



Unicamp

A Unitarian Universalist Camp and Conference Centre

# Labyrinth Booklet



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*Unlike a maze, a labyrinth has a single path that leads you to the centre, and then the same path leads you back out again. It is a walking meditation which, depending on your own interpretation of the experience, calms and centers you, or puts you in touch with the energies of the earth. It is said that "the labyrinth meets you where you are." Labyrinth designs have been found on every continent and date back at least 3,500 years. Walking them was popular in medieval France, England and Scandinavia.*

*Walking a labyrinth can be an inspiring experience, at times transformational. A Guest Book is kept near the labyrinth. We invite you to sign our guest book if you so desire, with the date, and if you like you can add a few brief words or sentences describing your experience.*

*The Unicamp labyrinth will develop its own stories over time – in fact, it already has them. It has been said that walking a labyrinth provides you with a connection to all who have walked that labyrinth before, and also any labyrinth, over the years and through all the ages.*

*Stones: You can bring a stone to the centre, representing what you bring to the labyrinth or what you leave behind in it, and/or take a stone out with you, representing what you are bringing back into the world.*

*"Labyrinths offer the opportunity to walk in meditation to that place within us where the rational merges with the intuitive and the spiritual is reborn. Quite simply, labyrinths are a way to discover the sacred in everyday life."  
- Helen Curry*

*Sources for this booklet are listed in the bibliography at the back.*

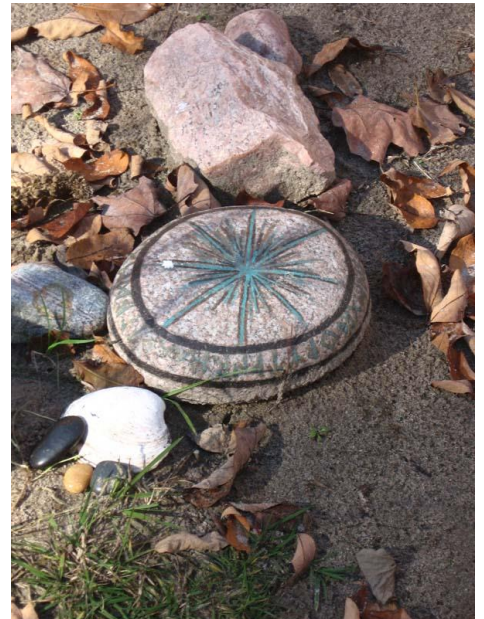


## The Story of Unicamp's Labyrinth

Unicamp's labyrinth was a generous bequest from the late Betty Bean Kennedy, and it has been at camp since 2005. Betty and her husband Bob were devoted longtime Unicampers; Bob's Beach is named after him.

Linda Reith has shared her recollections about Betty and the labyrinth:

"Betty decided to create a labyrinth in her back yard almost as soon as she moved to her new house after Bob's death. She and I were part of a coven called the Wyrd and the Wyrd agreed to help construct the labyrinth. At first we designed something based on the triscele, but it didn't work, so then we worked with this design which I already had in my back yard set in grass. Betty was determined to have a labyrinth she wouldn't have to weed so she had a huge hole dug which she filled with sand and then covered with wonderful pink gravel (pea sized). (Weeding wasn't really an option as her right arm was disabled from her cancer treatment.) The soil she removed became Mount Bob and was planted as a garden with a path leading through it. Betty bought the rocks that currently demark the paths at Unicamp to set out the labyrinth, though of course many rocks were brought as gifts. There are a couple that I painted to bless her labyrinth.



"As time went on Betty organized altars in each of the directions and the rocks from those altars are incorporated into the altars marking the directions at Unicamp. She also commissioned a sculpture for the center which she named Irene for the goddess of peace. The artist was Jo Anne Harder who is local to Fergus near Guelph. She also placed the small green sculpture named The Kiss in the labyrinth as it is now at Unicamp.

"Betty walked the labyrinth as a meditation tool. Sometimes she felt blessed just to sit in its pink glow. The Wyrd would often incorporate walking the labyrinth in our rituals. Typically we would set an intention and then walk the labyrinth singing a chant together. Sometimes we would stop at the centre and speak with each other, sharing what had emerged. More often we would exit the labyrinth before we spoke. The labyrinth was very important to us as it was a project we had all shared and it brought Betty pleasure which in turn brought us pleasure."

