

The Chartres Labyrinth

The labyrinth constructed at St. Hilda's is an 11-circuit labyrinth. It is a replica of the one embedded in the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France. The design of this labyrinth, and many of the other church labyrinths in Europe, is a reworking of the ancient labyrinth design in which an equal armed cross is emphasized and surrounded by a web of concentric circles. As with many Christian symbols, this was an adaptation of a symbol; that is known to have predated the Christian faith. This medieval variation is considered a breakthrough in design because it is less linear than the preceding, more formal, Roman design that developed from quadrant to quadrant. The medieval design made one path as long as possible, starting at the outer circumference and leading to the centre. Fraught with twists and turns, the path's meanderings were considered symbolic representations of the Christian pilgrim's journey to the Holy City of Jerusalem and of one's own journey through life. This classical design is sometimes referred to as "the Chartres Labyrinth" due to the location of its best known example.¹ The labyrinth was built at Chartres in the early 13th century (~ 1215 A.D.). No one knows the source of this classical 11-circuit labyrinth design, and much of its spiritual meaning and use has been lost.

The labyrinth of Chartres cathedral <https://www.cathedrale-chartres.org/en/cathedrale/monument/the-labyrinth/>