

# Slowing into Sabbath...

## Bell – 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 *Slowing into Sabbath...* as a way to *Immerse Yourself* in meaningful *Connection*. As you may know, we have made some small changes...we will be offering Taize 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 embark on today's journey, 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...letting yourself be held...

The body, mind and soul is completely at ease, absolutely still as you allow yourself to be carried by the meditative tone of Taize...allowing the words and music to wash over 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...

Allow your breathing to be a natural, gentle flow...and then slow it down just a little bit more. We allow the breath to carry us inward, settling into an open-hearted state, where Deep Listening is the dominant tone, where there is only here and now...feeling into this moment together...attuning ourselves to the high vibration we are creating.

As we consciously step into the flow of meditation, we acknowledge our connection with all Life. See with the mind's eye a 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 with all of life, our collective Work here is empowered... healing has begun...Wholeness is revealed.

To begin our path of contemplation this morning, I turn to the Hebrew Bible, the book of Exodus: "Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy". What does this mean? I was taught that it meant that I was supposed to go to church and worship God on Sunday. And then I learned that some traditions considered Friday or Saturday to be the Sabbath. As I learned more about the Jewish faith, and other Christian paths, I learned that humans were not supposed to do any work at all on the Sabbath...that this was a day set aside to worship God.

Since my early days *sabbath* has taken on another meaning. The root of the word *sabbath*, from the Hebrew, means only *to rest*. I was not taught the importance of rest. There was never any conversation in our house about balancing the cycle of work and rest. To be very busy, all the time, was a sign of productivity and success. I think this has been common in our culture for a very long time.

Rev. Wayne Muller, in his book entitled Sabbath says that "All life requires a rhythm of rest...We have lost this essential rhythm. Our culture invariably supposes that action and accomplishment are better than rest, that doing something – anything – is better than doing nothing. Because of our desire to succeed, to meet these ever-growing expectations, we do not rest. Because we do not rest, we lose our way. We miss the compass points that would show us where to go...we miss the quiet that would give us wisdom. We miss the joy and love born of effortless delight...for want of rest, our lives are in danger."

Thomas Merton wrote eloquently about this same concern. He said...

"There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence...(and that is) activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence.

To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence.

The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful."

Bombarded with activity, we have forgotten how to be still. With the rapid fire of media reporting, we have forgotten how to be alone, in the silence, with our own thoughts.

As a society, we have lost our ability to savor this life, to care deeply and gently for ourselves, our loved ones, and our world. We take a moment now to savor the silence...

## **SILENCE – 2 Minutes – Bell**

### **Diana**

Rev. Muller reminds us that “If busyness can become a kind of violence, we do not have to stretch our perception very far to see that Sabbath time – effortless, nourishing rest – can invite a healing of this violence.”

It is time that we reclaim the Sabbath, in order to promote and create Peace on Earth. “*Remember the Sabbath* is not simply a lifestyle suggestion. It is a spiritual precept in most of the world’s spiritual traditions – ethical precepts that include prohibitions against killing, stealing, and lying. How can forgetting the sabbath possibly be morally and socially dangerous? How can forgetting to be restful, sing songs, and take delight in creation be as reprehensible as murder, robbery, and deceit? Why is it so important?”

“Sabbath honors the necessary wisdom of dormancy. If certain plant species...do not lie dormant for winter, they will not bear fruit in the spring. If this continues for more than a season, the plant begins to die. If dormancy continues to be prevented, the entire species will die. A period of rest – in which nutrition and fertility most readily coalesce; – is not simply a human psychological convenience; it is a spiritual and biological necessity. A lack of dormancy produces confusion and erosion in the life force. We, too must have a period in which we lie fallow, and restore our souls.”

## **Musical Meditation – *Listen to the Silence* by Eddie Watkins, Jr.**

### **Diana**

The past year has offered some of us the opportunity to learn to be in the silence, alone with our own thoughts...alone with Spirit, if we choose. And some have taken the opportunity and grown spiritually through this circumstance. Others have replaced the normal busyness and noise with excessive media input, worry, and drama. This, it seems to me, has not been helpful.

The invitation, and incredible gift, that this time of pandemic offers us is the opportunity to consciously choose to reclaim Sabbath in our lives. Again from Wayne Muller: “Sabbath is a way of being in time, when we remember who we are, remember what we know, and taste the gifts of Spirit and Eternity. Like a path through the forest, Sabbath creates a marker for ourselves so, if we are lost, we can find our way back to our center.”