Betty was kind enough to leave a provision in her will that her beloved labyrinth be given to Unicamp, and she also provided money for transportation costs. In the summer of 2005 the stones and sculptures from the labyrinth arrived by truck, along with a load of sand for the base. It was decided that the labyrinth would be set up where the old swimming pool used to be, an area in need of revitalization. The Wild Ginger group set up the labyrinth in early October, using a compass to position the larger stones which mark off the four directions.

*"Walking the labyrinth is another way of tapping into forces beyond our normal conscious mind. It takes us to some ancient part of ourselves, as old as the turning of the planets and stars, as old as the goddess and earth energies, back when night was dark, when people knew the sky and nature was a part of us and we of it. This is something lost in our modern world, and the imbalance that it causes cries out for resolution. That's why the labyrinth touches so many people so forcefully."*

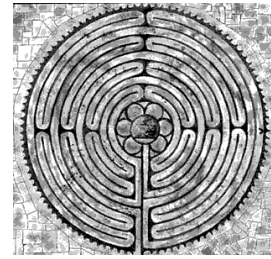
*- Robert Ferre, quoted by Helen Curry in **The Way of the Labyrinth***



## The 2 Most Common Labyrinth Types



“Classical” 7 circuit style



“Chartres” style, 11 circuit

Unicamp’s labyrinth is a seven-circuit “classical” type.

## Some Notes on the History of Labyrinths

In his book *Labyrinths: Walking Toward the Center*, Gernot Candolini says of the labyrinth: “It shows up in countless far-flung cultures: among Cretans and Spaniards, Etruscans and Britons, Normans and American Indians, Hindus and Indonesians. Because the method of constructing it is so clear and, once grasped, so simple, the labyrinth hasn’t changed for millennia. Hence this labyrinth has also been labeled the “classical labyrinth.”

The labyrinth is an archetypal symbol which seems to have sprung up almost concurrently on all six inhabited continents. All across Europe and east to Siberia, art prominently featuring spiral forms dates back to 15,000-18,000 BCE. Labyrinths date back at least 3,500 years; their exact origins are uncertain. Some uses of labyrinths from around the world:

- The Druids created small labyrinths with stones, for meditation by sunlight or moonlight
- In ancient Crete the labyrinth was found on coins and clay tablets, and associated with the myth of Theseus and the minotaur
- In Roman times it was a common pattern for pavements and floors
- In medieval cathedrals in France, the most famous of which is Chartres, labyrinths represented a pilgrimage to Jerusalem
- In England labyrinths were constructed on town commons, and were the site of maypole dances
- In Scandinavia labyrinths were often built in isolated areas near the coast; it was believed they had the power to trap trolls and bad winds, and bring sailors good luck
- Labyrinths are found in Hindu and Taoist temples
- In some parts of India a labyrinth is often found engraved near the door posts of houses
- In the aboriginal American cultures of the southwest, labyrinth forms were woven into baskets and an integral part of the mythology

## Walking a Labyrinth

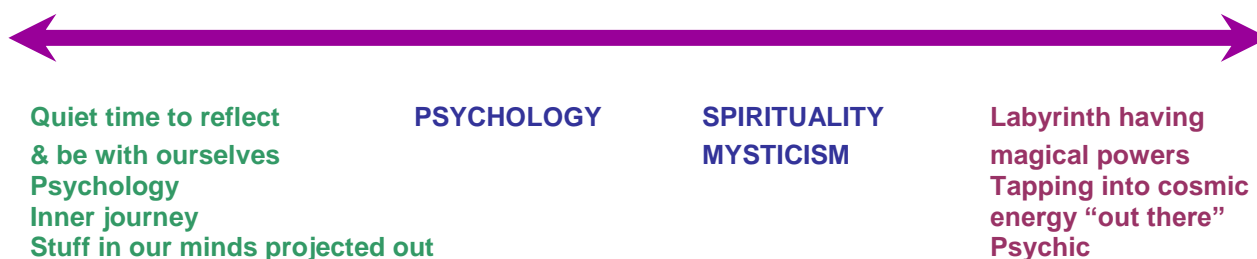
- There is no one “correct” way to walk a labyrinth. Do what feels right, at the time.
- It is suggested that you wait a few seconds after the last person before beginning your walk, so there is some spacing between people (because walks are usually more satisfying if you are not right on someone else’s heels.)
- Walk at your own natural pace, whatever speed is comfortable for you.
- It is perfectly OK to pass others who are moving more slowly.
- You will be passing those ahead of you on their way out – walk around each other in whatever way feels comfortable.
- Usually people walk labyrinths silently, but again some words may seem appropriate at times and that too is fine.
- Often people like to pause at the beginning before entering, and remain in the center for awhile. You may wish to meditate, stand, sit, walk around the center, turn to each of the 4 directions, etc etc. Upon leaving the labyrinth people often like to pause and look back towards the center.
- It is PERFECTLY OK for there to be more than one person in the center at the same time – the center is shared space, not private space; again, it’s at your own natural pace.



