

Living with Meaning, Truth, and Kindness...

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

Opening Prayer – Lucinda will set the intention to open heart and mind, welcoming whatever is to be awakened today.

Chant – *Get Ready, My Soul* by Daniel Nahmod

Introduction –Diana

Good morning. My name is Rev. Diana Johnson, Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystic Heart Spiritual Center. I begin today by welcoming you Home...Home to our Community, and Home to your own Mystic Heart.

Our theme for 2021 is *Connection*. The point of focus for the month of January is *Immerse Yourself*. And this morning, I am going to lead you on a meditative journey entitled *Living with Meaning, Truth, and Kindness...as a way to Immerse Yourself* in meaningful *Connection*. Today is the first Sunday of the New Year. We are making some small changes...we will be offering Taizé each week as our primary form of Sunday Devotion. In this way, we will be honoring the Spiritual Practices of Meditation and Prayer. And to complete each meditative experience, we will include a brief Celebration Practice. Celebration, too, is a Spiritual Practice that invites, welcomes, and gives thanks for the Good in our lives. And so we begin a New Year, together in Practice, together in Spirit.

I invite you now to get comfortable and settle into the stillness, bringing your awareness into this time and place...letting go of everything that has come before this moment... relaxing into this experience, feeling yourself grounded in the here and now...anything that may await you when our time together is done...letting yourself be held...

Let your body, mind and soul be completely at ease, becoming absolutely still as you allow yourself to be taken by the meditative tone of Taizé...allowing the words and music to wash over you...to move through you...

Let's begin by taking a couple of slow, deep breaths, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth, allowing the muscles in the face to relax...this allows the entire body to relax.

Breathing as one reminds us that we are connected, by the very act of breathing. Spiritus...meaning both breath and Spirit...reminds us that we are One in Spirit. We allow the breath to carry us inward, settling into an open-hearted state, where Truth is the dominant tone, where there is only here and now...feeling into this moment together...feeling the presence of your sacred community.

As we consciously step into the flow of meditation, we acknowledge our connection with all Life. Seeing with the inner eye, sense with me now the global web of

consciousness, each of us a point of Light...all beings, all over the world who, in this moment, are sitting in meditation or prayer, or attending their own sacred services...all of us in unison, acknowledging the Presence of the Divine...consciously connected by our common purpose...feeling the collective intention that brought us here...feeling the deep communion with that which is bigger than we are...feeling the impulse to grow and evolve that's awakening within us...

By consciously connecting...building a global web of consciousness through prayer and meditation, our collective Work here is empowered...our individual Work is empowered...healing has begun...Wholeness is revealed.

"For where two or (more) are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)

To begin our path of contemplation this morning, I pose a question. How do I inhabit the soul on Earth as a human being, living tenderly and authentically enough that I can be who I am, and create a path to what matters?

How do I let go of the resistance to what is trying to be born through me, so that the Light of Spirit can shine and radiate from within me?

For I know that this is how Spirit is revealed on Earth...as the layers of who I am not are worn away by living, then little by little, the Light I carry can pour into the world. My constant challenge is to accept *how* life wears away what doesn't matter until the miracle of life is revealed in everything. This is the purpose of the human journey...to live openly and honestly until we become a source of uncovered Light.

SILENCE – 2 Minutes – Bell

The Book of Soul: Where All Souls Meet (Mark Nepo) - Diana

"We do not need to separate things, not to alter life, but to move through life, the way a swimmer parts the deep. Though as soon as we finish a stroke, the Whole of Life joins around us. So the goal is not to control or conquer life, but to immerse ourselves in it. And for all the places we can travel and all the ways we can study, there's no greater teacher than when we dare to share the truth of our lives. When facing what's ours to face, we're surprised to learn, time and again, that under what seems unbearable is the rest of life waiting to be lived."

"In time, inexhaustible Universe can touch anyone brave enough and tender enough to embark on a quest to know who we are in relation to everything around us. Whether you call that vastness God, Atman, dharma, Allah, nature, or quantum physics, each of us can be infused with what matters if we can face the truth of our lives, love each other in spite of and because of our differences, and live into the deeper questions through acts of love."

"It seems the purpose of suffering is to exhaust us our differences, and the purpose of love is to awaken us to how we're at heart the same. Then we discover that the

Temple is the world. Still, every life, every generation, every age takes its turn at pushing each other away, only to be loved and worn back to the one tribe we belong to... There is no they. We are they. We are each other. And there's a deep Unity that always waits below our righteous insistence that we know the way."

