

The Gift of Being Human...

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Chris Johnson, RScP.



A Beloved Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Opening Prayer – Chris

Introduction –Diana

Good morning. For those who might be new to us today, my name is Rev. Diana Johnson, Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystic Heart Spiritual Center. Thank you for joining us this morning. Welcome Home to our Beloved Community, and welcome Home to your own Mystic Heart.

Let's begin with some devotional chanting...*Let Love Be the Guide.*

10:05 Chant – *Let Love Be the Guide*

Rev. Diana

As we chant together, we synchronize our vibration...we create a shift in our energy, in our consciousness, both personally and globally. By joining our voices, we experience the sacred.

This month we are taking time to *Celebrate the Gift*...the gift of Life, the gift of Love, and the *Gift of Being Human*.

Let's embrace the Whole of our being in Awareness, beyond our ideas of ourselves, making room for this moment to be exactly as it is, and making room for ourselves to be exactly as we are in this moment without having to label it in any way...just a human being sitting here, somewhere along the trajectory we call our life. And let's let our breath cradle this being that we call ourself...embrace this being in its entirety.

As we sit, feeling complete self-acceptance, and feeling our connection with one another, we take a deep, cleansing breath...and relaxing the body on the outbreath, let yourself be fully supported, allowing your eyes to gently close...slowing the breath and allowing it to find its own pace and sense of flow...scanning the body and releasing any remaining tension...

Letting go of all that has come before this moment with compassion and forgiveness...breathing in Peace, and allowing Peace to fill your being, bit by bit, cell by cell, and to all the space in between...and then let it flow from you into the space around you. Peace within...Peace without...surrendered to the stillness of this moment. And we extend that Peace into the Global Community... knowing that we are intimately connected...of the same Spirit...

Secure in ourselves, Embracing all that we are, and grounded in Blessed Peace, we consciously connect with all of Life...envisioning a web of Consciousness that encompasses the earth. We feel our own Radiance, expressing as a point of Light in the web. Sensing that same Radiance in every human, we extend our Embrace to

one another...to all those we know and love, present and past, and maybe even generations yet to come...and then to people we don't know, honoring their being...radiating caring and wishing them well, acknowledging our Divine Connection...and then reaching out beyond ourselves until our Embrace includes all of Nature and Its beauty...every creature that shares this beautiful planet with us, sensing the Light in each one...expanding our Embrace to include the plants and rocks, the sand, the soil, and the water...the entire planet, all shining with the Light of Spirit...teeming with Life and Intelligence. We allow our Embrace to extend into the heavens, and we realize that the clouds, the stars, and the galaxies are all radiating the same Divine Light...all part of One Eternal and Omnipresent Life.

Feeling our Connection, we share a heartfelt intention for our time together. We acknowledge our responsibility to one another as one human family, and to our beloved planet; and we commit to expressing our uniquely human gifts so that God might find a more perfect and complete expression through our lives.

In setting this prayerful intention, our Work here is empowered. We are investing our Life Energy in Peace, Love, Compassion, Abundance, and Freedom. In the silence, we feel the Power of our collective consciousness...and Wholeness is being revealed.

SILENCE – 1 Minute – Bell

Rev. Diana

The Season of Advent is here. It is a time of getting comfortable with darkness...a time of waiting for the Light to return...a time of Patience and Faith. *The Season of Advent* is a time to look deeply at who we are and who we are becoming...at who we are Called to be...and so we are Called into Humility and Authenticity.

Today is the first day of Advent on the *Liturgical Calendar*, the *Christian Calendar of Feasting and Celebration*. I wasn't raised with the observance of Advent...far from it. My home growing up was devoid of Spiritual Awareness or Tradition. But on my own as a child, I was a Spiritual Explorer. And as an adult, I have come to respect and honor the Christ Tradition as one expression of Universal Truth. I find that the Season of Advent lends itself well to deepening my experience of the holidays. Unlike the Christmas celebrations of my youth, this time of year has become sacred... the holidays have become Holy-Days.

The Season of Advent begins each year on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. It is celebrated by Christians to commemorate the coming of the Holy Child, the birth of Jesus. Metaphysically, we could say that we are awaiting, and participating in the birth of Christ Consciousness among humans here on earth. The season of Advent is a time of waiting for what is yet to come... for the physical light to return... for what is to be born in us and in our lives. At this time of year,

the natural world becomes still...quiet...and we are encouraged to reflect on the Spiritual Qualities involved in waiting...*Patience...Surrender...Presence...Compassion...Gratitude...Humility...and Faith.*

Each week of Advent invites us into the contemplation of a different quality of Spirit. Traditionally, *Hope* is the first week's focus. I prefer to ground my heart and mind in *Faith*. *Hope* seems to leave room for doubt, while *Faith* in the way Jesus used it, means an absolute *Knowing*. And so, today we light our first Advent Candle...the Faith Candle...and as we do, we commit to becoming more conscious of where we are placing our Faith.

