

Packing Lightly

February 5, 2023



A Beloved Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Chris Johnson, RScP
and special musical guests Anton Mizerak & Laura Berryhill.

Taizé

Chris – Opening Prayer

Rev. Diana – Welcome...if you're new with us here this morning... my name is Rev. Diana Johnson, and I am the Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystical Heart Spiritual Center. We are an Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. I want to welcome you Home to our Community, and Home to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart.

We begin our meditative journey this morning by joining our voices, deepening our intimate Connection in Spirit.

Anton, Laura, Rev. Diana, & Chris – Opening Chants

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

 **Thank You for Being in the World**, written by Anton Mizerak

Rev. Diana

We move more deeply into our meditative journey this morning, with eyes closed or gaze turned downward...taking a slow deep breath in, and letting it go, relaxing into your chair. Is there anything you wish to leave at the door before we continue our journey? Is there any intention that you wish to bring into our time together? Take another slow, deep breath in...let your shoulders relax as you release...taking a moment to give thanks, to express gratitude for having another day on the planet...orienting yourself toward gratitude, creating a loving set point for the day...helping your body, mind, and heart register that you are happy to be alive, that being alive is a gift...finding our breath, coming into the body consciously, creating reverence, deep love and respect, for Life Itself...remembering that all Life is sacred. It is a way of acknowledging what is here in this moment before us and finding deep love for it.

Breathing in, and with the next out breath, sending that reverence, love and respect out to the entire world...feeling the Light within as it expands to encompass all of creation...the human family...all other creatures...the plants...As we fine-tune our awareness, we begin to notice that every rock and grain of sand, is part of the radiance... the soil and the water...the clouds and the heavenly bodies...all part of One Light, One Life.

We send love, respect, and reverence to all of Creation. Feeling our connection with everything, we acknowledge our personal responsibility as caretakers, in Sacred Service to one another, to all life forms, and to the Sacred Mother Earth. Grounded in our Oneness, we begin our **Pilgrimage**, our journey of transformation. As with any journey, we remember the importance of **Packing Lightly**.

Whenever we make a journey, heavy baggage becomes a burden. We don't want to be weighed down with anything that is unnecessary for the journey. We want to carry only what is essential. This is a metaphor for life. Just as we tend to collect *things*, we also tend to pick up and carry attitudes, beliefs, expectations, and stories...stories about you, your life, the people in your life, the way things work. None of these stories need to go with you. There is nothing we can carry that ensures the outcome of our journey. "A false sense of security is the only kind there is." (Michael Meade)

This journey of transformation you are making, the **Pilgrimage** that we call life, is a calling. There is a Divine Impulse within you that causes you to change as you move through this human life span...your body grows and changes from stage to stage, your mind and emotions develop, and your soul, or spirit, are called to expand as well. This is natural...there is nothing you can do to stop it as long as you are a living, breathing person in this world. So we take a moment to sit in full acceptance that this is so. We feel the Divine Impulse moving us forward.

During the course of our lives, there are other Callings...something that once worked, no longer does...a relationship, a job, a home, a spiritual path. The journey we make in response is a **Pilgrimage** of the heart...a deep listening for the Guidance that will lead us to our next-yet-to-be.

Or maybe a physical challenge or illness Calls us to pay closer attention to how we care for our physical, mental, and emotional bodies...the journey we make in response has the potential to completely enrich and transform our lives if again, listening for Guidance, we move in the direction of Health and Wholeness.

No matter what Calls us into the journey of transformation, it demands preparation. There is much letting go that needs to happen. Preparing for such a journey means discerning what to carry with us and what to leave behind. This is one of the great gifts of **Pilgrimage** – an invitation to discern what is essential. What are the things you want to carry with you? And what can you lay down for the season ahead?

We might consider for our Pilgrimage, setting down any expectations we might have...all preconceptions, how we think things work, or how they should be. We might let go of judgments, or other compulsive thought patterns. We might practice fasting from ideas that keep us from truly living, or thoughts that don't nourish us in spirit.

