

Embracing the Unknown

March 19, 2023

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Chris Johnson, RScP

Taizé



A Beloved Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

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.

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

Opening Chants

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

 **A Blessing to the World**, written by Rev. David Bruner & Karen Drucker

Rev. Diana – Moving more deeply into our meditation, we make a Conscious Connection with the Global Community, gently allowing the eyes to close if you are comfortable doing so, and taking a couple of deep breaths...as you continue to ground yourself, imagine the breath dissolving any distracting thoughts. Now imagine moving the energy of the mind down into the heart...you may want to place your hands on your heart and breathe. Take a deep breath in and hold, and then let it out gently and slowly, connecting with your heartbeat.

As you sense your heartbeat, feel your connection to the Earth...Imagine that your heart is beating with the pulsing energy of the One Life, beating in tandem with the Heart of the Mother...with the Heart of the Father...with the Infinite Intelligence back of everything...and now imagine that your heart is beating with the hearts of all beings...human, other-than-human...and that all of creation is pulsing with this same Life...acknowledging the global web of consciousness that is created as we feel ourselves united by the pulse of Life Itself...sensing the Radiant Light of Spirit that shimmers through all of it.

We feel and know our oneness with All That Is...and we acknowledge our responsibility to one another as human family, and as caretakers of this beautiful and life-giving planet.

With every breath, and in every moment, we turn once again to ***New Beginnings***, and to ***the Practice of Embracing the Unknown***.

The Sufi poet Hafiz bids us to “Leave the familiar for a while...Change rooms in your mind for a day.”

And St. John of the Cross reminds us that “To get to an unknown land by unknown roads, a traveler cannot allow himself to be guided by his old experience. He has to doubt himself and seek the guidance of others. There is no way he can reach the new territory and know it truly unless he abandons familiar roads.”

We must become strangers in our own minds, homes, and communities. What I mean is that we must learn to see our lives and our worlds through new lenses...question all we think we know...and welcome all that crosses our path as an honored guests...faces of the Divine. This means that everything that seems foreign, strange, or uncomfortable is the place where Spirit *especially* shines forth. In shifting our perspective, we become the Principle of Hospitality expressing in the world.

“This hospitality applies to those who arrive at the door to my outer world in terms of people and experiences I find challenging.” (Christine Valters Paintner) But extending this hospitality to the inner life is even more vital because this is where true hospitality begins.

Returning once again to the wisdom of Rumi, in his poem The Guest House:

This being human is a guest house. Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor. Welcome and entertain them all!

Even if they're a crowd of sorrows, who violently sweep your house empty of
its furniture, still, treat each guest honorably.

He may be clearing you out for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice, meet them at the door laughing, and
invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from
beyond.

All of the places that tempt me to slam the door on my inner life, to contract into myself, pulling back from the discomfort...these are the places where we are called to meet the Divine.

Spirit's Guidance does not come only through the familiar faces, voices, and experiences that make us feel safe and comfortable. Instead, we find our lives sprinkled with people and circumstances that challenge and stretch our perceptions of the world...that little by little, pry open our minds and hearts.

Jungian Psychologist Ann Bedford Ulanov writes: “The holy refuses to be put in a box. These meetings with God well beyond our images of God comprise great religious moments that smash us or open us further to the transcendent or both. Mystics write of these moments.” It is these encounters that break us open, that move us past the conventional, the comfortable, the familiar...that strip the illusion of safety and security from our grasp...and that begin our journey of truly plumbing the depths of the Sacred.

Most of us don't want God on these terms, but on our own. We are willing to see Spirit at work in the beautiful...in the joyful...in the peaceful. But we are less willing to admit that holy disruption is simply one more way that Grace touches our lives...one more way that the Great Mystery moves through our experience.

This Pilgrimage called Life, this Transformational Journey, requires us to make room for the full range of human experiences...from great beauty, luscious comfort, and joy...even ecstasy...all the way to deep sadness, extreme discomfort, and that which seems ugly in our sight.

In the words of Christine Valters Paintner:

When we practice this kind of radical hospitality to all the ways holy disruption arises in our lives, we make room for the possibility that fear does not have to compel our every response. We begin to experience more kindness to everything that feels difficult within and so this begins to flow outward to others. We no longer feel compelled to limit who might be included in the realm of God's love and we learn to let go of our own agendas. We begin to see that God is so much bigger than our own imaginings and we talk with more humility. We are willing to consider that we might have been wrong all this time.