Waiting is part of living. If we plan to continue living, it serves us to become more comfortable with the process of waiting...and this requires us to become aware of our habitual patterns of impatience...and the willingness to redirect our thoughts. In other words, it takes self-discipline. Let me clarify...*discipline* is not *punishment*. It has nothing to do with an outer authority enforcing rules and regulations in our lives. *Discipline*, from the same Latin root as *disciple*, refers to the act of following a deeper Guidance, aligning with a higher Truth. It is grounded in an Inner Authority; it interacts with, and is affected by, Spiritual Law. It is an internal process and has nothing to do with anyone or anything outside of our own being.

Waiting is a process, and like any process, we can approach it with dread...fear of the unknown. Or we can choose to approach it as a Grand Adventure. We begin our Advent-ure by looking at how waiting grows our ability to have *Patience*. Author Holly Whitcomb says that, "Waiting teaches us to live life in increments, in small pieces rather than large chunks. Waiting teaches us to measure our progress slowly. It teaches us patience." She suggests that "Patience means trusting there's no quick fix"...that "Many chapters of our lives require long commitments"... "Waiting without immediate solutions presents us with an opportunity to lean into the unknown...When we can embrace the gift that Patience offers, we can trust beyond the moment." Practicing Patience can grow our faith by leaps and bounds. Each of us must acknowledge that we have only our own narrow perception. Based on what we think we know, there seems to be a right and perfect time for things to happen – and the time we have in mind is now! By letting go of the need to control, we can learn to trust that the fullness of God's time will allow us to bloom and grow.

SILENCE – 1 Minute – Bell

Rev. Diana

Jesuit Priest and Spiritual Evolutionary, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin says:

Above all, trust in the slow work of God. We are, quite naturally, impatient in everything to reach an end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages; we are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something

new. And yet, it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability...and that it may take a very long time.

It is as if he was writing for our time and our world circumstances. One would almost think that humankind has always struggled with Faith. Let's take a moment to contemplate, to ask of Spirit Within...

 What is the nature of Faith?

 What does it mean to have faith?

 How does it feel?

 What qualities and experiences does it bring into my life?

 Where is my faith weak?

 Where is it strong?

I believe that by taking the time to ask, truly open to the Inner Wisdom that is always available, we find the answers that are helpful in Guiding on our way. We are on an Advent-ure of faith.

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

Rev. Diana

Believe it or not, *The Gift of Patience*...once developed... is one of the *Gifts of Being Human*. Another of these most precious gifts is our capacity for *Devotion*.

What does it mean to lead a *Devotional life*? The word *devotion*, looking to its Latin roots, mean *consecrated...made sacred*. So to lead a devotional life means to see the Sacred of Life...*all* of it. It is easy to see God in the beauty of nature, in the smile of an infant, in the finding of a new love, or in the resilience and endurance of a long-standing commitment. It is easy to see Spirit in the discovering of a new talent...the perfect job or house revealing itself. It is so easy to see the Divine in everything when life is going smoothly. But that is not the nature of Life...Life brings the whole range of experience, from the traumatic to the transcendent. And a Devotional Life calls us beyond what is easy. It asks that we see the Sacred in everything...in all of life's experiences. It Calls us into a deep Faith that there is an inherent Wisdom and Purpose is all that is unfolding in our lives, no matter the appearance...no matter how difficult it is...or how sad and distraught we feel.

Author and poet Jaqueline Suskin refers to Devotion as “the ache of being alive.” It calls us to reverence, honoring...even to the excitement of being alive without being removed from the pain. It invites us to hold both the pain and the reverence...to be in awe and wonder, even as we may fear the uncertainty of not knowing what is to come...it Calls us to Humility and Authenticity as we practice Patience and Faith.

Chris – Meditation

As we settle into the Sacred Stillness, let us ponder what it means to be human... Humanity is the word we use to name our species... Humanity also carries with it connotations of kindness... compassion... generosity... charity... sympathy... warmth... Lovingkindness...

All of these qualities are inherent in our true nature... They are all Divine Attributes that we were born to impart... outward expressions of our Unity with God, other humans, and our environment... And yet when we hear the phrase, “It’s just human nature...” it often refers to negative behaviors...

