

Tending the Soul

May 21, 2023

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Chris Johnson, RScP,
and musician Dalton Fitzgerald.



A Beloved Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Taizé

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 welcome you home to our Spiritual Community (should you choose it). I welcome you home to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart.

This morning we center our reflections and contemplations on ***Tending the Soul***.

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

Taizé Chants

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

Dropping Down, written by Karen Drucker

Rev. Diana – Dropping Down into the Inner Chamber, taking a long, slow, deep breath...feeling the brief pause, and then letting it go...feeling the Presence of New Life entering your being with every breath in...breathing in Vibrant Energy, and then sending that Energy out into the world on the outbreath, creating an atmosphere of Love, Peace, and Wholeness, both within and without...

Taking another moment to follow the breath as it settles into its own natural flow, and then slowing it just a bit...

And now allowing your awareness to move away from the breath, grounding even more deeply into the silence, into the timeless nature of your being...right here, right now...feeling your Oneness with the Creative Intelligence of the Universe...and acknowledging your Oneness with the global community...

Sensing a web of consciousness that surrounds and infuses the planet, each of us a radiant point of Light in that web...knowing that all beings carry the Divine Spark...every human, every creature, every plant...part of the web...every rock and grain of sand,

every drop of water, infused with God's Radiant Light...extending still further into the cosmos, the wind, the clouds, the stars, the planets...one Light, one Life.

Acknowledging our connection with all of life, our collective Work here is empowered...Our collective prayer and meditation leave an imprint of Peace, of Love, of Grace, on the world, on the cosmos, for all time...transformation is under way...Wholeness is being revealed.

By our coming together, sharing in prayer, meditation, and visioning, we are ***Tending our Souls***. What is the soul?

Some would say that it is the immaterial aspect, or Spirit that animates the human form...the invisible, immeasurable essence that makes us who we are.

There is a belief that exists in many traditions that each soul is on a journey...that it travels from lifetime to lifetime, taking form again and again, adapting, changing, and growing by its experiences...that the soul's development is responsible for the inherent qualities we bring into our lives from birth...and that it makes its way along a continuum of spiritual development, coming to know itself more and more as an expression of the Divine.

How do we tend to such a nebulous thing as the soul? Where do we look to determine what the soul needs? I believe that we are given the tools we need to Tend the Soul...feelings, intuition, and insights. The question is, are we attending to our feelings, acknowledging them as pointers to what the soul is calling for? Are we listening for intuitive guidance in our daily lives? Are we using the insights we are given to change direction or behavior?

It is so easy to allow ourselves to be distracted from the inner life. Every moment offers opportunities to place our focus elsewhere. We can become so busy with the *doing* that we lose track of the *being*. While I believe that we are here to *do* things...to grow our human capacities, improve our relationships, care for our material surroundings, and serve others...what matters is our state of *being* as we do these things.

Questions that I use to check in with my state of being...am I getting enough rest? Am I engaging with too many activities or people, expecting too much of myself? What is my motivation for doing the things I do? Am I nourishing my physical body with healthy food? Do I honor my body with healthy movement each day...spend time in nature...take the time to notice the beauty that surrounds me? In short, how am I feeling about what I am *doing* and who I am being?

We are self-reflective beings...we have the capacity to think, plan, analyze, and choose, and also to reflect upon our own thoughts and choices...we are able to listen to how we are feeling about ourselves and our lives, and to choose again where needed. But do we honor ourselves enough to take the time for reflection? We have the capacity to ask for Guidance from Life Itself, from Great Spirit...from the Infinite Intelligence of the Universe...and to listen for answers. But do we slow down long enough...become

humble in our asking...and listen for a Higher Wisdom than our own? This is ***Tending the Soul***.