Fasting is really an invitation to authentic freedom. It is meant to free us from things that might weigh us down or restrict us...anything from material possessions to personal beliefs...from negative people or toxic surroundings to violent or depressing media...whatever might hinder us in our search for God. "Pilgrimage is the kind of

journeying that marks...this move from mindless to mindful, soulless to soulful..." (Phil Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage*)

Pilgrimage is an art form...the skill of consciously creating your own journey...it is enriched by our daily practice of slowing down and lingering, savoring, and enjoying each step of the journey.

Silence – 1 minute

The time has come to set out on a Sacred Journey...each of us is being Called this morning into some journey of transformation...something is stirring in our hearts, Calling us forward. There is a journey that we cannot *not* take.

What is the sacred story you are living? What is the transformation that is being Called forth? Can you make this journey from where you are right now? What might you need to let go to lighten the load...to lighten your heart? What habit, belief, expectation, or judgment would be best left behind? Take a moment of silence to reflect...and in a word or two that fully represent for you this mental or physical obstruction, write down what you intend to let go of. (A moment of silence)

As the music plays, feel free to walk forward and drop your paper into the flame...let it go...watch it burn...and as it does, know that you are completely supported in releasing it...there is nothing that can hold you back now.

Rev. Diana, Anton, & Laura – Tara Chant/Release Ceremony

Chris – Guided Meditation

How do we begin our Pilgrimage if we're not sure exactly where it will lead?... Most of our journeys in life are well-planned... mapped and charted far in advance of setting out... We know what to expect...

The Quakers have a saying... "*Begin your journey and proceed as the way opens...*" We are encouraged to transcend our doubt and uncertainty, and trust that we will be Divinely guided... Pilgrimage is an expedition of faith...

How do we tune in to that Divine Guidance?... How do we discern between the Voice of Spirit within us and our own human desires and preferences?... The fact is, often we cannot... we progress through trial and error...

We must remain open and alert for signs along the way... and be willing to adjust our course as needed... Spirit guides us not only from within, but also from without, through people, incidents, billboards, radios...

We may misread the signs and find that *the way closes* before us... it may feel like it's all been a big waste of our time... we're stuck... but way closing is really just another sign... We are being called in a new direction...

Packing Lightly, leaving behind preconceptions we have about our journey, leaves us more available to Spirit... more open to receiving Divine Guidance... and less likely to find that *our way has closed before us*...

In these few moments of shared Silence, let us contemplate what we have packed for our Pilgrimage... Have we brought expectations?... fears?... doubts?... Or have we brought faith?... availability?... and curiosity?...

Silence – 3:00

Letting the music gently guide our awareness back to this Sacred Moment... this Holy Ground... we give thanks for the Wisdom received in our Silent Communion... and for the courage to move forward in Faith...

We are grateful to know that we have the love and support of our Beloved Community... Prayer Practitioners to coach us should we lose our way... and the promise of our deepening Spiritual experience...

Remember when climbing mountains to stop occasionally... look back at the valleys... and celebrate how far you've come... how high you've risen... how you have grown...

Each of us has our own individualized Pilgrimage... no one else can walk our path for us... But when we share our experiences with fellow travelers, we find common ground... support... and guidance...

As Taizé continues, we let Rev. Diana's wisdom encourage us on our journey... inspire us what to bring... and what to leave behind... Packing Lightly...

Rev. Diana

Now, with the clarity that comes with release, there is a journey Calling you forth...a True Calling...It does not emerge from the thinking mind, but from the open, perceptive and loving heart.

You know what is yours to do in this season of your life. You set your intention to make the journey, one step at a time. You **Pack Lightly** for this Journey of the Soul...willingness, open-mindedness, open-heartedness, curiosity, anticipation, discernment, and commitment are all that is needed. "When you commit to your dream, invisible hands will appear to guide you." (Phil Cousineau)

"When you follow your bliss, doors will open where there were no doors before." (Joseph Campbell) With each step, pause...listen...listen as if your life depended on it...because it does. You will find strength, courage, and persistence you didn't know you had. And you will succeed.

