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**The Healing Power of the Circle: World Labyrinth Day, May 3**

By Meryl Ann Butler *(about the author)*

(7 comments, In Series: Labyrinths)

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Kastellaun Labyrinth, lavender labyrinth in Germany by [http://www.labyrinth-kastellaun.de/fotorueckblick.html](http://www.labyrinth-kastellaun.de/fotorueckblick.html)

(This article is part of a series on labyrinths. Additional information, especially about the history of labyrinths, is available in many of the previous articles listed below.)

Labyrinths have been experiencing a public revival in schools, hospitals, libraries and places of worship, as well as in private spaces, as virtual labyrinths online, or as small, printed patterns to walk with a finger.

Labyrinths are walked for many reasons, including to lower stress, to create ceremony, as prayerful/meditative movement, and to promote wellbeing, and their paths of comfort have found their way into hospice programs as well.

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Columnist Ray Waddle, a former Tennessean religion editor says, "I took a stroll the other day on the edge of eternity. The labyrinth is no miracle cure, but across the centuries it still invites everyone to reclaim a lightness of spirit, to turn away from vile impulses and fear. It points the way to a homecoming."

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Labyrinths are not the same as mazes, although the terms are usually used interchangeably by most people. To labyrinthophiles, the two differ greatly in definition, design and function:

A maze offers several paths to choose from, and making one's way through a maze therefore engages logic and analytical processes, and is focused on achieving a particular outcome. Mazes often have walls designed to obscure the view of the correct path.

A labyrinth has only one path. Therefore, there is no need for walls or hedges to obscure the view, and most labyrinths, unlike mazes, are flat, or relatively so. Walking the labyrinth is not done to achieve a goal, but in order to experience the journey. Most people report experiencing a feeling of peace, joy, or wellbeing as a result of walking the labyrinth's unicursal path.

Two of the primary labyrinth patterns include Chartres and Classical (sometimes called “Cretan”) styles. Labyrinths may be temporary or permanent, round or square, indoor or outdoor, and may be made of a wide variety of materials from canvas or carpet to rocks, sand, paving stones or masking tape. Many are wheelchair accessible. And labyrinths have even been built for horses to walk, also!

Lars Howlett, World Labyrinth Day Coordinator, has been working closely with the event’s founder, Stephanie Blackton, in spreading the word via social media. He notes, “the Labyrinth Society Facebook group has grown in leaps and bounds with people from all over the world sharing their plans to build, walk, and lead workshops. We encourage people to "Walk as One at 1" (o’clock in the afternoon), on World Labyrinth Day, to promote peace the world over.”

World Labyrinth Day is a creative, artistic and heartfelt yet loosely structured event, and often information is, well, "artistically" disseminated. I’m an artist, too, so I understand that my brothah and sistah artists are often so immersed in the passion for the project that promotion is often
only given a second thought - or third! But these intentions got a creative boost this year when Lars created an online survey to gauge the interest and locations of participants. Within the first two weeks, 185 people from 38 states and 17 countries responded, estimating over 2500 people at their events in the US, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, Holland, Mexico, Canada, Spain, Portugal, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Poland, Costa Rica, Argentina, Singapore and South Africa. The types of events include walks, workshops, picnics, finger labyrinths, and more.

Grace Cathedral's outdoor labyrinth by Lars Howlett

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