

## **The Pull of Existence, the Push of the Divine...**

### **Call to Awareness – 3 Bells**

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

### **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.

I invite you now to get comfortable and settle into the stillness of Taizé, 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...

Still the body, allow the mind to settle, let yourself be completely at ease as you are carried by the meditative tone of Taizé...allowing the words and music to wash over you...Get Ready, My Soul...

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

Our theme for 2021 is *Connection*, and the point of focus for the month of January is *Immerse Yourself*. This morning, we'll be taking a meditative journey to explore *The Pull of Existence, the Push of the Divine*. By offering Taizé each week as our Sunday Devotion, we are honoring the Spiritual Practices of *Meditation* and *Prayer*. And by bringing each meditative experience to a close with Gratitude Practice and Joyful Expression, we are honoring the Spiritual Practice of *Celebration*.

Let's begin by taking a couple of slow, deep breaths, inhaling, and exhaling slowly...breathing in the deep Peace of Spirit, and then letting it go, allowing the out breath to carry any tension with it as it leaves the body. Again, breathe in, allowing the lungs to fill naturally and fully, and then let it go. Breathe in Peace and breathe out Peace...allowing the complete cycle to complete itself...Peace within, Peace without.

Breathing is a natural process...if left to its own natural, gentle flow, your body will breathe deeply and slowly. We allow the breath to carry us inward, settling into a peaceful state, where openness 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 slip fully into the flow of meditation, we acknowledge our connection with all of Life. The Consciousness that permeates and expresses as all that is, is finding a point of expression in you, and in all other beings. Envision with me now a global web of consciousness, each of us a point of Light...beings, all over the world who, in this moment, are sitting in meditation or prayer, or attending sacred services, ceremonies,

or rituals...all of us in unison, acknowledging the Presence of the Divine, within and without...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... individual and global healing has begun...Wholeness is being revealed.

To begin our path of contemplation this morning, I turn to a quote from Mark Nepo's *Book of Soul*. He says, "We live in a technological age overrun with fragmentation and isolation, because our preoccupation with everything mechanical has divorced us from the Whole of Life...Just as water fills a hole because of gravity, *existence* will rush to fill us and overwhelm us if we don't meet the outer world with an inner life. So, if not committed to inhabiting our inwardness and developing a set of inner values, the characteristics of technology...will become our inner values by default."

What he is saying is that steeped as we are in the material world, in the scientific paradigm and the technology that surrounds us, it is absolutely necessary that we balance our participation in, and experience of the outer world, with committed periods dedicated to the inward journey...to meditation, contemplation, and communion or prayer; and that in order to live from our Wholeness, we must consciously choose our values, and devote time and attention to developing our capacity to live from spiritual principles, and ultimately, to embody our highest ideals.

He goes on to say, "Sidetracked by values we assume rather than choose, dreams never get built and ruins never get rebuilt, as our lives meander from their initiations of transformation. Exiled by our inexorable will imposing itself everywhere, the Mystery Itself must hover in the sky like a lonely god cut loose from a culture that no longer believes in mystery. To such an ancient force, we must seem like erratic ants that never stand still."

We start out with honorable intentions, with pure motivation, with hearts filled with vision. And then life happens...we are told to finish school, to get a job, to earn money so that we can do the things we want to do...have the things we want to have. And so, we work hard to earn a measure of what the world calls success...We are *pulled by existence*... "erratic little ants that never stand still." And what do we find when we've attained our goals? It's not what we thought it would be...it's not enough...there is something missing...this can't be all there is. We may feel that it's too late to turn back, or to make a change...that the years we have spent working toward this goal will be wasted. Not wanting to admit failure or discontent, we may even stay with our original path, thinking if we just work harder, do it differently...and we keep ourselves tethered to a life that is unfulfilling, that does not speak to our soul. And yet the soul is persistent...it will not be ignored.

What is it that causes this feeling in the depth of the soul...the feeling that there must be more in store for us? Dr. Ernest Holmes called it the *Divine Urge*..."The inner desire to express life...(the) eternally progressive spirit of unfoldment..." it is Spirit wanting to experience more, to BE more, in, through and as me. This *Urge*, or *Impulse*, is that which is forever calling me to step into a higher, more integral version of myself...including all that I have experienced so far as preparation and guidance in transcending...in evolving...in becoming my next-yet-to-be. *Divine Urge* is present in each of us...and It is persistent. First, it whispers; if I am not listening, It gets a little louder, a little more insistent until finally It is unmistakable in Its demand. Esther Nicolson uses the metaphor of being invited by the Universe. The first invitation to make a change comes in an ivory envelope. We might call this a gentle nudge. If I ignore the first invitation, I will receive the next one in a pink envelope...call this a problem or challenge. If I ignore the second invitation, the third will come in a red envelope. I might be faced with some kind of a crisis, something that demands my attention, or forces the change that I have been avoiding.

I invite you now to ask of Spirit...where in my life is *the pull of existence*, the material realm, the strongest? Where does the world hold undue influence in my life?

