

What is True Freedom? July 9, 2023 – Taizé

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells


Sherri - 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.

Rev. Diana & Chris – Taizé Chants

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

 **We Are One**, written by Linda Webb-Khakaba

Rev. Diana – We are One in this and every moment, connected by the breath moving into and out of our bodies...by the earth and water that give us nourishment...by the Presence of the Divine that lives, moves, and has its being by means of creation...all nations on the earth, all life upon the planet...nothing can separate us. We are One. Together we breathe (Pause)...putting both hands over the heart and surrendering into this moment...allowing the breath to encircle, awaken, and open the heart, preparing it to receive whatever is here for you today...

As we breathe again, let us soften...letting any resistance fall away, as together we feel the presence of our Collective Heart...

...taking what is Good in our lives and giving it our full attention and gratitude...listening to all that is spoken, both within and without, through the Wisdom of the Heart...letting the hands gently fall to your lap and breathing in Love...holding it for just a moment, and sending that Love into the room on the outbreath.

There is Freedom in stillness...a Freedom that says, “Just be still.” (Pause) Feel and know the Wholeness, the Completeness, of this moment as you allow yourself to be carried by the meditative tone of Taizé...allow the music to take you deeper as you remember who you are...

Musical Meditation

 **God Is, I Am**, by Eddie Watkins, Jr.

We take a moment to experience our Oneness with all of Life...to honor our connection with our global family...Envision with me a web of consciousness that surrounds and infuses the planet...each of us, a Radiant Spark shining within the web...every human, every creature, every plant, shining the One Light, from the One Source...the rocks and minerals, water and wind, stars and planets...enlivened by the Light of Spirit.

As we acknowledge our connection with all that is, we are empowered...there is strength in connection...there is freedom in knowing we are not alone...in belonging to something bigger than ourselves. As we recognize our interdependence, we come to see that our collective prayer and meditation leave an imprint on human evolution and on the world, for all time. In this moment, we set an intention that this imprint be one of Love, Peace, Joy, Beauty, and Contentment.

The flow of Taizé this morning invites us to ask ***What is True Freedom?*** Teacher and mystic Ernest Holmes, in chapter one of the Science of Mind text, says:

“The Divine Plan is one of Freedom; bondage is not God-ordained. Freedom is the birthright of every living soul. All instinctively feel this. The Truth points to Freedom, under Law. Thus the inherent nature of man is forever seeking to express itself in terms of freedom. We do well to listen to this Inner Voice, for It tells us of a life wonderful in its scope; of a love beyond our fondest dreams; of a freedom which the soul craves.”

Freedom is directly linked to belonging, although we are not often presented with this relationship as a point of contemplation. At the core of belonging there are three qualities... trust, faith and love.

Trust is the core of faith. That which we have learned to trust determines where we place our faith. If, at a young age, we learned that we could trust our parents to care for and love us, we might later place our faith in people as being basically good, trustworthy, well-intentioned, and loving. And we might place our faith in ourselves as lovable and deserving of all that is good. What we have learned is to trust, to have faith in, Good...to trust, to have faith in, God.

And what if this was not our experience? We may have learned that we could trust our parents to be unpredictable, angry, neglectful, self-absorbed, unloving. We might place our faith in people as inherently bad, untrustworthy, ill-intentioned, and selfish. In this case, we may not have faith in ourselves as loving, competent and deserving beings...and the most challenging part is that we may not even realize that this is our situation. But the Truth teachings of all ages, in all traditions, say, “As a man thinketh in his heart, so shall it be done unto him”, and where we place our faith is at the core of our belief system. We have inadvertently placed ourselves smack in the middle of a mistrust in ourselves, a mistrust of our fellow man, and therefore a basic mistrust in the Power of Good, in God Itself.

9:49 Each of us has all the faith we will ever have...all the faith we will ever need...right now. The question is, what do we have faith in? Where do we place our faith? In the

inherent Goodness of mankind? In our own Goodness? In our own competence and deservingness? Or do we place it in something else?

When we say that faith, trust, and love are at the heart of belonging, what concept of love are we referring to? In our culture, in the modern day, when we use the word Love, there are both preference and desire present in our minds. When I Love something or someone, I prefer that one. I desire that one. We might consider a definition from Bro. David Steidl-Rast's book, *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer*. He says, "Long before we begin to reflect on love, long before we even learn to speak, we do love. We love our parents, our playmates, our pets, our toys. Passionate attraction hardly characterizes any of these relationships. Nor does anyone take much notice of that love. It is like the air we breathe."

