

Labyrinth Prayer: Session 2

Theological Implications and Biblical Touchstones

Myanmar Institute of Theology Yangon, Myanmar 2013



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In the Lord I'll be ever grateful, In the Lord I will rejoice.
Look to God, do not be afraid. Lift your voices, the Lord is near.
Lift your voices, the Lord is near.

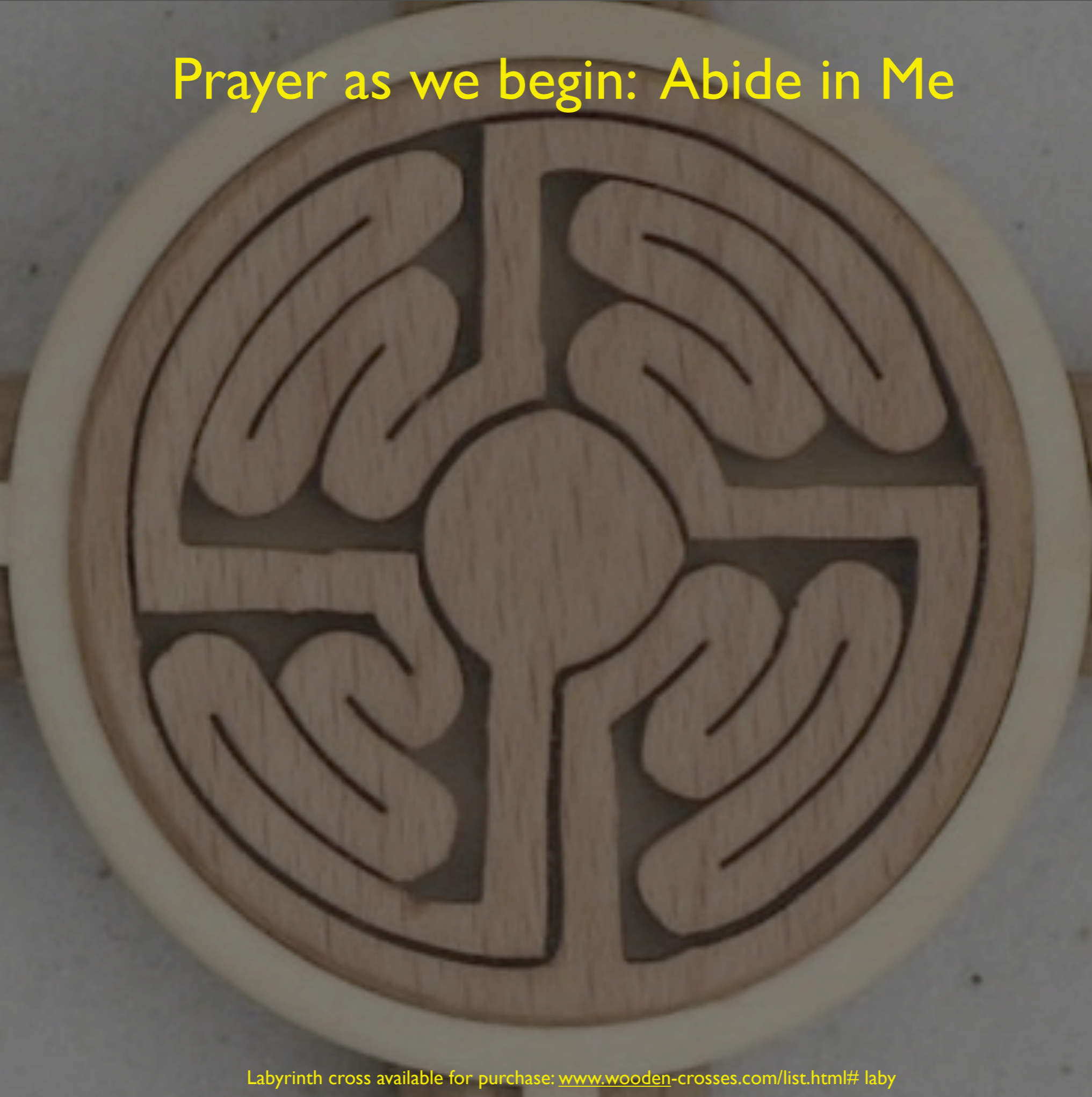
(Taizé chant)



“With a hammer, we can build a house. The hammer is important and extremely helpful, but the objective is the house. The same is true with the labyrinth. We should not confuse the tool with the purpose. **Our goal is not a labyrinth experience, but a [prayer] experience.** The labyrinth has shown itself to be a very efficient spiritual aid. Ultimately, of course, the result depends on the user and not the tool.”

Robert Ferré, 12 Reasons To Have A Church Labyrinth.

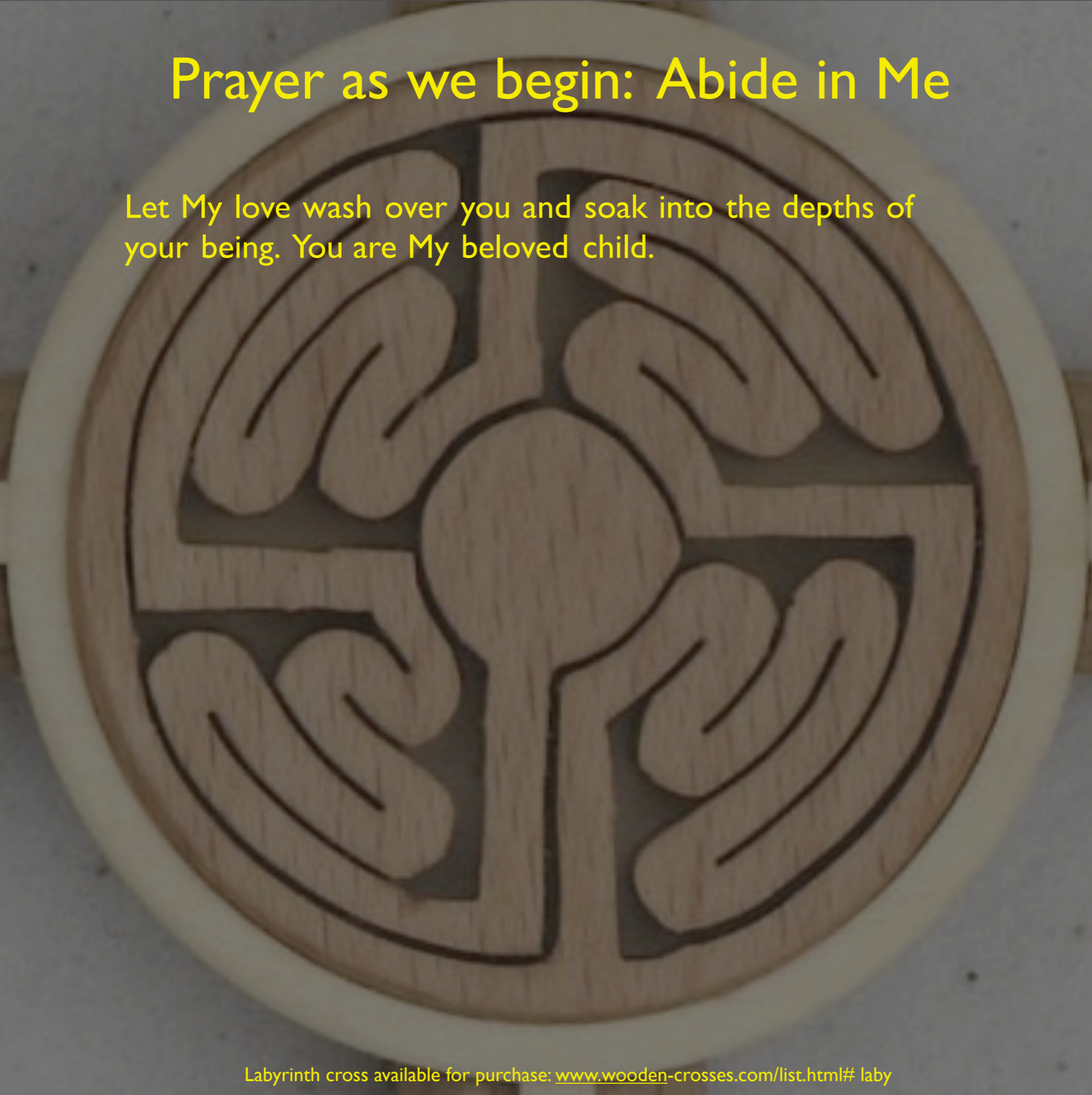
Prayer as we begin: Abide in Me



Labyrinth cross available for purchase: www.wooden-crosses.com/list.html#laby

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Let My love wash over you and soak into the depths of your being. You are My beloved child.



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Feel the light of My presence shining upon you. Open your heart and your mind to receive My love. Come, let Me fill you with My loving presence. My peace I give to you. Be still.

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I am with you always. I am Your Shepherd.

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I am with you always. I am Your Shepherd.

I am lifting you out of darkness into My glorious light. I love you with an everlasting love.

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Are you weary? You can rest in My presence.

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I am with you encircling you with My love and light. Relax in My everlasting arms. Let all your fears melt away.

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I am your strength and your song.

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Text based on Psalm 62:1; John 14:27; Psalm 23; Matthew 11:28; Isaiah 12:2; Psalm 46:10
...compiled by Karen Knutsen Quinn, Spiritual Director kkq@comcast.net, adapted by JKHGeoffrion

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Before entering: Prepare yourself for your walk.

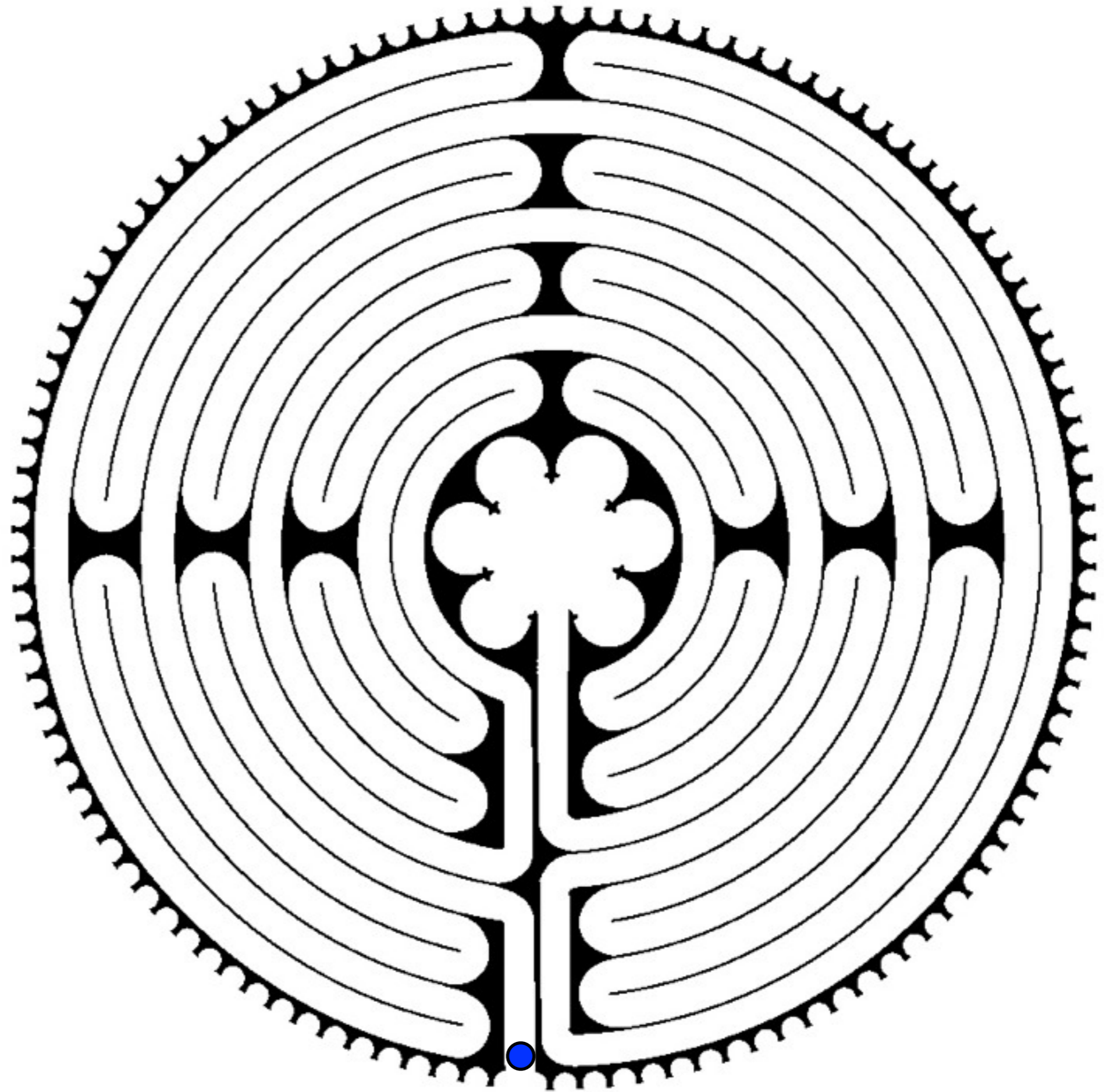


**Ask God to speak to you
as you walk.**

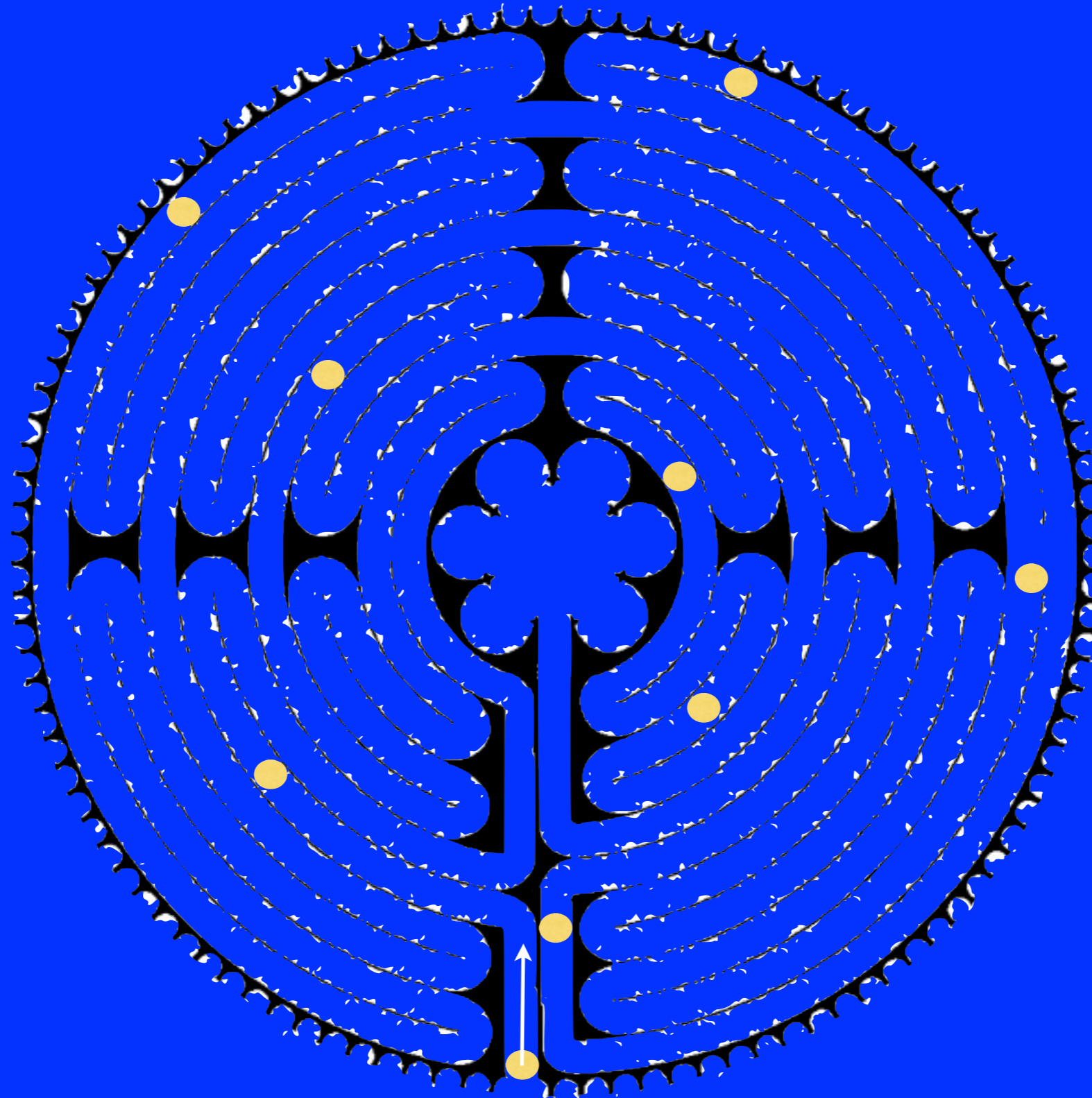
Pause. Take a breath.
Listen with your heart.



