

# Where Do I Begin?

## 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 consciously leave behind the cares and concerns of the day...to get comfortable and settle into the stillness of Taizé, allowing yourself to bring your full presence and attention, your full heart into this moment...fully arriving, allowing your awareness to rest 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. 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 Christ within finds Its way into this morning's experience...

## 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 asks a question: *Where Do I Begin?* Beginning our Sunday with Taizé allows us to share in group *Meditation* and *Prayer*. And completing each meditative experience with *Gratitude* and *Joyful Expression*, we honor the Spiritual Practice of *Celebration*.

Let's begin by taking a couple of slow, deep breaths, inhaling and exhaling...allowing Spirit to breathe us...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 Light that has never known darkness, to the Peace that has never been disturbed, to the Freedom that has never been bound, to the Love that has never been withheld...to the place at the core of your being that is eternal, that feels its 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 a vast being that has never been born and will never die...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 the global community that we are part of...Sensing a global web of consciousness, 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 Brahman, Great Spirit, Buddha Nature...call It Yahweh, Ein Sof, Universal Intelligence, God...a web of Consciousness 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 is awakening within 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 begin our journey of Authentic Expression, asking “Where do I begin?” Of course, we know that there is only one place to begin...at the beginning. We let go of everything we think we know and put on a beginner’s mind.

Zen Master Shun Ryu Suzuki Roshi reminds us that:

“If your mind is empty, you are ready for anything. In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities. In the expert's mind there are few.”

And in reference to our individual authentic expression, he says:

“What we call 'I' is just a swinging door, which moves when we inhale and when we exhale.”

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...we loosen the grasp on the qualities and traits, both the desirable and the undesirable. We let go of our physical appearance, our perceived mental capacities...We let go of whatever roles we may play...We release our preferences...our problems and our joys...our beliefs and opinions. We allow ourselves to experience pure Awareness. This is the Authentic Expression of Self...

**SILENCE – 2 Minutes – Bell**

**Diana**

What does it mean to be Authentic? From its Latin roots, *authentic* is related to *author*. It is referring to that which is principal, which comes first, or is genuine; it speaks to that which is the originator. And so, when I express myself authentically, who I am on the inside shows up on the outside. This is why, in order to allow our

Divinity to shine through our humanity, to authentically express Itself, we do our inner work first. “As within, so without,” said the Hermetic Masters of ancient Egypt.

As I give regular attention to my inner work, the interior becomes more Peaceful, Loving, and Compassionate, and my thoughts, words and actions follow suit. As Compassion becomes my natural response, so do I become more generous and kind. As I live more and more from generosity and kindness, so does the world offer it back to me. Now I can relax a bit...I can trust that the Universe is a safe place for me to discover and share my gifts.

I believe we are here to Authentically Express what is ours to give, in service to the world. No one can do this for us. But what are the gifts I am to share? As I begin to listen to my heart's desires, to what brings me Joy and causes time to disappear, to what brings a smile, a hug, or a thank you from another, my gifts emerge. As I listen to what this body and mind require to be healthy and happy, I find the energy and enthusiasm to share them.

Each of us has everything we need, by Divine Birthright, to live as an Authentic Expression of Life. Sometimes it takes a little digging...time looking inward...to find what will help us along. And what is it that will help? An open mind...a willing heart...so that we can let go of what we already think we know about ourselves, and

### **Musical Meditation– *The Adventure* by Gary Lynn Floyd**

#### **Diana**

There is always such beautiful poetry and deep Truth in Gary Lynn Floyd's music. He invites us to *lean into the Divine* for Guidance, Strength, Courage, and Willingness. Listen to this beautiful message:

*As I weave this tapestry, thread by thread, uniquely me. Slumbering within the seed is everything I'll ever need...awakening. All you ever need to bring, an open mind, a willing heart. The song that you were born to sing, be a candle in the dark. One step is all it takes to start to be the Adventure you are.*

What a beautiful way to answer the question, “Where do I begin?”.

Sometimes we know where to begin, but somehow it feels like this is not the right time to allow who we are, in our Authentic Expression, to come forward. Maybe we are in relationships where our family or friends might not approve, might not like the changes. Maybe we are tied by our finances to a particular job or role that we think requires us to be a certain way. We think to ourselves, “Someday when...” Someday when the kids are grown...when I retire...when I don't have so many bills...when my affairs are in order...when I have fewer problems in my life...when my relationships are in better shape...when I'm more enlightened than I am right now...when I lose 20 pounds...when all of my psychic traumas have been

healed...when I have more time to play...when I've had time to sharpen my skills...when I feel ready...