It is an atmosphere, a way of being in relationship with the world. And what is this way of being that underlies every form of love that we experience? It is the experience of belonging. In every form that love takes, there is a "Yes" to belonging.

We sometimes shy away from Belonging, because in our culture, we think of a possessive form of Belonging...belonging *to*. But this is not what true Belonging is...True Belonging is always mutual. There is a relationship present. Rather than something or someone belonging *to* me, there is the idea of them belonging *with* me. In belonging *with*, the meaning or focus changes...Suddenly the idea of belonging is not a one-sided proprietorship, but instead, a willing interdependence.

This is true of both people and things. I depend on my car to get me where I'm going, and it depends on me to make sure it has oil, gas, and water. I depend on my house to keep me warm, safe and dry.

9:52 It depends on me to keep up cleaning and repairs. If you love your house or your car, you are sensitive to her needs...there is an intuitive understanding that you belong together.

The level of intimacy in our belongingness deepens as we extend our love to living things...plants, animals, other human beings. But at whatever level of intimacy, I have to admit that I belong *to*, and belong *with*, everything that belongs *to* and *with* me. Belonging implies a give-and-take. And a sense of Belonging brings meaning to my life. I am a Spiritual Being, having a human experience, and a large and important part of that experience is Belonging.

How does a sense of belonging lead us to Freedom? When we know where we belong, with whom we belong, THAT we belong, we are free to simply be...to give of who we are, to give the gifts we have to give, as part of an interdependent cycle of love, as part

of the Divine Dance. We are free from seeking, free from having to perform, having to attain...free to be.

9:54 Chris – Guided Meditation

As children, many of us were drawn to the merry-go-round on the playground... We would run to get it spinning quickly, then hop on... Standing at the edge of the circle, we were exhilarated by the speed... but when we moved in, toward the center of the circle, we found a stillness...

The fast pace of our lives can feel like being at the edge of the merry-go-round... People, experiences, and sensations come at us continually... and it *can* be exhilarating... for a while... But if we are not careful to schedule some down time into our days, we can get emotionally exhausted...

Just like on the playground, we can find the stillness by moving in toward the center... taking moments to withdraw our attention from the frenetic activity *out there*, and turning it inward... to the center of our Being... to the place where the Divine dwells within us, in Perfect Stillness...

Tibetan and Zen Buddhists practice meditating with the eyes open... We live most of our waking hours with our eyes open... This kind of meditation helps us learn how to focus our attention inward... even if there are visual distractions... We participate in Life from that point of Stillness within us...

As we move into these moments of Sacred Silence... of shared Stillness... let us find that Still Point within us... With eyes open *or* closed, bring to mind an experience of Stillness... It may have been a state of flow... a time of communion with Nature... or simply a cessation of inner turbulence... Bring that memory into the present moment... rehearse that feeling... Where does that feeling reside in your body? ... Focus on that sensation, and give yourSelf fully to it...

Silence – 3:00

As our hearts remain centered in our Still Point, we expand our awareness to include the space we are in... the people with us... and the love and support of our Beloved Community... We are profoundly grateful for this time of communion with our spiritual family... Thank you, God, for everything and for everyone...

We can access the Stillness within at any time... It is available to guide us throughout our life... and as we live Life from that consciousness, we bring more Peace, Love, and Grace into our world...

As Rev. Diana resumes her talk this morning, we allow her ideas to flow into our hearts and minds, inspiring us to find our own Stillness Within Action...

10:02 Diana

Freedom is the natural state of all beings everywhere... Infinite Intelligence, expressing and experiencing Its agency as all of creation... constant, and yet ever-changing. It is *that* Freedom, *that* Spiritual Authority, that infuses the process of Creation unfolding. It is *that* Freedom that is expressing and experiencing Itself as you and me... we recognize and honor the *Freedom* granted to all beings, as Divine Birthright. Our nation's Declaration of Independence says, "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all people are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness..." As we come to know and embody these powerful words, life on earth is forever changed. We leave our lasting imprint... we make a difference.

How do we move in the direction of revealing the Freedom that is our birthright? Spiritual Practice. Isn't it funny that there are so many questions and only One Answer? Spiritual Practice. We actively and consciously practice building our trust, our faith in God, so that we may consciously and willingly place our faith in one another... seeing the spark of the Divine in each one. We are no longer engaging in acts of codependence, but from the place of interdependence. We belong together.

Deeply grounded in our faith in God, our faith in ourselves as expressions *of* that One Life, in our faith in one another, and therefore in our sense of belongingness, we are free... completely and utterly free to be who and what we are.

10:04 Closing Prayer - Please join me as we close in prayer.