### 3 Parts of a Labyrinth Walk

Way In	Center	Way Out
<b>Release</b> Prepare What you bring to it Quieting Beginning a journey Trusting the path	<b>Receive</b> The still point Insight, illumination Arriving Letting go of what doesn't work Protection You are where you should be Own spiritual centre	<b>Return</b> Accept/own what received Re-integration What you're taking out into world Transformation Confidence Using the strength gained Empowerment, grounding

### A Unitarian Universalist “Theological” Continuum of Labyrinth Views



### A Jungian Perspective

*“Claiming our adult capacities, risking service to what wants to come into the world through us, is our individuation imperative. Setting forth upon the high seas of the unknown is where we are meant to be....[It] is where spiritual enlargement is found, and the only way we find the new land we are meant to occupy.”*

- James Hollis, *Why Good People Do Bad Things*, p. 222.

Walking a labyrinth is an ideal way to explore these and similar questions. In his book *Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life*, Jungian psychologist James Hollis suggests the following questions for reflection/discernment (pp. 256-257). Such questions (or similar ones) can also be brought to a labyrinth walk.

1. “Where has life, in its unfairness, stuck you, fixated you? Why do you continue to cooperate with the wounds rather than serve something larger, which serves you in return?”
2. “Where has life blessed you, given you a gift?”
3. “Where are you blocked by fear, stuck, rigid, resistant to change?”
4. “What is the fear beneath that fear?” (because it “gains its power from the wiring beneath” – a deeper fear from the past leading us to respond as a child and not as a mature adult.)
5. Where was each of your parents stuck, and how does this show up in your own life?
6. “Where do you avoid conflict, the necessary conflict of values, and therefore avoid living in fidelity with who you are?”
7. What things “are holding you back from the larger journey of the soul? Are you tired enough, hurting enough, to begin to take the soul’s journey on?”
8. Where are you looking for permission to live your life? No one else will give this – need to write your own life script.
9. “Where do you need to grow up? When will this happen?”
10. “What have you always felt called toward, but feared to do? What new life wishes to come into being through you?”

## How the Labyrinth Works

In a nutshell, labyrinth experts and researchers do not know how it works. However, several theories have been advanced concerning this question:

- Walking a labyrinth combines the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual levels, which is somewhat unique.
- Path in and out consists of an equal number of clockwise and counterclockwise 180° turns – does this somehow have the effect of balancing the brain (the water in the brain)?
- Meditative aspect – like all forms of meditation it quiets the mind
- Seems to change brainwave patterns – increase in alpha and theta waves has been measured (similar to that observed with meditation and psychic experiences)
- Effect of intention – we get out of our everyday busyness and preoccupations, and are in a receptive state
- Cumulative effects – feeling more grounded, more centred, more at peace, etc.
- Notion of the omphalos or center point, holy center etc. – an element of mystery
- Is the effect due to what we do while walking, or some intrinsic power of the labyrinth itself?
- Labyrinth as creating an altered state of consciousness (at least sometimes) and it is easier to bring thoughts into reality when in this state
- Has been considered sacred or divine space, imbued with a special energy
- Rev. Lauren Artress states that walking the labyrinth is a sacred ritual, and our own life is the raw material for it; she also states that the mission of the labyrinth is to unify and heal the world

*"Labyrinths are like cats – you can't own them, you just feed them and learn from them." "*

- attributed to Jeff Saward



## Symbolism

The labyrinth is a spiritual symbol dealing with mystery.

