

*Just Stop!*  
*Sunday, December 4, 2022*  
*Second Sunday of Advent*



Rev. Diana Johnson, with Lucinda Alton, RScP & Johnson, RScP

A Beloved Community  
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Chris

*Taizé*

**Call to Awareness – 3 Bells**

**Lucinda – Opening Prayer**

**Rev. Diana – Good morning and welcome**

**Chant**

 **Welcome Home to Your Mystic Heart**, written by Diana & Chris Johnson

 **Silent Night, Holy Night**, written by Franz Gruber

**9:40 Diana**

Today is the second Sunday of Advent on the liturgical calendar, the Christian Calendar of Feasting and Celebration. The Season of Advent is a time of stillness, of quiet waiting for what is yet to come...for the physical light to return...and for what is to be born in us and in our lives.

Each Sunday of Advent, we will be lighting a candle to bringing our awareness to a particular quality of Spirit...a quality that we seek to embrace in our own lives. Last week we lit the first purple candle, which represents Hope or Faith. This week we'll also light the second purple candle, which symbolizes the Quality of Peace.

I invite you now to get comfortable and settle into the Peace that is always available, deep within where Spirit's voice is beckoning...where no sound, no thought can disturb...relaxing into this experience, allowing yourself to be filled to overflowing with Presence...every cell, every atom infused with Divine Light...surrounded and held by the Loving Arms of the One.

Letting go of all that you may be carrying...tension melting from your body, falling away...so that your body, mind, and soul is completely at ease...and becoming absolutely still as you allow yourself to be carried by the meditative tone of Taizé...allowing the words and music to wash over you...

Now let's take a couple of slow, deep breaths, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth, allowing the muscles in your face to relax...settling into an open-hearted state, where Absolute Peace, Serenity is the dominant tone, where there is only here and now...feeling the presence of sacred community...feeling the Presence of

Spirit. Grounded in this Powerful Presence, we enter into sacred ritual...we form and hold a powerful Vision.

Together, we envision a web of Consciousness, surrounding and infusing the planet...we see and feel ourselves as a point of radiant Light in that web... feeling the Light that you are radiating from deep within you...now expanding our awareness, and sensing that same Light shining in and from every human...no exceptions. Moving beyond our human family, we acknowledge every creature as an expression of Light...every plant, every rock and grain of sand...the soil and the water...the clouds...the heavenly bodies...all glowing with One Light...expressions of One Life.

We know that there is no separation between us...we feel our inherent connectedness. As one human family, we acknowledge our personal responsibility and our role as caretakers...in Sacred Service to one another...to all life forms...and to the planet that sustains us all.

Grounded in our Oneness, we center our awareness in this month's theme, **Sabbath**, and we explore what it means to **Stop (It)!**

We may have preconceived ideas about what it means to "Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy." What comes up in your heart and mind when you hear this 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment from the book of Exodus? Notice any thoughts, feelings, responses, or reactions...

The word **Sabbath** comes from the Hebrew *Shabbat* and means *to cease*...not merely to stop, but to yield...to surrender to the One Divine Power and Process that is forever at work...to allow life to go on without you.

Author and Minister Wayne Muller tells us that "There is astounding wisdom in the traditional Jewish Sabbath, that begins precisely at sundown, whether that comes at a wintery 4:30 or late on a summer evening.

Sabbath is not dependent on our readiness to stop. We do not stop when we are finished. We do not stop when we complete our phone calls, finish our project, get through this stack of messages, or get out this report that is due tomorrow. We stop because it is time to stop."

What are we ceasing from? In true Sabbath, we cease from doing anything that feels like work. Whatever actions we engage in are for the pure joy and delight of the experience.

We cease from the need to produce or accomplish anything. There is a deep sense of sufficiency in Sabbath...what we have, and who we are in the here and now, is enough.

We cease from worrying, feeling anxious, concerned, or tense. We trust that whatever is unfolding in our lives will be softened...made more Graceful...by our willingness to practice faith in the Process.

We cease from the need for control. We surrender all thoughts and ideas about how things *should be* and sit in complete acceptance of *what is*. We trust that Life is expressing for the ultimate Good of All, and we let it be.

We cease from our materialistic nature. Letting go of the need to acquire or possess things or people, we move more firmly into sufficiency...into surrender.

We cease from enculturation...from living our lives according to cultural standards and values...according to the opinions and preferences of friends and family...and allow our heart's deepest knowing to guide us.

And we cease from the senseless habit of checking out as we move through our days. We practice mindfulness...we consciously expand our awareness.