Move through
the open
door into the
labyrinth.



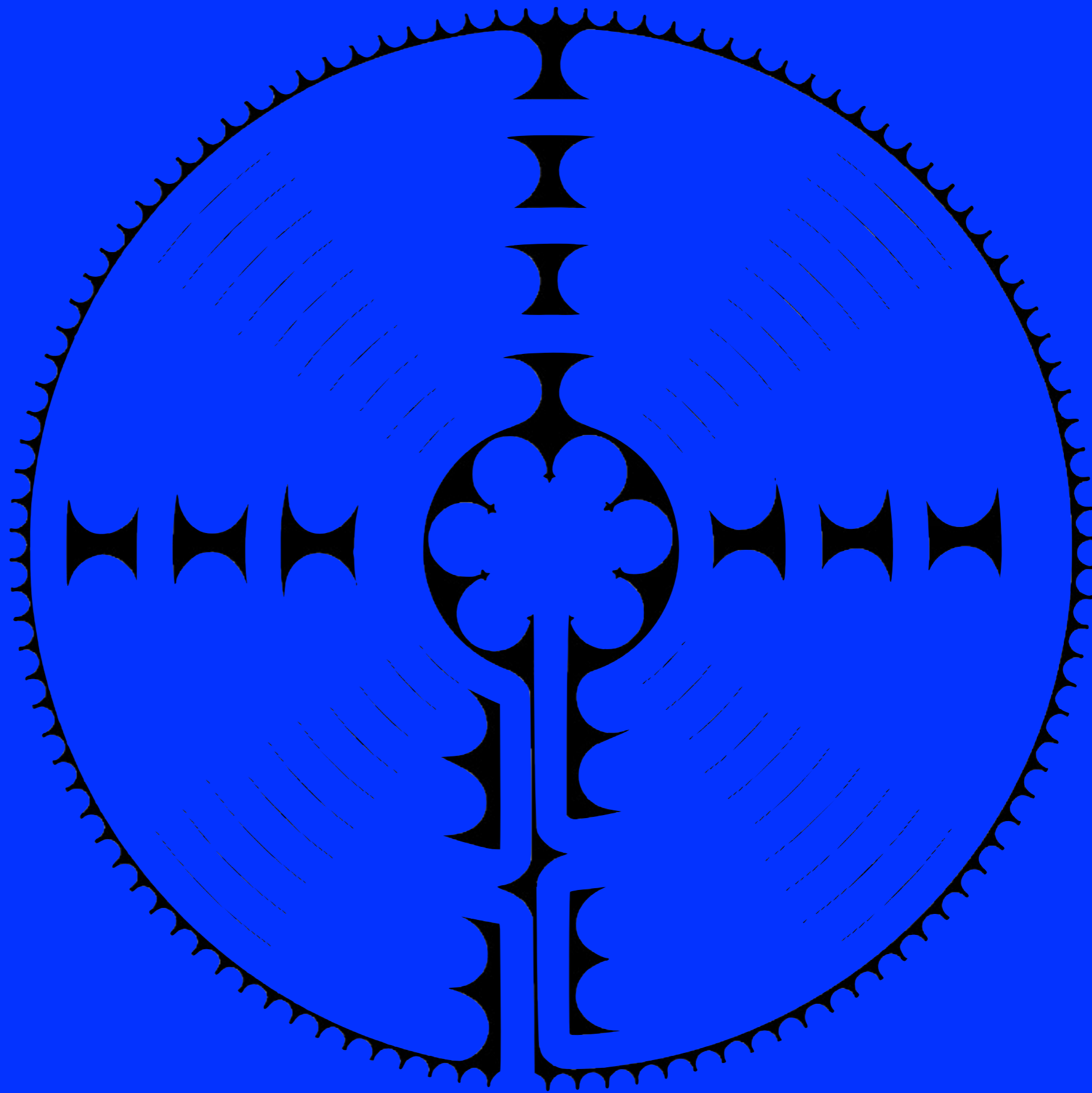
Moving Towards the Center:
(you WILL get there, but it is a journey)!



You are
being led to
the center.

You are
“walking the
cross.”

No matter
how lost or
alone you
feel, God is
with you,
guiding.



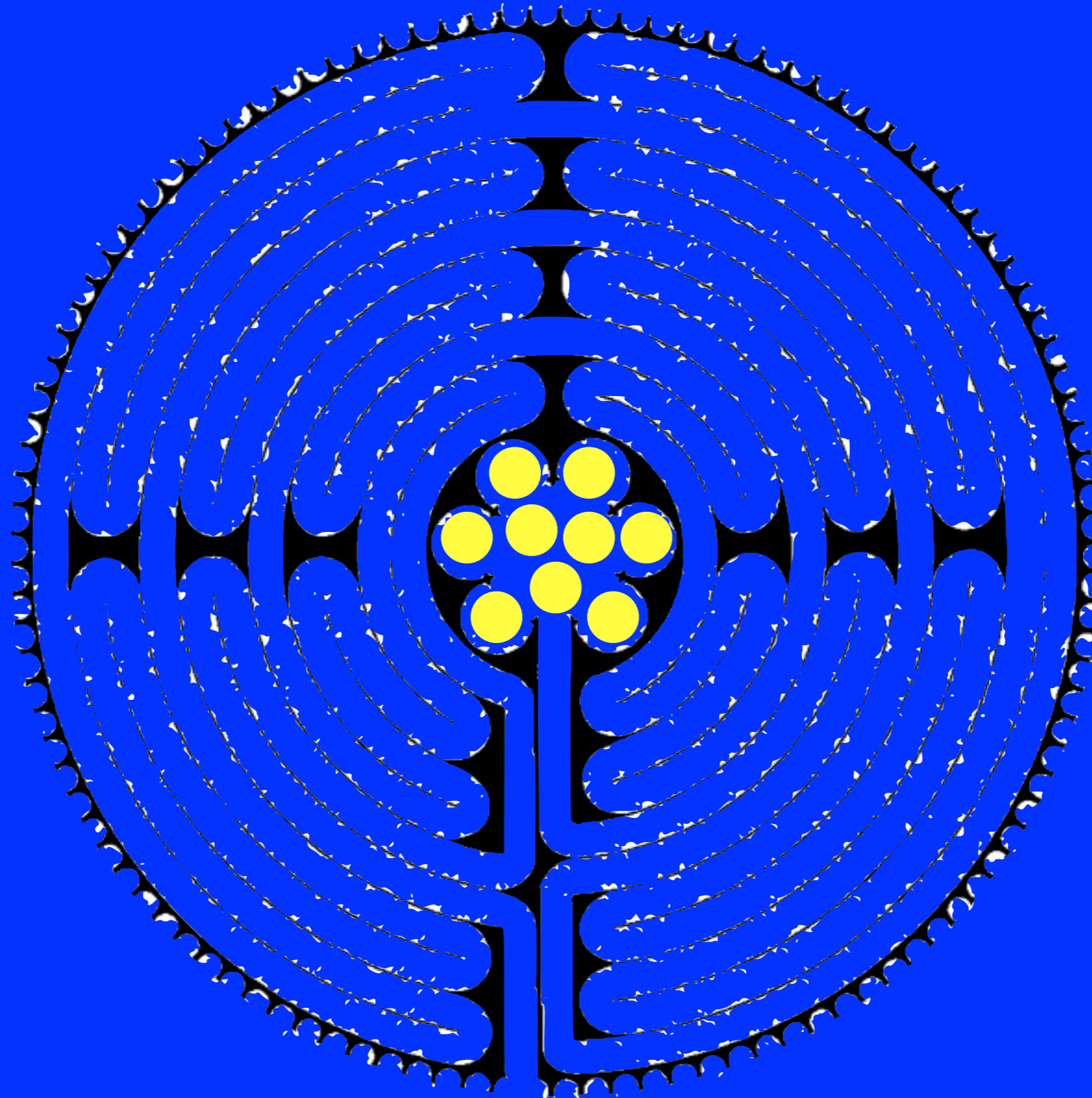
When you get to the center:

**Rest with God.
Listen.
Receive.
Offer thanks.**

**Stay in the center
as long as you would like.**



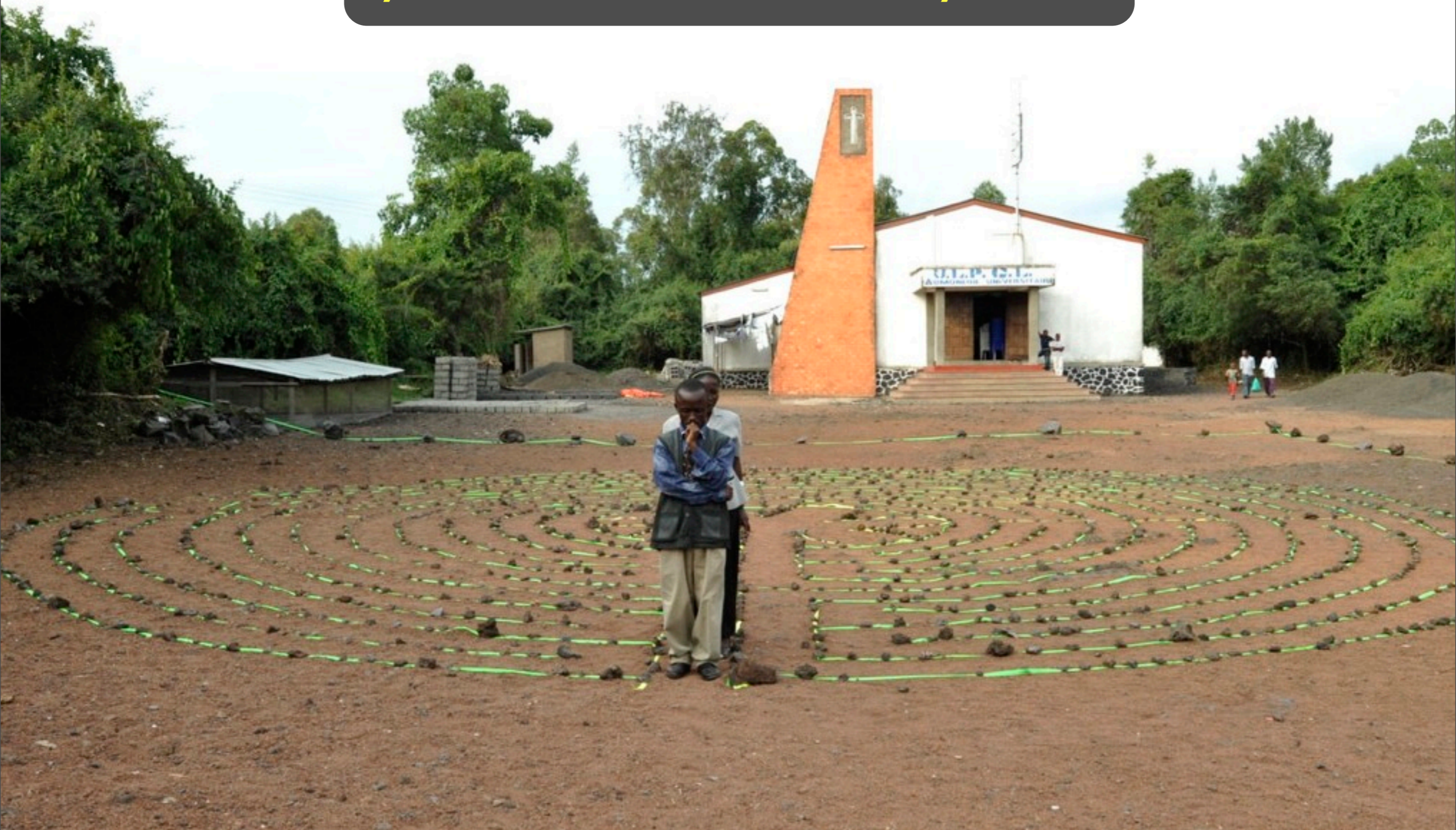
There is room in the center for many people.



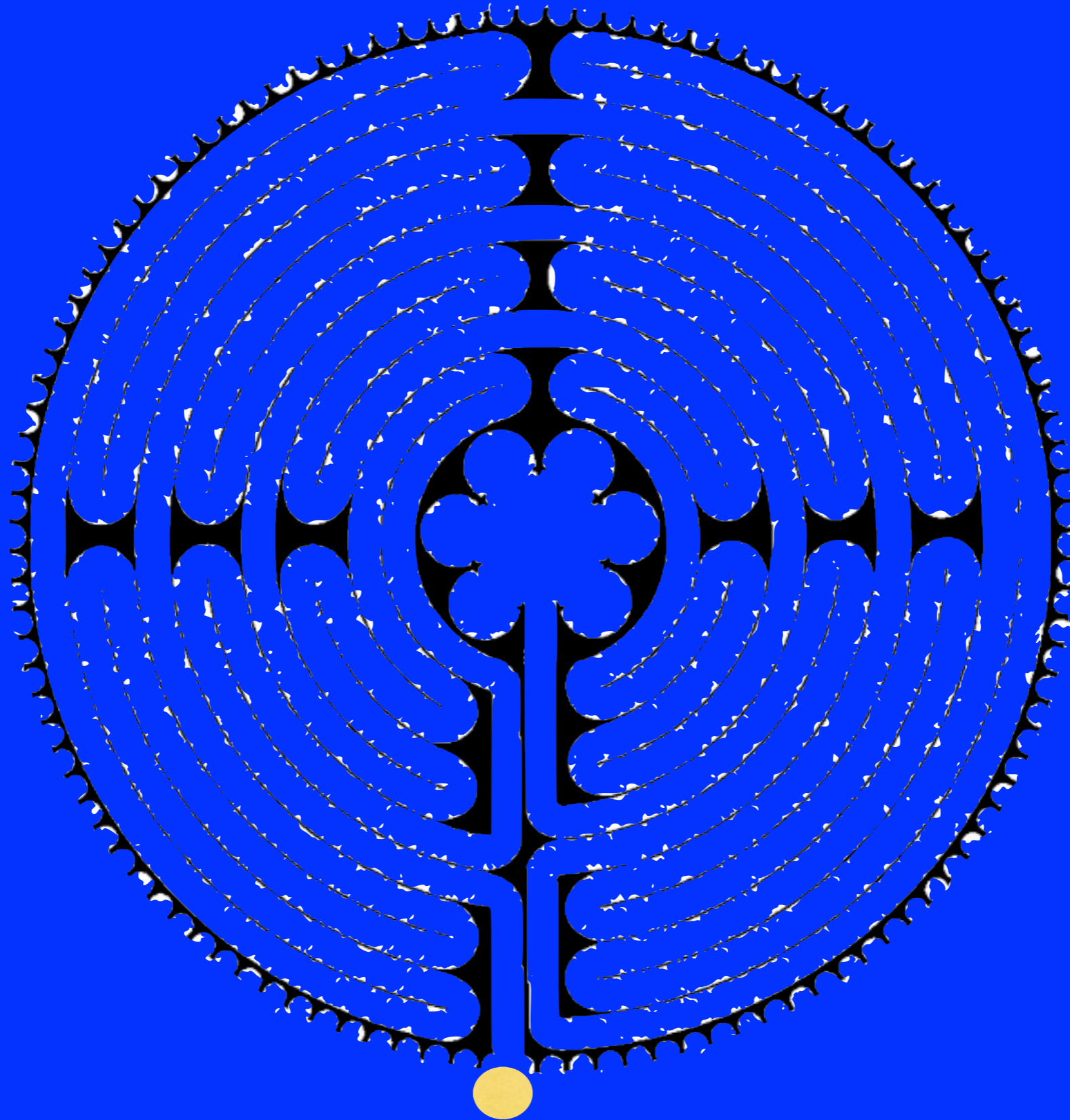


You return to the door of the labyrinth by following the pathway in the opposite direction.

Prepare yourself to leave.
Stop and thank God before
you walk out of the labyrinth.



Revisting Your Prayer Experience: make time for personal reflection.



**After you walk
the labyrinth:**

Become aware of
your feelings
and thoughts.

