

# So, Now What???

Sunday, June 11, 2023

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Chris Johnson, RScP

*Taizé*



An Independent Interfaith 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 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 dive deep into the flow of Taizé Meditation as we join our voices in song.

### Taizé Chants

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

 **I Am So Blessed**, written by Karen Drucker

**Rev. Diana** – Each of us is so blessed, right here in this moment, by the breath moving into and out of our bodies...by the gift of Life...feeling the Presence of Love, expanding within me with every in-breath...and flowing out into the world on the outbreath, creating an atmosphere of Lovingkindness...Compassion...Peace (Pause)...allowing awareness to move away from the breath and into the stillness...feeling the Presence of the Divine...and acknowledging our Oneness with the global community...

Sensing the Divine Intelligence that surrounds and infuses the planet, each of us a Radiant Spark within that Consciousness...every human, every creature, every plant...

...the rocks and minerals, water and wind, stars, and planets...infused with Spirit's Light...each one, a perfect and intentional expression of one ever-present, all-pervasive Life.

We empower our Collective Work by acknowledging our connection with all that is...we are a powerful Force for Good. Our collective prayer and meditation leave an imprint of Peace, of Love, of Grace, on human evolution, and on the world, for all time.

Our topic for contemplation today is **So, Now What???** This month's theme is **You Are Here**, in the midst of whatever is happening, for a reason. Last week's topic was, **There Are No Accidents. So Now What???**

One of life's biggest questions is...what do I do with this precious gift of life? Where do I fit? What can I give that will make a difference? It is important to remember that we each have a unique contribution to make...and that each gift, each person, is equally valuable in the eyes of Spirit...in the Light of Truth. And so, it falls to each of us to spend time with ourselves, asking for Guidance, and seeking what is ours to do.

We are also wise to remember that what we have to offer will likely change as our lives progress. What we give to the world early in life as a loving and conscious parent, or a caring and thoughtful young person morphs into new ways of serving as we move into careers, householders, volunteers, or whatever else we are called to.

What is important to remember is that, until we take our last breath, we are never done. The longer we live, the more we come to know Who and Whose we are, the more of our own gifts we discover. And it is part of our purpose in this lifetime, and our soul's evolution, to recognize our own gifts and to give them where we can.

And so, the self-reflection begins...or continues. "What gifts are uniquely mine? What do I have to offer?" You may discover the voice of a smaller self, interrupting... "Who are you to think you have special gifts?" Author Marianne Williamson would respond this way: "Who are you not to? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others." (From *A Return to Love*)

We often hear about the importance of meditation and prayer as tools for self-reflection. We are told that Spiritual Study and Service are key in our development. I would like to take us in a different direction...it is when we are rested and relaxed that the Voice of Spirit can be heard most clearly. And certainly these Practices have their place in a contemplative and examined life.

But there are other ways to rest...and to find that clarity. How often do you give yourself permission to play? How often do you dance for the sake of dancing because it feels good? How often do you draw or paint for the sake of self-expression, *with no agenda* to improve your skill? How often do you go to the park and swing? Or take a walk, with no purpose other than the Joy of walking? How often do you tinker, or putter, with no goal in mind?

As Spiritual Seekers,

we can get so caught up in thinking, thinking, thinking. Fun gives our minds a rest and lets the Greater Mind find an opening to impart some beautiful insights and wisdom...Some of us think that to be spiritual, we must be serious, predictable people whose every action is on purpose.

Just as children enter into play or into a game, ...there is a lightheartedness, a delight, a sense of fun, sheer exuberance in the joy of living.

(Rev. Christie Hardwick, June 2023 SOM Magazine, p. 57)

By playing, we give ourselves time to notice what brings us Joy, what brings us alive. And it is within this feeling of aliveness that we find our True Gifts.

“But,” says the small self, “there is so much pain in the world, so much that needs doing. What right do I have to be Joyful in the face of so much suffering? How can I make time for play...and to accept Joy in my life...when everywhere I look, there is sadness?”

*What if* we thought of Joy as a form of peaceful resistance? (Pause) *What if*, by consciously choosing Joy, we are actually thwarting the systems, people, and institutions that practice oppression? (Pause) What if, by standing in our own Joy, we are expressing our Divine Birthright, and using our Spiritual Authority to bring Light to the world? Am I not a more powerful force for Good in the world when I stand in the Truth of Who I Am? I rest in God, knowing that I Am a playful and Joy-filled being.

**Silence – 1 minute**

**Chris – Guided Meditation**

Spiritual teachers throughout the ages have taught the value of being fully present... altogether mindful... focusing on what *is* right here and now... As creative beings crafting our experience, we are constantly at a point of choice... we choose our response to Life *now*... and again *now*...