There is only One Thing going on here, and that One Thing is God expressing by means of Their creation. Each and every one of us is, and can only be, an emanation of that Life, with all of the inherent Qualities of Spirit present and available as factory equipment. This is Spiritual Truth, and nothing we can do will ever change it. What I *can* do it learn to work with it, constructively...

for my own benefit, growth and development, and that of my loved ones...for the benefit of my local community and my world. I can and do recognize my interdependence with all of Life. I acknowledge my Inherent Freedom, given me at birth. And I use this Freedom to carefully choose my thoughts, words, and actions...my *responses* to whatever is appearing in my life. What a gift to be given such Freedom...to contribute to my own life story and the story of human history from here forward. I choose to wake up from the dream of separation and live my life as the irreplaceable strand that I Am...offering my unique gifts in full faith that they are necessary...that they are received and appreciated.

In this moment of awareness and deep communion, I simply say Thank You, Spirit, for every little thing...for every blessing poured into my life...and for the understanding that everything *is* blessing. And so, I can let go and trust that all if well...And so it is...Amen...Sathu...Ashay...Aho!

10:06 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.

10:07 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.

10:08 Offertory Video– *Thank You* by Ma Muse

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VS0f8GjMzg>

10:13 Diana – Blessing for the Offering/Closing Song (Soul's Blessing)


What is True Freedom?...Conscious Conversations

10:30 Recorded Song as a cue to begin – *We Come Together*

10:33 (Upbeat) Opening Prayer – Sherri

10:33 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 Mystic Heart Spiritual Center. We are an Independent 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.

10:34 Opening Music

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

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

10:40 Feel free to stay standing or whatever serves you in noticing the Presence of Spirit in the body...join me in the embodiment of living in a **Love-Soaked World...**

...where all humans embody and live from Kindness, Compassion, Peace, Joy, Abundance and Generosity, Justice and Freedom as the Living Principles that guide our every thought, word, and action...where all humans honor and care for one another, for the earth that sustains us, and for every life form that shares this beautiful planet with us.

We are creating a world where all needs are met...where all beings are well-fed, and have the safety and comfort of home...

...where mental/physical health, education, and healthy relationships are ensured by social systems grounded in Wellness and Wholeness...

10:42 ...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.

With our growing Awareness, and by the Power of our collective intention, we are writing a new story; 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 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 to say good morning to your Spiritual Family...some of the people who care about you...people you can count on when you need a hand.

If you were with us at Taizé this morning, you know that we have been considering the question ***What is True Freedom.***

10:43 So, what is it? I've been waiting all week for you to tell me.

(Stillness is the absence of turbulence. "Stillness is a calm, trusting, unperturbed composure of the heart. Thus a heart that has acquired stillness can choose to speak out or to remain silent, depending on what life demands at the moment. The right word, at the right time, will be a word that does not break the silence, but lets the inner stillness come to word.") (You Are Here, Br. David Steindl-Rast)

We talked about how, like anything we seek to attain, inner stillness can be learned through Practice; and how one who has attained it radiates a sense of calm, even when engaging in intense activity.

Finally, I offered a Practice for you to use whenever you find yourself experiencing inner turbulence. There are copies in your Bulletins this morning, or by the front door if someone already got yours.

Moving into our Conscious Conversation, I'd like to explore some additional ways to encourage bringing **Stillness** into our active daily lives. I'm going to start by asking you to share...**do you have any practices for finding Stillness Within Action?**

I was looking through a book called *Stillness is the Key* by Ryan Holiday. He is a modern Stoic who has studied many of the world's traditions. He makes the point that everyone from the Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Jews to the Greeks, Epicureans, and Christians have a word that means Stillness.

10:46 And not only that, they all agree that "the one thing all these schools (of thought) share is a pursuit of this inner peace—this stillness—and a belief that it's the key to a happy and meaningful life."

He defines stillness as our ability to remain, “steady while the world spins around you. To act without frenzy. To hear only what needs to be heard. To possess quietude—exterior and interior—on command.”

He says that “Stillness is that quiet moment when inspiration hits you. It’s that ability to step back and reflect. It’s what makes room for gratitude and happiness. It’s one of the most powerful forces on earth.”

Not only that, in his book he lists “28 proven exercises from across *all* the wisdom of the ancient world that will help you keep steady, disciplined, focused, at peace, and able to access your full capabilities at any time, in any place, despite any distraction and every difficulty.”

Here’s the catch – he says: “These steps will work... *if you work them.*”

We might have covered some of these things already in your personal practices. But let’s talk about a few more that might be helpful.