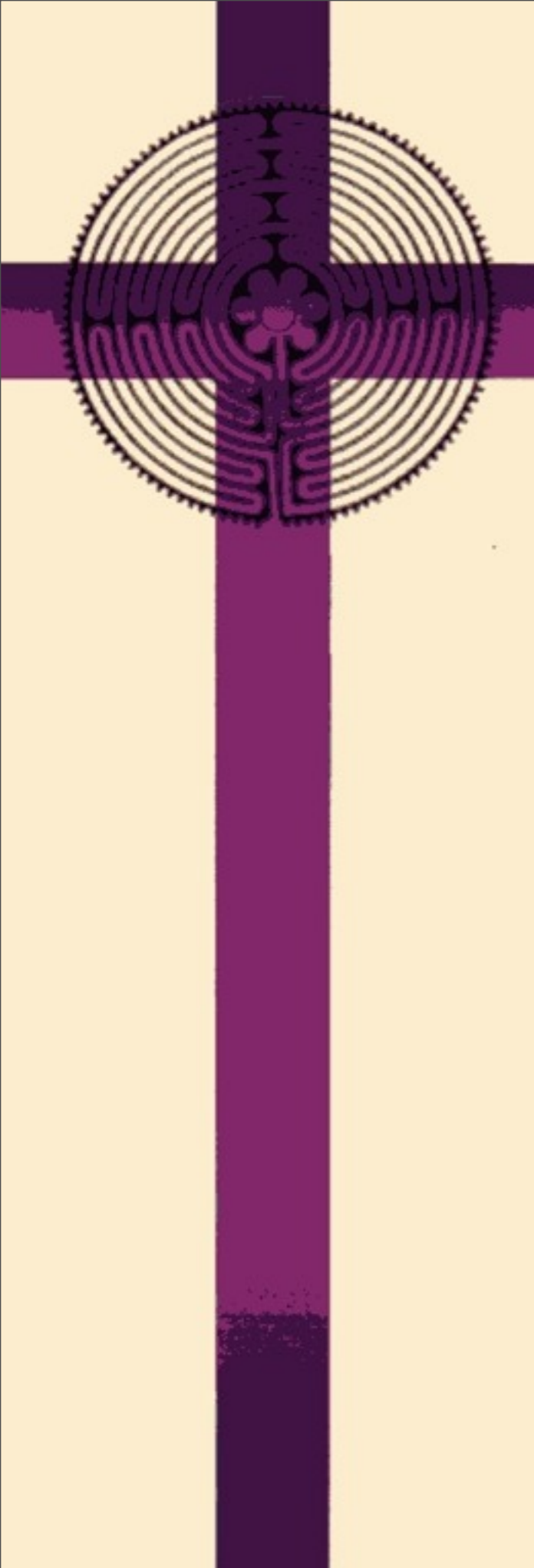
Take time to journal,
draw,
or reflect--
or continue praying
and listening.



Use your labyrinth prayer journal
to reflect on your labyrinth experience.



Image painted by Lea Goode-Harris



Labyrinth Experience: “Speak Lord, Your servant is listening.”

God may give you an image,
a word,
a song,
a Scripture,
a desire...

Listen well with your heart and mind.

Now the LORD came... calling, “Samuel! Samuel!”
And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”
1 Samuel 3:10

A Christian Biblical and Theological Understanding of Labyrinth Prayer

“Follow me...”
“I am the
way...”

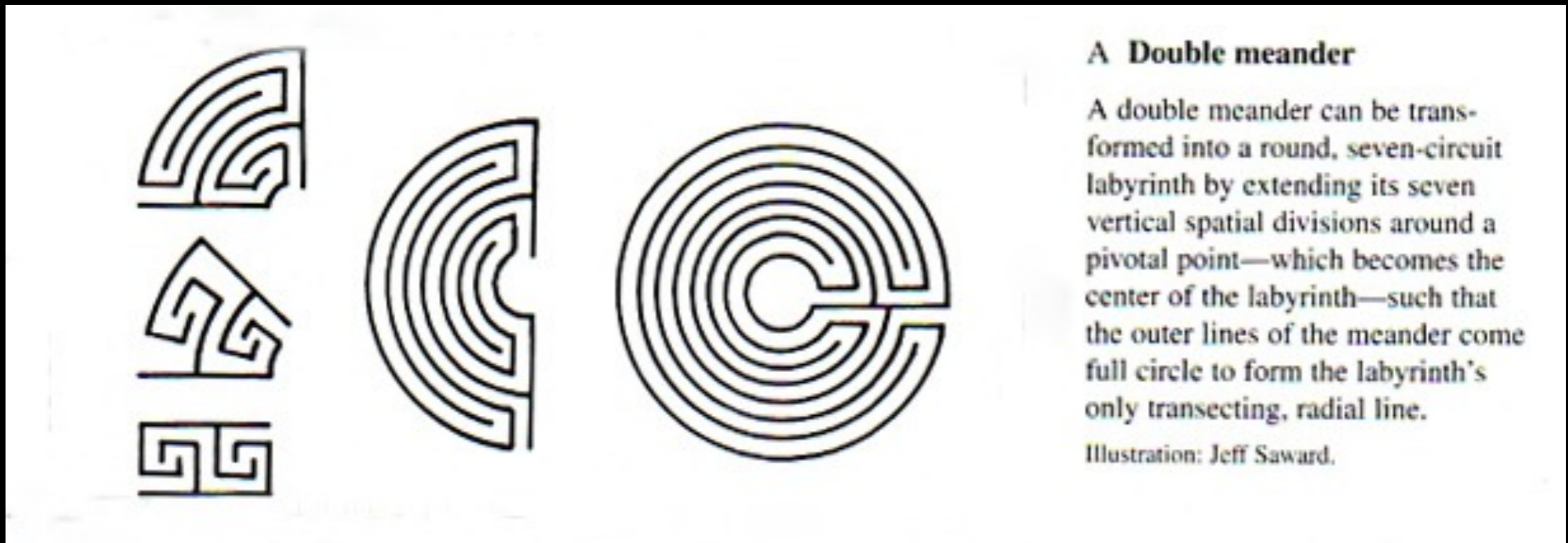


Labyrinths were in use long before the time of Jesus.

We have no record of Jesus using or referring to a labyrinth, although the decorative Greek-key pattern was well known in Palestine during Jesus' lifetime.

It can be extended to create a classical 7 circuit/8 circle labyrinth.

Geoffrion, *Christian Prayer and Labyrinths*.



From Hermann Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, p. 38



From The Labyrinth Society Webpage: <http://labyrinthociety.org/labyrinth-types/3683-meander-labyrinth-diagram-2>

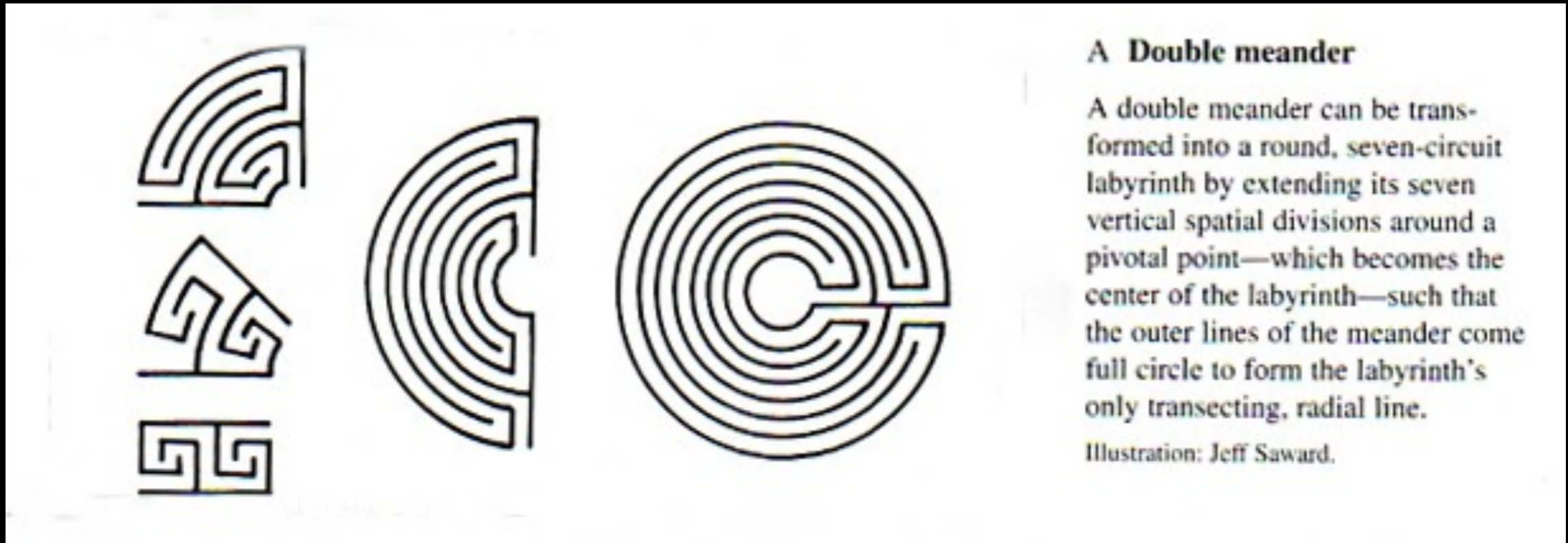


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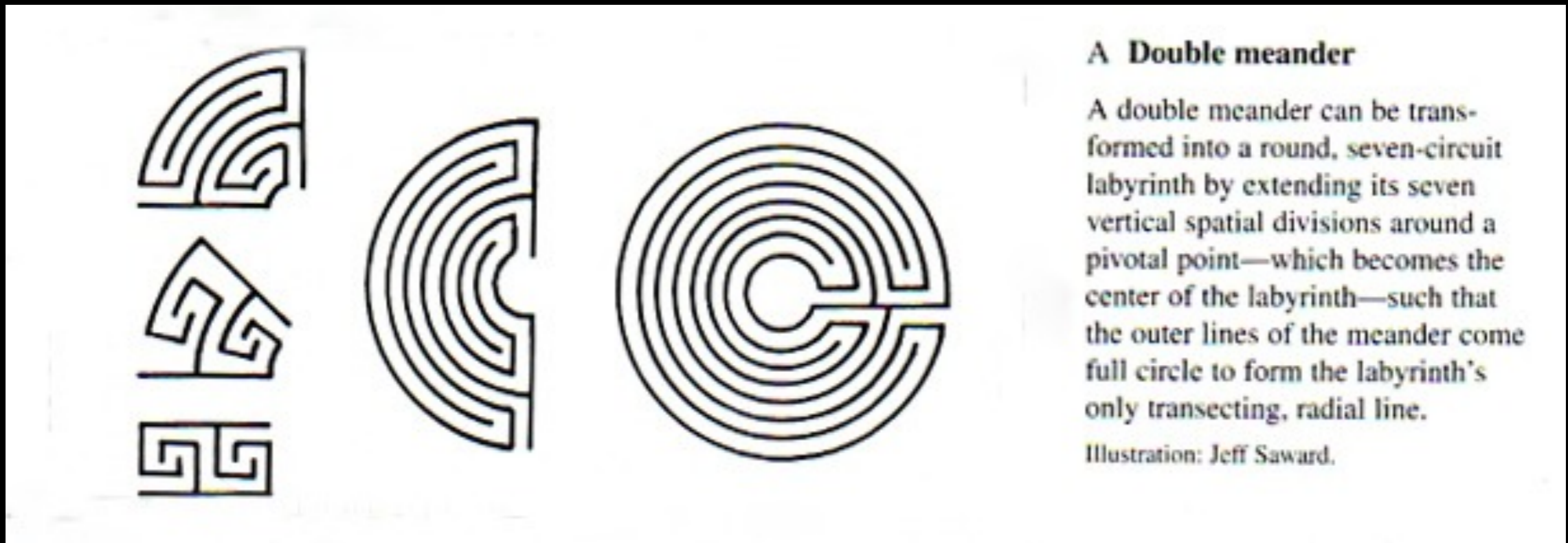


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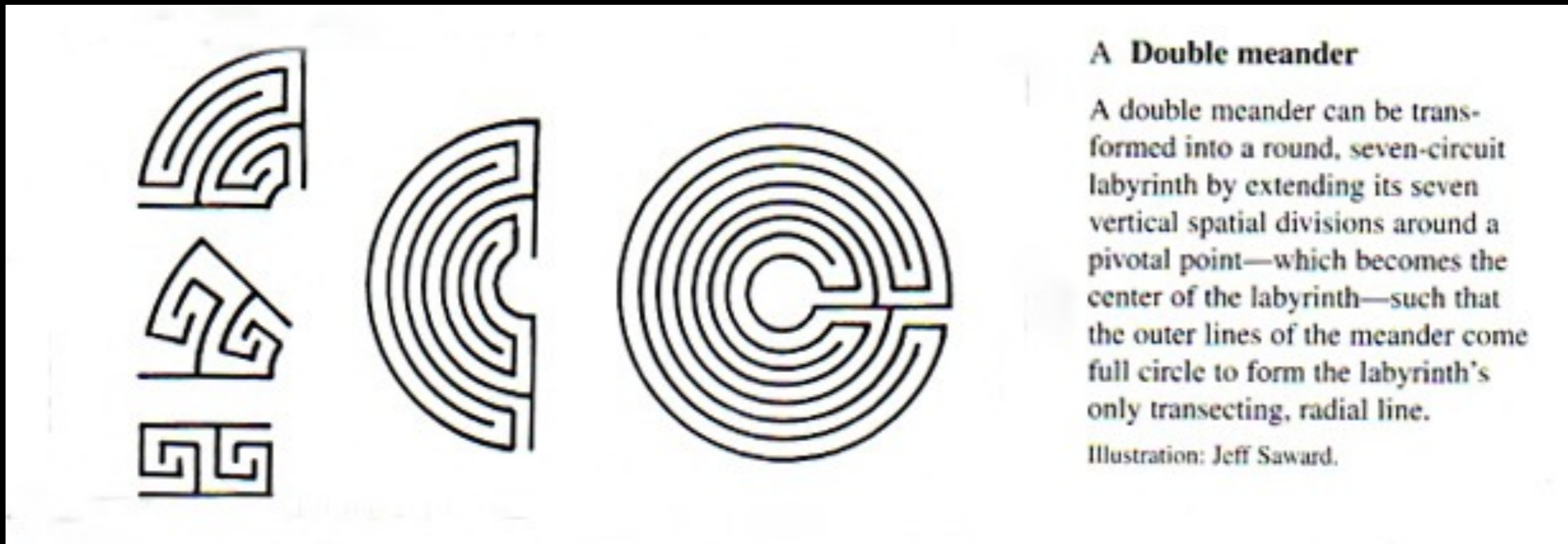


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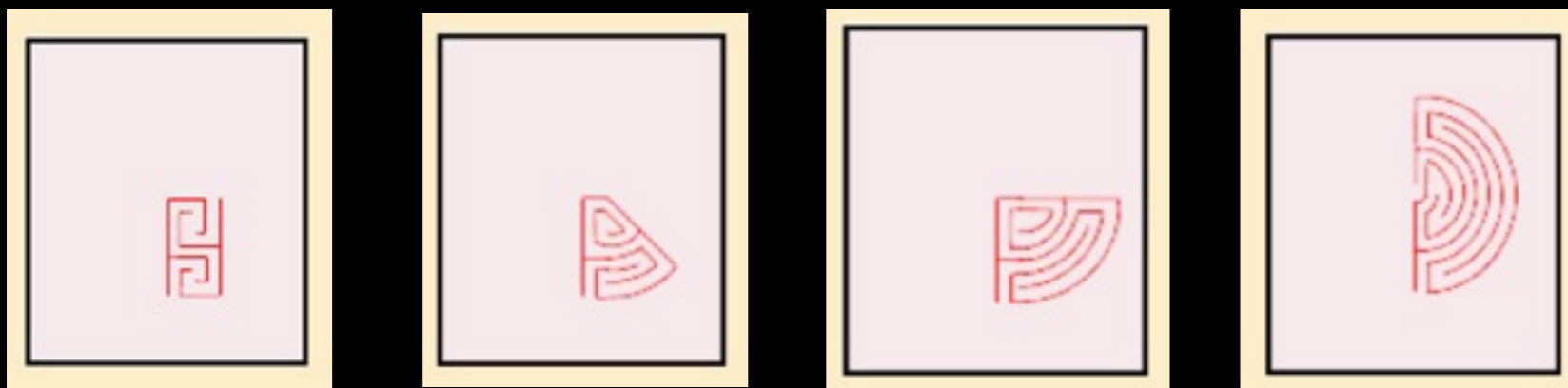
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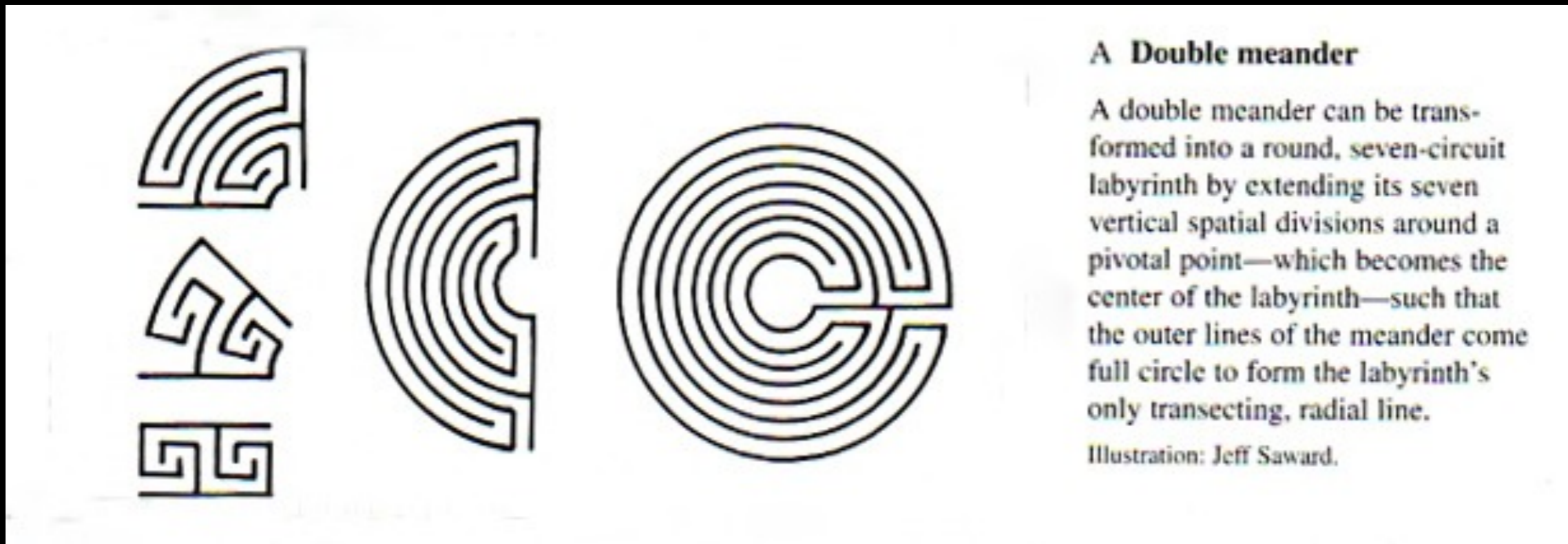