Taizé Closing Prayer

Coming back into this space, we open our eyes, our hearts, and our minds. Take a look at who is here celebrating with you this morning. This is your Spiritual Family...one of your support systems. These are some of the people who care about you, who are there for you if you need anything.

Rev. Diana – Offertory

As we close our Taizé Meditation, 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.

Offertory Music – Nothing, Everything (*Gate Gate*), written by Laura Berryhill

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Taizé Closing Song - *A Soul's Blessing*, written by Chris Johnson

Conscious Conversation

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

Chris – Opening Prayer

Rev. Diana – Welcome...if you're new with us here this morning... my name is Rev. Diana Johnson, and I am the Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystical Heart Spiritual Center. We are an Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. I want to welcome you Home to our Community, and Home to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart.

Laura, Anton, Rev. Diana, & Chris – Opening Music

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

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

 ***Chant – I Am As God Created Me***, written by Michael Stillwater

Rev. Diana

I invite you to remain standing, and take a moment to feel the Presence of God in your body...the Life Energy moving through...the Love Energy filling you up...and join me in Sacred Ritual.

Feel the Power of Creation moving through you as together, we hold our Vision of a ***Love-Soaked World***, where all humans are embodying and living from Peace, Joy, Abundance, Generosity, Justice and Freedom as the Living Principles that guide our lives...where all humans practice Loving Kindness and Compassion, honoring and caring for one another, and for our beautiful 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 and respected for their inherent Goodness and Light...where the Peace we cultivate within shows up as a world free of hatred or violence.

We are creating a world that knows no greed, where there is abundance in 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 person is a caring and conscious vessel through which Goodness flows. By the Power of our collective intention, we craft a new template, a new way of living on the earth. We *will not* lower our Vision, no matter the appearance. Knowing with our whole hearts that such a world is not only possible, but *inevitable*, we align our *actions* to support and nurture its Graceful unfolding. With absolute faith that it is moving into form and experience here and now, we give thanks, we let it be. And so it is! Amen!

Let's take a slow, deep breath in, and let it go...When you're ready, let your eyes open and notice who is sharing this space with you this morning. Doesn't it feel good to have the support of Spiritual Community?

Let me set a little context for our **Conscious Conversation**. Our theme this month is **Pilgrimage**...a journey of transformation. We know that beginning here and now, today...whomever we are, wherever we've been, whatever we've done...we always have the chance to make a fresh start. Our lives are journeys of transformation. Whether we consciously approach each new stage of life as an opportunity to *purposefully* grow and transform, or whether we remain unconscious and Life steps in to *force* us to change, we will not be the same person in ten years that we are today. **Shift happens. Am I right?**

During the Taizé this morning, we talked about **Packing Lightly** for our Journey of transformation...about leaving behind our expectations, preconceptions, beliefs, opinions, judgments, obsessive thought patterns. We entertained the possibility of fasting from ideas that keep us from truly living, or thoughts that don't nourish us in spirit. And we shared in ritual to let go of whatever seems to be holding us back or getting in our way.

For our **Conscious Conversation** this morning, I'd like to look at some of the things we might want to let go, so that we can **Pack Lightly** as we consciously step into the next let of our life's journey. Are you ready?

Letting go of things...Are there things in your life that you could do without...that you hardly ever (or never) use?

Why do we have so much trouble getting rid of things?

What's the payoff?

Letting go of commitments...do you have commitments to things that no longer bring you joy...maybe never did?

Why do we continue to fill our days with activities that zap our energy?

What's the payoff?

Letting go of relationships...this one is a little bit trickier. Are there people in your life that drain your energy? A doctor or other Practitioner that is not a good fit...someone who you get together with out of obligation...an old friend who constantly complains? Or even more intimate relationships that are not serving you?

