



**scan this page**  
with Layar to see a video  
of a labyrinth walk.



St. Paul's labyrinth offers peace even on one of the busiest corners in Houston.

## COME FULL CIRCLE

Like traditional prayer, it can be somber or joyful, and each labyrinth walking experience is unique.

“Some come out with a clear message or answer to prayer,” Williford says. “Others with a grocery list for the week. It’s just good quiet time to meet whatever the need.”

Alice Bongers with Ann’s Labyrinth in Shepherd Park says the practice is very personal.

“I’ve walked it fast because I needed to be somewhere, and I’ve taken my time. Both are effective. It’s whatever you need when you’re doing it.”

She also adds that her granddaughters love to walk it. “I think it teaches kids how to be quiet and listen to the heart and not the head,” she says.

Williford has seen kids—particularly autistic children—become fascinated with the labyrinth.

“It quiets them,” she says. “It’s not a panacea. Kids are still kids. But it’s interesting to see the effect it can have on them.”

Houston offers a variety of labyrinth walking experiences from professionally laid, immaculately landscaped versions to more simple, volunteer-created designs, all with unique, yet equal ways of stilling the mind. And while you might find you have a

favorite, most walkers say they benefit from visiting multiple labyrinths.

## THEN AND NOW

Perhaps the best known, and some say the most beautiful, labyrinth in the city is the one located near the chapel at the University of St. Thomas, but many are not associated with churches at all. In fact, a popular place for them is near hospitals, such as MD Anderson, where people often need a few moments of quiet reflection.

And many agree that the labyrinth located at Sylvan Rodriguez Park in Clear Lake is definitely worth the drive. That one is centered within a ring of 13 laurel trees representing the 13 moons of the year and a ring of standing stones marking the summer and winter solstices.

Does it sound a little New Age-y for you? It might help to realize that labyrinths are an ancient tool that many believe were first used by early Christians wanting a symbolic trip to Jerusalem since the actual trip was often difficult and dangerous. Others believe Vikings first used them before a voyage as a good luck measure ensuring a safe return.

Whatever their origin, there are existing labyrinths known to be thousands of years old and, in all of them, the pattern of the circle represents the idea of a journey. ❖

## if you go

### walk the walk

*New to labyrinth walking? There’s no right or wrong way to do it, but these steps might help get you to find your center.*

**Dress comfortably** to avoid distractions. Consider a jacket and comfy shoes, or go barefoot if the surface permits. Walking barefoot can be especially grounding.

**Get focused.** Pause at the entrance. Become quiet and open to the experience. Enter when it feels right.

**Walk with intention and purpose.** Whether seeking guidance, forgiveness or knowledge, make it clear to yourself. Meditate on a purposeful word (grace, hope, abundance, truth) and decide what it means to you at that moment. Stay attentive. Notice where your thoughts go.

**Respect the walk of others.** Humming or singing is fine, as is silence. Notice the attitudes of others and consider the reasons they’re there; honoring their walk honors your own. Slow moving traffic keep right. Just kidding, but do be aware that some will take longer than others. It’s OK to pass politely.

**Linger in the center.** Focus on sights and sounds of the labyrinth before heading out.

**Exit with reverence.** Turn and face the labyrinth and give an acknowledgement such as an “amen” or a simple nod.

**Reflect.** Write down or illustrate significant thoughts or revelations.