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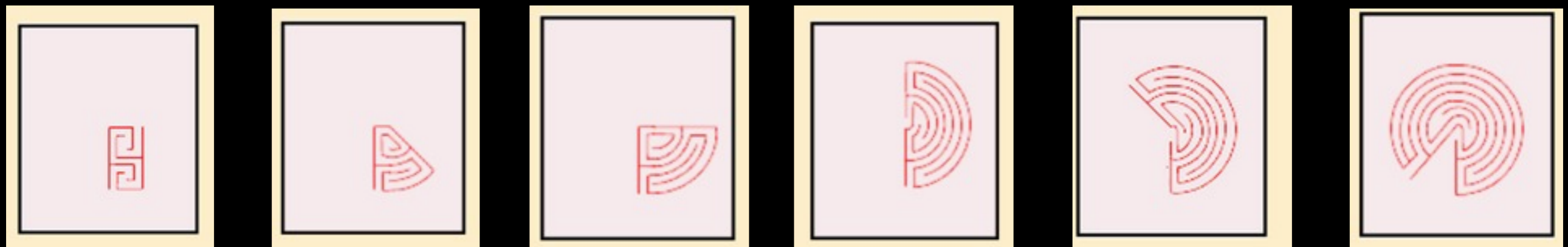
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“The labyrinth holds no power of its own, and there is nothing magical about it. Rather, it is simply a creative tool that facilitates our thinking about our faith and experiencing God in fresh ways. When we walk, reflect, and pray on a labyrinth, God is likely to use the experience to draw us closer and to help us to see aspects of our lives that we might not be able to see otherwise. Even more, the Holy Spirit can use our labyrinth prayer experience to transform us inwardly in ways that change our lives outwardly.”

Tim Geoffrion,

The Powerful Use of Symbol and Metaphor in the Judeo-Christian Tradition: Rich Symbolism in Labyrinth Prayer.

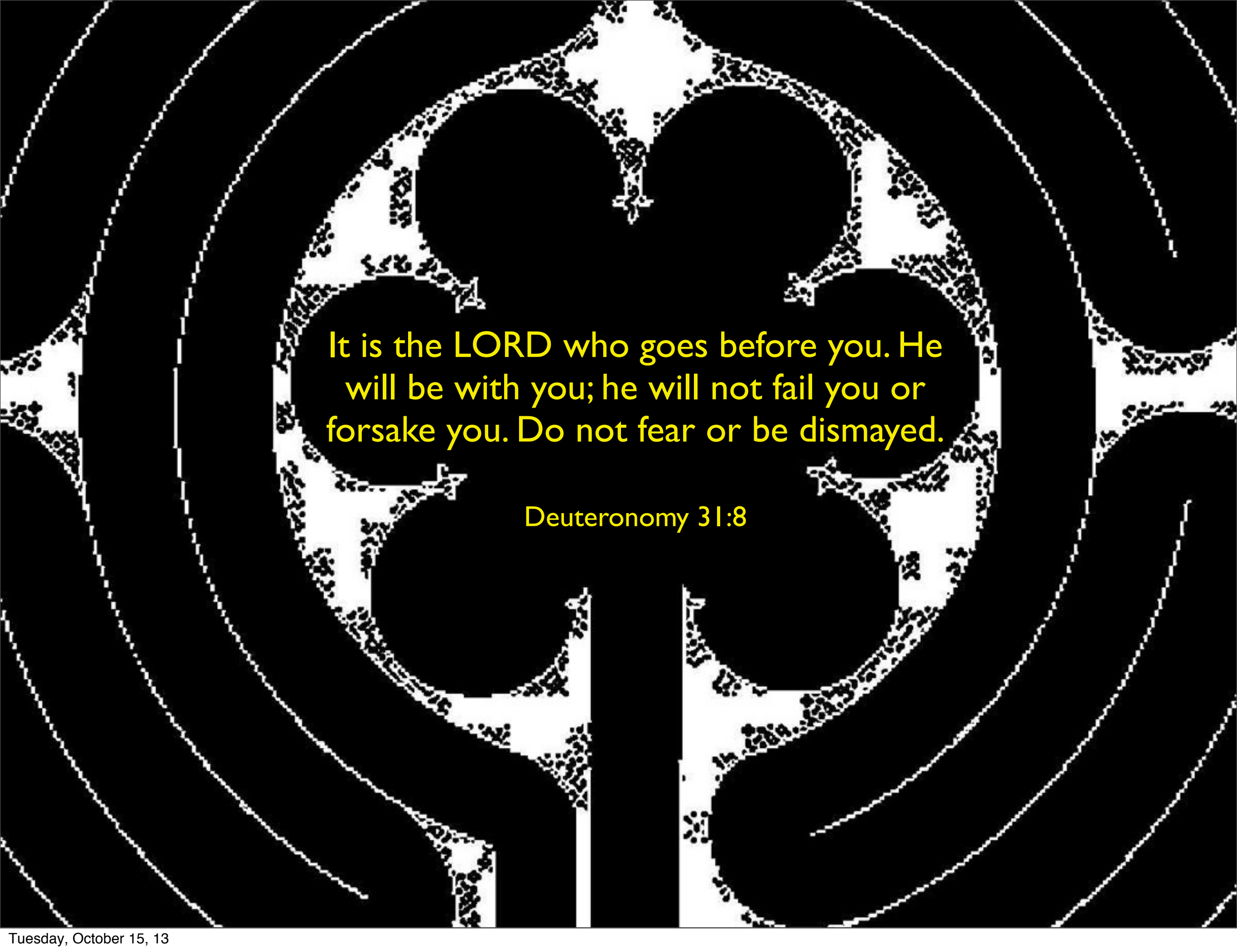


Ministers pray on a labyrinth Musanze (Northern), Rwanda 2009



We come to the labyrinth as Christians.
Christ walks with us as we move on the labyrinth.

Church Garden Labyrinth, 7
circuit "heart of Chartres",
Baltimore, Maryland, USA



It is the LORD who goes before you. He
will be with you; he will not fail you or
forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.

Deuteronomy 31:8

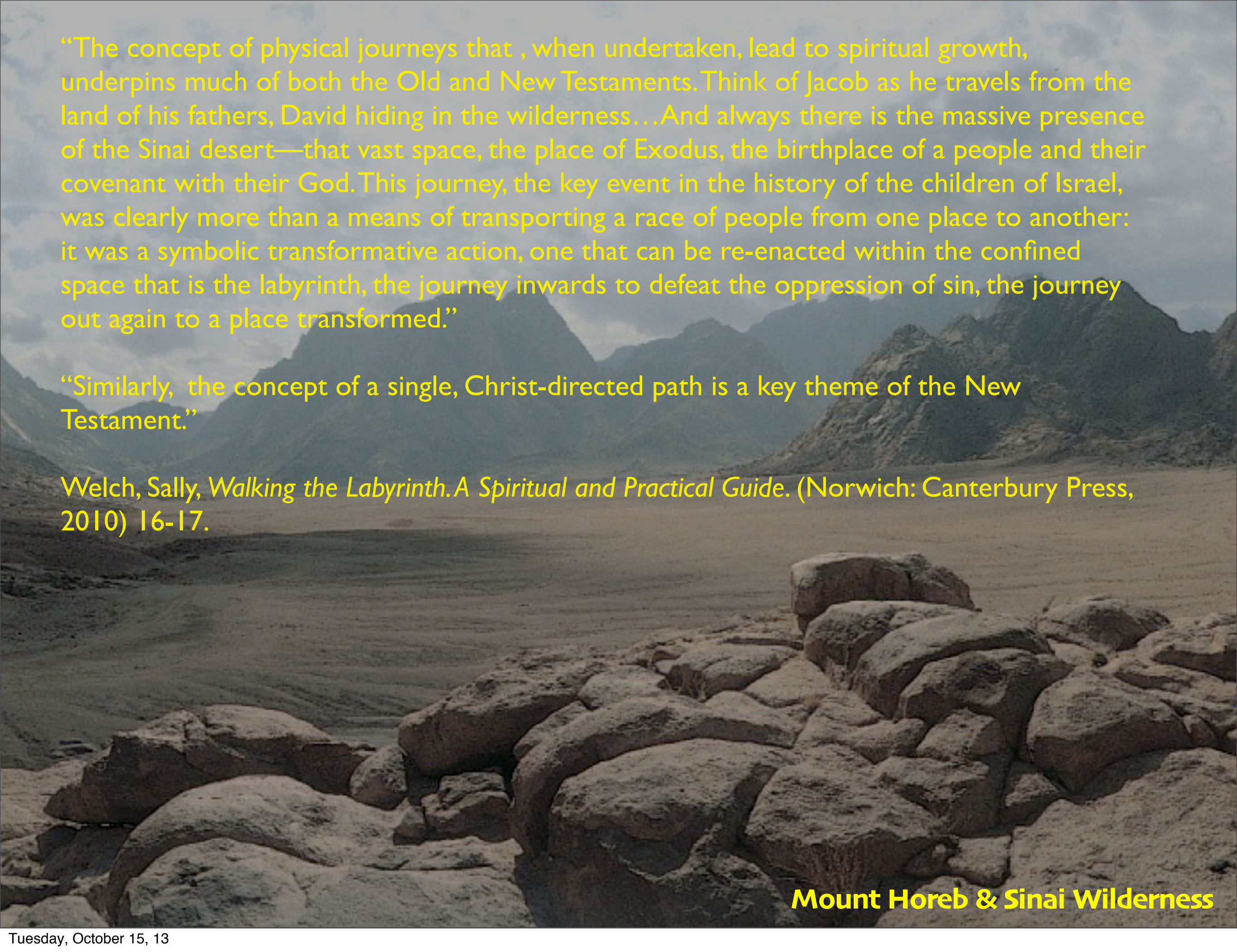
“In Christian practice, the labyrinth is not designed to produce a spiritual peak experience, but to provide inner space for listening to God. It is to be a tool for prayer, not an idol.”

Hungryhearts, Summer 2000, Vol VIII, No. 2, page 3.



Cathedral of the Palms
Sarasota, Florida USA

Biblical Themes and Labyrinths



“The concept of physical journeys that, when undertaken, lead to spiritual growth, underpins much of both the Old and New Testaments. Think of Jacob as he travels from the land of his fathers, David hiding in the wilderness... And always there is the massive presence of the Sinai desert—that vast space, the place of Exodus, the birthplace of a people and their covenant with their God. This journey, the key event in the history of the children of Israel, was clearly more than a means of transporting a race of people from one place to another: it was a symbolic transformative action, one that can be re-enacted within the confined space that is the labyrinth, the journey inwards to defeat the oppression of sin, the journey out again to a place transformed.”

“Similarly, the concept of a single, Christ-directed path is a key theme of the New Testament.”

Welch, Sally, *Walking the Labyrinth. A Spiritual and Practical Guide*. (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2010) 16-17.

Mount Horeb & Sinai Wilderness



Biblical texts to explore in relation to labyrinth prayer

Abraham as a pilgrim: Genesis 12

Theme of exile as pilgrimage: Exodus

The wise men travel to meet Jesus: Matthew 2:1-12

The shepherds visit Jesus: Luke 2:8-20

The flight of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph to Egypt : Matthew 2:13-15

Jesus walking with the disciples on the Road to Emmaus Luke 24:13-53

Christians as exiles and strangers (pilgrims KJV) I Peter 2:11-12



**“Follow Me.”
Jesus**


**Matt. 4:19, 8:22, 9:9, 10:38
16:24, 19:21; Mark 1:17, 2:14,
8:34, 10:21; Luke 5:27, 9:23
9:59, 14:27, 18:22; John 1:43, 10:27,
12:26, 13:36, 21:19, 21:22**

“Christian life is an on-going response to Jesus’ authoritative call, “Follow me.”

The following of Christ is often imaged as a journey.

David Liedl, Labyrinth retreat leader



A photograph of a stone labyrinth in a park. The labyrinth is a circular path made of grey stones, with a central square. Three people are walking on the path. The background shows trees and a fence. The sky is overcast.

Jesus said, "I am **the way,**
the life and the truth."

John 14:6

"Jesus' claim can be understood in terms of the metaphor of labyrinths--
a single pathway, leading one to God, The Center of All."

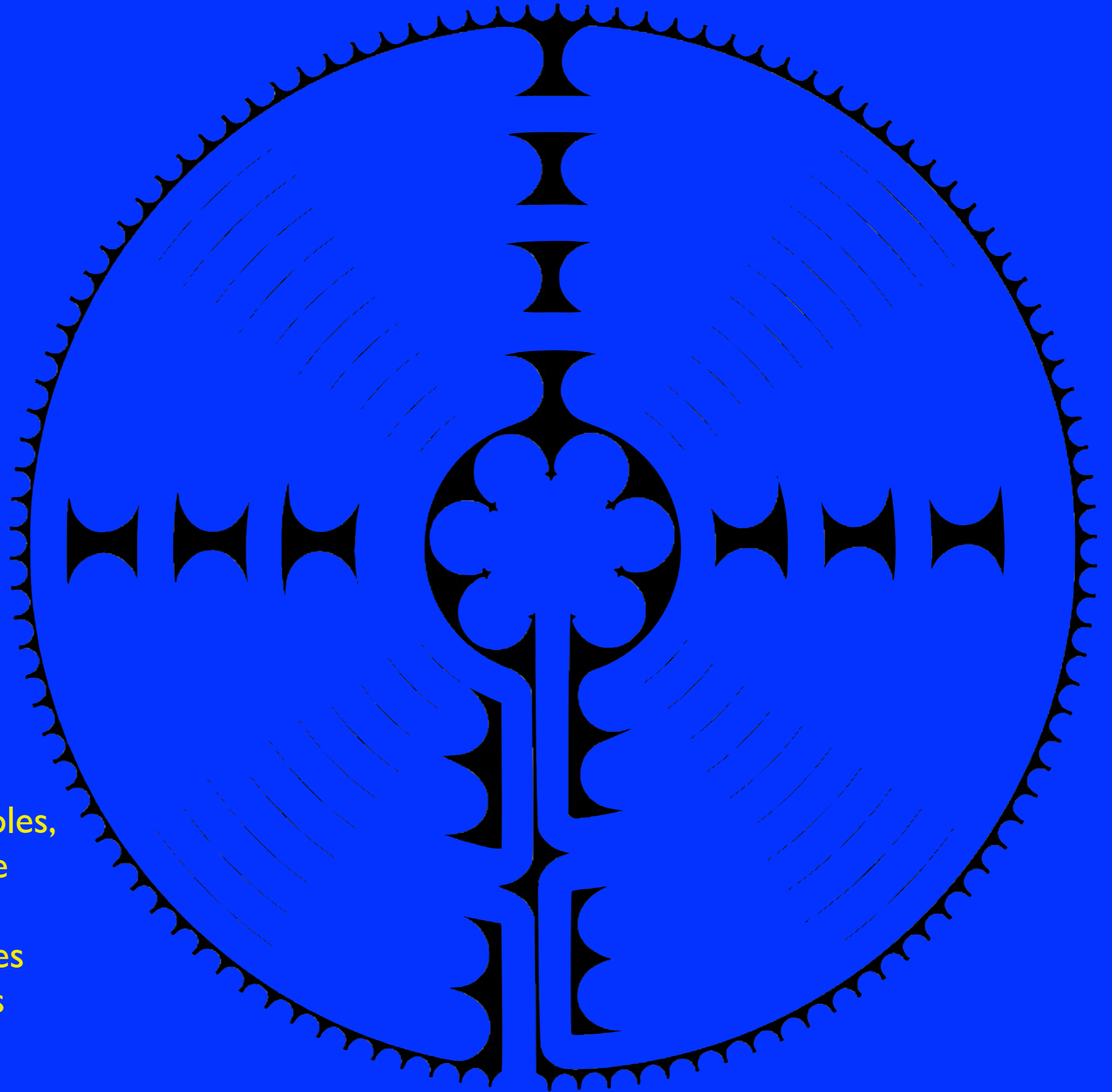
Geoffrion, Christian Prayer and Labyrinths.