<b>Circle</b>	Wholeness, unity, eternity, one's self or own true nature
<b>Spiral</b>	An ancient goddess symbol, serpent = wisdom, knowledge
<b>Journey</b>	Trusting the path, inward journey of personal transformation, the hero's quest, our common life path
<b>Death &amp; rebirth</b>	Life cycles, fertility, birth, new knowledge, new awareness
<b>Earth</b>	Renewing connection to the earth/goddess
<b>Goddess/Feminine</b>	Mother goddess, Grandmother Spider, Mary (also masculine sky god, especially if tree in center)
<b>City</b>	Associated with cities at least since Greek and Roman times, representing order out of chaos; in England some labyrinths were called "Troy Town"
<b>All paths leading to one goal</b>	Validates following individual path in life – any point in labyrinth will eventually lead to the center; it is impossible to be lost and all paths are the right path – comforting concept
<b>Good fortune</b>	Protection
<b>City</b>	Order out of chaos
<b>Union of opposites</b>	Center as connecting sky and earth; mystical experiences deal with unity
<b>Ariadne's Thread</b>	Ariadne's thread as a guide through the labyrinth – what kind of threads help to guide you?
<b>Web</b>	The similarities with the UU Interdependent Web concept – a labyrinth is like a complex web; Indra's web, Grandmother Spider

## Symbolism of the Four Directions (Native Spirituality, also Wiccan/Celtic)

	Colour/Animal	Associated Symbolism	Tarot Suit & Elementals
<b>EAST</b>	Yellow Eagle	Air, spring, dawn, thinking, new light, beginnings, vision, rebirth, renewal, illumination, bells, childhood	Swords Sylph (air spirit)
<b>SOUTH</b>	Green or red Mouse or coyote	Fire, summer, noon, passion, quickness, power, growth & development, emotions, creativity, determination, youth	Wands Salamander (fire spirit)
<b>WEST</b>	Black Buffalo (or bear)	Water, autumn, sunset, sensitivity, love, death, psychic ability, introspection, meditation, dreams, visions, adulthood	Cups Undine (water spirit)
<b>NORTH</b>	White Bear (or buffalo)	Earth, winter, midnight, courage, wisdom, grounded, practical, steady, completion, fulfillment, mystery, elders	Pentacles Gnome (earth spirit)

East  
South  
West  
North

Enlightenment  
Receive outer world  
Inner world  
Take all and apply it to life and its issues



## Labyrinths and the Symbolism of the Journey

- A labyrinth walk can be compared with the hero's quest as described by Joseph Campbell (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*) which is essentially a search for the "divine essence" within.
- Campbell describes the pattern of the hero's adventure: "a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return." (p. 35) followed by integration of the insights into everyday life.
- This pattern is similar to the 3 parts of a labyrinth walk: the way in which is a time of quieting, anticipation and release; the centre which is the still point where insight/illumination may be experienced; and the return which provides a sense of empowerment, grounding and re-integration as the gifts of the labyrinth are taken out into the world.
- The greatest and most mysterious journey of all is our voyage through life itself. Labyrinths have long been used as a metaphor for life's journey and life cycles – birth, death, rebirth, the seasonal cycle. Rites of passage have been conducted in them, and some people find walking a labyrinth useful in times of illness or grief.
- Sense of trusting the path – it will take you where you need to be, physically and spiritually, and the similarities of trusting in the twists and turns of life.
- It is an inward journey of personal transformation and discovery – which is what the hero's journey is really about. These themes also partly explain why Unitarian Universalists love labyrinths – there are similarities between our approach to religion and modern understandings of what a labyrinth means and can do.

## Labyrinths and Spirituality

- Resonates with UU theology in some significant ways – the openness, and no one right way; also both are very much experience-based
- It is a right-brain, non-rational experience – awakens our spiritual side
- Lends itself to insights that pop our minds, seemingly out of nowhere
- Labyrinth walking is a means, a method, a vehicle – as are other forms of meditation. It is a practice – the effects of repeated walks
- Feeling of support/constancy/reliability despite life's problems/disappointments (related to mother goddess symbolism, earth symbolism; also the journey)

- Sense of reconnection, and finding things we didn't know we knew – similar to the Jungian notion of personal growth being a process of uncovering/rediscovers something that is already present in us, the “self” – and labyrinth is one path to this
- Opportunity for our “inner voice” to speak – link to the unconscious and its treasures – and thus can be used as an aid in discernment, overt or subliminal problem solving
- Spiritual/mystical experiences can be triggered by labyrinths

