

# Tillich Park Labyrinth

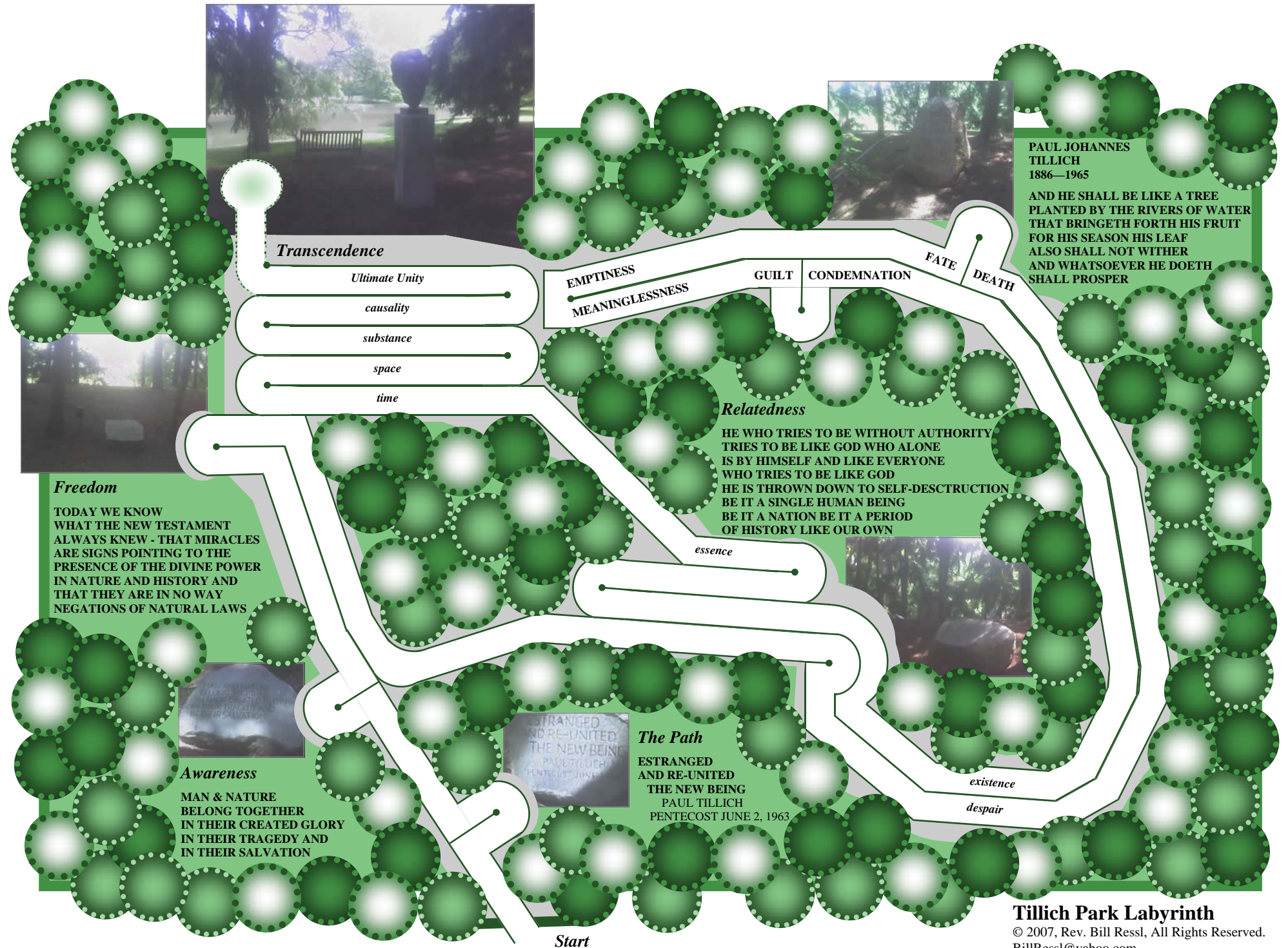
## Welcome!