Chris – Guided Meditation

We have been taught that God is Good... that Spirit inhabits all beautiful things... We believe that Beauty, Love, and Joy are signs of the Divine Presence... proof that God exists...

It is easy to see Spirit in a majestic mountain... a redwood cathedral... a pristine beach... or a clear mountain stream... But can we find God in the midst of hardship?...

In difficult times, we may imagine that Spirit is absent... that God has withdrawn from us... But where could Spirit go?... The Omnipresent One *is* eternally everywhere...

Perhaps it is *we* who retreat from the Divine... Maybe fear blinds us to the Greater Good that is being served by a challenge that we are facing... We can't see where this is going...

But we rarely know where *any* of this is heading... the good *or* the difficult... The good and beauty *feel* better, so we accept them without question... When we resist what is before us, we push God away...

So how do we practice the Presence of Spirit in the face of challenges?... We rely on our faith... that we are not alone... that the Divine is fully present... that all is unfolding for the Highest Good...

In this shared Silent Communion, let us remember a time when a challenge was so difficult that we felt abandoned by God... But much later, we were able to see that it *was* for the best... Spirit had been guiding us all along...

Silence – 3:00

We don't know what we don't know... How then shall we Embrace the Unknown?... When we embrace a friend, we open our arms, and lean into them... Only after we reach them do we close our arms...

May we take the same approach to our Pilgrimage?... Can we open our arms and hearts and lean into the Mystery with faith and courage?... Loving and trusting Divine Guidance?...

Paul said, "We walk by faith, not by sight..."¹ We won't always be shown the outcome of our choices... But we *can* trust our Inner Knowing... our Divine Self to lead us into Divine Harmony...

With gratitude for this Sacred Communion with Spirit and with our Interspiritual Community, we give thanks... for our courage, faith, and commitment to stay the course...

And we give thanks for Rev. Diana's continued inspiration this morning... for her encouragement to walk our path, Embracing the Unknown...

Rev. Diana

The ancient Desert Fathers and Desert Mothers speak of three things that we must let go of as we continue to live life as a Spiritual Journey. The first is letting go of our former way of life so that we might move closer to our heart's desires. The second is letting go of our mindless thoughts. And the third is letting go of our images of God, realizing that any image we might entertain is much too small to contain the Divine.

We live in a time when fundamentalism has emerged as an overwhelming force in religious consciousness...not only in Christianity, but also in the extreme branches of many world traditions. This stems from the human need to feel a sense of control in chaotic times. In an attempt to make sense of our world, and to help us cope with the loss of meaning we may be feeling, we engage in black and white thinking. We put God in a box. We put one another in boxes. These boxes may seem to offer stability... safety...understanding. But in truth, what they create is perceived separation... instability...and limitation.

Meister Eckhart, a 13th century Christian mystic, describes the practice of non-attachment. Most contemplative traditions, such as Buddhism and Yogic Philosophy, have a version of this concept and cultivate the Practice of holding life with an open

palm...of letting go of how we would have life be, and welcome the reality of things...of what is actually before us. “We let go of who we think God is and cultivate openness to the One who is far beyond the horizons of our imaginings.”

Musical Meditation – *Hands of Grace*, written & performed by Jack Fowler.

Rev. Diana – Closing Prayer

We are held in the hands of Grace, in the heart of the One Source...in full faith that each of us is a perfect and intentional expression of Divinity Itself...

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.

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.

We feature another short video from Farmers' Footprint...

Offertory Video–

Gail Fuller on Farmer Mental Health

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= oHOp51RZYg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHOp51RZYg)

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Closing remarks – still supporting Farmers' Footprint with lunch donations – check your bulletin or the website for activities coming up – please consider spending a service now and again with Traci and the kids. She has sign-ups next door.

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.

Opening Music

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

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

 **Song – Metta-Chant**, written by Tienne Beaulieu

Rev. Diana

I invite you to remain standing and take a moment to feel the Presence of Spirit in your body...the Life moving through...the Love filling you up...and join me in our Sacred Practice of Visioning for a **Love-Soaked World**.

...where all humans are embodying and living from Peace, Joy, Abundance, Generosity, Justice, and Freedom as 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...

