

Taking the First Step

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

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

Introduction – Rev. 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 consciously leave behind the cares and concerns of the day...to get comfortable and settle into the stillness of Taizé, putting aside everything else and giving yourself the gift of stillness as you allow your awareness to become centered in this time and place...feeling content with what is as you ground yourself in Spirit, here and now...nowhere to go, nothing to do. You can afford to take an hour for yourself. Just be...allowing yourself to be carried by the meditative tone of Taizé...feeling the words and music wash over you...remembering who you are as the spark of Divinity is kindled and allowed to burn brightly...

Chant – *Beauty In You* by Karen Drucker

Our theme for 2021 is *Connection*, and the point of focus for the month of March is *Authentic Expression*. This morning, we'll be taking a meditative journey that invites us to *Take the First Step* toward our own authentic expression. Coming together each Sunday for Taizé allows us the unique opportunity to share in group *Meditation* and *Prayer*. And completing each meditative experience with *Gratitude* and *Joyful Expression*, we share in and witness the Spiritual Practice of *Celebration*.

Let's begin by taking a deep breath in, allowing Spirit to breathe you...and then gently letting it go, exhaling fully as you allow your body to relax. Breathing in, feeling the Life-giving Power of the breath, and then letting it go, and relaxing just a little bit more...and now following the breath as it settles into a natural, gentle flow...

Now slow the breath down just a little bit more...turning inward to the Peace that can never be disturbed, to the Light that shines through any darkness, to the Love that heals all wounds, to the Joy that is forever available, and to which your heart returns again and again...settling into the eternal nature of your being, where you feel and know your Oneness with the Divine. There is only here and now...this sacred moment...as together, we attune ourselves to the high vibration we are co-creating with the Infinite. As an irreplaceable strand woven into the fabric of Creation, you are the very image and likeness of pure Spirit. You are Life expressing.

Slipping fully into the flow of meditation, we acknowledge and experience the pulsing of Life as it moves through us...we honor the same Life in everyone and everything, without exception...and we acknowledge our connection with all of Life.

We take a moment to get in touch with our global community...Sensing a web of consciousness that covers the planet, each of us a point of Light...all beings who in this moment, are drawn to the miracle of who we are... acknowledging the Presence of something vast and mysterious, in which we live, move, and have our being...an Infinite Field of Possibility...call It Jehovah, Allah, the Tao...call It Ancient Mother, One Mind, God...by any name, we know It to be a web of Consciousness. As we envision all beings, all of creation, joining the web, we see that there are no longer spaces between us...our web has become the fabric of Life in which we find our place, our purpose...our Authentic Self.

We can feel the collective intention that brought us here...we feel the deep communion with that which is bigger than we are...and we feel the impulse to grow and evolve. It has forever been with us...individually and collectively. As we consciously connect with all of life, our collective Work here is empowered... where two or more are gathered, transformation has begun...Wholeness is revealed.

We began our journey of Authentic Expression, asking “Where do I begin?” We humbly acknowledged that the only place to begin any journey is at the beginning. This requires that we put on a beginner’s mind.

Each of us is a channel for the breath of Spirit to move through. And so we let go of everything we think we know about ourselves...who we think we are supposed to be, what we think we are supposed to do...and we become pure Awareness.

It is in this state of Awareness, free of labels, opinions, and ideas, that we get a clear reading on Spirit’s Guidance. Rev. Dr. Michael Beckwith tells us that, “There is an impulse within us all – a creative urge, a quest – that is compelled to manifest. We can absolutely trust it and yield to it, and as we do so we will receive feedback from the universe in the form of guidance and inspiration about the purpose for which we were born.” As you listen now, you can hear that Guidance, moving you to your next step toward Authentic Expression.

SILENCE – 2 Minutes – Bell

Rev. Diana

What does it mean to be Authentic? It means living my life with integrity...the kind of integrity that says, “I know who I am. I know that what I am doing, how I am living, who I am being, and how I am serving, are all in alignment with Spirit’s Highest Ideal for my life. How do I know? Because my life is Peaceful, Joyful, and completely fulfilling.” Does this mean there are never challenges? No. But stepping into Authentic Expression offers a solid foundation where challenges can be seen as opportunities for change and growth. Authenticity offers a sense of stability that cannot exist when we are living our lives to imitate, keep up with, or please others.

Michael Beckwith suggests that, “When you make a conscious choice to be yourself – your Authentic Self – and you live from that octave, you have embodied the

understanding that nothing outside of you determines your character, your attitude, or the circumstances in your life.” And yet, most of us struggle with Authentic Expression. Why is that?