### **Silence – 1 minute – Bell**

Sabbath is meant for rest and reflection. It has been said that the pace and pressure of our modern life is a form of innate violence. We allow ourselves to take on too many concerns, volunteer for too many projects, and surrender to too many demands.

Thomas Merton once wrote that

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

In the book of Exodus, we are told to “Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy.” This is the fourth of The 10 Commandments given to the Jewish people through Moses on Mount Sinai. Why is *keeping the Sabbath* part of a list that includes prohibitions against killing, stealing, and lying? Could it be that the Source of Life understands the necessity of dormancy?

Consider a fruit tree. If it does not lie dormant in the winter, it will not produce fruit in the spring. If this continues for more than a season, the health of the tree declines. If dormancy continues to be prevented, the tree will die. A period of rest and rejuvenation is not simply a human psychological convenience, it is a spiritual and biological necessity. A lack of dormancy produces confusion and erosion in the life force.

We, too, must have a period in which we lie fallow, and restore our souls. In Sabbath time we remember to celebrate what is beautiful and sacred; we light candles, sing songs, tell stories, eat, nap, make love. It is a time to let our work, our lands, our animals lie fallow, to be nourished and refreshed. Within this sanctuary, we become available to the insights and blessings of deep mindfulness that arise only in stillness and time. When we act from a place of deep rest, we are more capable of cultivating what the Buddhists would call right understanding, right action, and right effort. In a complex and unstable world, if we do not rest, if we do not surrender into some kind of Sabbath, how can we find our way, how can we hear the voices that tell us the right thing to do?” (*Sabbath, Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives* by Wayne Muller)

### **Silence – 1 minute**

### **Chris – Guided Meditation**

This month we celebrate the birth of the Christ in human form... Emmanuel means *God with us*... When we sing, *O Come Emmanuel*, we are inviting Spirit to inhabit us more

fully... As we recognize our Oneness with our Creator, we find that all the Divine qualities are fully available to us... Love... Beauty... Wisdom... Truth... and Peace...

Advent is a time of Sacred Expectancy... awaiting Christmas with Hope and Faith... Singing of Peace on Earth... And yet December can often seem to rush by in a whirl... We may get so caught up in the busy-ness of shopping, wrapping, cooking, and other preparations, that we lose our sense of Peace...

Peace is our natural state of being... we weren't made to rush, worry, and live in chronic stress... we don't function well, and our health suffers from this pace... Hurrying is contagious... it throws us off-balance... We may become alienated... We may forget that those are our brothers and sisters out there...

How might we regain our balance?... and restore our Peace?... Br. David Steindl-Rast recommends this: **Stop, Look, Go**... When we notice ourselves getting caught up in the rush, we need to **Stop**... take a deep breath, center, and then **Look**... What's really going on?... what's important right now?... Is this what I want in this moment?...

Looking within, we choose how we wish to proceed... and then we **Go**... We resume our activities, but mindfully... intentionally... thoughtfully... We may still be in the rush, but not caught up by it... As we share Sacred Silence together, let us contemplate... How might we be more consistently aware of our stress reactions?... In what situations might it benefit us to Stop, Look, then Go?... How might this practice make us a calming presence for others?... When might our best response be to Just Stop?...

### **Silence – 3:00**

Gently now we bring our attention back into this room... this time... aware of Spirit breathing our bodies... and of gratitude for this feeling of deep Peace... Grateful for the Spiritual Authority to create our own experience in each and every moment... Thank you God for everyone and for everything...

I invite you to know with me now that Spirit is moving powerfully through each of us, and through our Beloved Community... Individually and collectively, we are a powerful spiritual influence on our world... As we evolve in consciousness, the benefits of our growth ripple out, blessing the entire world...

As our Taizé continues, we make ourselves open and receptive to Rev. Diana's words of wisdom... We give thanks for the blessings that are available to us when we Just Stop...

### **Rev. Diana**

Keeping the Sabbath serves us well. But resting and renewing are not merely self-serving actions. When we are well-rested and nourished, we have more to offer. Humans are naturally giving beings. We want to help, we want to serve. When we cease from our daily work and other occupations, other things can fill the space created by our rest. Relationships, creativity, physical exercise, our prayer life...all of these things *and more* have the chance to blossom in the space created by our rest. Sabbath is not about

following orders, it is about Joy, Fulfillment, and those aspects of life that grow only with time.

As we prepare to close in prayer, I leave you with these thoughts (Wayne Muller):

We stop because there are forces larger than we that take care of the universe, and while our efforts are important, necessary, and useful, they are not (nor are we) indispensable.

If we refuse to rest until we are finished, we will never rest until we die. Sabbath dissolves the artificial urgency of our days because *it liberates us from the need to be finished*...There is no rush to get to the end, because we are never finished. Take time to rest, and eat, and drink, and be refreshed. And in the gentle rhythm of that refreshment, listen to the sound the heart makes as it speaks the quiet truth of what is needed.