Greed, competition, and envy are all simply manifestations of a sense of separateness... from our Source... from each other... even from Nature... Even though Spirit is everywhere present, we feel disconnected... alone... maybe even fearful... *We have evicted ourselves* from the Garden of Eden...

We were born into a Story of Separation, a story that tells us that I am separate from you... we are separate from the earth... there is not enough to go around... And yet, the World Spiritual Traditions tell us we are One... with God... with Mother Earth... with all of Creation...

Which story shall we embrace? ... One clearly invites us into competition, fear, and greed... while the other calls forth our humanity... the best that is within us... our Divine Inheritance... As we enter the Sacred Silence, let us contemplate... “In what areas do I feel unconnected? ... Where do I feel most connected with others? ... What might I do to deepen my sense of Oneness with Spirit and other people?” ...

Silence – 3:00

Allowing the music to gently guide us back from this Blessed Stillness, we center our hearts in gratitude... We are grateful for this marvelous experience of being fully human, and yet also fully divine... For all the opportunities to express our humanity...

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 this world.

Returning to Rev. Diana’s inspirational message, we open even more fully to Love... to Unity... to our Divine Nature... as we unconditionally accept the Gift of Being Human...

Rev. Diana

Human beings, in our ability to hold contradictions, have the capacity to find a root of purpose for our lives, even as we remain consciously present in the here and now. We are able to hold the trajectory of our lives...who we have been, and who are, and who we are Called to become...and to serve Life as an unfolding process, even as we bring the best of who we are in every moment.

Granted, in any given moment, the best of who I Am may be (in the words of a dear one) “a hot, wet mess.” I may be feeling the pain of what’s happening in my life or in the world and allowing it to move through me. It is important to remember that honoring ourselves and our feelings, and expressing vulnerability and authenticity, serves Life.

At other times, offering the best of myself might look like serving the world...helping a neighbor, friend, or family member...or it might be creating art, planting a garden, writing a poem or a song, cooking dinner, rocking a baby, picking up trash in my neighborhood, or walking in nature, seeing, honoring, and connecting with the natural world. Or it might look like my choosing to practice experiencing Awe of...the reverential respect and wonder of being alive...and becoming aware of the tiny miracles that surround us every day, in every moment.

Rev. Diana – Invitation to Practice

This is a *Gift of Being Human*, part of our complex brain function...we can consciously create reverence and wonder by choosing any simple object and acknowledging the miracle of its existence. How did it come to be? Who created it...how many minds, hearts, and hands did it take? How does it serve me? How do I serve it? By taking a moment to really see the things in our lives, we move toward a life of Devotion. And of course, we can take this process out into Nature, and to the other beings in our lives. What a miracle that this mountain, this lake, this cloud, this flower...this person...is before me now...is part of my experience. How does it bless my life?

As we choose to stay grounded in Spirit and blessing, in reverence and wonder, patiently holding the paradox of both pain and pleasure...humble, faithful, and surrendered...we move into a Life of Devotion, inviting and allowing Divine Intelligence to Guide us to our next yet to be. This is the *Gift of Being Human*...to know ourselves as expressions of Spirit, and conduits of Life unfolding.

Musical Meditation – *Reveal Thy Will*, by Eddie Watkins, Jr.

Rev. Diana

I invite you to take my prayer as your own.

God...Spirit...Infinite Intelligence...Divine Mind...is all that is. It is the Essence, the Substance, the Process...the Source of Life Itself. There is nothing else.

And so, I know that the One Life that created the heavens and the earth, that expressed Itself as the mountains and valleys, oceans and rivers, plants, and

animals, has given of Itself so that I might have life...and that It might experience Itself as me. I Am That.

In this Holy Moment, I acknowledge the Light that I Am. And I commit to being with the darkness, in this time of waiting, so that whatever is seeking to be born by means of me, may come forth. I humble myself before this Powerful Presence that I call God, that I call Life, acknowledging Its Intelligence and Wisdom...aware of Its Loving and Lawful Nature, and aligning myself with It, so that It might have Its way with me. In faith, I surrender to Its Knowing, inviting It to speak so that I might be Guided to Right Action in every moment.

I Am so grateful for my deep Faith, and for the Infallible Presence that invites that Faith. I Am grateful for the Community that surrounds and supports me. I Am grateful for Life Itself, and for my life in particular. I give thanks for the many, many blessings of this day...the simple things...my comfortable place to sleep, my hot coffee and warm shower, the candles and lamps that illuminate my home and the sunshine outside...I allow myself to feel a deep sense of awe.