Why do we hold onto relationships that are clearly not good for us?

What's the payoff?

And the most challenging thing for most of us...Letting go of beliefs and ideas.

What are some of the beliefs that hold us back?

Where do these beliefs come from?

Why do we hold onto them? What's the payoff?

Sometimes letting go is the hardest thing to do...and it is often the best thing we can do to make space for new experiences.

If you consider your life as a Journey of Transformation, and right here and now is a new beginning, what will you pack? What will be beneficial as you make your new start?

What kinds of ideas or beliefs?

What kind of attitudes?

Our journeys do not change us all at once. It can be hard to be patient...we may not even see the changes because they're so gradual. The changes in our souls occur over time. We each have things to learn and to do before we are transformed into our new identities. We go through many trials by fire...many changes in landscape. But we can't take on the new person we're becoming without letting go of the old.

Author Christine Valters Paintner offers that "There is a difference between being a tourist and a pilgrim. A tourist has new experiences, but remains the same person. A pilgrim experiences new places and is changed by them. We can only be freed by what lies ahead if we leave behind our baggage."

Closing Prayer

I begin our closing prayer today with a traditional prayer from Ghana:

Journeying God, pitch your tent with mine so that I may not become deterred by hardship, strangeness, doubt. Show me the movement I must make toward a wealth not dependent on possessions, toward a wisdom not based on books, toward a strength not bolstered by might, toward a god not confined to heaven. Help me to find myself as I walk in other's shoes.

Right here and now, I know that the Living Universal Presence is with us always, living Life in, through and AS each one of us...in, through and AS all of creation. As I accept

all that life brings me as Goodness unfolding...as I accept that if something is before me, it is FOR me...my life becomes easier, more graceful. I relax and let go of all that is no longer serving my conscious evolution and growth. I make the obvious choice to just set it down. I am made new by my intentions, and where I place my attention in every moment...may this newness unfold in ways that serve the Whole.

I am grateful for our time here together. Thank you, Spirit, for the many, many blessings of this and every day. I release this prayer now, trusting that it has already done its work...opening the way for new life to unfold. And so, in deep faith, I let it be. And so it is! Amen!

Anton & Laura – Closing Song: *Step by Step*, written by Laura Berryhill

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!


Laura & Anton – Offertory Music: *I Am a Light*, written by Donna Michael


Chris – Blessing for the Offering

Chris – Invitations

 **Kavalya Poirier is offering Kundalini Yoga/Meditation** - She is on vacation and will return Feb. 21st.

 Michael Bordeaux and the Mystic Heart Book Club is reading ***Lunch With Buddha*** on Tuesdays from 3:00-5:00 pm.


 Kavalya is taking a two-week break from **Functional Movement Yoga** and will return on Thursday, Feb. 16th from 11:00 am – 12:15 pm.


 **Fast Track to Wellness** with Rev. Diana meets on Thursdays from **12:30 – 2:30** pm. This is a physical health and wholeness support circle. They are currently using *The Yoga of Eating* and *The Miracle of Fasting* as basis for their discussions. Drop-ins are welcome.

 **Metaphysical Bible Study** with Chris Johnson meets on Thursdays from 3:00 – 5:00 pm.

 **Please sign up with Traci to assist with the Junior Mystics once every 4-8 weeks.**

Looking Ahead...

 The next **Sound Bath Meditation** will be offered here in Suite I this Tuesday, February 7th, from 6:30 – 7:30 pm

 **Let's Talk Dirty**, our first Gardening Workshop for 2023 - Saturday, February 25th from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm. Contact Rev. Diana to reserve your spot. \$20 suggested donation.

 **2nd Annual Spring Retreat at Coram Ranch in Shasta Lake** April 20-23, 2023. More details are in your bulletin and on our website.

Prayer Requests, Information Cards

Anton, Laura, Rev. Diana, & Chris – Closing Song: *Love Be with You*, written by Lainey Bernstein, RScP, & Gary Lynn Floyd