**The cross
defines how
we move on
a labyrinth.**

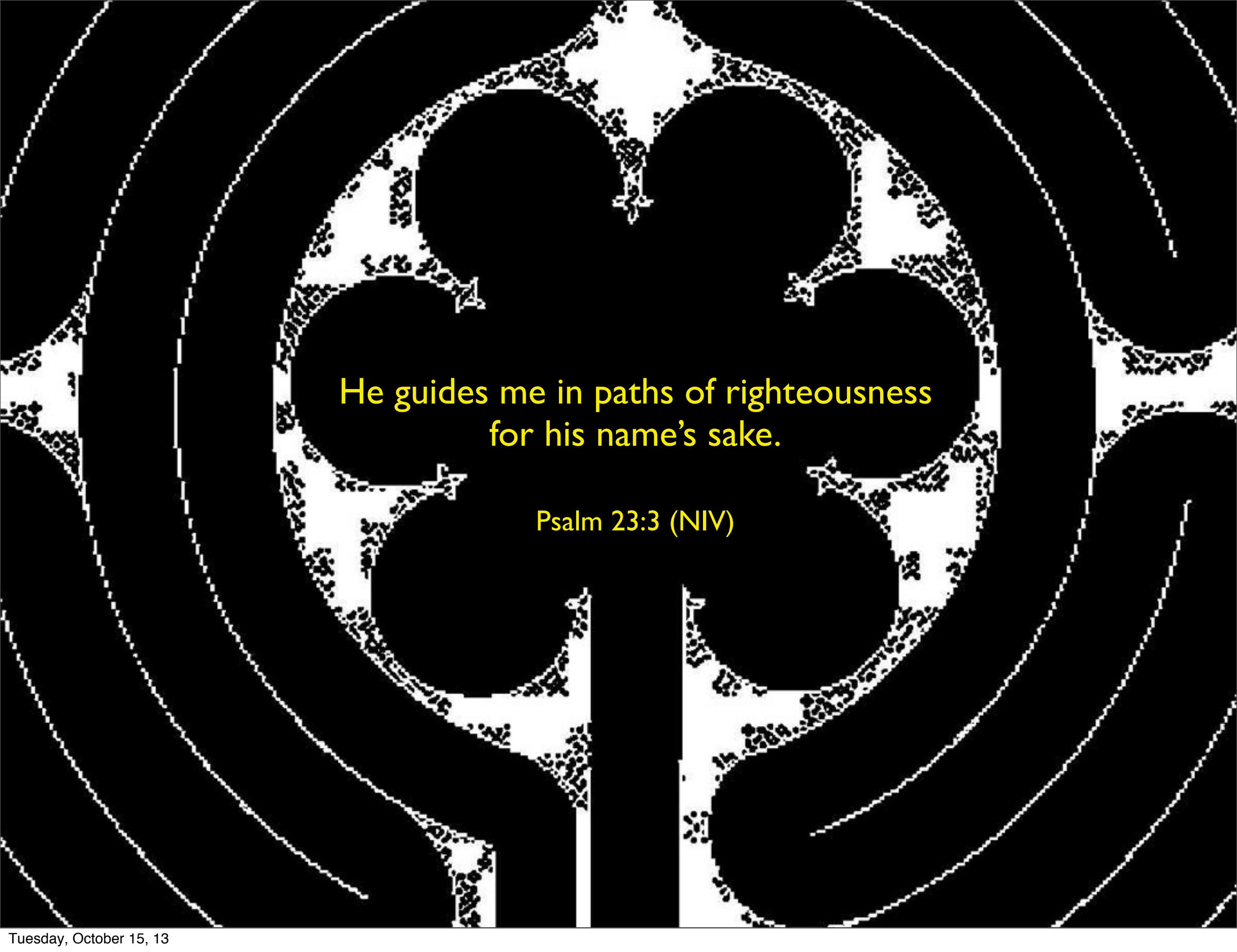
**We are
“walking
the cross.”**

**“Then Jesus told his disciples,
“If any want to become
my followers,
let them deny themselves
and take up their cross
and follow me.”**

**Matthew 16: 24; Mark 8:34
See: Matthew 10:38; Luke 14:27**



Biblical Texts and the Labyrinth



He guides me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

Psalm 23:3 (NIV)

God has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

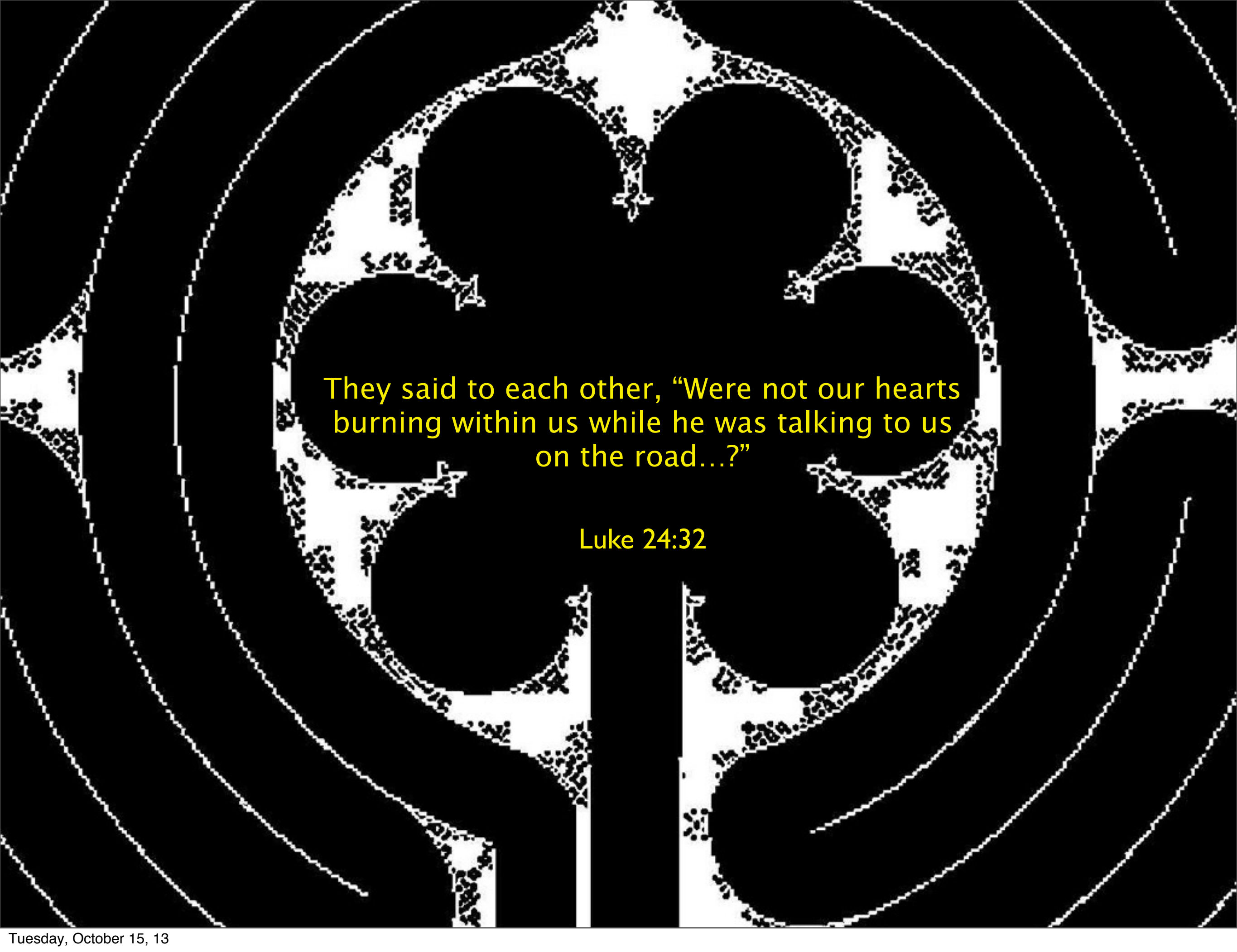
Micah 6:8



“...do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you?
1 Cor. 6:19




Labyrinth of Life, DeepHaven, Minnesota (USA)



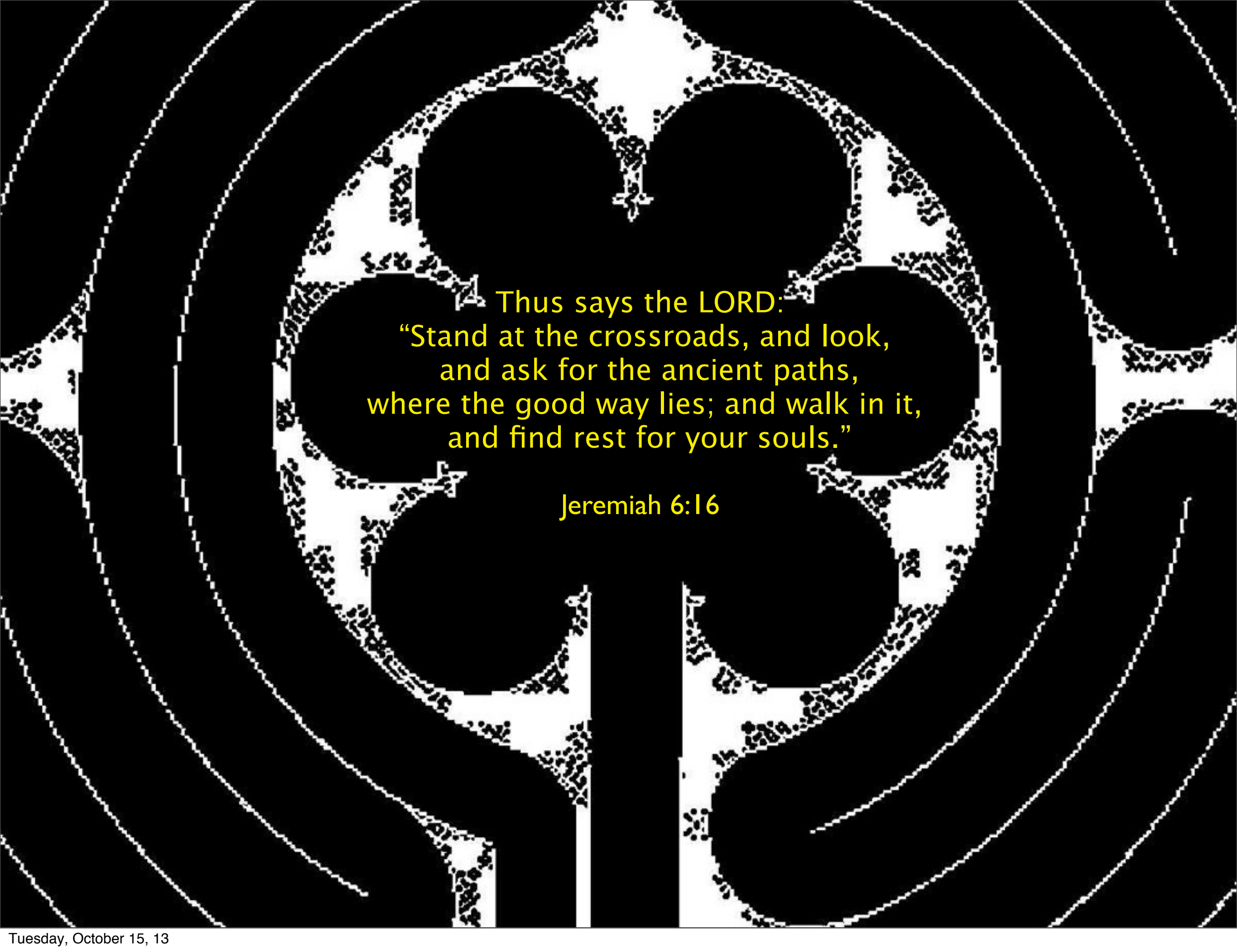
They said to each other, “Were not our hearts
burning within us while he was talking to us
on the road...?”

Luke 24:32



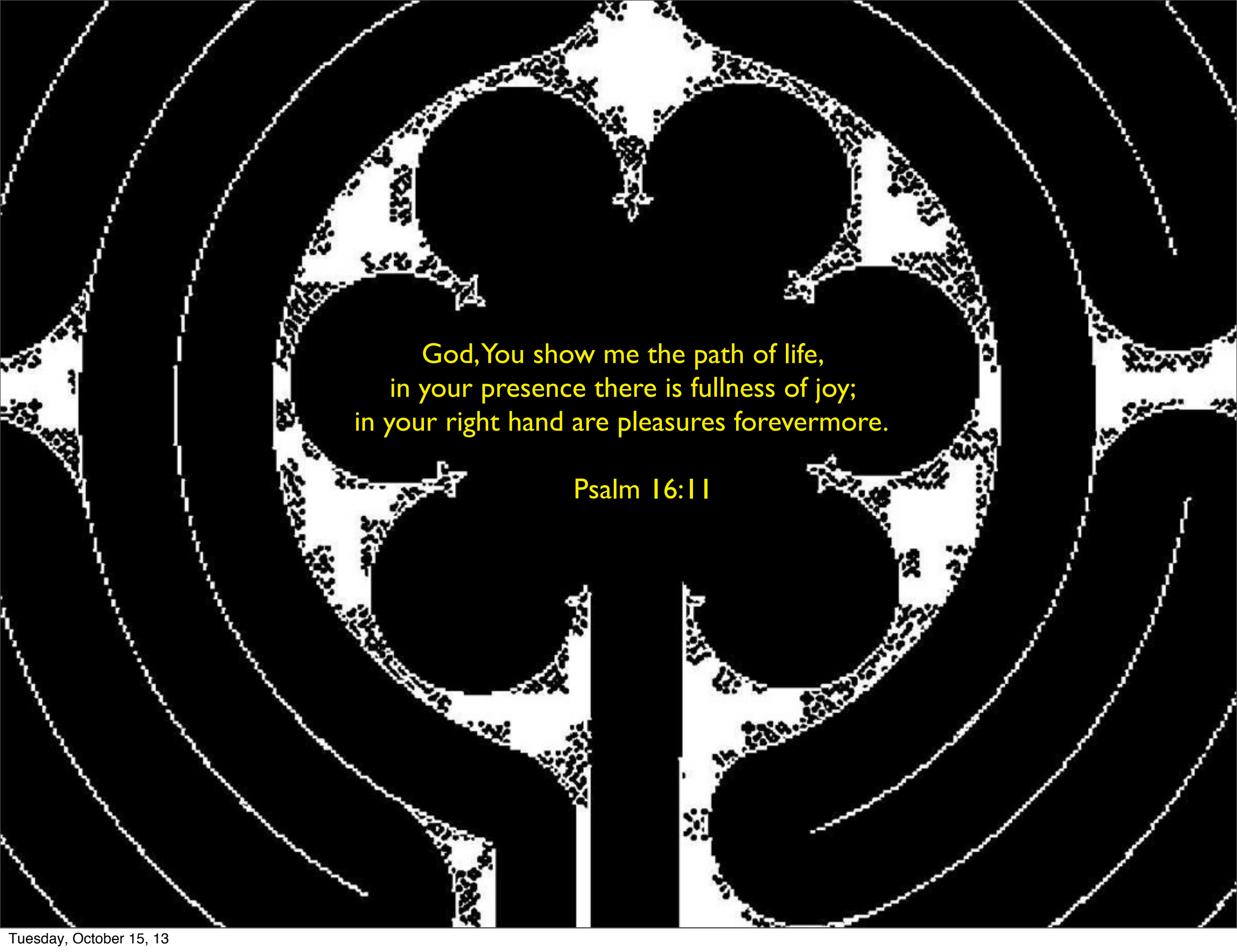
**“Come to me, all you that are weary
and are carrying heavy burdens, and I
will give you rest.” Jesus**