Dalton – Musical Meditation – *Get Ready My Soul*, written by Daniel Nahmod

Chris – Guided Meditation

What is the Soul? ... Like all spiritual Truth, what the soul is cannot be clearly expressed in words... Rev. John Ortberg defines it as “the eeriest, most mysterious, most evocative, crucial, sacred, eternal, life-directing, fragile but indestructible, and now-a-days quite controversial part of your existence...”

Author Dallas Willard once said, “You’re a Soul made by God, made for God, and made to need God...What is running your life at any given moment is your soul. Not external circumstances, not your thoughts, not your intentions, not even your feelings, but your Soul...”

The Soul will tell us what it needs, if we listen... but how do we contact it? Parker J. Palmer tells us, “The Soul is like a wild animal — tough, resilient, savvy, self-sufficient, and yet exceedingly shy... If we want to see a wild animal, the last thing we should do is to go crashing through the woods, shouting for the creature to come out.

But if we are willing to walk quietly into the woods and sit silently for an hour or two at the base of a tree, the creature we are waiting for may well emerge, and out of the corner of an eye we will catch a glimpse of the precious wildness we seek...”

As we share these moments of Sacred Silence, let us enter the forest within, and sit at the base of a tree in quiet anticipation... ever alert... never grasping... Our shy Soul will reveal itSelf to us... When it does, gently invite it to share its needs with you... its deepest desires for you... its purpose for incarnating as you... at this point in time... Then listen deeply... don’t rush it... don’t let thoughts interrupt it... Simply wait in patient expectancy... and when it does speak, heed its call...

Silence – 3:00

Allowing the music to guide us gently out of the forest... back into the here and now, we give thanks for this time of Blessed Communion with our Soul... immersed in the love and support of our Beloved Community... We accept our newfound insights with profound gratitude...

And we express this gratitude by continuing and sustaining our divine dialogue with the Soul... by committing ourselves to a regular practice of checking in with ourselves at the deepest level... and we allow ourselves to be guided and even changed by what the Soul reveals to us...

As Taizé continues, we open our heart, our mind, and our Soul to ever greater inspiration... and to Rev. Diana’s encouragement to faithfully continue Tending the Soul...

Rev. Diana

The soul is our unique expression of the Divine in human form. It gives us our distinct qualities, characteristics, and gifts so that we can share them with the world. It is our soul's purpose in this lifetime to pour out our gifts...to give unconditionally...to live Whole-heartedly.

Now the question becomes... "what do I have to offer? What are my unique gifts? How will my self-givingness take form in the world?" The first step in answering these questions is to first ask, "What do I love?" St. Thomas Aquinas suggested that "The things that we love tell us what we are."

"Where we are full-hearted in our lives, we are deeply engaged, responsible, reliable, and committed." (Angeles Arrien) That makes it pretty easy to discover where your own full-heartedness lies...where are you fully involved in manifesting what has heart and meaning for you? It can be anything...take a moment and look within yourself...where do you willingly spend your 'free time'? What kinds of activities make time disappear...and move you into a Flow that leaves you feeling peaceful and contented? I would bet that each of us can name at least one or two things that bring a sense of wholehearted, or full-hearted living. These are ways of ***Tending the Soul***.

I'm sure we've all heard this quote by Howard Thurman: "Don't ask yourself what the world needs. **Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that**, because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

So, what is it that makes you come alive? I'll bet you can guess what some of mine are...studying, writing, teaching, singing, dancing, gardening, cooking, walking barefoot in the dirt...

Next question...how much of your time do you give to these pursuits, to these activities? Is it enough? Or do you cheat yourself and the world of your gifts? How are you doing with ***Tending the Soul***?

We'll take these questions and more into our Conscious Conversation this morning, but let's take a moment to close our Taizé in prayer. Join me in knowing that...