**Rev. Diana – Prayer**

**Rev. Diana – Offertory**

It is time for us to close our Taizé Meditation. As we do, we offer the opportunity for you to share of your financial good in support of the work we do should you choose to do so. If you're joining us online, you can find a Donate Button and our mailing address at mysticheart.org. And we thank you in advance for your gifts.

I invite you to consider the lyrics to this beautiful song by Cari Cole.

**Offertory Song – *Whenever the Time is Now***, written & performed by Cari Cole

**Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering**

**Song**

 ***A Soul's Blessing***, written by Chris Johnson

## *Conscious Conversation*

**Bell – Call to Awareness – 3 Bells**

**Opening Prayer – Lucinda**

**Rev. Diana – Welcome...if you're new with us here this morning...**

**Opening Music**

 ***Welcome to the Mystic Heart***, written by Diana & Chris Johnson

 ***One Big Family***, written by Robin Hackett & Gary Lynn Floyd

 ***Peace Like a River***, traditional African American Spiritual

**Rev. Diana**

I invite you to remain standing...let your whole body experience the Vision of a Love-Soaked World. Take a moment to feel the vibration of Life in your body...Infinite

Intelligence moving through you...filling you up...bringing your hands and arms to life, coming up through your feet and legs, moving toward your chest and filling your heart.

As we embody our Divine Connection, join me in Sacred Ritual...as together, we hold our Vision of a **Love-Soaked World**, where Peace, Joy, Abundance, Generosity, Justice, and Freedom are the living principles that guide every life...where all humans practice loving kindness and Compassion, and care for our planet as the Sacred Home that she is.

We are creating a world where all needs are met...where all beings have plenty of nourishing food, the safety of a warm and comfortable home... medical care, education, healthy relationships, right livelihood, creative contribution, and a sense of belonging...a world in which all beings are valued for their inherent Goodness and Light...where the Peace we cultivate within shows up as a world free of hatred or violence.

**10:43** We are creating a world that knows no greed, where there is abundance in simply having *enough*...where every being deserves and receives all that is needed for a full, rich, and contented life. In this new world of our creation, every member of the human family serves as a *conscious* vessel through which God's blessings flow.

"We stand firm in our faith"(from Corinthians 16:13)... we *will not* lower our Vision. Knowing with our whole hearts that such a world is not only possible, but *inevitable*, we take the necessary steps toward its creation. We call it forth from the realm of Infinite Possibility, knowing that it is taking form, right here and now as we *align our actions* to support and nurture its Graceful unfolding. We give thanks, we let it be. And so it is! Amen!

Are we ready for a **Conscious Conversation**?

This month we're going to be talking about Sabbath. During Taizé this morning, we began by lighting the first two candles of the Advent Season, the candles of Hope, or Faith and the candle of Peace. Peace and Sabbath seem to make a good pair. Let's see what comes up around the idea of Sabbath.

**What comes up for you when I say the word *Sabbath*?**

**What does the word actually mean?** ('to cease')

During Taizé, we spent time reflecting on the many things we might cease from doing as part of our Sabbath. I think they bear repeating as a springboard for further conversation.

In true Sabbath, we cease from doing anything that feels like work. Whatever actions we engage in are for the pure joy and delight of the experience.

We cease from the need to produce or accomplish anything. There is a deep sense of sufficiency in Sabbath...what we have, and who we are in the here and now, is enough.

We cease from worrying, feeling anxious, concerned, or tense. We trust that whatever is unfolding in our lives will be softened...made more Graceful...by our willingness to practice faith in the Process.

We cease from the need for control. We surrender all thoughts and ideas about how things *should be* and sit in complete acceptance of *what is*. We trust that Life is expressing for the ultimate Good of All, and we let it be.

We cease from our materialistic nature. Letting go of the need to acquire or possess things or people, we move more firmly into sufficiency...into surrender.

We cease from enculturation...from living our lives according to cultural standards and values...according to the opinions and preferences of friends and family...and allow our heart's deepest knowing to guide us.

And we cease from the senseless habit of checking out as we move through our days. We practice mindfulness...we consciously expand our awareness.

**Whether we interpret Sabbath as one full day each week, or moments of time sprinkled throughout our day, what prevents us from “Remembering the Sabbath and keeping it holy?”** (Distraction, drama, advertising, jobs/the need for money, worry...?)

In my research this week, I came across a couple of phrases I hadn't heard before. They are actually book titles. *The Sabbath as Resistance* and *Subversive Sabbath*.