Matthew 11:28



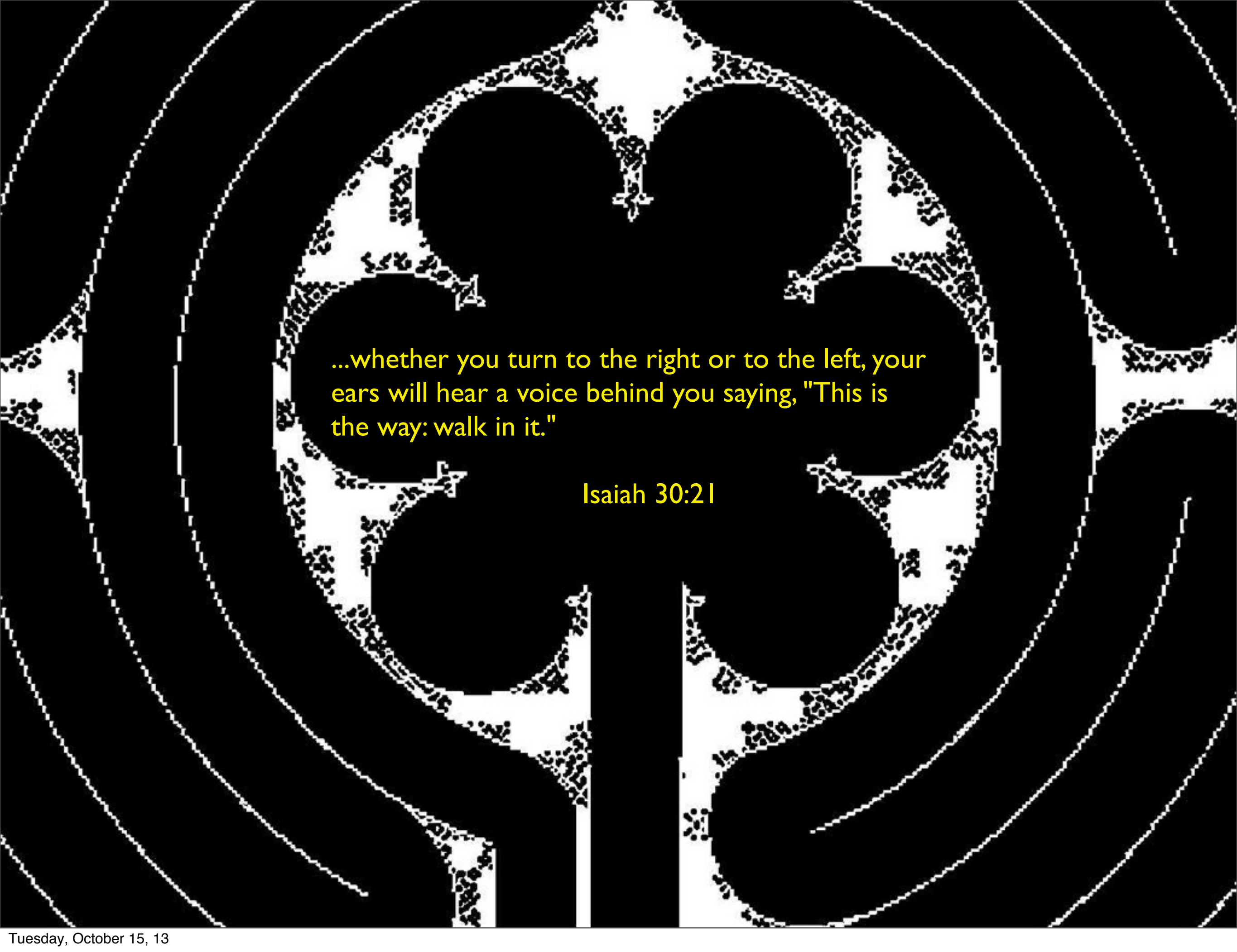
Thus says the LORD:
“Stand at the crossroads, and look,
and ask for the ancient paths,
where the good way lies; and walk in it,
and find rest for your souls.”

Jeremiah 6:16



God, You show me the path of life,
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 16:11



...whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way: walk in it."

Isaiah 30:21

Theological Implications Relating to Labyrinths



What are some of the theological messages of labyrinths?



A circular stone labyrinth with a central six-petaled flower design, set against a blue background. The labyrinth is composed of many concentric, winding paths that eventually lead to the center. The stone is a light, weathered color, and the paths are defined by raised ridges. The central flower has six distinct petals, each with a slightly scalloped edge. The entire labyrinth is surrounded by a decorative border of small, repeating circular motifs.

What are some of the theological messages of labyrinths?

- Divine help is available.



What are some of the theological messages of labyrinths?

- Divine help is available.
- A path of wisdom leads one towards God.

A circular stone labyrinth with a central floral design, set against a blue background. The labyrinth is composed of many concentric, winding paths that lead to a central floral motif. The stone is a light, weathered color, and the paths are carved into the surface. The background is a solid, textured blue.

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- Truth and God's presence are yoked. As one moves in the Divine Presence, truth becomes clearer and more compelling.

A circular stone labyrinth with a central floral design, set against a blue background. The labyrinth is composed of concentric, winding paths that lead to a central point. The paths are carved into a light-colored stone, and the central point is a stylized floral or cross-like shape. The entire labyrinth is set against a dark blue, textured background.

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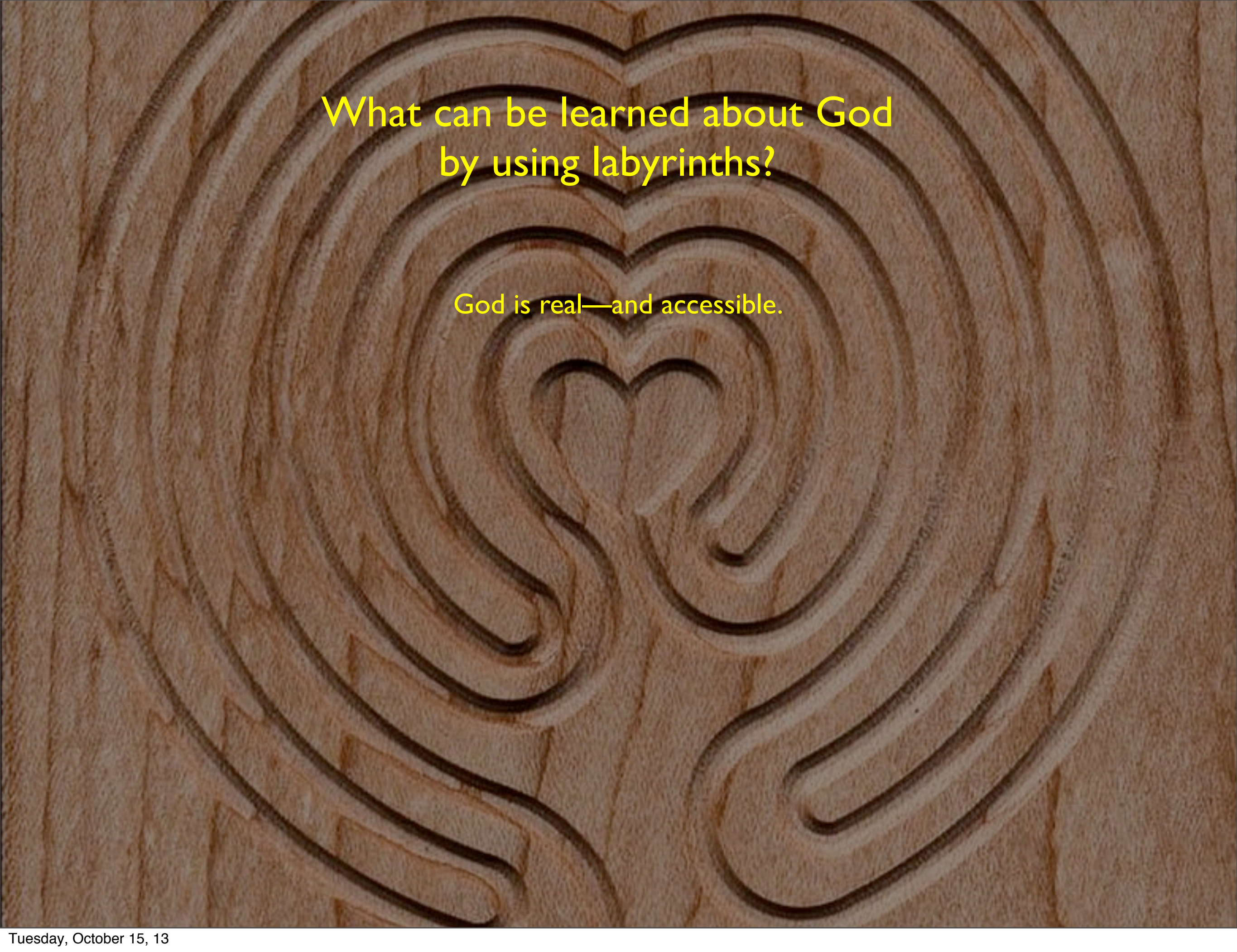
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Taken from Christian Prayer and Labyrinths.
Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004.



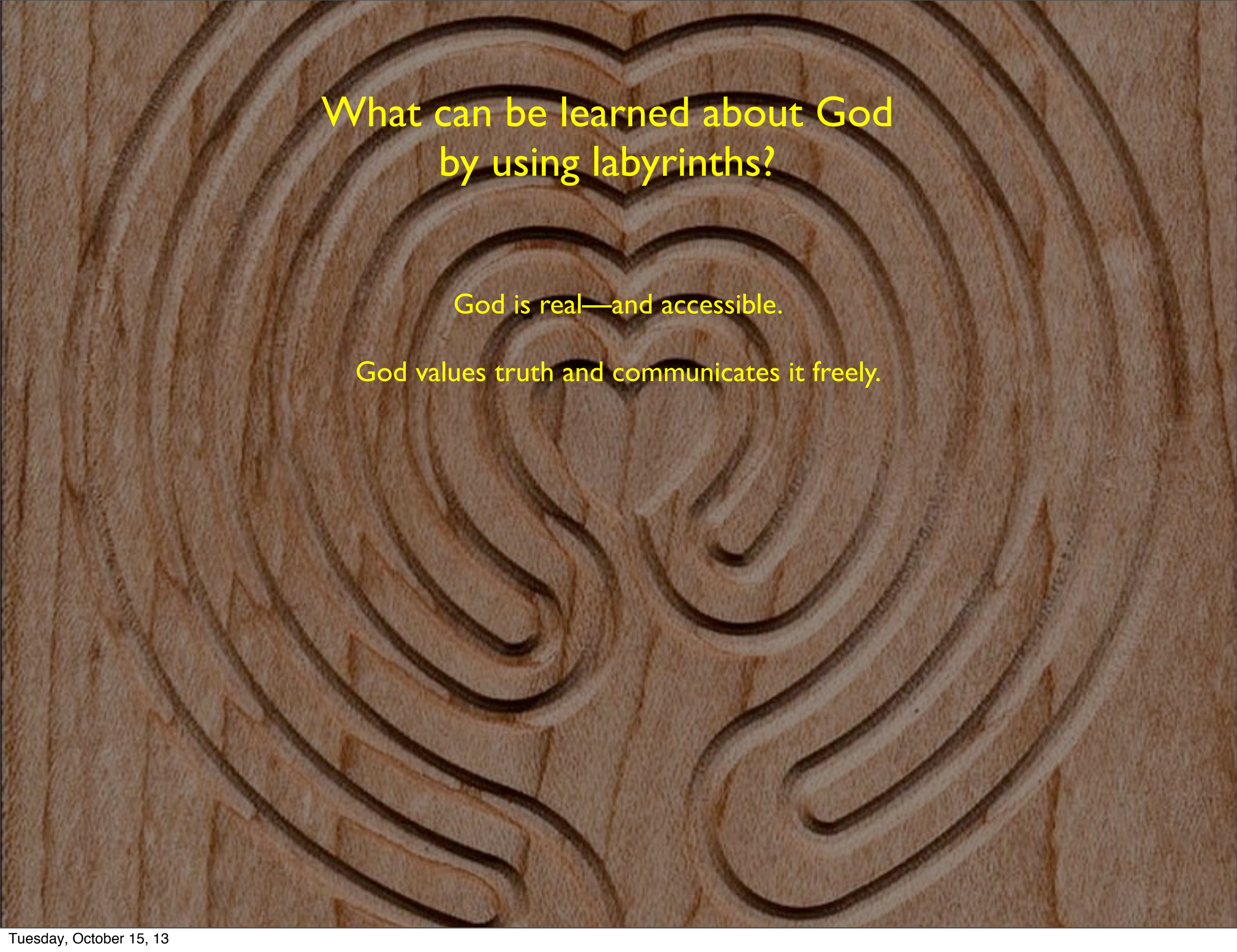
What can be learned about God
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by using labyrinths?

A wooden labyrinth with a heart-shaped center. The labyrinth is carved into a piece of light-colored wood and features a complex, winding path that leads to a central heart-shaped opening. The path is composed of multiple concentric, interlocking loops that create a sense of depth and complexity. The wood grain is visible throughout the image, adding texture and natural beauty to the design.

What can be learned about God
by using labyrinths?

God is real—and accessible.



What can be learned about God by using labyrinths?

God is real—and accessible.

God values truth and communicates it freely.



What can be learned about God by using labyrinths?

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God's presence supports wholeness.



What can be learned about God by using labyrinths?

God is real—and accessible.

God values truth and communicates it freely.

God's presence supports wholeness.

God is unpredictable—but trustworthy.

We cannot control
or often even anticipate
God's next move in our lives.



What can be learned about God by using labyrinths?

God is real—and accessible.

God values truth and communicates it freely.

God's presence supports wholeness.