Taizé Closing Prayer

Right here in this Holy Moment, I Am ***Tending my Soul***. I Am taking the time to remember Who and Whose I Am...that there is one Source, one Life, and that I Am an integral part of that One. I Am here on purpose...a perfect expression the Divine, uniquely made so that my soul might continue along its amazing journey...and so that I might share my gifts with other souls that cross my path. This life is so much bigger than we realize...there is so much more going on than our human senses can perceive. So I choose to consciously place my faith in the Goodness of Life, in the perfection of all that is unfolding, and in the Grace of the One I call God. As I make this conscious choice from a place of Spiritual Power and Authority, my life reflects Goodness back to me. I have absolute Faith that my Powerful Word is creative and moving into form and experience right here and now for each one listening; and so, I release it fully and

completely to the Loving, Lawful Presence, calling it done. And so it is. Amen...Sathu...Ashay...Aho!

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.

Dalton – Offertory Music–*Build My Dock*, written by David Ault

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering/Closing Song (Soul's Blessing)

Conscious Conversation

Dalton – Music

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

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

 ***Song – I Release and I Let Go***, written by Rickie Byars

Chris – Prayer

Rev. Diana – Good morning and welcome, or welcome back...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. We welcome you home to our Spiritual Community and to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart.

This morning we center our Gathering on ***Tending the Soul***. But before we jump into our ***Conversation*** this morning, we invite the felt Presence of Spirit into our bodies, however that works for you, and we join in the Sacred Practice of envisioning a ***Love-Soaked World...***

...where all humans are embodying and living from Peace, Joy, Abundance, Generosity, Justice and Freedom as Living Principles, practicing Love, Kindness and Compassion, honoring and caring for one another, and for our Sacred Mother Earth.

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 accepted as Gifts of the Spirit and enjoyed 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. By the Power of our collective intention, we write a new story...we create a world that works for all beings.

We *do not* lower our Vision, no matter the appearances in the world, knowing with our whole hearts that such a world is not only possible, but *inevitable*. As one by one, each of us aligns our actions to support our vision, it is coming into form and experience now...and we trust that this prayer is a creative act in its Graceful unfolding.

We open our hearts, our doors, and our arms in Radical Welcome, erasing all lines of apparent separation. In keeping with our Vision, we create an open and loving community to which all are invited, and *in* which all have an equal voice. Trusting in the power of prayer, we say Thank You, Spirit, letting it go and letting it be. And so it is...Amen...Sathu...Ashay...Aho!

Let's take a moment to look around and notice who is sharing this space with you this morning. Take a moment to really see one another.

If you were with us at Taizé this morning, you know that we have been looking at ***Tending the Soul***. For those who weren't there, we defined the soul as the immaterial aspect, or Spirit that animates the human form...the invisible, immeasurable essence that makes us who we are.

We contemplated the belief that exists in many traditions that each soul is on a journey...that it travels from lifetime to lifetime, taking form again and again, adapting, changing, and growing by its experiences...that the soul's development is responsible for the inherent qualities we bring into our lives from birth...and that it makes its way along a continuum of spiritual development, coming to know itself more and more as an expression of the Divine.

We reflected on our individuality and the unique gifts we are meant to offer the world. And I shared a favorite quote by Howard Thurman as a way of determining what your gifts are. "Don't ask yourself what the world needs. **Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that**, because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

I'd like to use that as a springboard for our Conversation this morning.

What is it that makes you come alive?

(For me it's studying, writing, teaching, cooking, gardening, walking barefoot in the dirt...)

How much of your time do you give to these pursuits, to these activities?

Is it enough? Or do you cheat yourself and the world of your gifts?

I find it sad that, when preparing to choose a career, I wasn't asked, "What do you do with your free time? What do you enjoy the most?"

Were you asked that question?

What kinds of questions were you asked?

When we're engaging in activities that fulfill us, we are living a Whole-Hearted life...we are *Tending the Soul*.

What does it look like to live a half-hearted life?

(a lot of shoulds, rather than wants; "I have to", instead of "I choose to.")