What I have noticed is that Life can throw us distractions...opportunities to lose track of where we were headed. In the moment when Spirit speaks, guiding us to our next step, pointing us toward our next-yet-to-be, we are so certain of our direction.

We have experienced this clarity at one time or another. There is a deep knowing that Truth has spoken and that ultimately, we will follow...Soon...after the to-do list is complete...when there is enough money in the bank. As we heard last week, someday will never come if we don't take the first step. We are masters of deception...we fool ourselves into believing that there are good reasons to put off taking a step in the direction of Authenticity.

Author Carolyn Myss, in her book *Intimate Conversations with the Divine*, shares her thoughts: “At the end of the day, all roads lead to a single realization: that until you are living in your authentic skin, you will resent *not* living there. And you will find ways to punish either yourself or others, to express the anger created by your constant state of imbalance. That, too, is an expression of organic divinity – your spirit will not let you rest until you are conscious enough to recognize distractions. Only then can you choose not to engage with them.”

I believe each of us is here to Authentically Express what is ours to give, in service to the world. No one can do this for us. As each listens to his heart's desires, to what brings Joy and causes time to disappear, to what brings a smile, a hug, or a thank you from another, the inherent gifts emerge. In this moment, we enter the flow of music, allowing it to remind us that stepping into full Authentic Expression happens one breath at a time, one step at a time.

Musical Meditation– *One Breath at a Time* by Karen Drucker

Rev. Diana

One step at a time...that's where Grace comes in...when we take the step. I have heard it said that walking requires absolute faith. As we take the first step, our body is thrown out of balance by the forward movement of the leg and foot. And then, miraculously, the foot finds solid ground; and as it does, we are thrown off balance again as the opposite leg and foot move forward. Walking is an act faith...of losing and regaining balance...just like life. Losing and regaining balance. And like walking, the more faith we practice in our day-to-day living, the more graceful our life becomes.

Besides distractions, what else seems to block our ability, or willingness, to take the first, or next, step? Sometimes, upon deeper reflection, we find that we don't feel *worthy* of so much Goodness...of a Joy-filled and Abundant Life, of an easy, relaxed, and stress-free life. Without even realizing it, we have been unwilling to give

ourselves permission to shine. We have played small...and then perhaps used material things, roles, professions, as *proof* that we are worthy. Maybe we have struggled with feeling valuable unless we have a constant stream of busyness...another form of *proof* of our worthiness.

If this is ringing true for you, I have an invitation for you to consider. Put the story of unworthiness down. Let it go. It is not serving you, and it is not serving the world. It's not who you are...who you have ever been. Write a new story...one that names you as a perfect and intentional expression of the Divine. You were created in the image and likeness of the Infinite...made to shine forth the glory of God. You are an Artist of Possibility, fully equipped with everything you need to step into your full potential, and to be fully supported in the process. Nothing can get in the way of your Authentic Expression without your permission.

Consciously place your faith in your inherent Divinity. No need to worry about mistakes...Know that the Universe is a perfect system. As you set your intention, and take your first steps, It will give you feedback. "The fundamental Goodness of the Universe will step in and expand your view. Even if at first you take a misstep, it doesn't matter. Your sincerity will draw to you a correction that will set you firmly on your path." (Michael Beckwith)

SILENCE – 2 Minutes - Bell

Chris – Meditation

Centered together in this deep contemplation and reflection that is Taizé, I invite us to enter into inquiry... Profound inquiry begins when we take an open-ended question into meditation... The root of *question* is *quest*... What shall our quest be today?

Our inquiry may begin with the phrase, "What if..." "What if Spirit's highest intention for my life is far beyond what I have imagined?" ... "What if the Universe will completely support me in living my Authentic Life?" ... "What if the fear of not knowing what might happen were totally eclipsed by my faith in Divine Guidance?" ... "What if..." What if, indeed...

Often, we hesitate to take that first step toward authenticity because we want to see the whole roadmap... we want the full itinerary... all the ramifications... But we don't have that choice... Martin Luther King reminded us, "Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase. Just take the first step." ... Our Spiritual Journey is called a faith path for a good reason – it requires our faith... We need to take that first step trusting that we will see the next step from there... Spirit will always give us guidance when we ask and listen...

As we move into the Silence, ask "What is my next step? ... What is mine to do today? ... What is the best use of my Divine Life in this moment?" ... Listening in the

Stillness, make yourSelf available to Divine Intuition... Open your heart... Your Authentic Self beckons...

We are deeply grateful for this time of inquiry, contemplation and communion with both Spirit and our Beloved community... Thank you, Spirit for your inspiration, your guidance, and your Divine Love and support...

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.