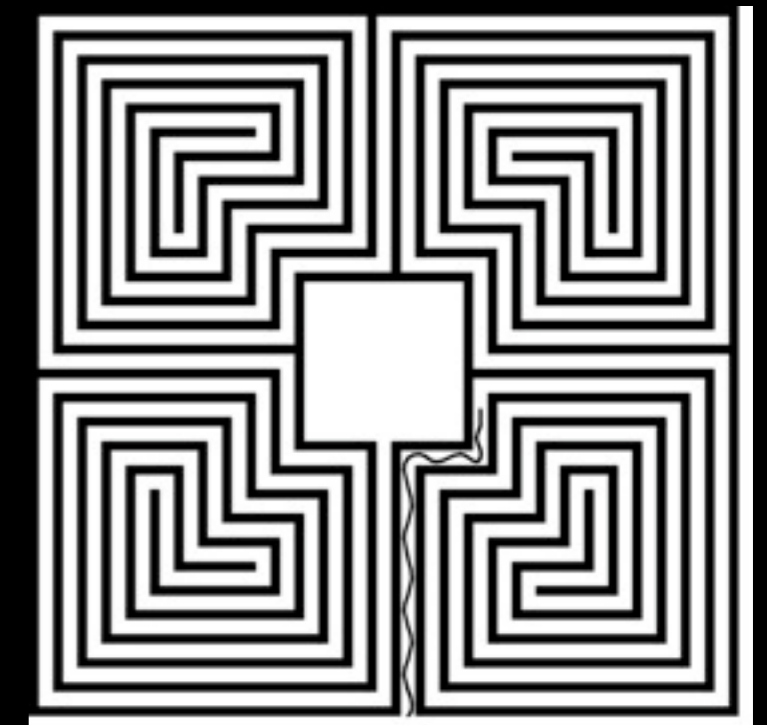
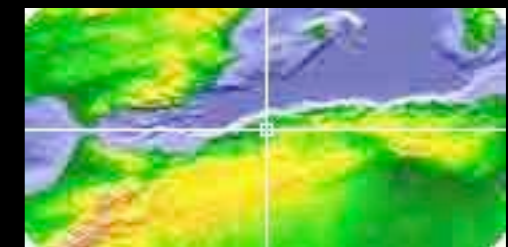
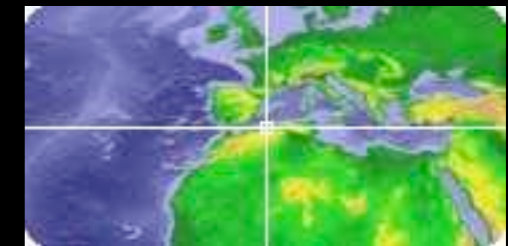
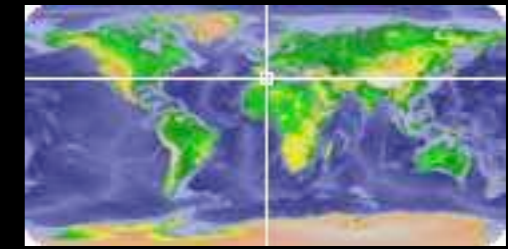
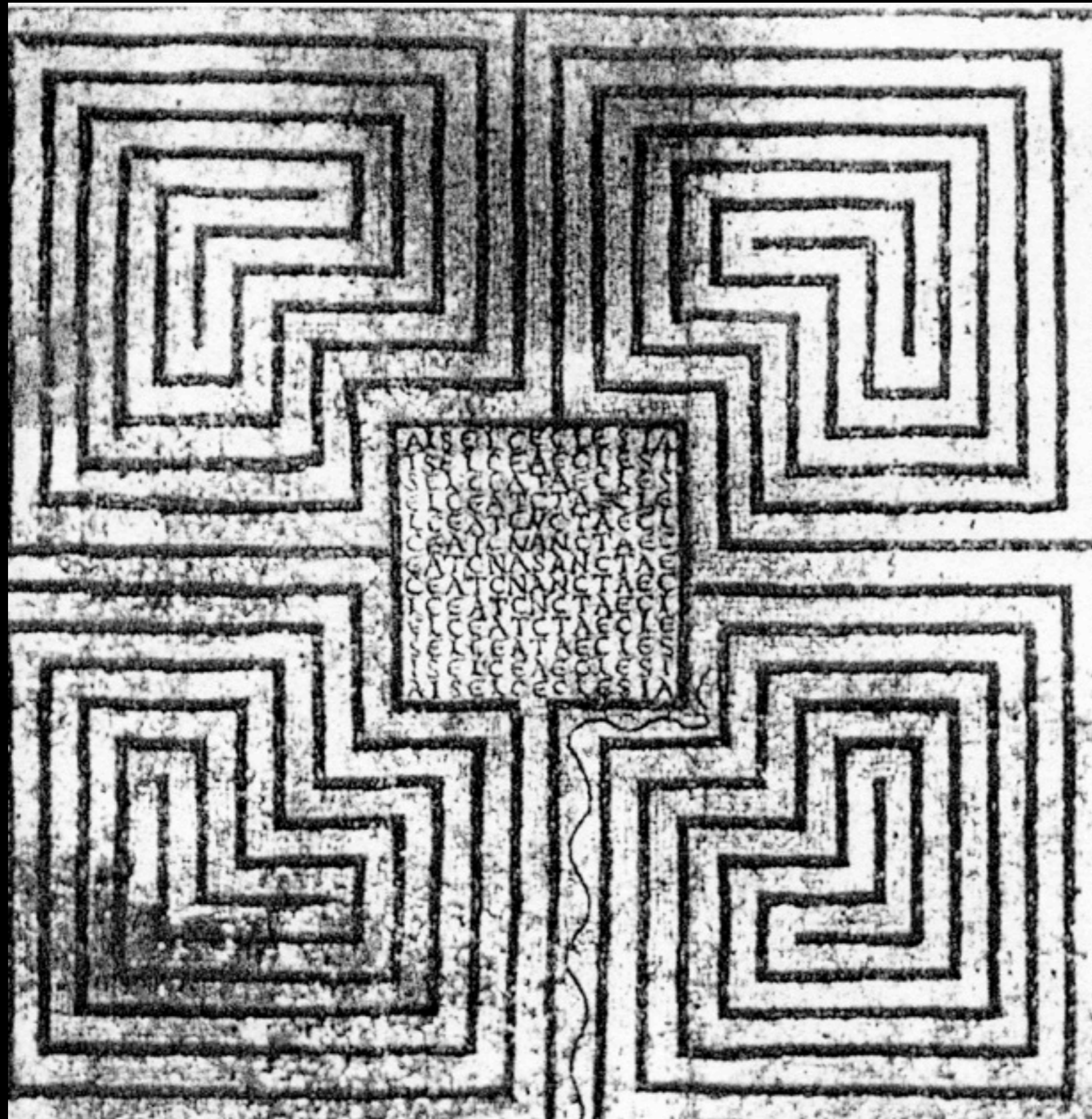
God is unpredictable—but trustworthy.

We cannot control
or often even anticipate
God's next move in our lives.

Christian Prayer and Labyrinths.
Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004.

Historic Christian Labyrinths

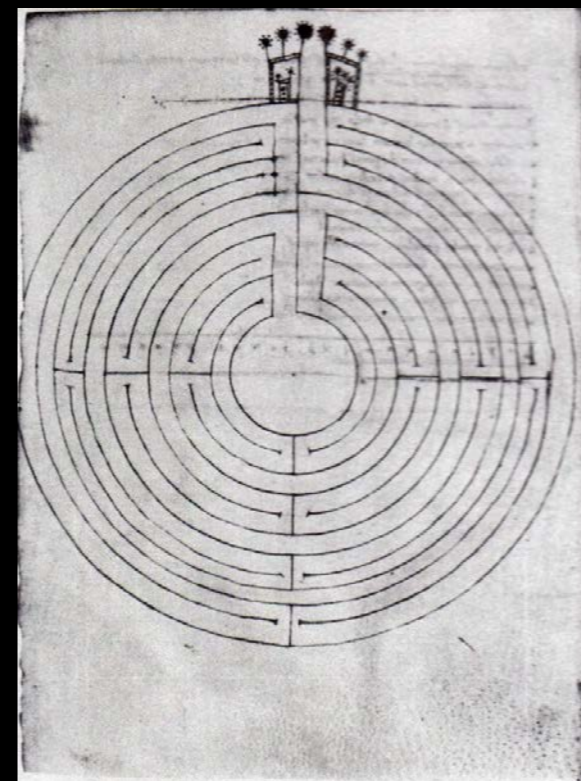
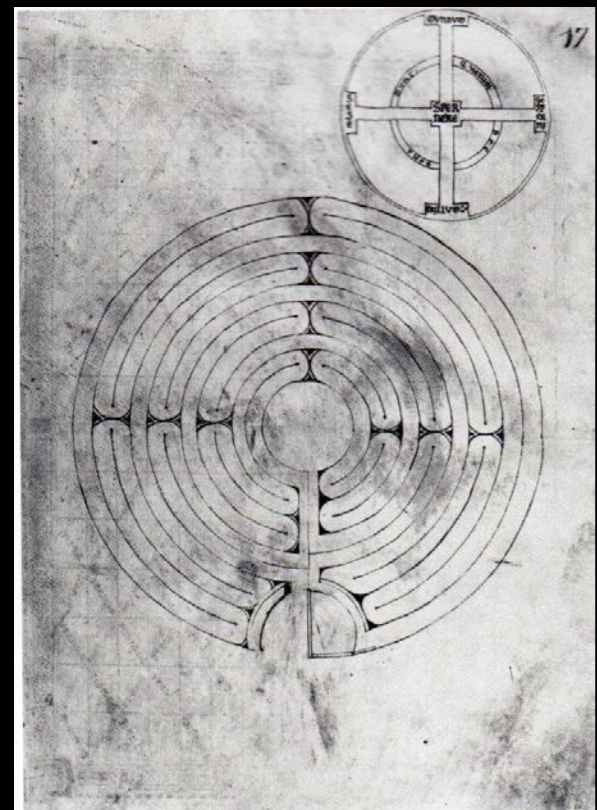
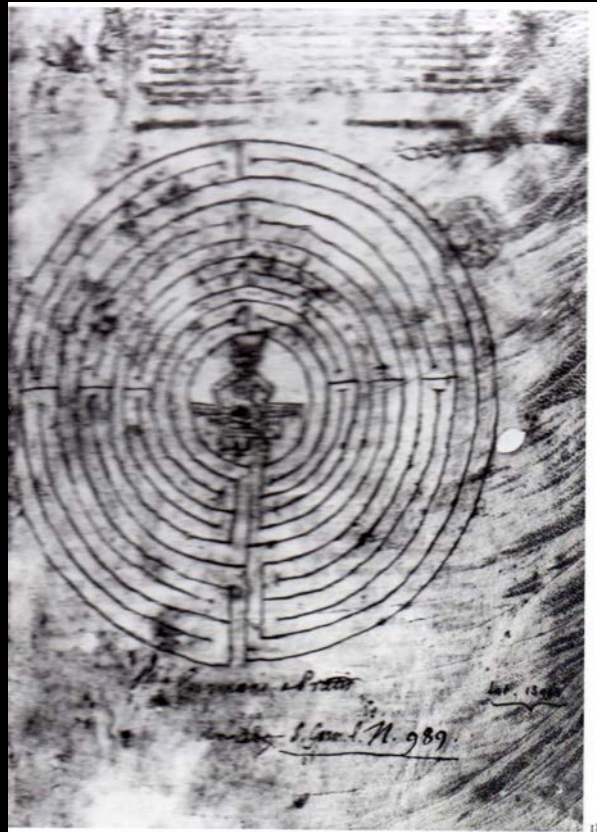
The oldest surviving Christian labyrinth



Installed 324 CE in the cathedral in Orleanville, Algeria (N.Africa)

European Manuscripts from the Middle Ages

476-1543 CE



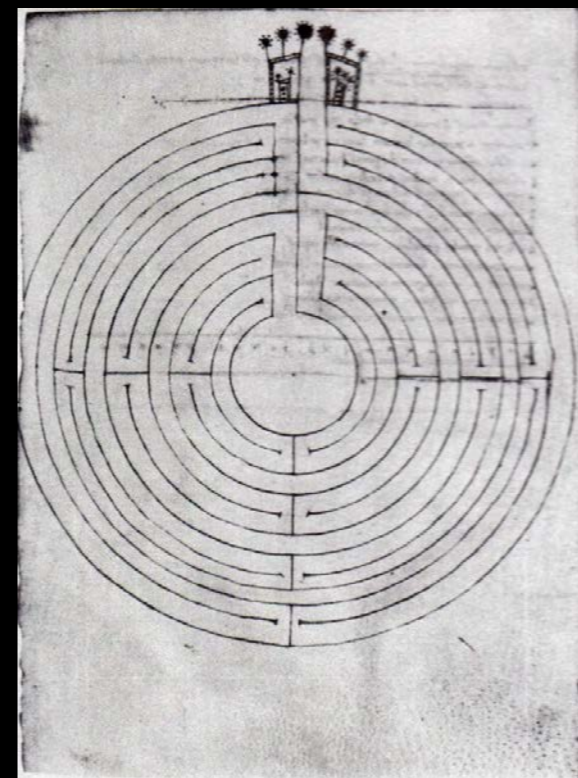
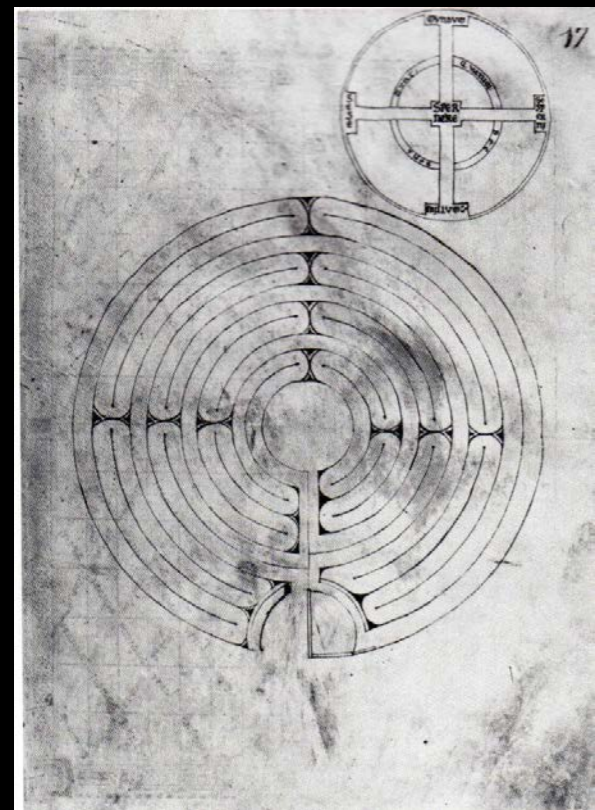
European Manuscripts from the Middle Ages

476-1543 CE



10th Century
St. Germain des Prés –
Paris
Manuscript relates to the
Easter Cycle

Kern No 181;
page 112



European Manuscripts from the Middle Ages

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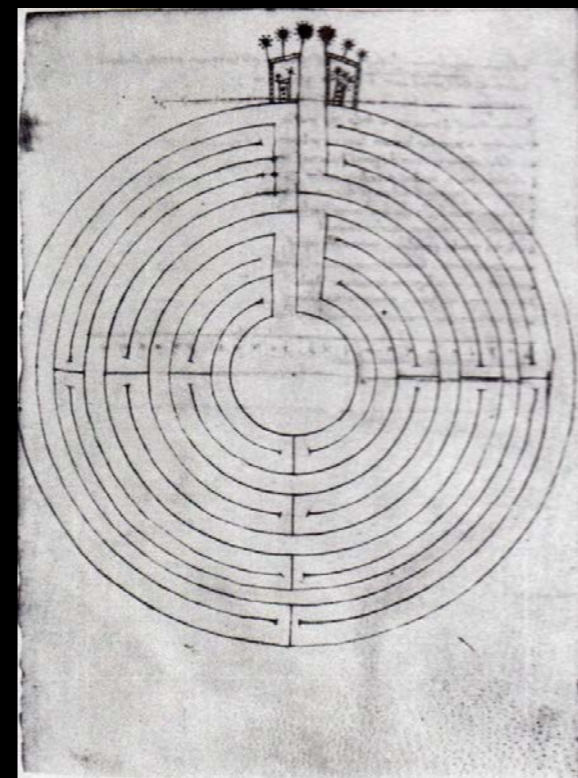
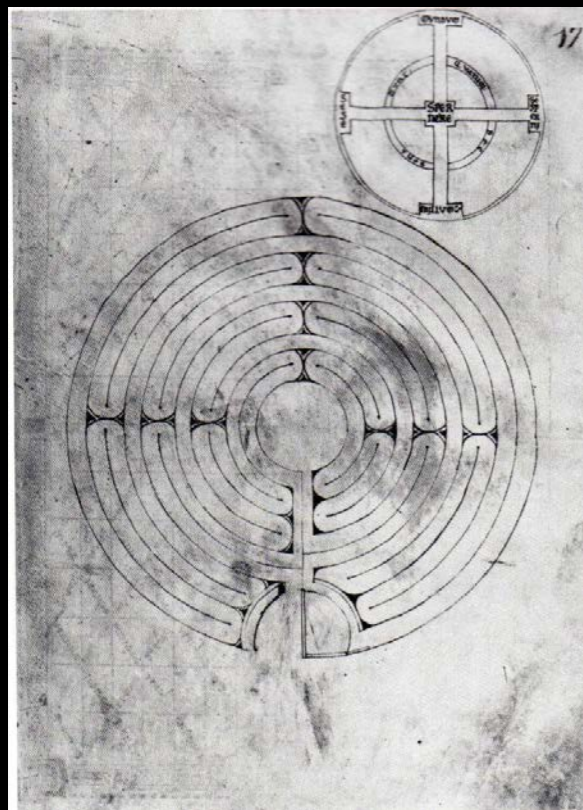
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page 112