Sabbath is not only an *absence* of work; rather, it is the *presence* of something that arises when we consecrate a period of time by listening to what is most deeply beautiful, nourishing, and true. “It is time consecrated with our attention, our

mindfulness, honoring those quiet forces of grace or spirit that sustain and heal us.” By lighting candles, we make Sabbath a sacred time. The flame reminds us of the Light that shines within every being and all of Creation. In breathing deeply and slowly, we are reminded to be grateful for Life Itself. The Sabbath is a time for relaxing into the silence and attuning ourselves to the higher vibrations of Spirit.

## **SILENCE – 2 Minutes**

### **Chris – Meditation**

Please join me in taking a deep, cleansing breath in... and exhale fully... Again, inhale deeply, letting Spirit fill you... and exhale, completely letting go of all tension or worry... Once more, deeply breathe in the Presence of God... and release as you surrender into this communion...

This is a Sacred Moment, dedicated to communing with the Divine Presence... We let go of the cares and duties of the day for just a little while, and focus on our relationship with our Source... our Ground of Being... our highest conception of God...

We are here by Divine Appointment... Just as our bodies need nourishment and rest, so do our souls need time to rest in Spirit and be replenished... When we sit in reverent silence, contemplating the Divine, we deepen our connection with God... In this place of profound receptivity, we become aware of the Gifts of Spirit that are being given us... Peace... Love... Truth... Understanding... Compassion... Wisdom...

The Master Teacher Yeshua of Nazareth said that the Sabbath is given to humankind to replenish ourSelves in body, mind and spirit... And we enter into the Sabbath every time we meditate, contemplate, pray, chant, or worship the Divine in any way...

As we move into the Silence, let us remember that this is a Sacred Time... We are on Holy Ground... And as we listen carefully, we can hear the Still Small Voice of Spirit...

## **Silence – 5:00**

We are so grateful for this time of Sweet Communion with God... For this opportunity to remember our True Self... To connect with our Sacred Source... We give thanks for the Infinite Supply of inspiration, joy, and comfort that is ever available to us...

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 this Sacred Sabbath time, we open to Divine Inspiration as it flows through 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... we recall that in 2021, we will be giving our focused attention to one quality of Spirit each month. These qualities are all present and available, within us. 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*. Reclaiming Sabbath is an excellent way to give focused attention and intention to Peace.

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 James (3:18) we find a beautiful verse...something we can place our faith in. It says, "A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

This is no empty promise...it is spiritual principle. It is good old-fashioned cause and effect. We reap what we sow. When we take the time to become peaceful, and then sow seeds of Peace in our lives, we are righteous...we are in alignment with Spirit and all of Spirit's blessings flow into and through our lives.

I invite you to spend time this week in meditation with this idea. Or use it when your mind takes on a life of its own.

***Peace, be still.***

Perhaps follow with this:

***Peace fills my body, my mind, my heart, my soul.***

***I Am the Peace of God.***

**SILENCE – 2 Minutes - Bell**

### **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. Move your body a little bit if you'd like, to reconnect your awareness to our shared space.

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.

As I shared last week, 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.

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...people of like mind, that we can talk with...and people to receive our Service in the world.

As you may know, our Vision at Mystic Heart is ***Practicing the Possible Through Prayer***. The Mission we are fulfilling in the world is this: ***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 Taize 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.

*Remember the Sabbath* means remember *everything* you have received is a blessing. Remember to delight in your life, in the fruits of your labor. Acknowledge the miracle of being given a life to live. Remember to stop and give thanks and *celebrate* the wonder of it. The Gospel of Thomas tells us, "If you do not fast from the world, you will not find the Kingdom. If you do not observe the Sabbath as a Sabbath, you will not see the Father." And so, we begin by fasting from the world, going into the silence of prayer and meditation; and then, we *celebrate* the world and all of its glories. It is, indeed, a collection of miracles.

Celebration is a vital part of our Spiritual Practice. The sacred scriptures of the world tell us that celebration is not only important, it is a holy, creative act, an act of worship and devotion to the One Source. 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.

I like to 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. 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. What a powerful way to spend some of our Sabbath time.

We want to share what we have with others, so I invite you to invite folks to check out our website.

### **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!**

And keeping in mind that in the book of Psalms it says, “Let them praise his name with dancing!” and the book of Jeremiah invites us to “Dance and be glad,” AND keeping in mind who your minister is...please feel free to get up and dance, dance, dance.

**Offertory Video – Justin Timberlake...*Can't Stop the Feeling***

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

**Closing Song: Love Be with You by Gary Lynn Floyd**

**Close of Service**