How often do you hear yourself saying, "I have to do this" or "I have to do that?" Not only is that a half-hearted way for me to live, but it also puts me into a victim role and releases me from responsibility. But that's a whole 'nother talk.

Here's an interesting experiment...think of something that you "have to" do during the week. **Anyone want to share?**

Now, instead of saying I have to _____, say "I choose to _____". Because you don't really have to, do you? There are alternatives, aren't there?

Do you feel a certain sense of empowerment by owning the choice? Does it feel different in your body?

It's a sign of emotional and spiritual maturity to consciously own the choices we make. I so admire you for willingly walking into a place where you know that I'm going to say things like that. Not everyone is ready to step into that level of responsibility. Okay, let's shift things a bit and talk about another way of *Tending the Soul*.

What effect does the experience of Beauty have on your life?

Would you say that spending time in Beauty, or with Beauty, is a way of *Tending the Soul*?

I'd like to share another short section from Gregg Braden's book, *Secrets of the Lost Mode of Prayer*. This comes from a chapter called *Beauty is the Transformer*.

Read from pages 103 (green), 105-107 (pink)

What is your yardstick for Beauty?

Beauty is as Beauty does...this week, I invite you to invite Beauty into your thoughts, words, and actions, whatever that means to you. Invite Beauty into your heart and mind...notice Beauty wherever you go. Remember that Beauty is a Quality of Spirit, always present within you...and in everything around you. Your job is to find it.

Closing Prayer Join me now as we close our time together in prayer.

Love, Life, Light...Peace, Power...Joy and Beauty...these are some of the inherent Qualities of the one Source. Right here and right now, I acknowledge and accept these

Divine Qualities as part of my human expression. I call them forth to shine Light into every area of my life. In every moment, I remember Who I Am and why I'm here...to offer my gifts to the world...to play my part in this dance of life with authenticity and integrity. As I move into this week, I ask for Guidance...what is mine to do? What is my greatest contribution? I listen...and I act accordingly. I come into greater and greater alignment with the Truth of who I came here to be. And in walking through the world in this way, I Am ***Tending the Soul*** of Humanity. With a deep sense of Peace, I am grateful for my life...I am thankful for the many blessings of this and every day. Filled with appreciation, I release this prayer, trusting that it has already done its work. And so, I let it go...I let it be...and so it is! Amen! Sathu! Ashay! Aho!

I invite you to bring your awareness back to your body, to your senses, to the atmosphere in the room. And when you are ready, open your eyes to re-enter the space. Welcome back.

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!


Dalton – Offertory Music: *Invisible Hands*, written by JD Martin

Chris – Blessing for the Offering


Angela – Invitations


 **This Monday, May 22nd, from 7:00-8:30 pm** – Angela is facilitating The Skillful Ally, a discussion & learning Group at NorCal Outreach. See Angela for more details.

 **The Mystic Heart Book Club, Functional Movement through Yoga, Fast Track to Wellness, and Metaphysical Bible Study** are all meeting at their normal times this week. Drop-ins are welcome.

 **Farmer's Market every Saturday, 7:30 – noon. Come and see us!** Also, sign-ups are available to take a turn working the booth or transporting food to the Good News Rescue Mission.

Looking Ahead...

 **Saturday, June 3rd from 10 am – 4 pm**, Mystic Heart will be participating in the Pride Festival. Sign up to work a shift in our booth, or help out as a volunteer in the food booth.

 **Saturday, June 10th from 1:00-3:00 pm, Praying in Color with Ellie Thompson.** We will be using decoupage to prayerfully create a beautiful, one-of-a-kind flowerpot. Suggested donation: \$20

Looking Far Ahead...

 **Next year's retreat at Coram Ranch is booked. What you need to know for now... Dates: Thursday, April 25th – Sunday April 28th, 2024.** Next year's cost will be \$350 for adults; there is a lesser amount for children. Monthly payments can be set up if that is helpful.

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

Dalton – Closing Song

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

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