And is there something, big or small, that the Divine Urge is calling me to step into?

**SILENCE – 2 Minutes – Bell**

**Diana**

The Divine Urge is alive and well, fully present and functioning, and not only in human beings. The Divine Urge is the Power back of all of Creation. It is Spirit seeking to express Itself, in, through and as everything and everyone. As we move through the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is a sense that our world is changing rapidly. We do not know what is coming...how our world will look a year from now, what the next five or ten years will bring. What we *can* trust is that Infinite Intelligence is always at work...no matter what conditions may appear.

All of Life is evolving...nothing is ever standing still. Spirit, too, must evolve. While we understand It to be the Ground of Being Itself, eternal...no beginning, no ending, and unchanging in Its Allness, we also know Spirit to be forever giving of Itself so that It might express and experience Itself as any and all potential forms and experiences. In this sense, God is evolving.

Spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen has coined a term for the most recent incarnation of the Divine Urge...he removes the spiritual language, referring to it as the *Evolutionary Impulse*... "that mysterious urge toward unbounded freedom and our own potential for radical transformation in this life." It is the sacred impulse Itself, the Source and driving force, or Power, behind the Higher Potential that is forever emerging.

All of life is evolving...each of us is changing and growing. The Evolutionary Impulse is at work within each one of us. Whether or not we realize it, and consciously assist

It...now that is another question. "It is a very rare moment indeed when the evolutionary impulse arises in awareness, unimpeded by the endless fears and desires of the separate ego. But it is infinitely more rare that, when that impulse arises, there is a bold and fearless response that says yes and yes and yes and only yes, now, and forever.

The price of radical transformation is always the same-- we have to let go of fear and attachment. And, in that letting go, discover a completely different perspective on what it means to be alive. But it is these two tasks -- transcending fear and attachment and being willing to embrace a new way of seeing -- that most seekers find so challenging. [...] When the higher state of consciousness begins to recede, when the intensity of the spiritual experience becomes the simplicity of life as it is, when we discover that we have not changed as much as we thought we had, how profound is our interest in the miracle and mystery of the revelation that just descended upon us?

Indeed, how much do we really want to change, even now that we have seen the yonder shore? Are we willing to pay the price of permanent transformation when it demands everything from us?" (Andrew Cohen, *The Evolutionary Impulse*, Awakin.org)

In order to be the resounding Yes to Life and to transformation, I have to want to change now...and now...and now...because within the desire to change *now* is the letting go of fear and attachment. And when I let go of fear and attachment, a completely different perspective emerges...one that could not have become visible without letting go and letting God...without surrendering to my greatest, highest Good.

### **Musical Meditation – *Morning Prayer: I Will Surrender* by Karen Drucker**

#### **Diana**

No matter where the conversation begins, it always comes back to faith. Where am I placing my faith? Do I have faith in the idea that if I were to change direction in my life, that I would be viewed as a failure? Or do I choose to have faith that God is on the field, that inner Guidance is leading me, and that all that I have done and been up until now has prepared me perfectly for what lies ahead?

Do I have faith in the idea that my soul's calling will not support me financially? Or do I place my faith in God's amazing Abundance and Self-Givingness, trusting that as I take a leap of faith, the wings of Spirit will catch me? It takes awareness to notice when my faith is not serving my highest Good. And it takes courage to consciously choose to redirect it. I choose to pay attention...I choose to be brave...I choose to have faith in the unending Goodness of Life.

Rainer Maria Rilke shared these words of wisdom:

"Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything.

Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.”

We never know where the future will lead. Not one of us knows if we'll be here tomorrow. In seeking to live from my Wholeness, fulfilling my soul's purpose for this lifetime, may I be patient toward all that is unsolved...and unknown...and yet not use patience as my reason for not moving forward...and taking a leap of faith.

## **SILENCE – 2 Minutes**

### **Chris – Meditation**

I invite us now to take a deep breath in... and exhale, letting go of everything that came before this moment... Again, breathe in the breath of Spirit... and release fully... Once more, breathe in Divine Inspiration... and exhale, surrendering completely into this meditation...

Each of us is a unique expression of God... Each of us has a different combination of Divine Gifts... These Spiritual Gifts allow us to individualize God in endlessly diverse ways... Every one of us is a part of a larger Whole... as if we each carry a piece of a vast puzzle... Every piece is important... we are all significant aspects of Spirit... The purpose of our spiritual journey is to share our Divine Gifts with the world...

Now, imagine yourSelf surrounded by a field of Pure, Unconditional Love... Let It hold you... supporting you completely... Feed your love into It... and feel God's Love pouring back into you... Allow yourSelf to be completely immersed in this atmosphere of Divine Love...

Making yourSelf fully available to Spirit, open to the Voice of your Higher Self... Ask, “How does God see Itself as my life? ... What Divine Expression is trying to be born through me now? ... What is Spirit desiring to draw forth from me?”

Contemplating these questions, we open our hearts, our minds, and our souls, as we listen deeply in the Silence...

