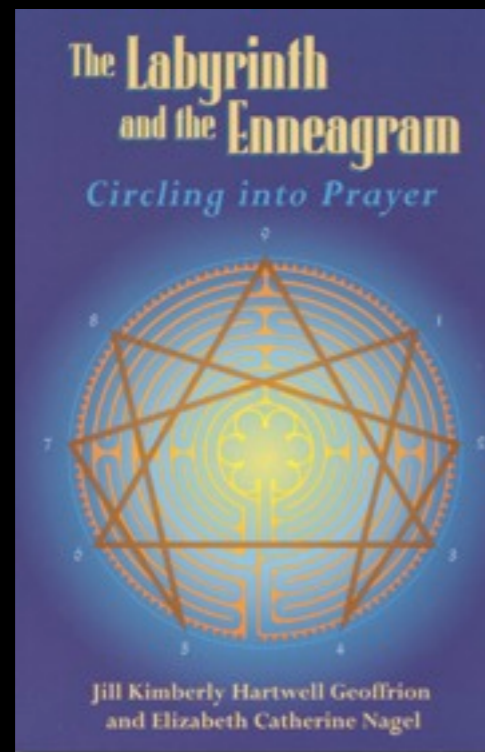
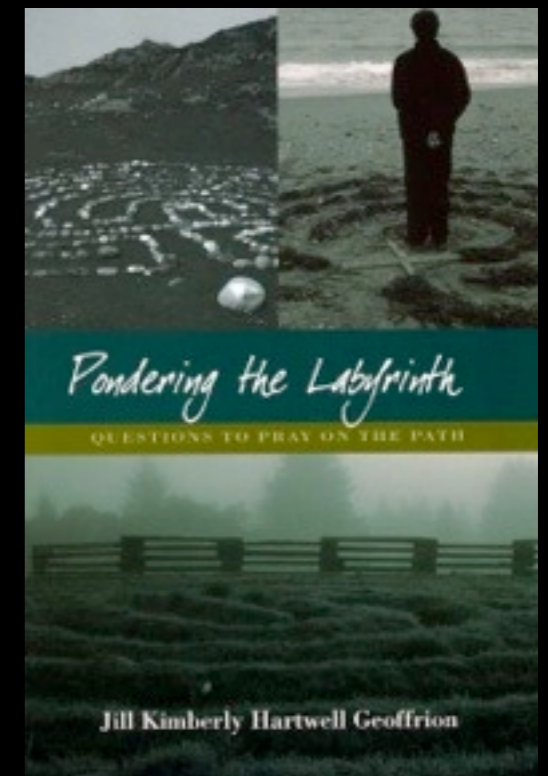
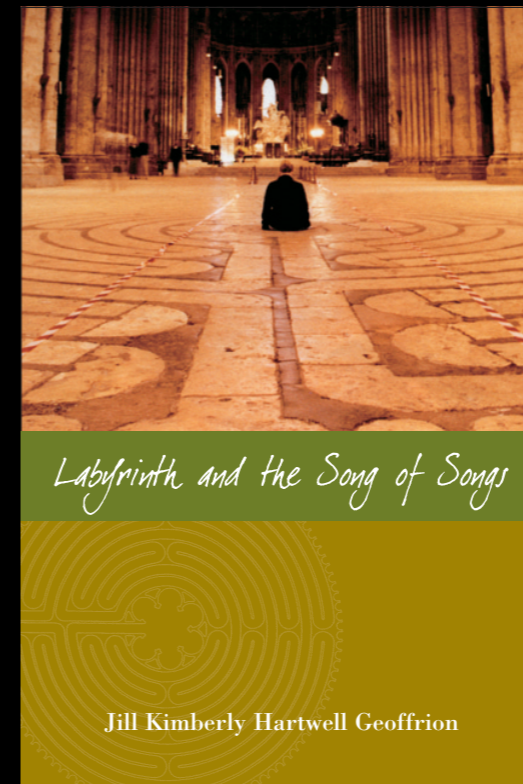
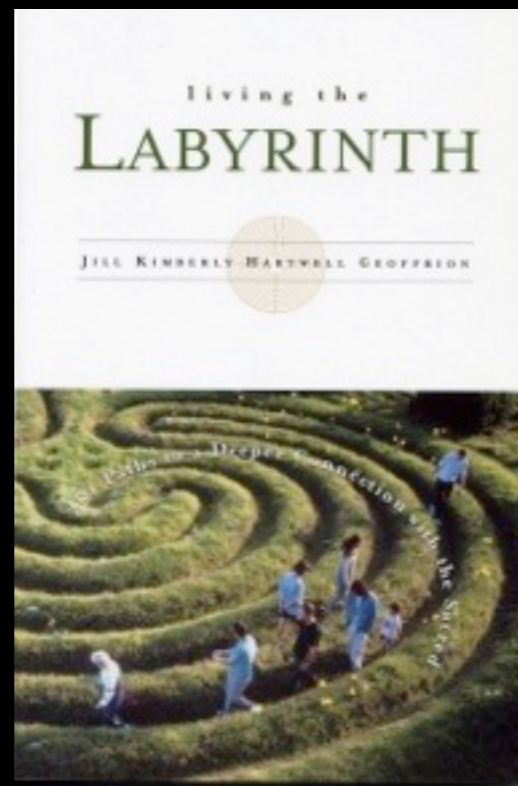
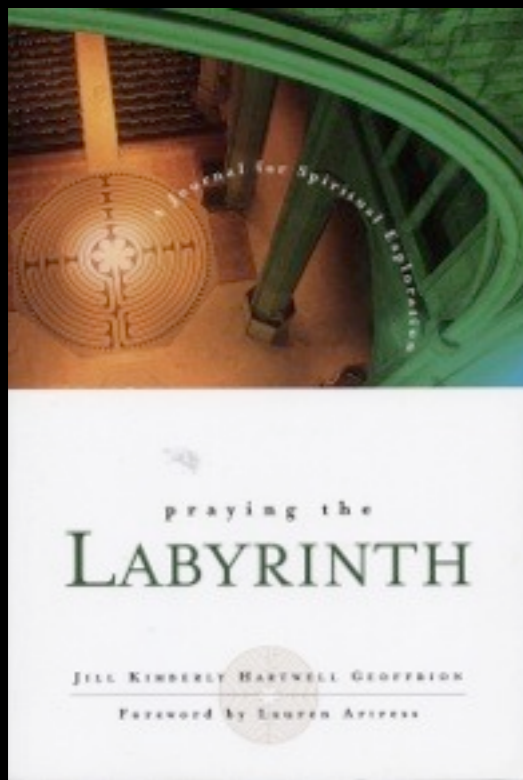
What is your next step?





*I would like to express my
gratitude
to God
for the labyrinth ministries I
am privileged to be a part of,
to all the donors of
Faith, Hope and Love Global
Ministries,
and to all those
who use the labyrinth
as we seek to share in the
lives of those who suffer.*

**“May my teaching fall like rain, and my words, distill as the dew,
like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants.” Deuteronomy 32:2**



Books by Jill on labyrinth prayer

A woman with short grey hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and a blue patterned skirt, is kneeling on the ground outdoors. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows a concrete path, a fence, and trees.

Feel free to
contact Jill

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Faith, Hope and Love
Global Ministries

www.fhlglobal.org

(You can sign up for monthly
e-newsletter updates at the
bottom of our home page.)

Labyrinth prayer & resources

www.jillgeofrrion.com

Travel & Photo Blog:

jillgeoffrion.wordpress.com