

Journeys

Our Christian lives are often spoken of as journeys. But there are many kinds of journey. Sometimes we are called to move on: to a new job, a new school, a new home, a new community, or a new understanding of how we should live. We leave the past behind and embrace a new future.

Sometimes we go and return. Pilgrimages are like this: we have a specific destination, we spend some time there, and then we return, perhaps with new insights, perhaps refreshed and renewed by the experience.



Currently labyrinths are very popular. St Hildeburgh's in Hoylake had a golf themed labyrinth while the Open was happening earlier this year, but labyrinths have a long history. Perhaps the most famous is at Chartres, shown here. Labyrinths like this are not mazes, they are not puzzles: there is a single route to follow. Nor is the point to reach the centre. The point is to follow the path and emerge where one started. It is form of prayer, a form of meditation, in which, as Eliot expresses it in *Little Gidding*, "the end of all our exploring Will be to arrive where we started And know the place for the first time."

But we do not need to go far, or need a special route. We can walk a familiar path in a reflective way. We might take a journey around St Bridget's Church. Enter by the South door and kneel before the font, recalling baptism, our acceptance into the Church family and the beginning of our Christian lives. Then move forward and sit in the front pew. Here we reflect on the Word of God: both as written in Scripture at the lectern on our left, and as interpreted for us, here and now, from the pulpit. Now enter the chancel, approaching the altar, aware that we are in the presence of God. Kneel at the altar rail, the place where we meet with God in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. Be aware too that here the whole Church is brought together, for sharing in the one bread makes us one body. But we cannot stay here: we must return, walking back down the aisle. Finally we leave the Church and re-enter the world, so that we can live out our faith in our lives.

This is the journey we take in every Holy Communion service: we gather, we hear the word of God, in scripture and in the sermon, we meet with God, as a body, in bread and wine and then we are sent out to serve God in the world outside.