You know the end of this story...there is no *someday when*. There is only this moment. Not one of us knows if we'll wake up tomorrow morning, no matter our age or physical condition. All we know for sure is that we are here now. And even if we live a long, healthy life, there will never be a *someday when* our inner and outer worlds will be in total alignment. This moment is the perfect moment to begin. There is nothing wrong with this moment. There is nothing missing from this moment. Buddhist Master Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us that, "The present moment is the substance with which the future is made. Therefore, the best way to take care of the future is to take care of the present moment. What else can you do?"

Now is the time to begin...now is the only time we have.

## **SILENCE – 2 Minutes - Bell**

### **Chris – Meditation**

I invite you now to invoke your Inner Knowing – That within you that shares in Spirit's omniscience and Infinite Love – and ask It a few questions... "Who or what is my Authentic Self?" ... "What is the gift that only I can give?" ... "What is God's highest intention for my life?" ... "Who am I *really*?" ...

Listen to the initial responses of your mind... Do they ring true? ... Or do they sound more like stories about you? ... Do you like the stories about you? ... Where did the stories come from? ... Who made them up? ... Ourselves? ... Our parents? ... Society? ... Were we all just born into a story that has been unfolding for centuries, and left to figure out how we fit into it?... Just be with the stories for a moment... Let them float by, and look to see what is beyond them... As we shift our focus from our heads to our hearts, we begin to discover what the stories camouflage...

Our heart is the Holy of Holies... the inner sanctum of our body temples where Spirit dwells... The I Am that dwells within you and me is the same Great I Am that creates the entire universe... All of Creation is the manifest body of God... It takes an Infinite Variety of form to manifest Unlimited Spirit... Each of us is a unique way that Spirit shows up in human form... Each of us has something that only we can bring to our world... All of us are necessary to the manifestation of heaven on earth...

As we move into the Silence, ask Spirit "What is my unique contribution to humanity? ... What is mine to do?" ... Listening in the Stillness, make yourSelf available to Spirit... Open your heart... Welcome your Authentic Self...

## **Silence – 5:00**

With profound gratitude for this time of blessed communion with God and with our Beloved Community, we accept the Gifts of Divine Guidance and Inspiration...

Thankful that our *intention* to be authentic actually brings forth our Authentic Self, we are grateful... 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.

With our hearts and minds fully open, we receive Rev. Diana's message this morning... With deep gratitude we allow ourselves to be transformed... This is Where We Begin...

### **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 taken care of...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 Perfection...treating it as a brother or a sister...treating It as a part of myself that I have not yet known.

As self-reflective human, I am tasked with the stewardship of Creation, of Life. Stewardship...with the taking care of our Beloved Planet and its beings. We have been given dominion...the physical and mental strength and capacity and responsibility...to be Earth's stewards. It seems that we have sometimes gotten *dominion* confused with *domination*. But we are waking up, as a human family. We are moving into our rightful place as stewards of Life.

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. I recite these words as the meditation of my heart...

-  Be still and know I Am God...
-  Be still and know I Am...
-  Be still and know I...
-  Be still and know...
-  Be still and...
-  Be still...
-  Be...

Giving thanks to the One for Its many gifts, and for the privilege of sharing them with the world. Giving 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 know that it is by Grace that I live. Recognizing our Oneness, I Joyfully receive and reveal the Life of Spirit today. I surrender completely to Divine 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 –*Last Song* by Daniel Nahmod**

#### **SILENCE – 2 Minutes – Bell**

#### **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 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As our time draws to a close, I want to acknowledge today as the 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **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 – *This is Me* from *The Greatest Showman***

**Diana – Closing Gratitude and Benediction**

**Lucinda, Prayer Practitioner: Brief Invitations**

**Tuesdays, 3:00-4:30 pm – *The Book of Joy*, 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](http://standingfirmfitness.com) for more information.**

**Fridays, 2:00-5:00, *The Celestine Prophecy: A Deeper Dive*, a class facilitated by Rev. Diana.**

**Saturdays:**

**March 13, 10 am – noon – *Praying in Color...Rock On* 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](http://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.

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

**Close of Service**