...where mental/physical health, education, and healthy relationships are ensured by social systems grounded in Wellness and Wholeness... where right livelihood, creative contribution, and a sense of belonging are known as Gifts of the Spirit and experienced by all...

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 Generosity flows. By the Power of our collective intention, we write a new story...we create a world that works for all beings. We know that our Good Work is bearing fruit. 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*. It is coming into being now...and we trust that this prayer is an integral part of its Graceful unfolding.

We open our hearts, our doors, and our arms in Radical Welcome, erasing all lines of apparent separation. We create an open and loving community to which all are invited, and *in* which all have an equal voice. Our Powerful Vision is moving into form and experience here and now, and so we simply let it go and let it be. And so it is! Amen! Sathu! Aho! (to manifest into existence)

Let's take a moment to look around and notice who is sharing this space with you this morning. This is one of your support systems, your Spiritual Family should you choose it.

What does it mean to live into the Mystery?

(to recognize that you're part of something fundamentally wonderful and miraculous; you are part of a complex, multi-dimensional system of Reality and you don't know how it works; being aware that there is a Supreme Force living all around you; that It is always 'wanting' and 'pushing toward' the highest and best for you)

As a child, we're tapped into that sense of wonder, delighted by whatever is before us. We know no bounds to what is possible. **What are the natural qualities that we display as children.**

(curiosity; exploration; innocence)

What happens when, even as adults, we begin to approach life with curiosity, exploration, and innocence instead of certainty?

(You begin to experience what feels like magic, miracles; you remember that you are part of something greater and this allows you to tap into it, to invite it into your life)

Sadly, we have mostly forgotten this as a society, as a species even. The really cool thing is that we are living in a time when we are beginning to wake up, starting to remember, one by one. The challenge we face is that many of us are linear thinkers. We want a clear-cut, direct path to where we are going. We want to know there is a destination.

Has your Spiritual Journey been a clear-cut, direct path?

Can you see your destination up ahead somewhere?

So, if there is no destination, what is this Journey about? (learning to work with the Divine, be with the Divine; coming to know yourself AS the Divine in form)

Who or what is your teacher? (Spirit)

What is the curriculum? (your life experiences)

Through my life experiences I am given the tools and resources I need to awaken the ideas, insights and realizations my soul is asking for to move forward.

Where are you being led? Where am I being led? God only knows.

Do we follow these Callings?

What gets in the way of following this Guidance?

Do we get confused about which are True Callings, and which are coming from our mind, or ego?

The good news is that a global shift is happening...we are being blessed with the evolution of a Unity Consciousness...an awareness and perspectives that allow us to see things differently.

We are beginning to recognize and admit that our ego are influencing reality...more and more of us are stepping back a bit...making space for the Sacred to truly enter our lives.

Why would we do this? For what benefit?

(for many of us, we see the benefit of being able to manifest what we need to support and bring Grace to our journey; we begin to notice the synchronicities and little miracles in our manifestations; we begin to notice that the more time we spend engaging with Spirit, the more our lives flow; as we become more aware and appreciative of what is happening, we shift from chasing miracles to experiencing them. This is happening worldwide... a common theme...a collective consciousness shift.

We are learning to connect with our Divinity in new and exciting ways. Where do you notice this awakening happening?

(a slow transition back to regenerative agriculture; the paradigm shift from big business to local economy; our educational and spiritual systems are shifting from teaching us *what* to think to showing us *how* to think, *how* to learn; an increasing number of teachers of non-dualism, evolutionary and eco-spirituality; a re-emergence of ancient traditions...paganism, shamanism, and other forms of indigenous wisdom, a revisiting of the Eastern and Desert Nomadic mystical traditions)

And is this good news?

This is the 4th Sunday in the Season of Lent, with the Spring Equinox right around the corner tomorrow...a celebration of new life, new growth; a fasting from old habits and patterns that do not serve us; adopting new ways of being and seeing; and feasting on what feeds our hearts and souls. We honor this season of New Beginnings, as we come together in Communion and in Community. We share this journey of transformation, as authentic beings, seeking the support of others willing to practice the vulnerability, courage, and commitment it takes to build bridges, to practice Radical Acceptance and Welcome.

I'd like to close our Conversation this morning with a meditative Practice. Feel free to close your eyes for a few moments, relaxing into your chair...allow these words to speak directly to your soul. Allow them to travel to the inner worlds of your inner being.