As we listen to Rev. Diana's message this morning, we allow ourselves to be moved in new, more profound ways... We find our Authentic Self responding to the Divine Call to express more fully... We surrender our fear now, and take the first step...

Rev. Diana – Invitation to Practice

Continuing with the meditative tone of Taizé...we give our focused attention to the Spiritual Quality of *Life*. As I attend to the Quality of *Life* within me and all around me, I know that I Am Guided...that all that I will ever need is already within me.

Everywhere I look, there is *Life*. All of Creation is alive with the Infinite Intelligence of Spirit. Every Life has a purpose, a place in the tapestry. Every Life...my Life...is a testament to the miraculous nature of our world. Honoring all of Life means placing my faith in Its Perfect Unfolding...letting go of the need to control circumstances.

I gently guide my mind into my deepest, most silent place...into my heart, and there stand in the presence of God...the One that breathes Its Life into me and into all of Creation. (Pause) Even as It gives me life, so does my existence give It Life.

It is here, in the depths of my heart and soul that I feel my Divinity infusing my humanity...entwined as One. As I sit in the silence, I touch the place where Spiritual Authority dwells, the place from which my Authentic Expression flows...and I Am filled with a sense of profound gratitude.

It is in this place that I come to know myself as an Individualized Expression of the One Loving and Compassionate Source. It is here that I sense and know that I Am intentionally, purposefully, and perfectly created so that God might experience Itself as me.

And so, I grant this opportunity to the One...to experience and express Its Life by means of mine in the way that It chooses...

To set the tone for Creative Artistry to move through my life, I call on the soul's memory...to see my life as it began in the heart and mind of the Infinite. I mentally relive the days when, as a child, I felt free to imagine the infinite possibilities that lay

ahead...when it seemed that I was free to accomplish anything. I may have to go back a long way...to learning to walk, to riding a bike...nothing could stop me. I allow for the memory of that imagined freedom to move powerfully through me now. I free myself from the false obstacles that adult life has put in my path.

I give myself permission to shine. I assert my inner authority, appreciating my beauty, empowerment, creativity, wisdom, and peace. I break free from the limiting constructs I have created and radiate the fullness of Who and What I Am.

And finally, as I begin to grow in new and maybe unexpected ways, I do not apologize for the Good that is taking place in my life. Instead, I claim it; I embody the transformation and acknowledge the Presence, Power, and Love that brought it about, honoring the Father within that is doing the Work. This is true humility...the human being, serving as the conduit through which Spirit powerfully expresses Itself, conscious and willing to serve.

In this Holy Moment, I claim and accept Authentic Expression for each one listening today. I know that through Spirit's Guidance, each of us is finding our right and perfect next step...that each is willing to take that step, in full faith that Divine Will is being done by means of each one of us. I give thanks to the One for Its many gifts, and for the privilege of sharing them with the world. I give thanks for my Life, and for the privilege of sharing it with friends, family, spiritual community, and others who cross my path. May I always be a reflection of Peace, Love, and Compassion...may I unfailingly be an example of Kindness and Generosity. May I trust in Absolute Justice, leaving myself free of judgment and criticism, and honoring the sacredness of every Life. And may I come to know and express the Authentic Self that I Am intended to be, so that I say all that is mine to say, and do all that is mine to do. I surrender completely to Divine Intelligence, Order and Timing, allowing myself to be guided every step of the way. In deepest gratitude and complete Faith, I speak my Word and release it to the Loving and Powerful Presence, calling forth all that is Holy, all that is Whole, here and now. It is done...And so it is...Amen!

Musical Meditation –*I'm Here to Remind You* by Rev. David Ault

SILENCE – 2 Minutes – Bell

Rev. Diana - Moving into Celebration

Is the world a little more peaceful, oceans and skies a little more blue? Is humankind a little bit wiser about the good that we can do? Does the sun shine a little bit brighter where before there was only rain? If so, then I'm glad I came. Have I given hope to the hopeless, has a hungry soul been fed? Has a child stood a little bit taller because of something that I said? Have I left a little kindness, have I eased a little pain? If so, then I'm glad I came.

Let's take a moment again this week for our Joyful Practice of envisioning a Love-Soaked world, a world impacted by all of the good we are doing...a world that is

peaceful, joyful, and kind...where everybody has enough to eat, a warm place to sleep at night, opportunities for growth and development, and a sense of belonging and contribution. A world created by our willingness to practice bold and courageous Love and Compassion, and radical Integrity, Kindness, and Generosity. Doesn't it make you want to smile?

Hold onto the Vision...hold onto the smile...hold onto the Love as you 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 can do this thing. Do you believe it? Can you say that with me? We can do this thing. With hearts overflowing, we step into the final few minutes of our gathering...together, we Practice Gratitude and Joyful Expression as a way of celebrating one another in Community. We give thanks for this joyful and prayerful experience; we feel so absolutely blessed to have Spiritual Family to share our lives with.