### **Labyrinths have been used for:**

- Use with crystals
- Associating planets with the labyrinth coils
- Use with Tarot cards
- Use with chakras
- Healing
- Ceremonial rituals – weddings, anniversaries, separations, memorials
- Families or couples celebrating or bonding together
- Observing seasons and holidays, with decorations (some feel its powers are increased during the solstices and equinoxes)
- Observing times of day such as sunrise or sunset (some feel its powers are increased then)

*“Trust your own intuition, your own spirituality. What you discover is what you need to discover and that is all that really matters as you walk the labyrinth.”*

- Gailand MacQueen, ***The Spirituality of Mazes and Labyrinths***

(These 2 photos are by Tom Brown)



### **Labyrinth Approaches – Things you might like to try:**

- Walk the labyrinth barefoot
- Dance, run, crawl, or walk backward
- Before a walk, draw a timeline of your life
- After a walk, record insights and reflections in a journal
- Engage in a quiet, centering time before and after a labyrinth walk
- Walk in “gracious attention” – i.e. quiet your mind but let thoughts come
- Have music playing while walking
- Ask the labyrinth for something
- Ask the labyrinth a question
- Repeat a mantra while walking (a sound, word or phrase)
- Bring the images of a dream you have had to the labyrinth
- Sing a chant while walking (individually or as a group)
- Use it for problem-solving – keep a problem or issue in mind as you walk it





## Problem Solving (source: Cassandra Eason)

- Entrance:** State the problem  
#1 Coil 3 List the possible options (no solutions here)  
#2 Coil 2 Think of factors that favour change  
#3 Coil 1 Think of factors that favour the status quo (or little change)  
#4 Coil 4 What other people will influence the decision, or be affected by it?  
#5 Coil 7 What are the risks involved in the possible new venture?  
#6 Coil 6 What is the untapped potential here, what can be achieved?  
#7 Coil 5 What is in the future if the possible action is carried out?  
**Center:** Allow images to come to mind  
**Way out:**  
Coil 5 What do you really want? (a spontaneous inner message)  
Coil 6 What is in the way of this?  
Coil 7 What are the first steps toward happiness?  
Coil 4 What unexpected things might happen as a result?  
Coil 1 Decide on one action you can and will take  
Coil 2 Find allies – who will you contact about your decision?  
Coil 1 What is your new life goal, or how will you redirect your energy?



## Dreams

- You can work with a dream while walking the labyrinth in order to get insights into the dream.
- Be aware of an image, or group of images, that the dream presents to you, and work with these images, opening them up as you go.
- This can also be a way of getting back into an unfinished dream, and developing it further.
- Other times, fragments of dreams may just surface as you walk, and you can choose to explore them further if you like.



## WE POLISH THE STONE

By Helen Iacovino

we polish the stone we've been given  
where Raven and Turtle are present,  
warming the cold stone with our light,  
heating the world with our words and our brainwaves.

ever retrieving the stones that we're finding,  
stones continuously arising from earth,  
arising from beaches, arising from meadows,  
growing like flowers by streambanks & fences.

in the labyrinth's circles power surrounds us,  
slowly it draws us into trusting the circle,  
trusting the Raven and trusting the Turtle,  
who toss stones between them, flashing many colours.

like water we polish our stones,  
water wearing down, water beating,  
water caressing & water singing,  
our feet addicted to the waves lapping over,  
our feet never wanting to emerge from the water.

we polish the stone we have chosen,  
we carry our stones, mill-stone & gem-stone,  
through the labyrinth where a path has been trodden,  
our hands clutching stones, our minds turned to the center,

where trusting the Raven & trusting the Turtle,  
a rainbow is growing to join all worlds together.