As you breathe, remember...remember...remember...remember that deep down, you already remember...more than you remember in this moment. Remember that there is something to remember. And allow the remembrance in. There is a buried treasure deep within, waiting...waiting. You are on a journey of discovering, and rediscovering, this treasure. Each time you do, you access more of who you truly are. You are part of something far greater...you are part of a greater story. The entire universe is working with you to nudge and nudge, to whisper and hold space for you to find your way back to the Light...it's not out there, but in here...in you. As you begin to remember, we remember. Allow the Divinity to awaken from within and see the Divinity in all.

Closing Prayer: I close today with a poem, *How to Feel the Sap Rising*:²

Walk as slowly as possible, all the while imagining yourself moving through pools of honey and dancing with snails, turtles, and caterpillars.

Turn your body in a sunwise direction to inspire your dreams to flow upward. Imagine the trees are your own wise ancestors offering their emerald leaves to you as a sacred text.

Lay yourself down across earth and stones. Feel the vibration of dirt and moss, sparking a tiny (or tremendous) revolution in your heart with their own great longing.

Close your eyes and forget this border of skin. Imagine the breeze blowing through your hair is the breath of the forest and your own breath joined, rising, and falling in ancient rhythms.

Open your eyes again and see it is true, that there is no “me” and “tree” but only One great pulsing of life, one sap which nourishes and enlivens all, one great nectar bestowing trust and wonder.

Open your eyes and see that there are no more words like beautiful, and ugly, good and bad, but only the shimmering presence of your own attention to life.

Only one great miracle unfolding and only one sacred word which is yes.

Know with me that...this One Great Miracle Unfolding is expressing as all of creation, which includes each and every one of us as perfect creations. The one sacred Yes is forever responding to our every thought, word, and action. And so I take care...

I give time to the process of remembering who and whose I am. I give thanks for all of it, whatever it looks like, trusting and knowing that all is happening in Perfect Order and Timing. I go with the flow of life, Embracing the Unknown, in full faith that all is forever well. And so it is! Amen! Sathu! Aho!

Offertory

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 Song – *Great Spirit's Hands* by Ma Muse

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzGwskTFZS0>

Chris – Blessing for the Offering

A quick reminder that we are working toward the sponsoring of our 5th acre for Regeneration by Farmers working with Farmers' Footprint.

Gail Fuller *Recovering Conventional Farmer*

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

Chris – Invitations

-  **Michael Bordeaux and the Mystic Heart Book Club** is taking a week off this week, coming back next week to continue the Saga... *Dinner with Buddha*.
-  **This Wednesday, March 22nd from 2:00 – 5:00 pm, Rev. Diana will be starting a new prayer class.** Check your Bulletin or our website for more details. Contact Rev. Diana to register and get the Pre-Assignment.
-  **Kavalya Poirier is offering Functional Movement through Yoga** on Thursdays, 11 am – 12:15 pm. We still have room for those willing to commit on a monthly basis.
-  **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. Drop-ins are welcome.
-  **Metaphysical Bible Study** with Chris Johnson meets on Thursdays from 3:00 – 5:00 pm. Drop-ins are welcome.
-  **Please sign up with Traci to assist with the Junior Mystics once every 4-8 weeks. She has the sign-up sheet next door...many hands make light work.**

Looking Ahead...

-  **Sunday, April 9th – Easter Sunday Release and Renewal Ceremony – 10:00-11:30, a single service for this week only.**
-  **2nd Annual Spring Retreat at Coram Ranch in Shasta Lake April 20-23, 2023.** Please let Rev. Diana know if you are planning to attend and have not yet registered. Payment in full is due by April 1st.

Planning way ahead because we want you to be there...

-  **Friday, May 19th , 6:00-9:00 pm, Our Annual State of the Heart Gathering.** This is what might otherwise be called our Congregational Meeting...except we like to turn it into a potluck and music jam. You will, of course, learn how we've done this past year, how we're doing now, and what our plans for the future are. This year's Gathering is once again being hosted by the very gracious Gary and Angela French. More information will be available soon.

Prayer Requests, Practitioner available after service, Information Cards if new people

Closing Song

 **Love Be With You**, written by Lainey Bernstein & Gary Lynn Floyd

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Notes:

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:7

² Christine Valters Paintner