We spend much time talking, "but ultimately we make no ground until we listen – to each other and to the current of humanity from which we rise and return. We only have one turn at being here together before we pass what we've done or not done to the next generation. I pray we can listen to what love and suffering open us to, so we can drink from that well and build a better world."

As we move into a New Year, something is calling us to go deeper.

Musical Meditation – *Something's Calling Me* by Jami Lula

Reading excerpted from Mark Nepo – Diana

Something's calling me a little bit deeper...

As we move repeatedly from surviving to thriving, our walk in the world can wear us down or lift us up, depending on how often we remember that we're part of something larger". For this we need one another...we need relationship...we need community. "It's letting each other in that can distribute the weight of suffering." It is listening to another, being heard by another, being held by another, and sharing our life's stories that eases the hurt and brings the warm glow of acceptance... empathy... connection...belonging...that brings meaning to our lives.

"By its very nature, meaning is gathered and enlivened through relationship. It is how we make sense of our experiences, the practice of living as an awakened part in an awakened Whole.

By its nature, truth is gathered and enlivened through deep presence and deep listening. It is the practice of seeing and receiving things-as-they-are, the practice of living with the bareness of being.

And kindness is enlivened and released through the risk of immediate care. It is the practice of allowing compassion to guide us, the practice of uncovering our intimacy with all things.

Together, meaning, truth, and kindness connect everything, forming a lifeline we can hold onto, no matter the storm."

SILENCE – 2 Minutes

Chris – Meditation

I invite you to join me in taking a deep, cleansing breath... And as you exhale, release everything that has come before this moment... Simply relax... let your body settle into a comfortable position and become still...

In this stillness, know with me that Spirit is fully present, right here, right now... God surrounds us, pouring into us from all sides... And God is within us, radiating out from us... Let Spirit fill you with Love and Peace, and let it radiate back out from you into the world... This world has never needed God's Love and Peace more than it does right now... And we are the vehicles through which these Divine Qualities are to flow into the human experience...

As we freely give our Love and Peace to others, we are eternally replenished... God fills us constantly with the Gifts of Spirit, even as we give them away... For we draw from an Infinite Well of Love, Peace, Beauty, Joy and Truth... It is God within us that is the Source and Substance of these Gifts... Our only responsibility is to be an open vessel for Spirit...

This meditation is the action of opening our hearts, our minds, and our souls to the One Source of Life, Love and Wisdom, that It may fill us with ItSelf... So that we may release our gift out into the world, without holding back... For the more we give away, the more flows into us ...

We surrender now to this Flow of Spirit, letting It fill us and pour out through us... Letting It magnify our capacity for Meaning... for Truth... for Kindness... And now, as we move into silent contemplation, we continue to expand our understanding and embodiment of these Gifts...

Silence – 5:00

With grateful hearts, we give thanks that Spirit Lives, Loves and Gives of ItSelf to us and through us... We give thanks for the never-ending supply of Love, Peace, Joy, Kindness and Truth that gives our lives Meaning, as we commune with Spirit... Thank you, God, for everything...

Please affirm with me that our thoughts, words, and actions align with our deepest spiritual intention, and that we are all inspired daily to give full expression to the gifts given us. The light of our souls shines brightly as we express powerful spiritual qualities in the world.

Remaining centered in Meaning, Truth and Kindness, we open even more fully to the inspiration of Rev. Diana's message this morning... Open to accept the Gift that is uniquely ours to receive... We embrace it now, with deep gratitude...

Diana – Invitation to Practice

Continuing with the meditative tone of Taizé... As we begin the new year, we will be giving our focused attention to one God Quality each month. Each of these Qualities is already present, within us. Can you feel the place within you where Spirit dwells? Attending to these Qualities allows them to grow and expand in our experience, being revealed in every area of our lives, more and more of the time.

For the month of January, we ground ourselves in the God Quality of *Peace*. January is a quiet time of year, a time when the days are a little shorter...the trees are dormant, doing their work under the ground, taking in nourishment and building their root systems so that they might bloom, grow leaves, and bear fruit during the coming seasons. January is a perfect time for each of us to take in Spiritual Nourishment so that we, too, might thrive in the days and seasons to come.

Being deeply at Peace, no matter what is happening around us, offers us a most valuable gift...the gift of Contentment.

In the book of Philippians (4:6-7) we find a beautiful promise...something we can place our faith in. It says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. The Peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds..."