Life is a series of *now* moments... flowing one into the next... And each one offers us the opportunity to alter our course... to veer in a new direction... to enhance a beneficial quality we have... or to release detrimental thought or behavior patterns... To make our Life up as we go...

It sounds like a lot of hard work... all that focus and attention... But I invite you to consider those times when we are naturally present... effortlessly absorbed in the here and now... beholding the beauty of Nature... playing music... participating in a game... dancing... past and future completely forgotten...

It is in these moments that Spirit lives as us... we are inspired... Divine Intuition guides us... we are free to be truly authentic... And this is when our unique Gifts reveal themselves to us... When we seek our gifts effortfully, they run and hide... when we play, they joyfully reveal themselves...

It has been said that the purpose of life is to discover your gift... the work of life is to develop it... and the meaning of life is to give your gift away... In this time of shared contemplation, let us consider our favorite forms of play... what really brings us joy... for these point to our Divine Gifts... Imagine yourself lost in playful abandon... unrestrained... free... blissful... What feelings arise?... Trace those feelings back to your heart... and let your gifts be revealed...

## **Silence – 3:00**

As we bring our attention back to this time and this place, we embrace that feeling of playful spontaneity... and all it has unveiled... We are grateful for the love and encouragement of our Beloved Community as we support one another in finding, developing, and sharing our gifts...

For it is in the sharing of our Authentic Self that we create a new heaven and a new earth... a new paradigm... a more fulfilling story for our planet and her inhabitants... *A Love-Soaked World...*

In gratitude and eager anticipation of Rev. Diana's continued exploration of play as a spiritual practice, we fearlessly ask, *So, Now What?*

## **Rev. Diana**

In the words of the Rabbi Yeshua, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3-5)

What does this mean, become like little children? What are some of the qualities of childhood? Wonder...openness...curiosity...playfulness... empathy...generosity...and humility. In childhood, until we are taught otherwise, we see the miracle in every little thing... an ant crawling down the sidewalk...a flower turning into an apple. We are willing to try things out and we question everything! We learn naturally through play...we share what we have...and we try to help others when they are distressed. We see the world with the eyes of the heart...and because we are so physically small compared to those around us, we know and accept that we are not in control. We allow ourselves to be guided and guarded by something or someone much bigger than we are.

When was the last time you consciously expressed and experienced your child-like nature? How much time do you give to play each day? Each week?

When you have a job to do, do you do it playfully? Br. David Steindl-Rast defines leisure as playful work... "seen in this light, leisure is not a privilege, but a virtue." Leisure, viewed through this lens, is available to everyone, if only we are mindful...if we remember throughout the day to drop our awareness from the head to the heart...to breathe...slow down and create space for yourself...and to feel the Joy and Appreciation of being alive!

**10:01 Musical Meditation– *I Hope You Dance*, by Lee Ann Womack**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DmBSGIXqC4Q>

***So, Now What???*** We dance...we do our best to move playfully through life, tapping into the Joy that is always available. We make time for leisure, for working playfully, and enjoying the ride.

**Taizé Closing Prayer** - Please join me as we close in prayer.

We take a moment to connect with the One Source of all Life, remembering the Qualities of Spirit...Love, Compassion, Peace, Power...but also Joy, Beauty, and Light. We are all of that. It is our Divine Nature. So why not just let go of all of the stories that tell us otherwise and embrace our own Divinity...the Divinity of Life...of every being...of every moment. Breathe that in for a moment. There is nothing else...only God, coming to know Themselves as creation. That means you...that means me. Why not embrace our playful nature, our sense of wonder and innocence? Why not let our lives be more fun? Why not step outside of who we have always been, and dance a little bit?

I Am so grateful for my deep connection...so grateful for the realization that Life is supposed to be a balance of darkness and Light, and for my heartfelt intention to lighten up!

I am grateful for this community...showered with more blessings than I can count. For all of this and so much more, I give thanks, in full faith that this prayer is active and vital. As I relax into Spirit's Sweet Embrace, feeling Its Warmth, Presence, Intelligence, and Love, I simply let go...get out of the way and let God do Their thing. 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.

### **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](http://mysticheart.org). And we thank you in advance for your gifts.

**Offertory Video – *Be Here Now***, by Narayan and Janet

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3f2Cj\\_wrss](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3f2Cj_wrss)

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

**Taizé Closing Song**

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


## *Conscious Conversation*

**Chris – Re-Opening Prayer**

**Rev. Diana** – Good morning and welcome, or welcome back...welcome to those joining online. 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 Gathering Place and to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart.