## **Silence – 5:00**

Deeply grateful for this blessed time of communion with God and with one another, we give thanks for these insights and intuitions... And we accept the inspirations yet to come with profound gratitude...

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 fully available to Divine Inspiration, we open ourSelves to the Wisdom of Spirit, as it flows through Rev. Diana's message this morning... We receive it with open hearts... with open minds... and with deep gratitude...

### **Diana – Invitation to Practice**

Continuing with the meditative tone of Taizé... we are 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.

We complete the month of January by grounding ourselves in the God Quality of *Peace*. Being deeply at Peace, no matter what is happening around us, offers us a most valuable gift...the gift of Contentment.

Today, I invite you into a Practice that will lead you to greater Peace. We know that whatever we give our attention to expands in our experience.

“Peace begins with me.” This is a way of living, a way that will support our world in moving gracefully into its next-yet-to-be. I invite you to join me for a brief spiritual practice. This short mantra meditation can be used any time you feel yourself becoming agitated in any way. This Practice will help you to *Reset* so you can be the place where Peace begins, no matter what's happening.

As you say each word, you'll place your thumb against one finger at a time:

 When you touch your index finger, say: PEACE.

 When you touch your middle finger, say: BEGINS.

 When you touch your ring finger, say: WITH.

 When you touch your pinky finger, say: ME.

You can also use...Be Still and Know. You can do this Practice out loud or silently, anywhere you happen to be. I trust that you will use it to bring more peace to your life and to our world. Join me now in a musical experience of Surrender.

### **Music –Surrender by John Astin**

#### **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.

In order to make our time together complete, we gradually step into gratitude. We give thanks for this prayerful experience, for this time in group meditation and contemplation. 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 Oneness*.

We are all connected...we are a *Beloved Community*... a safe space where one can experience the challenges of deep and profound spiritual transformation, surrounded by a loving and supportive environment. Such a community helps us to know and stand up for what we are *for*, rather than what we are *against*. It helps us grow into more masterful spiritual beings... “people who are strong, clear, and compassionate because of the inner work they have done and the community practices in which they have engaged” ...people who “seek to bring the revelation of their souls to bear on the problems of this world – problems we all share.”

What a blessing to have a community to grow with, to pray with... people of like mind, who love and support one another...people we can talk with and listen to.

People who are Practicing the Possible through Prayer...fulfilling this Mission in the world:

***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, it's what we do.

Our Community is a living, breathing organism. It is an Independent Spiritual Center that welcomes all who are drawn...open to all faith paths, philosophical points of view, and ways of life that support and uplift the growth and evolution of the planet and its beings. As Spiritual Evolutionaries, we stand on the shoulders of the New Thought Leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Transcendentalists of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and the Perennial and Indigenous Wisdom Teachings of the ages. We take the common threads that run through all Wisdom traditions and carry them forward into something that is useful, practical, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We have so much to share. 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***. As a community, we give thanks for all of life's blessings. Together, we express our gratitude to God and to one another.

Celebration is a vital part of our Spiritual Practice. The sacred scriptures of the world tell us that celebration is a holy, creative act, an act of worship and devotion to the One. 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.

During Taizé each week, we move through the entire cycle and flow of Spiritual Practices, grounding you in the Six Pillars of a Spiritual Life. 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 can't think of a more powerful way to spend a Sunday morning.

We want to share what we have with others, so I invite you to invite folks to check out our website. The power of invitation is one of the ways we grow our community.

### **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.

We also have a Gracious Giving Program for those who would like to make a heartfelt monthly commitment of support so that we can more effectively plan for our growth and our monthly spending. I would be happy to give you more information.

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!**

Now, in the spirit of the Biblical tradition, "Let us praise His name with dancing." Please enjoy the Rev. Dr. Michael Beckwith as he leads us on an Adventure in Paradise.

### **Offertory Video – *Adventure in Paradise* by Rev. Dr. Michael Beckwith**

**11:05 Closing Gratitude and Benediction**

**Practitioner: Brief Invitations**

**Tuesday (*Tai Chi* with Chris Netto, Tuesdays at 10 am on Zoom. Contact Chris at [standingfirmfitness.com](http://standingfirmfitness.com) for more information.**

**Tuesdays, 3:00-5:00 pm – *The Book of Joy*, a book club facilitated by Michael Bordeaux.**

**Thursdays - *Metaphysical Bible*, on-going, from 3-5 pm.**

**Please note the Date Change - Fridays, 2:00-5:00, starting March 5<sup>th</sup> – *The Celestine Prophecy: A Deeper Dive*, a class facilitated by Rev. Diana. More information to come.**

**Selected Saturdays:**



**February 6, 10 am – 1 pm – *Mystic Morning Brew* with Prayer Practitioner Lucinda Alton**

**February 13, 10 am-noon. *Praying in Color: Self Love* with Ellie Thompson.**

**Sunday Taizé Meditation Experience, 10 am each week.**

**All activities and services are available via Zoom. Check our website, [mysticheart.org](http://mysticheart.org), for more information and for all of our Zoom links.**

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

**Close of Service**