

# ADVENT LABYRINTH

This Labyrinth has been designed to encourage you to make a journey to follow the star like the wise men of old to find the child in the manger who is the Saviour of the world. Make this journey with Mary and Joseph, with the shepherds, with all who came looking for the promised king.

There will be different stations to stop at on this journey giving you an opportunity to participate, to think, to pray but you do not have to do any of these things if you do not want to. Music will accompany your journey, take your time to think and reflect. You can take however long you want to, do not rush, enjoy the experience and allow God to speak to you in this meditation.

## STATION ONE - STAR GAZING

Consider the awe inspiring majesty of a star filled sky. Consider how you would react if you thought God was asking you to go on a journey, either a physical journey or an emotional one. How far would you be prepared to go? What reasons would you give yourself to ignore the calling? What if the journey was to have lasting significance for you or for others?

*Prop - photo of star filled sky or universe on a computer screen or a big screen.*

## STATION TWO - BAGGAGE

Before you go on a journey, you need to pack. Journeys can be long. They can be dangerous. You don't want to be carrying excess baggage. So what do you need to let go of? Who do you need to make peace with? What things are you carrying that you don't need to? Guilt? Worry?

Take a stone, hold it in your hand and think about all these things. Are there things for which you need to say sorry to God? Are there worries that you need to let go of? Then when you have thought about all these things, let go of your stone, drop it into the water and as you do so ask God to take these things away.

*Props - some pebbles and a bowl/vase of water*

## STATION THREE - GIFTS

If someone had given you a really expensive gift, what would you do in return? Give them a gift too? Return the expensive gift? What if you couldn't return it, what if it was too important to you? How much is the gift itself worth? What would you give? Is there anything you would like to give to the baby Jesus now? Nothing? An open mind? Time for someone who is lonely?

Jesus said "Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, that thing you do for me."

Maybe you feel you don't have anything to give. Maybe you don't want to. But if you do, write the gift you'd like to bring to the baby on the inside of the envelope and seal it shut, then keep it in your hands until you reach the manger to present it to the baby.

*Props - envelopes and pens*

## **STATION FOUR - THE OASIS**

You've reached an oasis. The wise men had a long way to go, through scorched dry desert lands. Sometimes they must have been desperate for water and provisions. They must have felt hot, thirsty, and maybe even too tired to go on. When plants aren't watered, they die, and we are the same. We are also the same inside. If we don't get fed spiritually then our spiritual lives die.

Think for a minute about a time, if you have had one, where you felt God touch or refresh you. Thank God for it and then take a glass of water and have a drink. While you are drinking, ask God to refresh you again. Ask God to show you the times and places that might refresh you, to show you where your next oasis might be.

*Props - plastic cups and jug/bottles of water*

## **STATION FIVE - LOST AND FOUND**

The wise men were lost in a strange country. They needed a signpost, a guide. They went to the king's palace and asked the way. It was the priests who told them where they needed to look. They told them of the prophecies that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

You can't go on a strange journey without signposts or maps to help you get there.

The Bible, God's word, is our signpost, while other people can help us on our journey. Think about the people and things that have helped you make your way in the world so far. Open your map book and consider for a moment the complexity of any journey, the number of wrong turns and detours that surround the easiest route. Thanks God for the people and things that have kept you on the right track.

*Props - road maps*

## **STATION SIX - DOUBT**

"Doubt is part of any journey". That's what Christians in the east sometimes say to encourage each other. In the Christmas icon called "The Nativity" Joseph is sitting at the edge of the picture, looking sad. Some say he is being tempted, doubting that God had really done his miracle. But Joseph is still in the picture; he is still an important part of it all. The lesson for us is don't go on the journey alone. Don't give up, because you have doubts. As a father with a sick child once said, "Lord I believe. Help me overcome my unbelief".

*Prop - Picture of a nativity scene*

## **STATION SEVEN - LIGHT**

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. For to us a child is born".

Everything looks different with the lights on, just like everything feels different when you're in love. Light your candle and watch the flame for a short while. Think of places where you wish that light would shine today.

*Props - candles and matches*

## **STATION EIGHT - LIES AND BETRAYAL**

Sometimes people lie to us, fail us or hurt us, and it feels like we have been betrayed, broken. Sometimes it is in small ways, because we all make mistakes; sometimes it is in painfully large ways. The wise men expected honest help from King Herod. They thought he wanted to worship the Messiah, but instead he wanted to kill the baby.

When people we think we can trust let us down, or hurt us, it can totally shatter our faith itself. We wonder where God is and how he could allow it. Yet God is still there, and faith carries on ultimately. Maybe you feel scarred by it all or cynical. At this point if you like someone will anoint your hands with oil. When they do so ask God to heal the pain and the cynicism caused by those who have failed you.

*Props - someone standing at this station with anointing oil*

## **STATION NINE - GOD IN THE FLESH**

This is the manger which one night became God's throne room. Stay here and just sit in God's presence for a while. If you wrote down a gift for the Christ child place the envelope in front of you and use it as a focus for prayer.

*Prop - a manger*

## **STATION TEN - BEING RESCUED**

The wise men were warned in a dream to go back home to their own country by another route. If they had not taken this detour who knows what king Herod might have done to them. He even stooped to slaughtering young innocent children in Bethlehem to protect his selfish ambitions. Think about the times you have had close shaves and escaped, or been helped when in trouble.

Look at the corks floating on the water. When the surface becomes disturbed or agitated the water supports the corks no matter how stormy the waves become. Take a moment to thank God for protecting and supporting you through difficult times.

*Props - basin of water and corks*

## **STATION ELEVEN - REFUGEES**

Mary, Joseph and the Christ child became persecuted refugees after Jesus was born. Herod wanted to kill them: "and gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under".

After 2000 years very little has changed. There are still people who are forced to leave everything they know, love and find familiar; rich or poor, through no fault of their own. Look at your atlas and think back over the news stories you have heard this year of people being forced out of their homes by war, persecution or disaster. Take a moment and pray for those refugees now.

*Prop - atlas or globe*

## **STATION TWELVE - BACK HOME**

After every great and wonderful experience, we have to go back home, and it was the same with the wise men. Sometimes everyday life can seem a bit mundane after all the excitement of a long journey. But the Celts had a way of making everyday things special, turning the simple and everyday into a prayer.

Repeat this prayer to yourself: take it away with you.

Bless to me, my God, everything my eye sees  
Bless to me, my God, every sound I hear  
Bless to me, my God, every scent in my nostrils  
Bless to me, my God, everything I taste, every note I sing, every word I say  
Everything that guides me  
Each dream I pursue.

## **AS YOU FINISH**

You have come to the end of the Advent Labyrinth. Think back and consider which parts affected you most deeply. The people and situations that came into your mind. Where you felt the presence of God.

Before you leave you are invited to have your hands washed and then to eat the bread and drink wine. We ask you to take this opportunity because although God sent his son Jesus to be with us that first Christmas, the baby in the manger became the Saviour who died on a cross for each one of us. We eat the bread and drink the wine to remember who Jesus is and what he has done for us.

*Props - Card with the prayer written on it, basin with warm water and hand towel, and bread and wine.*