And anchored in gratitude, I consciously choose to offer blessing...envisioning a world in which humankind is living peacefully together...where every being is experiencing Joy, Abundance, and Freedom. Knowing that Peace exists, that Love is real, I feel and know our world as a Peaceful place...where all beings practice loving kindness, compassion, and generosity with each other...where all humans respect and care for our planet as a cherished Home...where all beings have everything needed to experience fullness of life...nourishing food, the safety and comfort of home, medical care and education, healthy relationships, right livelihood, creative contribution, and a sense of belonging. I feel and know a world without greed, where there is abundance in having *enough*...where every being, as a precious creation of God, is deserving of all the blessings life has to offer.

As I lean into the Radiant Light, the Infinite Intelligence, Divine Wisdom, Powerful Presence, and Limitless Love that is God, I trust that my Vision is coming into form and experience here and now as Wholeness is revealed. This can only be so, for it is by God's infallible Law that my Word is made manifest.

And so we, as part of a global web of gratitude, give thanks for all of the blessings of this day. We give thanks for the presence of mind that allows us to live each moment fully and mindfully. We acknowledge the Goodness of Life...and we consciously stand in the flow of Grace that lifts us and carries us on our way.

Trusting completely that Divine Order is guiding all of Creation, I release this prayer to continue its Good Work...and knowing it is coming into form and experience, I stand in expectant wonder, letting it be. And so it is. Amen!

Rev. Diana – Moving Into Celebration

Please repeat after me as together we affirm... *There is Power in our Prayer...There is Power in our Vision...We are changing the world from the inside out...here and now... And so it is! Amen!*

I've already given you your homework for the week, so let's move on into Celebration! Celebration is an important part of our Spiritual Practice. As we appreciate the gifts in our lives, more are given. It is a cycle...Divine Circulation.

Please join me now in celebrating *The Good News* from Filming for Change.

Filming for Change – *The Good News*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8vzEXXkD0Q>

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Each Sunday, we invite you to join in the celebration of the work we are doing in the world by sharing of your financial Good, should you choose to. If you are at home, 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, let these words reverberate in your heart and mind, knowing the Power of our word; 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 move, as we celebrate...


Offertory Video – *Living in the Overflow*, by Charity Gayle and Joshua Sherman

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmAfEI-lbgc>

Gratitude Prayer – Chris & Rev. Diana


April – Invitation to the 12 Days of Kindness


Chris – This Week's Invitations


 **Tuesdays, 3-5** – Book Club is on hiatus until January 4th. The next book is *Church of the Wild: How Nature* by Victoria Loorz. Order your books on AmazonSmile or download onto your Kindle.


 **Thursdays, 3-5 pm** – *Metaphysical Bible* (on-going, drop-ins always welcome)

Looking Ahead...

 **Mystic OAKS Adventure Group: The Schreder Planetarium: THE CHRISTMAS STAR...Saturday, December 3 from 7:00 – 9:00 pm.** Contact Rev. Diana for more information or to make your reservation. Tickets are \$12 per person. **3 seats are still available.**

 **Mystic OAKS Adventure Group: Redding Lights at Turtle Bay; Thursday, December 16 from 7:00 – 9:00 pm.** Contact Rev. Diana for more information or to make your reservation. Tickets are \$9 for seniors, \$12 for adults, and \$6 per child 5-15 years with our membership discount. **RSVP/payment in advance is required.**

 **The Two Christmas Stories: A Mystical Look at the Nativity** with Chris Johnson, **Saturday, December 18 from 10 am – 3:30 pm.** Did you know that the Christian Bible tells two very different Christmas stories? Join Chris in this mystical exploration. Lunch will be provided by the Rev. Contact Chris for more information and registration.

 **You Are the Light: A Christmas Candle Lighting, Wednesday, December 22 from 7 – 8:30 pm.** Please join Mystic Heart as we honor the world's winter traditions and celebrations, each of which invites us to prepare for the return, or the revealing, of the Light. Dalton Fitzgerald and Judy Preble will be joining us in offering Special Music. Please reserve your seat with Rev. Diana, as our seating is limited.

If you'd like prayer support, we have prayer request cards and envelopes on the fireplace, as well. If you would like to meet with a Prayer Practitioner in person, I am available for a quick prayer after the service. Or contact one of the Mystic Heart Practitioners for a full Session during the week. Our contact information is listed in the bulletin and on our website, as are all of the Mystic Heart events and activities.

To continue the celebration, there is food and fellowship next door immediately following the service. So let's stand and sing our closing song.

Closing Song: *Love Be with You*, written by Lainey Bernstein, RScP & Gary Lynn Floyd

Close of Service