## Music

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

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

**Rev. Diana** – Feel free to stay standing or whatever serves you in noticing the Presence of Spirit into our bodies, as we join in the Sacred Practice of envisioning a **Love-Soaked World...**

...where all humans embody and live from Peace, Joy, Abundance, Generosity, Justice, and Freedom as Living Principles...honoring and caring for one another, and for the beautiful planet that sustains us all.

We are creating a world where all needs are met...where all beings have plenty of nourishing food, the safety and comfort of home...where mental/physical health, education, and healthy relationships are ensured by social systems grounded in Wellness and Wholeness...

...where all beings Serve the greater community doing whatever feeds their souls and are well supported for their time and talent...and by their Service, each one finds a sense of belonging...A world in which all beings are valued and respected for their uniqueness...where Authenticity and Integrity are the norm...where the Peace and Kindness we cultivate within shows up as a world free of hatred or violence.

By the Power of our collective intention, we are writing a new story, and it is a story where there is no greed, where abundance means having enough to thrive.

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*. We align our actions to support our vision, and a new world is being our born.

We open our hearts, our minds, 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 accept its Graceful unfolding, calling it done, and in Sweet Gratitude, we release it now to the Living, Loving, Lawful Presence.

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...your Spiritual Family should you wish. These are some of the people who care about you. You can count on their support.

If you were with us at Taizé this morning, you know that we have been considering the question, **So Now What???**

Let's back up just a bit. This month's theme is **You Are Here**. Last week's topic was **There Are No Accidents**. And today we're asking, **So Now What??? You Are Here, There Are No Accidents...**

**So, Now What???**

**What's the first thing that comes to your head?**

We talked a little bit at Taizé about how we often hear about the importance of meditation, spiritual study, and service are key in our development, in determining what our next step should be. Then I took a different direction, pointing out that it is when we are rested and relaxed that the Voice of Spirit can be heard most clearly. While these practices are important ways that we can gain clarity, there are other ways to rest and get grounded in Spirit.

The importance of play was one of the topics we visited...we looked at how play leads to Joy, lightheartedness, and insight. It brings us alive and points us toward what we love...toward our true gifts. I asked some questions, and now we have a chance to hear your thoughts:

**What if we thought of Joy as a form of peaceful resistance? Is it? How?** (consciously choosing Joy, we are actually thwarting the systems, people, and institutions that practice oppression...we win!) I Am a more powerful force for Good in the world when I stand in my Authenticity, using my unique gifts to bring Light to the world.

**What does it mean to stand in my Authenticity? I Am using a capital A here.**

**Does it mean I get to say whatever I feel, to whomever I want, in whatever tone, whenever I choose...because it's part of how I'm feeling in any given moment?**  
No, that's another A word...???

Accepting the Joy that is inherent in Life is a Spiritual Practice...we have to stop taking ourselves so seriously. So as we ask **So, Now What???** Let's add some play and Joy into the mix, shall we?

It seems to me that while the next best step is different for each of us, there is something we all share in moving forward. Each of us has the opportunity to *begin again*, right where we are.

Can I share something I found really interesting? It comes from this book, *Church of the Wild* by Victoria Loorz. I'd like to try to summarize a couple of ideas, and then get your feedback. Is that okay? She begins by quoting John the Evangelist in the Christian New Testament.

In the beginning, was the Logos, and the Logos was with God. And the Logos was God. This was with God in the beginning. All things came into being through this, and apart from this, nothing came into being that has come into being...And the Logos became flesh and dwelt among us.



**Have you heard this quote before? Is this the way you heard it?** (I always heard *Word*, not *Logos*. And there are many scholars that translate it *In beginnings...not in the beginning*.)

We could spend all afternoon talking about our personal interpretation of what this means. But there's something that you might find more interesting. It turns out that up until the fourth century, theologians and bishops translated the word *Logos*, from the Latin, to mean *conversation*, not *word*. So the passage would have originally read, "In the beginning, was the *conversation*, and the *conversation* was with God, and the *conversation* was God. This was with God in the beginning. All things came into being through this, and apart from this, nothing came into being that has come into being...And the *conversation* became flesh and dwelt among us."

Go ahead and call me a geek, but this new information got me thinking.