The Tillich Park Labyrinth is a finger labyrinth. As all labyrinths are tools of self discovery and discernment, take time to create a calm space and frame off a period of time for self reflection as you take a walk through the process of New Being defined by Paul Tillich. Start at the lower center. Follow the path with your finger or a pencil; pausing at each curve to read the "stone" along the path. Consider the words along the path as they relate to your life - allow the Spirit to commune. Unlike a maze, labyrinths have only one path. The path in also leads out.

## A Note from the Creator of the Labyrinth

This labyrinth was inspired by a walk through Tillich Park in New Harmony, Indiana. The pine needle path wanders through a forest of Norwegian Spruce. At specific points through the park stones are engraved with Tillich's thoughts. As I walked through the park, first at night and then during a beautiful May afternoon, a kairos moment occurred, a communion with the Spirit - it became clear that the park, as most of Tillich's writings, subtly yet distinctly speak to his four step process of New Being: increasing awareness; increasing freedom; increasing relatedness; and increasing transcendence. This labyrinth was created as a tool to break free of historical time and to touch the Spirit deep within. This labyrinth is dedicated to Mrs. Jane Owen on the *true* Memorial Day 2007, this Wednesday, May 30, 2007.

Peace & Blessings,  
Rev. Bill Ressler, M.Div., M.S.W.  
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# Tillich Park Labyrinth

## Paul Tillich

Paul Tillich (August 20, 1886 - October 22, 1965) is known as one of the greatest systematic theologians of the 20th century. Tillich was born in Starzeddel, Germany. He was the first born son of the Reverend Johannes (a Pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church) and Mathilde Tillich. As a youth he learned about history by playing with the boys on the 500 year old walls that surrounded the bucolic village he lived in. At age 8, on a trip to the Baltic Sea, he experienced the power of creation and the presence of the infinite. That experience laid the foundation for his life's philosophical and theological work exploring the relationship between the finite existential horizon with the infinite vertical dimension of the divine.

Following his father's footsteps, Tillich was ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1912. For over two decades he taught philosophy and theology in a number of German universities. In 1933 he was dismissed from his teaching position due to his opposition to the Nazis. Later that year he joined the faculty of the Union Theological Seminary in New York. At Union Tillich became a prolific author and influential lecturer. In 1954 he accepted a prestigious appointment at Harvard. He moved to the University of Chicago in 1962. Tillich dedicated Tillich Park in New Harmony, IN on Pentecost Sunday 1963. His ashes were interred in the park on Pentecost Sunday 1966.

## Walking the Tillich Park Labyrinth

**Start:** As you begin, imagine walking into a canopy of tall Norwegian Spruce trees, cool and calm with beams of light dancing through the branches.

**The Path:** Estranged and Re-united, The New Being. Reminds us that we live in estrangement, the constant tension between despair and ecstasy, often in a state of anxiety. Yet, at any moment and in any space the Spirit can break through - we can transcend our current reality and experience a New Being in a New Reality.

**Awareness:** Humanity and nature belong together. We are connected. We are one. Each of us comes from the Eternal Now to live within existence; someday we will once again return. Be aware of your finitude in this existence as well as your participation in the Eternal Now which had no beginning, is, and ever will be.

**Freedom:** Miracles, signs, and symbols are all around pointing towards the Divine Power in nature and history. From this point in Tillich Park one can experience the breaking in of the Spirit. Above and beyond the stone is a break in the trees opening the sky and filling this place with sun - much like when the Spirit breaks into our life filling us with courage and faith. We are free to break from our past forms to think anew; free to transcend into a new reality. Revelation is at hand. Without the courage to be we fall into despair; yet we always have freedom to transcend.