Sacred Scripture assures us that Peace will come to all who spend time in Communion with Spirit, with their deepest Wisdom and Highest Knowing, with gratitude for Life Itself. We are told that this Peace is beyond anything we can imagine...that there is no need to comprehend it with the intellect. As we spend time in prayer and meditation, Spiritual study, Service and Celebration, we will experience this deep Peace...that is enough.

I invite you to spend time this week in meditation with this mantra, from the book of John. Imagine whichever teacher or great soul speaks to your heart, imparting these words:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you," for we are One.

Perhaps follow with this:

Peace infuses my body, my mind, my heart, my soul. Peace is what I Am.

Diana - Moving into Celebration

I invite you to gently bring your awareness back to your body...to your senses...to the atmosphere in the room. As you feel ready, allow your eyes to gently open and take in whatever is before you. We give thanks for this prayerful experience, as we recognize that, in order to make our time together complete, we gradually step into gratitude.

We are so deeply grateful to have Spiritual Family, a Spiritual Community, to share our lives with.

The word *community*, from its Latin roots, means *common*. The same root informs the word *communicate* (to share common understanding) and *communion* (to share common experience). It is no accident that the word *community* also contains the word *unity*. It is in community that we can discover, acknowledge, and *share* in our Oneness. This is a piece of our Spiritual evolution that we cannot do alone.

Mark Nepo, in his book *More Together Than Alone*, says this: “In the Hindu Upanishads, there’s a passage that speaks to how those who become wise lose their names in the Great Oneness, the way rivers lose their names when they flow into the sea. In this transformation from the solitary to the communal, there’s a mysterious physics that each generation has to relearn regarding what is possible when we can work together...community is an ever-potent seed waiting for our effort and care to animate what we have in common, so we can share our understanding and experience in our time on Earth.”

So, what a blessing to have a community to grow with...a community that reflects back to us *our* growth...*our* experience...that supports us and brings its caring and compassion to our lives...and people whom *we* may serve in return.

The Mission we are fulfilling in the world is ***Living from our Divinity, we empower our lives, and create authentic, loving Community through heartfelt Study, Service, Celebration, and Prayer.***

The words authentic, loving Community are there on purpose...at the heart of our Mission. It’s who we are and what we’re about. Our classes and book studies offer tools for individuals who are seeking personal and spiritual growth. Our Sunday Taizé offers the opportunity to share in Prayer and Meditation...but also in *Celebration*. Together, we give thanks for all of life’s blessings. Together, we express our gratitude to God and to one another.

Celebration is an important Spiritual Practice, and one that often gets forgotten. But the sacred scriptures of the world tell us that celebration is not only important, it is a holy, creative act, an act of worship of, and devotion to, the Infinite Intelligence that is manifesting as all of creation. And by celebrating, we bring our awareness to the Joy that is inherent in us, our Divine Birthright, a quality of Spirit that is ever available. So I thank you for joining us this morning for our time of devotion...of honoring the Divine, honoring Life, honoring ourselves and honoring one another...and sharing in the joy of Life together.

We could think of the time we share each week as an opportunity to move through the entire cycle and flow of Spiritual Practices, grounding ourselves in the Six Pillars of a Spiritual Life. Think about it, in one short hour each week, we open in prayer, move into meditation, are given food for thought and tools for growth, serve the community by our willingness to be present, and offer gratitude and thanksgiving by our joyful celebration and our act of giving. I don’t know about you, but I think this is a pretty powerful addition to anyone’s week.

We want to share what we have with others, so I invite you to pass on our website to anyone you know who may benefit from our time together.

Offertory – Blessing for the Offering

And now, we offer you the opportunity to share your financial Good, in support of the Work we are doing in the world. You can go to mysticheart.org to use our Donate Button or to find our mailing address. As we move into this time of giving, please take these words into your heart, feeling their True Meaning, and knowing how much we appreciate your gifts:

As I awaken to the God within me and all around me, I see Abundance everywhere I look. I consciously step into that flow of Abundance by this act of giving. I bless this gift, sending it forth to heal and prosper. It is evidence of my deep faith. It does good work in the world and blesses all of Creation. I give from a consciousness of Abundance! And so it is! Amen!

Join me in Immersing Yourself in the music of

Video – MaMuse...*Dunk Down!*

Closing Gratitude, Brief Invitation (List Only), and Benediction

Closing Song: Love Be with You by Gary Lynn Floyd

Close of Service