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*Published in the Canadian Unitarian Council's anthology Threads*



## Labyrinth Poetry

### CREATURES OF THE WEB

(A labyrinth poem)

By Helen Iacovino

*"Hope and fear chase each other's tails."  
- Buddhist saying*

we are creatures of the web,  
entranced & entrained,  
entering into it and retrained  
into our circular dance  
of life despite death,

following the faint thread  
created by no one,  
pulled by no one,  
which disappears around corners  
in the centre of every circle.

pulling first in one direction  
then another, & yet another -  
& so we follow  
the only thread we know,  
disappearing in the dust clouds  
& dust bunnies of the future.

creatures of the web, we long  
to crawl through the coils, maybe reinvent  
ourselves in myriads of fresh ways,  
to seek shelter despite knowing  
that nothing can reassure us,  
ever longing for brief reflection  
& the safety of silence.

we are nevertheless creatures  
tied ever to our earth, which lies

ever under our feet,  
& more so as we walk the coils.

coils, paths & strings  
all try to reassure us, remind us  
we always step on solid ground,  
& travelling in circles,  
we are ever returning.

we know this is not  
a world of straight answers or lines,  
not a straight-laced world;  
there are only winding threads  
we can pull at one by one,  
& unravel gradually & then put back.

we weave them with our whole being,  
we conjure them into apparitions  
that tie the world up  
into the knots its existence depends on.

creatures of the web, we dive  
into something called life, we come  
in from the sidelines, we come  
with multitudes of threads, we lose them,  
we find them, we go around again.

© Helen Iacovino





## AUTUMN LABYRINTH

By Helen Iacovino

like Coyote in unfamiliar terrain,  
continually learning new ways to walk,  
I step across packed sand through fallen leaves  
& lift my feet higher, with lighter steps -

distant leaves falling  
sound like people in the forest,  
as foot-fall & leaf-fall subtly blend  
into just one sound:  
sound of the whole world falling  
towards its winter dreams.

under sun, under trees,  
my terrain is everywhere,  
the gift of one of the last days  
in the dying forest,  
before winter's looming grip  
& the uncertainty we always look into.

freedom is never real -  
birds & rhythms,  
airplanes & timetables,  
all are bound & chained  
& each leaf predetermined underfoot.

the ever-present brook  
is full in a season of much rain  
with cool water we can't step twice in,  
as every falling leaf  
makes its statement to the world  
& like a spirit among trees  
falls to join all other countless things.

we count, we count anyway,  
determined to do what can't be done -  
as the labyrinth's circles give & take away -  
give us 2 chances on the path,  
as there & back we pass through twice,  
through the shifted stones  
& seashells torn by frost,  
the centre telling of a day like this  
when through bright sunshine, among trees,  
the birds answered each other's songs.





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[www.paxworks.com](http://www.paxworks.com)  
[www.labyrinthonline.com](http://www.labyrinthonline.com)

Sid Lonegren's website  
Caerdroia – Jeff & Kimberley Saward, Great Britain  
Alex Champion's website  
The Labyrinth Society  
The Labyrinth Company  
Labyrinth Enterprises – Robert Ferre, labyrinth builder/pioneer  
Toronto Labyrinth Community Network  
Directory of Ontario labyrinths on their website – this is a wonderful resource; the number of labyrinths is increasing  
Lauren Artress' website, worldwide labyrinth locator  
"Awakenings" website  
Myth, labyrinth spirituality, dowsing  
Labyrinth builders & facilitators  
Labyrinth resources/art



### **Unitarian Universalist websites and congregations with labyrinths:**

[www.uua.org/ga/ga00/223.html](http://www.uua.org/ga/ga00/223.html) Workshop at GA 2000 in Nashville  
[www.uucava.org/page/uucas-labyrinth-project](http://www.uucava.org/page/uucas-labyrinth-project) Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington – labyrinth project  
[www.sanjo세uu.org/OurWorshipLife/SpiritualPractices.html](http://www.sanjo세uu.org/OurWorshipLife/SpiritualPractices.html) First Unitarian Church of San Jose  
[www.uucfl.org/bg/labyrinth/index.shtml](http://www.uucfl.org/bg/labyrinth/index.shtml) Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Lauderdale

Article by Chris Michell in The Canadian Unitarian, Summer 2006 issue:  
[http://www.cuc.ca/canu/Summer2006\\_web1a.pdf](http://www.cuc.ca/canu/Summer2006_web1a.pdf)

### **Some labyrinth locations:**

Toronto: Trinity Square, just outside Eaton Centre (west side)  
High Park – north of Grenadier restaurant, over the hill  
Woodbine Beach – sometimes there is a labyrinth made of rocks in the sand  
Jubilee United Church, Underhill Drive, Don Mills (outdoor, open to public)  
Burlington: Central Park (off Guelph Line)  
Hamilton: St. Joseph's Health Care Centre (outdoor, open to public)

