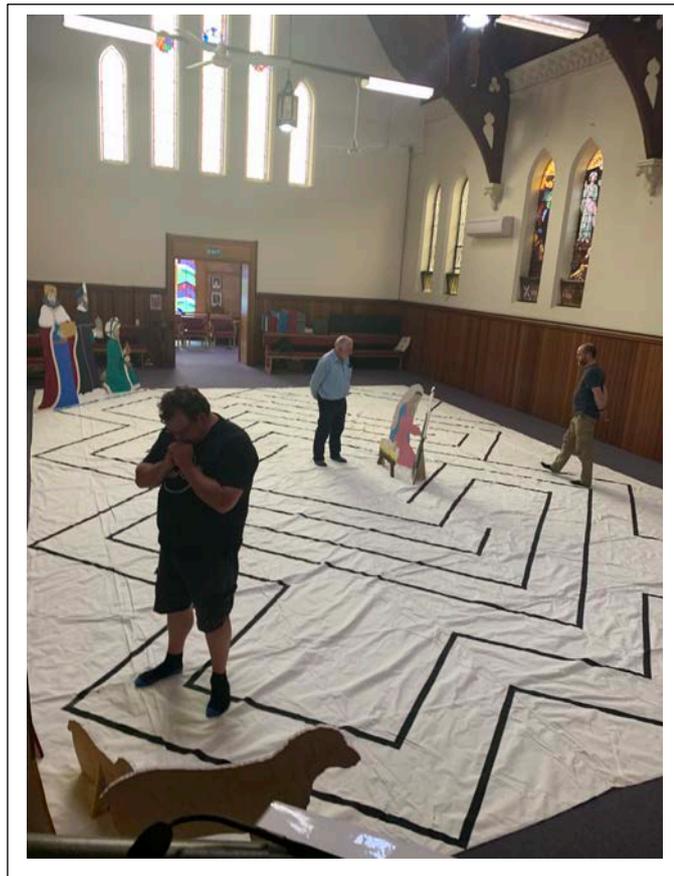


## **Banyule Network Christmas Labyrinth 2020**

**“Let the Christmas story, touch your story.”**



## **Entering the Labyrinth:**

### **The Light of Hope**

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

(John 1:5,9)

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2020 is a year that we will remember for a long time to come. For many of us it has been a very difficult year. As you enter this labyrinth, it is likely the first time you've been able to enter a church since before Easter. How does that feel?

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Take a moment to breathe deeply, to notice what tensions you carry as a result of this year. Lay those burdens down before you enter.

As you begin this journey through the labyrinth, carry with you the light of hope which shines in the darkness – and the darkness will not overcome it.

## Centre Station:

### Jesus is born

While Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:6-7)

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The child Jesus is born – in the same painful, sweaty and messy way that all babies are born. Consider for a few moments the risks that **God** took – bringing hope and change to the world through a small, vulnerable human baby.

Yet – mysteriously – this was God’s way of entering into and identifying with the human story. Through Jesus, the Light of the World, God’s ways of love, compassion, justice and inclusiveness would be made known to the world.

Of course, Jesus did not remain a baby. The story of his birth is linked firmly to the story of his death and resurrection. As you ponder the birth of Jesus, look past the manger, up towards the window that depicts the scene of his appearance to the disciples after his death. If we are to understand the significance of the birth of Jesus, we must do so in the light of his death and resurrection.

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When you are ready, walk on to the next station.

## **The Shepherds:**

### **Jesus' birth is announced**

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace among those whom he favours!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

(Luke 2:8-20)

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It would not have been a surprise to a Jewish audience, who knew the Hebrew scripture well, that Jesus' birth was announced to Shepherds in a field. Although Christian writers often comment on the lowly status of the shepherd, a reader of the Hebrew bible would know that many of the key figures in the story of God, figures who were part of Jesus' family line, were also shepherds. Think of Abraham and his sons and David and his family as examples. And of course, the great pastoral Psalm, "The Lord is My Shepherd alludes to this too.

Later in his life, Jesus will tell his followers: “I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me.” What does it mean for us to be following the Good Shepherd?

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When you are ready, walk on to the next station.

## **The Visit of the Wise Men**

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking: “Where is the child who has been born King of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened.

(Matthew 2:1-3)

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Many of us know of the wise men as part of the Christmas narrative. They bring a sense of the exotic to the story; strangers from a distant land who bring mysterious gifts to the child. But if this is just an exotic flourish to the text, it is interesting to note Herod’s reaction. He was afraid.

When the news of Jesus birth is revealed, it is the people we might least expect who are attracted by it and who want to offer worship and gifts. Others are struck with fear.

Sometimes we miss the light that is around us because we think we already know what to expect.

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Where have you noticed God’s light of hope shining on you this year? Give thanks to God for the moments of God’s presence you have noticed.

When you are ready, walk on to the next station.

## **Final Station:**

### **How then, shall we live?**

When Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and King Herod was ruler of Galilee ... the word of God came to John, son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He lived near the Jordan River, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins ...

John spoke sternly to the crowds that came out to be baptised by him, 'Your life needs to change ... not just your appearance but your whole heart attitude. Is it healthy and blossoming?'

The crowds asked him, 'Then what are we supposed to do?' John said to them, 'If you have two coats, give one away. Share your food with the hungry.'

To the tax-collectors John said, 'No more extortion – collect only the amount of tax set out in the law.' To the soldiers John said, 'Don't blackmail. Be content with your wages.'

... and with many other words, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

(Luke 3:1-18)

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John's ministry is one of preparation for the coming of Jesus, helping people turn their lives around to line up with God's ways of justice. It's a commitment in keeping with the songs of Mary and Zechariah that come before Jesus' birth. If you're not familiar with them, you will find them at them in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of Luke's Gospel. These songs also encourage us to worship God rightly by loving our neighbour.

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Identify one action or one change that you will implement in your life. Write it on a Post-it note and place it in the offering bowl.

As you leave the labyrinth, Let God's Spirit fill you with hope and peace ...

Banyule Labyrinth Stations written by Rev. Sandy Brodine.

The life-sized Nativity figures are a COVID creative project made by Alan Brook.



Audio Recordings: David Landis Morse  
Rev. Sandy Brodine  
Rev. Paul Blacker  
Kristen Barnett  
Rev. Brendan Byrne



Online “Labyrinth SPACE” curated by Kristen Barnett. This can be viewed on the Banyule Network Facebook page, or on the Banyule Network Vimeo page.

With thanks to the many helpers who came to set up, to pack up and to act as greeters and sanitizers in order that this event could happen.

With particular thanks to Cathie Clarke for her support, and for putting together the COVID Safe Plan.

We all pray that this labyrinth will help you connect with the God who made you – and to find the light of Christ in the darkness this Christmas.