**Does this change your understanding of this passage?**

**Looking through the lens of symbolism, what might this mean?**

**Could this have an impact on how we figure out...So, Now What???**

For me it changes everything. Instead of the Word being a one-way directive from a God *out there*, speaking a literal word and bringing that thing into existence...this was my childhood understanding...it was about having a conversation. It becomes interactive, between my human self and my own Divinity. The interactive nature of a conversation points to a relationship...to a God that is generous and giving, that is responsive to our needs, to our thoughts, words, and actions...to the Loving and Lawful Nature of God. And it points to the existence of Grace.

When we're in a loving relationship with someone (and God is Love), we have many opportunities to offer forgiveness, to begin again. For me, the translation becomes, *In beginnings, is the conversation, and the conversation is with God, and the conversation is God working in my life*. It means that in every moment, I can begin again, and the best way to start is to have a conversation with the Divine, or my inner Wisdom...to pray...to ask...to listen to my heart...to respond...to listen again...and then to take my next step.

**How does that sound to you? Any thoughts?**

Can I share one more geeky question with you? I'm gonna' let me *geek flag* fly 😊

**Who knows what a *charism* is?**

From *Rooted* by Lyanda Lynn Haupt: "Charism is an enchanted word from the Western monastic tradition. A charism is a particular gift or power – almost a super-power, received in grace through...the spirit-wind, and returned to the world as favor freely given."

**What word is more familiar to us that shares the same root? (charisma)**

**Why do I bring up this word this morning?**



Because everyone has a charism...a special gift...and the grace offered within your gift is not complete, is not fulfilled, until you return that gift to the world as a “favor freely given.” It’s time to believe in your gift...to uncover it if you haven’t already...and to share it. That’s what we’re all here for.

Thanks for letting me geek out on you this morning...for following the workings of my mind and my heart, and for sharing yours.

Should we go ahead and close with prayer? Please hold these words as your prayer, as well.

### **Closing Prayer**

Let’s relax and settle into the breath...into the One Source of All of Life...God, Infinite Intelligence, Great Spirit, Creator...by whatever name I call It, I can sense Its Presence here and now. I feel it moving within and all around me, beating my heart, healing any places of dis-ease, bringing Peace and a sense that everything is always unfolding for the Good...even when I can’t see it in the moment.

I trust that Grace is always and forever flowing in and through my life. I place my faith in the Absolute Abundance of God’s Universe and know that whatever I need comes to me in Divine Order and Timing. And so, I open to the flow of God’s generous Spirit, allowing the Good to move through my life, through my relationships, through my home and family.

I invite that same Goodness to move powerfully through the lives of the unsheltered and those experiencing challenges of any kind. On behalf of those who have not yet found their faith, I offer my own, knowing that all are lifted. I extend my Love and Compassion to the world and its beings, trusting that this creates a gentle ripple of Peace and Wholeness that moves through all of creation.

In deep faith, I release my prayer, trusting the Power of the One to move through me, and through my life. I call it done...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](http://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!**

Here is a song from Eddie Watkins, Jr.: *It's a New Day!*


**Offertory Video – It's A New Day – Eddie Watkins, Jr.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gli2BzL4jqQ>


**Chris – Blessing for the Offering**


**Chris – Invitations**


 **Thursday from 11:00 – 12:15 Kavalya is offering Functional Movement and Yoga in Suite H.**

 **Support your local farmers, and your own physical health, at the Saturday Farmer's Market every Saturday, 7:30 – noon. Mystic Heart will not have its booth on Father's Day weekend.**

**Looking Ahead...**

 **Wednesday, June 28<sup>th</sup> from 6 – 8 pm, Common Threads of Truth with Rev. Helen Cummings.** The focus of this first presentation in a series will be Buddhism and the Common Threads of Truth it shares with other traditions. There will be Q & A and simple refreshments. Donations are gratefully accepted. Bring a friend!

 **Saturday, July 1 from 8:30 – 11:30 am at the Anderson River Park is our next Celebrating Community Fun-Raising Event.** April and Maile are hosting and leading a Fishing Excursion! The adventure will include brunch and some instruction/assistance in catching your very own fish! **There is room for 8 adults.** Suggested donation is \$20. Children are welcome, as well...this is a family event. Please text April at 1-562-440-3785 for more information, meeting place, etc. Tickets are available today!

 **The Mystic Heart Book Club will reconvene on July 11<sup>th</sup> with Rev. Diana.** We'll be reading *The Essential Path* by Neale Donald Walsch (while Michael is on vacation).

♥ Friday, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 9 am – 4 pm – join Mystic OAKS as we visit the Shasta Abbey and Sisson Museum in Mt. Shasta. Please contact Chris Netto at [nettowoman@gmail.com](mailto:nettowoman@gmail.com) for more information.

**Prayer Requests, Practitioner available after service**

**Closing Song**

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

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