**Relatedness:** In Tillich Park this is a challenging place, much like a World War One trench where many of Tillich's colleagues died. It reminds us to consider how do we relate to others? How do we relate to our Ultimate Concern? Is our Ultimate Concern God - or ourselves? How do we participate in life? Do we live estranged from what we could be or do we truly value a communion with the Spirit - *and* live it? Do we allow the Power of Being to fuel our courage and faith towards becoming a New Being in a New Creation in a New Reality... or do we become a non-being wandering in despair?

**despair:** Despair is never far away; it is ever present. Within despair non-being is present. We experience loneliness, disintegration, self-seclusion, intentionless vitality, chaotic formlessness, and a mechanized existence with a meaningless fate.

**FATE & DEATH:** Take a moment to stand before Paul Tillich's memorial stone - between the existential forms of anxiety known as fate and death. In despair fate is focused only on self-destruction. Consider, how fate would be experienced if one's Ultimate Concern was God? Death. The end of finite existence. The death of others is a constant reminder of our loss of relationship. Yet, if we come from the Eternal Now

and return to the Eternal Now - what is death? Is it time to die to our old self so a New Being can emerge?

**EMPTINESS & MEANINGLESSNESS:** Anxiety experienced as non-being empties our sense of personhood and fills us with meaninglessness. Transcendence towards a New Being in a New Reality is near, yet it is so far away when one follows the path of despair.

**GUILT & CONDEMNATION:** Guilt about anything and everything; that which one has done and has not done. Guilt that leads to condemnation; condemnation that kills creativity and vitality.

**existence:** Throughout our despair the Power of Being is present able to fuel our courage and faith so that we can exist holding the tension between our ontological polarities without falling into despair. Holding in tension our sense of: individualization and participation with our Ultimate Concern; our creative dynamics and the forms which give life understanding; and, understanding of freedom that allows one to strive towards the Ultimate.

**essence:** At times the Power of Being fuels our courage and faith in our Ultimate Concern and a balanced essential reality can be experienced. We develop a clear sense of personhood which is in communion with the Spirit. We experience a sense of vitality and growth which is intentional and purpose filled. We become free of our finite existence and strive towards the Ultimate; our life transcends itself.

**The Structures of Self-Destruction:** As one moves toward the Ultimate, the Structures of Self-Destruction (time, space, substance and causality) are experienced in a re-formed nature.

**time:** Within despair time vanishes and the anxiety of death is ever present. As we move towards the Ultimate, time is in communion with the Spirit and becomes liberating with an eternal memory.

**space:** Within despair there is no specific space to call our own; non-being is the ultimate insecurity. As we

move towards the Ultimate we learn our space, we have a world, a specific space to exist within the abstract unlimitedness. We have courage to be present and to define our space recognizing the space we hold in Eternal Life as part of the Eternal Now.

**substance:** Within despair we see the outside world as being accidental without meaning or purpose. As we move towards the Ultimate we recognize that existence is relatively static and self-contained yet not related to any identifiable substantial form since the Ultimate is beyond our forms.

**causality:** Within despair there is no power to be and we are the prey of non-being. As we move towards the Ultimate we can resist non-being by looking towards the Power of Being. We exist with a cause-creating ground of causality recognizing New Creation is possible.

**Ultimate Unity:** The final dimension of Being and Knowing is Ultimate Unity, a theonomous state. Within Ultimate Unity the Power of Being is fueling courage and faith to exist in a Spirit determined and Spirit directed way while remaining fully oneself in an ecstatic existence which recognizes the multi-dimensional unity of life.

**Transcendence:** The final step of the four step process of New Being. Take a moment to enjoy having reached the center. From this point in Tillich Park one looks out onto the water as Tillich looked out to the Baltic Sea at age 8 which began his journey of discovery. From here you will begin the journey back to the beginning. Life is a continual journey of increasing transcendence towards reframing existence in the direction of the Ultimate. As one considers their participation with the holy, one transcends all aspects of their existence, their life. As we transcend from a past reality to a new reality we are challenged to rethink all aspects of life leading us once again to the beginning, to increasing awareness. Enjoy the journey.