We are creating a new story. Together, we practice seeing the Divine in all that is, and in seeing a world where all human gifts are shared and appreciated.

Mystic Heart's Beloved Community is creating space for such people to gather and find support and encouragement. Our wide-scale Vision is ***Practicing the Possible Through Prayer***. We know that Peace, Love, Kindness and Generosity are all possible. This is our Work. We are committed:

 to living physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually empowered lives...

 to bringing our most authentic selves in service to others...

 to honoring and experiencing the Divinity of all beings...

 to experiencing the miraculous nature of our world and everything in it...

 to recognizing and living from our Unity...

 to practicing Love in order to bring Peace to our world.

I love that this Community is a living, breathing organism...that it is an Independent Spiritual Center, free to grow and change according to the needs and desires of its members and friends...that it welcomes all who are drawn to be here...that it is open to all faith paths, philosophical points of view, and ways of life that acknowledge and honor the Divine, and support and uplift the growth and evolution of the planet and its beings.

As *Spiritual Independents*, we learn from and put into practice the teachings of Jesus and other evolved beings. We stand on the shoulders of the New Thought Leaders and the Transcendentalists; and we honor the Perennial and Indigenous Wisdom

Teachings of the ages. We recognize the common threads that run through all Wisdom traditions and carry them forward, offering principles and practices that are free of dogma and practical for the 21st century.

As our time draws to a close, I want to acknowledge today as the 19th day of the sacred season of Lent. As I said last week, the word *Lent* derives from the Anglo-Saxon and is the word for spring, which is a verb meaning to lengthen. The season of Lent begins in the spring when the days become noticeable longer. In recent times the celebration of fasting and feasting has been set at 40 days to honor the 40 days of prayer and fasting that the master teacher Jesus spent in the wilderness dealing with temptations of mind and body. The number 40 has been called sacred by many spiritual traditions, and is a symbol of spiritual completion, of the time it takes for a new state of consciousness to be reached...as long as it takes.

Lent is a season of spiritual growth, a time for progressive unfoldment, for the expansion of awareness and the raising of consciousness. On the altar this morning, you see the symbols of new life, the new life that will emerge as daily we fast from negative thinking in all forms and focus instead on Spiritual Truth. But in order to shift our thinking, we need to first recognize the thoughts that most often plague us so that we can let go of them and replace them with Truth. **That's your homework for this week...notice and list the thoughts that most often get in your way.** I invite you to send me those lists if you wish to take part in our *New Life Blooming* Celebration on Easter Sunday. **You are also invited to consider which Spiritual Truths you would like to replace them with. Watch your email for more information.**

For now, let's get on with our Celebration! As a community, we celebrate by giving thanks for all of life's blessings. Together, we express our gratitude to God and to one another. This is a vital part of our Spiritual Practice. The sacred scriptures of the world treat celebration as a holy, creative act, an act of worship and devotion to the One Source of all of Life. By celebrating, we feel and express our inherent Joy. So, from the bottom of my heart, 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 celebrating the Joy of Life together.

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Each Sunday, 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 feel the Truth of these words, and know 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!

Don't hesitate to get up and dance. Today's music video is one of my favorites!

Offertory Video – *Be Yourself* by Narayan and Janet

Rev. Diana – Closing Gratitude and Benediction

Sherri, Prayer Practitioner: Brief Invitations

-  Tuesdays, beginning March 30, 3:00-5:00 pm – *Deep Spirit* by Christian de Quincey - a book club facilitated by Michael Bordeaux.
-  Thursdays, 3:00-5:00 pm - *Metaphysical Bible*, an on-going circle.
-  Also on Thursdays, Chris Netto is offering Tai Chi via Zoom. Please contact Chris at standingfirmfitness.com for more information.
-  Selected Saturdays:
-  March 27, 10am – 5pm – Mystic OAKS Adventure – location TBA, weather permitting.
-  April 10, 10 am – noon – *Praying in Color...* with Ellie Thompson. Come and learn how to turn prayer into art...this month we will be rock painting as Spiritual Practice.
-  Sunday Taizé Meditation Experience, 10 am each week.

All activities and services are available via Zoom. Also, as we have moved into the red tier, we have between 8-12 seats available for each activity, with physical distancing in place for in-person attendance. You must reserve your seat ahead of time with Rev. Diana. Check our website, mysticheart.org, for more information and for all of our Zoom links.

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

11:12 Closing Song: *Love Be with You* by Gary Lynn Floyd

11:15 Close of Service