**Without having read these books, what might be meant by *The Sabbath as Resistance*? Resistance to what?**

(The cultural norms we are marinated in – workaholism, competition, materialism, insufficiency or not-enoughness.)

Author Walter Brueggemann states that, “In our own contemporary context of the rat race of anxiety, the celebration of Sabbath is an act of both resistance and alternative.

It is resistance because it is a visible insistence that our lives are not defined by the production and consumption of commodity goods. Such an act of resistance requires enormous intentionality and communal reinforcement amid the barrage of seductive pressures from the insatiable insistences of the market, with its intrusion into every part of our life from the family to the national budget.”

**What does *subversive* mean?** (to turn from below; to undermine the power and authority of a system or institution)

**So how might practicing Sabbath, or creating times of Sabbath, be seen as *subversive*?** (Our culture has us on the go 24/7, outwardly focused, trying to win the race...get ahead. Of what?)

**Okay, now that we've labeled practicing Sabbath as *subversive*, as an act of resistance, how many of us are going to give it a try?** You're just like me...tell me I can't and watch me go! Or like the sign on my desk says, *Underestimate me. That'll be fun!*

**Do you think it's going to be easy to dedicate yourself to the Practice of Sabbath keeping?**

Engaging the practice of Sabbath can be challenging at first. This is because Sabbath involves pleasure, rest, freedom, and slowness, none of which comes naturally to North Americans. Most of us are so sold on speed, so invested in productivity, so convinced that multitasking is the way of life that stopping for one whole day can feel at first like a kind of death.

There used to be Blue Laws that required businesses to shut down on Sunday, to give everyone a chance to renew. We don't have those anymore.

**When was the last time that businesses all shut down in Redding?**(The outbreak of the pandemic. And before that, maybe when the Twin Towers went down.)

**Do we really need a catastrophe to make us stop?**

Keeping the Sabbath is not another thing to do, or a task to be accomplished. Sabbath is a divine "No!" to the things that compete for our time, the things we gain at the expense of others.

Sabbath is the regular, disciplined, visible, concrete yes to the neighborly reality of the community, and to communion with the Sacred.

In the creation story from Genesis, the first full day of Adam and Eve's life was a day of rest. Maybe practicing **Sabbath** is meant to be a starting place for a life well-lived.

**I have some homework for you this week, or should I call it Food for Contemplation?**

1. How might ceasing from work one day a week reshape your work and attitudes on the other six?
2. What is the advantage of a pattern of Sabbath time, as opposed to snatching odd moments or hours of Sabbath time?
3. In what ways can members of a spiritual community help one another step off the treadmill of work-and-spend and into the circle of gratitude for the gifts of God?

**Closing Prayer**

**Rev. Diana – Affirmation 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. You can find more information on our website.

As we move into this time of giving, hold these words close to your heart 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 offer this gift freely in the spirit of Love, blessing and 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!**









**Offertory Video – *Planting Seeds***, written & performed by Daniel Nahmod & Nimo Patel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AmqYcWjBmc>

**Lucinda – Blessing for the Offering**

**April – 12 Days of Kindness update**

## **Angela – Invitations**

-  **We are looking for volunteers to assist with the Junior Mystics once every 4-8 weeks.**  
Please contact Rev. Diana for more information.
-  **Tuesdays, 3-5 pm – Michael Bordeaux’s Book Club** is on hiatus until January 3<sup>rd</sup>, when it will begin reading *Lunch with Buddha*.
-  **Thursdays, 12 – 2 pm, Fast Track to Wellness** will be meeting on December 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, then take a break until January 5<sup>th</sup>.
-  **Thursdays, 3 – 5 pm, Metaphysical Bible Study** will be meeting on December 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, then take a break until January 5<sup>th</sup>.
-  **Saturday, December 10, 2022, from 10am to 2pm. Merry Christmas, Mother Earth!** Your generous donation will help cover the costs of materials/lunch. Please contact Amanda Hunter to reserve your spot.
-  **Wednesday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 – 7:30 pm.** Sound Healer Sherry Barret will be offering a Sound Wash Meditation Experience in Suite I. A donation of \$10-20 is being requested (but not required).
-  **Wednesday, December 21<sup>st</sup>, 6:30-8:00 *You Are the Light: Christmas Candle Lighting Service.*** Please RSVP with Rev. Diana. Childcare available.
-  **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Spring Retreat at Coram Ranch in Shasta Lake, April 20-23, 2023.** A non-refundable deposit of \$100/adult is required to guarantee your space. Payment in full is due by April 1, 2023.

As always, more details are in your bulletin and on our website.

**Lucinda – Invitation to Prayer**

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