Lambert
St. Omer
Between 1060-1123

Below: a brief history of
Theseus and the
Minotaur

Kern No 191;
page 116



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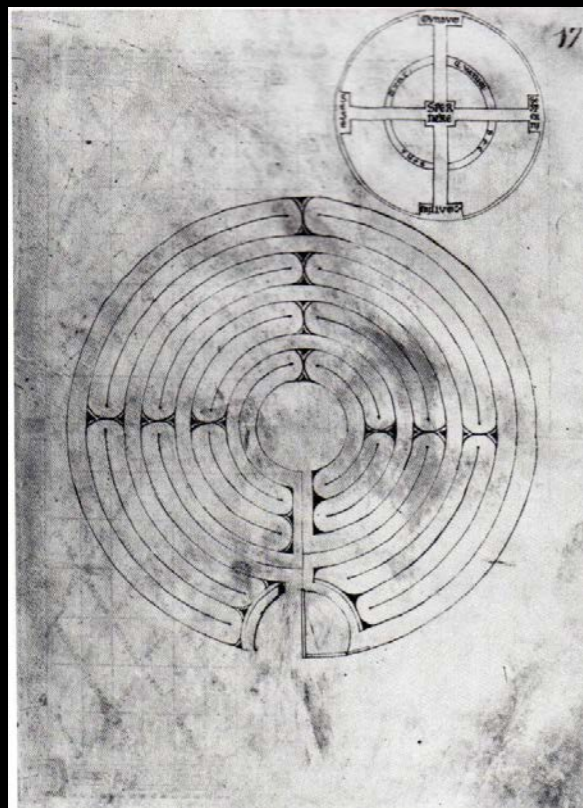
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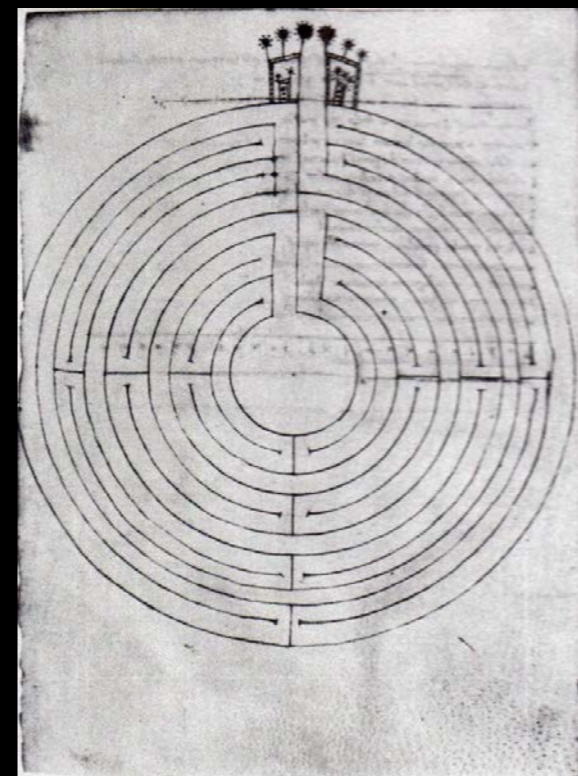
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Isodore de Séville
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to calculate the date
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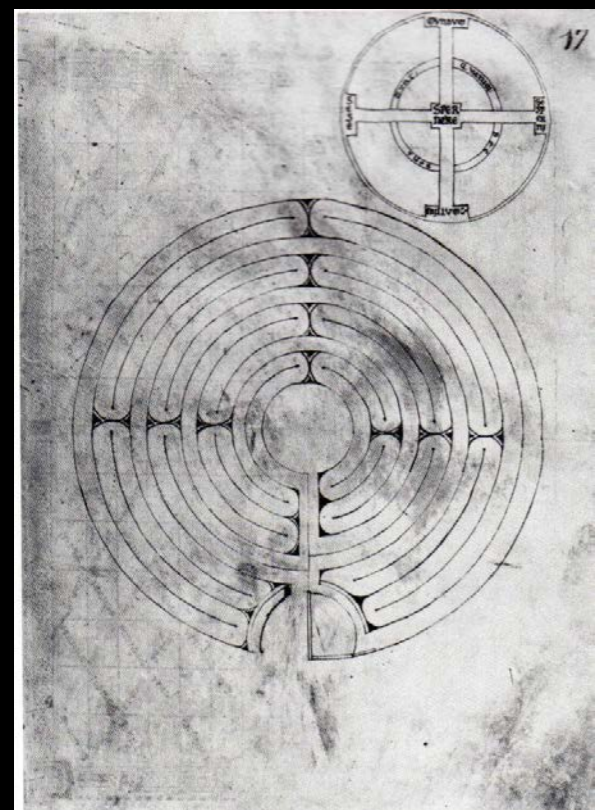
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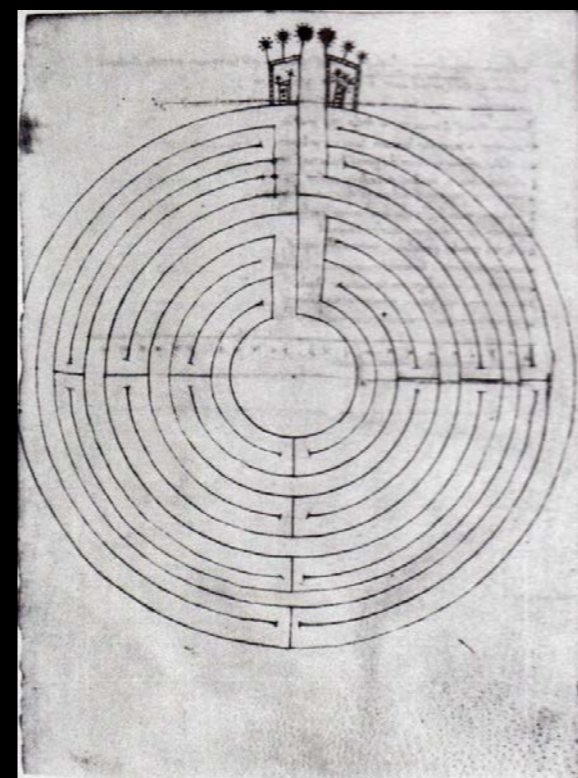
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Martianus Capella
11th century

Manuscript that discusses
the seven liberal arts

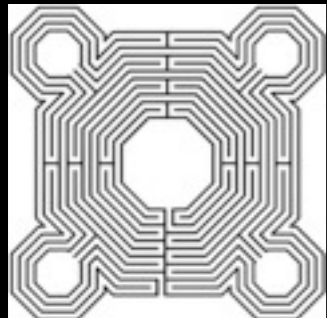
Kern No 187;
page 115



Sens



Reims



Amiens

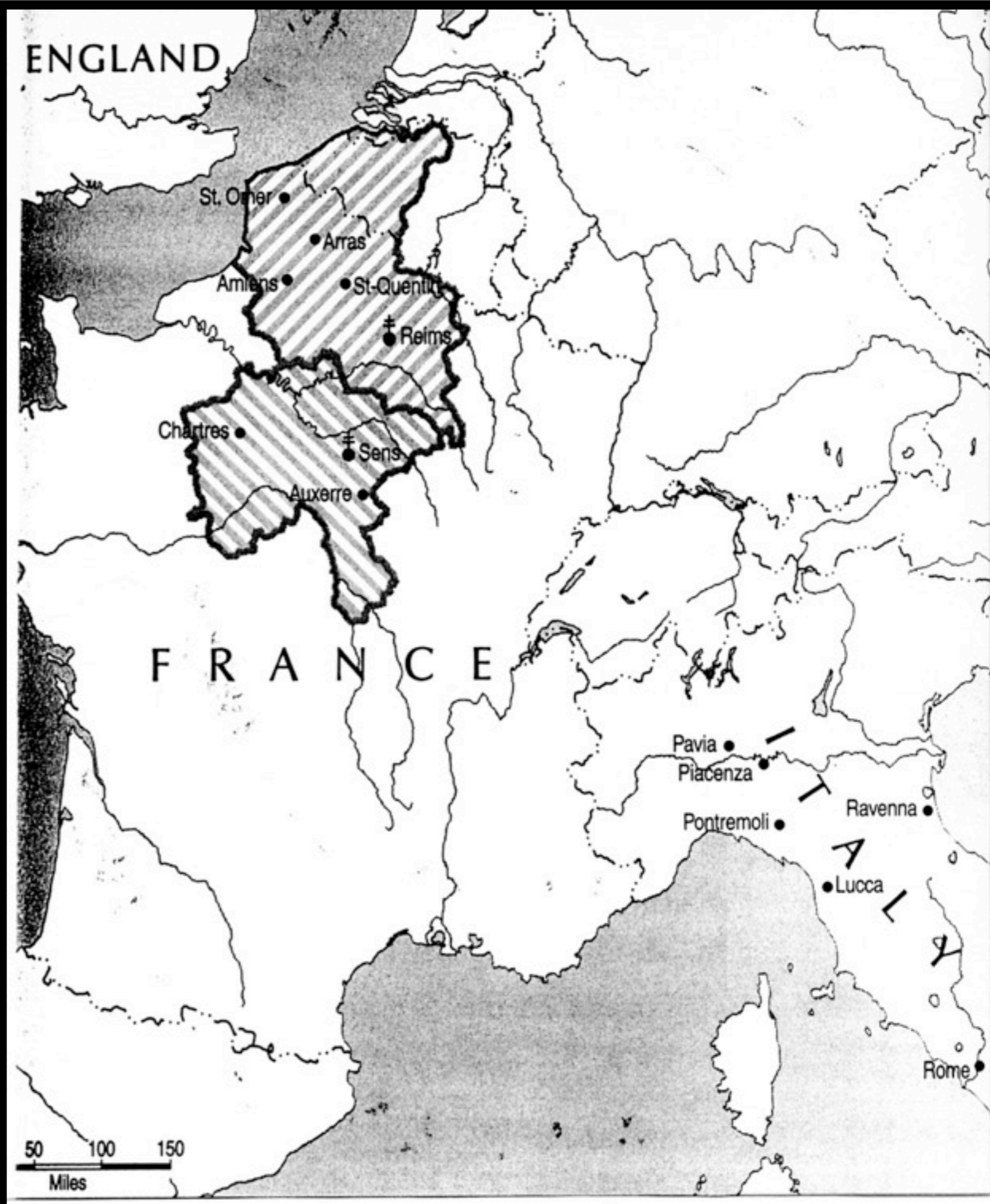
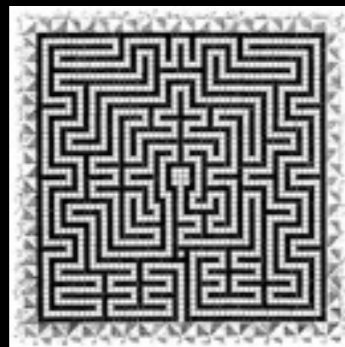
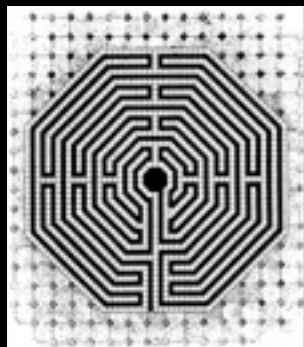


Chartres

Medieval labyrinths found in France and Italy. (Many labyrinths were also shown in manuscripts.)

St. Quentin

St. Omer



Chartres, France: Installed around 1,200 CE





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

Alatri, Italy
12th century



Contemporary Christian Labyrinths

Solvitar ambulando.
It is solved by walking.

Augustine of Hippo (Algeria)
Church Father 354-430 CE





Taking a prayer walk with God.



Calvin Presbyterian labyrinth

Calvin Presbyterian Church

SUNDAY WORSHIP 9:30AM

PLEASE VISIT OUR

LABYRINTH !

REV. CAROL REED

PASTOR



Welcome Sign
Long Lake, MN (USA)



**Labyrinth built next to a church
in northern Rwanda.**

**It was designed and
built by the arch-deacon
Rev. Jean-Damascene Nsabimana**

Photos © Jean-Damascène Nsabimana





Labyrinth prayer offers a contemplative way of approaching and resting in God's presence... The invitation is to...become quiet within, to slow down, not to "escape" from the world, but to attend to all of life with "quiet still awareness", through the lens of the great love of God.
Robyn & Bronwyn Pryor Melbourne, Australia

An aerial photograph of a large, circular labyrinth paved on a stone floor. The labyrinth is composed of dark, winding paths that spiral outwards from a central point. Numerous people of various ages and ethnicities are seen walking through the paths, some in small groups and others alone. The surrounding area is a large, open space with stone paving, and some wooden chairs are visible in the upper left corner. The overall scene suggests a public or religious gathering.

Labyrinth ministries
in contemporary Christian settings

Labyrinths are used for ministry in churches, retreat centers, schools, hospitals, and even prisons.



A cross is sometimes placed in the center of a labyrinth.



Goma, D. R. Congo (Africa)



Church labyrinth with altar in the center. Long Lake, Minnesota (USA)

Labyrinth in the center of the chancel near the altar

Choir and
4 circuit
labyrinth,
Riverside
Church
New York
City USA





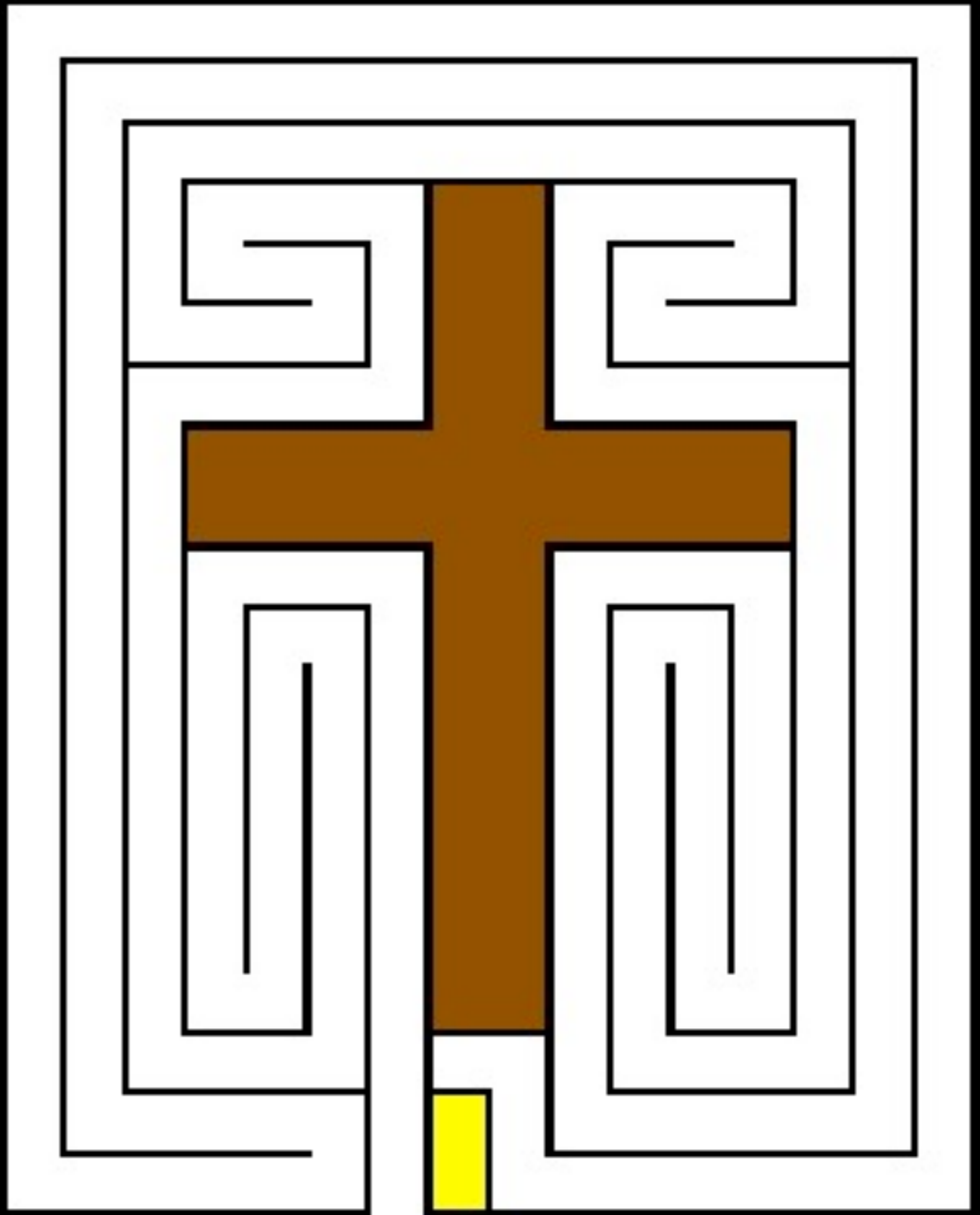
Cathedral labyrinth in a side chapel used for small group worship services.
Evry, France (20th century)

Episcopal Church
Sarasota, Florida USA



Creation of contemporary Christian labyrinth patterns

<http://www.CrossLabyrinth.com>
used with permission.





What questions
do you have
about Christian
labyrinth
prayer?

Prayer of Dedication

Lord, I will trust you,
help me to journey beyond the familiar
and into the unknown.

Give me the faith to leave old ways
and break fresh ground with You.

Christ of the mysteries, can I trust You
to be stronger than each storm in me?

Do I still yearn for Your glory
to lighten on me?

I will show others the care
You've given me.

I determine amidst all uncertainty
always to trust.

I choose to live beyond regret,
and let You recreate my life.

I believe You will make a way for me
and provide for me,
if only I trust You
and obey.



I will trust in the darkness and know
that my times are still in Your hand.

I will believe You for my future,
chapter by chapter,
until all the story is written.

Focus my mind and my heart upon You,
my attention always on You without
alteration.

Strengthen me with Your blessings
and appoint to me the task.

Teach me to live with eternity in view.

Tune my spirit to the music of heaven.

Feed me,
and, somehow,
make my obedience count for You.

Brendan, in [Celtic Daily Prayers from the Northumbria Community Harper 2002.](#)



Ministry website www.fhlglobal.org

Labyrinth resources by jill www.jillgeoffrion.com

Journey blog by jill jillgeoffrion.wordpress.com