(Not from his book) Prayer: Talking and listening to your personal version of God, Higher Power, Inner Wisdom...Communion. How can prayer bring Stillness or equanimity into your daily life? (It reminds me Who and Whose I Am, and grounds me in what is True)

Journaling: Does anyone have a journaling practice? How can journaling bring Stillness or equanimity into your daily life? (You can start the day by clearing out all that is turbulent, writing it in your journal, and acknowledging that it is there.)

Manage your inputs: What do you suppose that means? What are some ways we can manage our inputs? Limit screen time, monitor the level/amount of drama you expose yourself to, hang out with positive, supportive people, etc) includes others - **Put your phone away; Stop Watching the News: What affect will this have? Does it mean being uninformed? What are more effective ways to become informed?**

10:52 Take walks: Did you know you can walk yourself into a state of well-being? Why do you think this works? (reduces stress, manages, manages depression, manages social anxiety, boosts self-esteem, walking together increases intimacy and connection, sharpens memory, and bolsters gratitude)

Detach from outcomes: What does this mean? (Let go of our illusion of control; One way to practice detachment is the No Problem, No Preference meditation)

Do Good: How would this increase Stillness? (If I’m doing what is mine to do, I feel a sense of accomplishment and contribution)

Build a routine – how does this lead to greater freedom?

Zoom out...global perspective

Realize you have plenty...practice gratitude

Cultivate Relationships

Seek wisdom

Slow down...Enjoy the small pleasures

Seek solitude – quiet reflection time

Get rid of stuff

11:00 It is so important to include the body, mind, emotional body, and spirit in our reflections and conversations. Because there is no separation between them. Each one has an effect on all the others. And if there is only one thing going on here, and that One Thing is God expressing and experiencing Themselves as all of creation, then *all* of what we are is God in form...even if we are not all of what God is. Don't we owe it to the Creator of the Universe, or to Life Itself, to take care of every aspect of our humanity? It's a big responsibility...

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

11:02 Closing Prayer

And so it is! Amen! Sathu! Ashay! Aho!

11:05 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.

11:06 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!

11:14 Video – Prayers for Freedom

<https://youtu.be/-39vSLiWJdM>

11:18 Sherri Blesses the Offering

11:20 Sherri - Brief Invitations

This Tuesday, July 11th 12:30 – 2:30 – feel free to join our Core Council for its monthly Gathering if you're curious about the business of Mystic Heart.

The Mystic Heart Book Club will begin ***The Essential Path*** by **Neale Donald Walsch** this Tuesday, July 11th from 3-5 pm.

Metaphysical Bible Study is back this Thursday, July 13th from 3 – 5 pm.

Cultivating the Soil and the Spirit: this Saturday, July 15, 1:30-4:30 pm. Part prayer support circle, part Garden Club...We will be starting the seeds for your Fall Salad Garden and learning how to tend them. In the process, you will be invited to reflect on what will nourish your body, mind, and spirit and restore your energy. And if you've never grown a garden before, no worries...we'll be starting at the very beginning. **Suggested donation: \$20. All materials provided.**

Mystic OAKS (Outdoor Adventures for Kindred Spirits) has a new adventure scheduled for this Friday, July 21, 2023.

Join us for a guided tour of the **Shasta Abbey**, a picnic lunch at the Mt. Shasta City Park, and a visit to the Sisson Museum. 9am to 4pm. **Please contact Chris Netto at nettowoman@gmail.com today** if you are planning to visit the Shasta Abbey's group tour and have not yet responded.

Mark your calendars for the *Common Threads of Truth*, Tuesday, July 25th, 6:00-8:00 pm – Kathy Rutan-Sprague of the Baha'i Tradition will be presenting. Donations gratefully accepted.

Looking Ahead...

For our next Celebrating Community Fun-Raiser, we have joined Unity of Redding in buying out the Riverfront Playhouse on **Wednesday, August 9th, 7:00 pm, curtain at 7:30**. The play is a romantic comedy called ***The Rainmaker***. **Early bird tickets are \$20 until Sunday, July 23rd, and \$25 after**. We are being invited to bring appetizers to share, and beverages will be for sale at the theater.

Praying in Color – Kindness Rocks! Join Rev. Diana on **Saturday, August 12th, 1:30–4:00 pm** at the **Mystic Heart Gathering Place, Suite H**.

Saturday, August 19th, 10 am – noon, Laurie Buckman will present a ***Culinary Herbs Workshop***, including how to mindfully grow and use a variety of herbs to create a varied and healthy range of recipes. More details to come.

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

11:25 Closing Song – Love Be With You