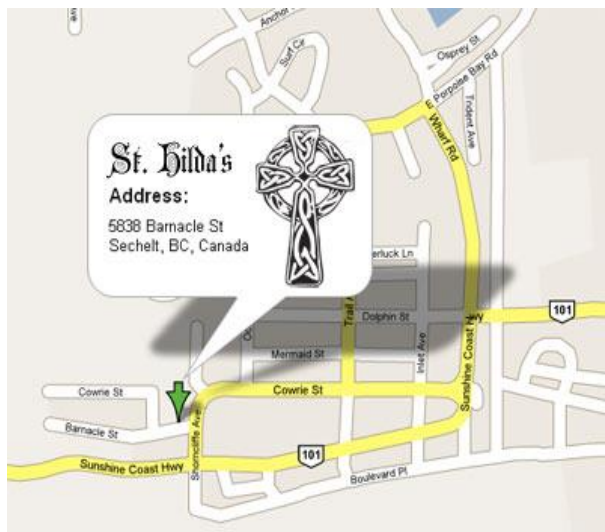


The narrow path is a two way street.

If you are going in and another person is going out, you will meet on the path. If you want to keep in an inward meditative state, simply do not make eye contact. If you meet someone you know, a touch of the hand or a hug may be an important acknowledgement of being on the path together.



For more information please visit our website at

<http://www.sthilda.ca/>

Directions to St. Hilda's Anglican Church are also available through

<http://maps.google.ca/>



The Labyrinth

at

St. Hilda's by the Sea
Anglican Church
Sechelt

**Available for
meditation walks
anytime.**

The History

Labyrinths and their close cousins, mandalas, have been found in almost every religious tradition around the world. For example, the Jewish mystical tradition used an elongated labyrinth figure called the Kabbala. The Native American labyrinth traditions used the Hopi Medicine Wheel and the Man in Maze. The Celts and Scandinavians made walking labyrinths of turf. The oldest known labyrinth was found on the island of Crete. It has seven path rings and is thought to be approximately 5,000 years old.

During the Middle Ages, labyrinths were created in churches and cathedrals throughout France and Northern Italy. These characteristically flat church or pavement labyrinths were inlaid into the floor of the nave of the church.



Equal-armed cross design

The labyrinth constructed at St. Hilda's Church is an 11-circuit labyrinth. The best known example of this type is embedded in the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France (built in the early 13th century ~ 1215 A.D.). The design of this labyrinth, and many of the other church labyrinths in Europe, is a reworking of the ancient design in which an equal-armed cross is emphasized and surrounded by a web of concentric circles.

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 meanderings were considered symbolic representations of one's own journey through life.

How to Use a Meditation Labyrinth

During meditation, the spiritual seeker passes through three universally common stages of experience: 1) releasing and quiet; 2) open and receiving; and 3) union. The labyrinth can be used in this threefold mystical tradition as follows:

Walk the path into the center and let go of all thought and simply open yourself to God. Empty or **release** anything that may be puzzling you or cluttering your mind.

After quieting the mind in the first part of the walk, the centre presents a new experience: a place of meditation and prayer. Often seekers at this stage in the walk find **insight** into their situation in life, or clarity about a certain problem, hence the label **illumination**. As one enters the center, the instruction is simple: enter with an open heart and mind; receive what there is for you.

The third stage, **union**, begins when you leave the center of the labyrinth and continues as you retrace the path that brought you in. In this stage the meditation takes on a grounded, energized feeling. Many people who have had an important experience in the center feel that this third stage gives them a way of **integrating** the insights they received. Others feel that this stage stokes the creative fires within. It energizes insight. It empowers, invites, and even pushes us to be more authentic and confident and to take risks with our gifts in the world. Union means communing with God. The third stage of the labyrinth empowers the seeker to move back out in the world, replenished and directed, which makes the labyrinth a particularly powerful tool for transformation.



Guidelines for Walking

There is no right way or wrong way to approach the labyrinth, however when there is more than one user these guidelines might be helpful.

Pause at the entry and allow yourself to be fully conscious of the act of stepping into the labyrinth. Firm up in your mind your spiritual intent. Allow about a minute, or several turns on the path, to create some space between yourself and the person in front of you.

Follow your pace. Allow your body to determine the pace. If you allow a rapid pace and the person in front of you is moving slower, feel free to move around this person. This is easiest to do at the turns by turning earlier. If you are moving slowly, you can step onto the labyrs (wide spaces at the turns) to allow others to pass.

Support your movement through the labyrinth by **becoming conscious of your breath**. Let your breath flow smoothly in and out of your body. It can be coordinated with each step – as is done in the Buddhist walking meditation – if you choose. Let your experience be your guide.