

That Was Then, This is Now

October 1, 2023



A Beloved Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Sherri Dotter, RScP, & Chris Johnson, RScP

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). Even more, I welcome you home to the answers that lie within your own Mystic Heart.

Rev. Diana & Chris – Taizé Chants

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

Pour Yourself in Me, written by Rickie Byars

Rev. Diana – We begin by taking a long, slow, deep breath in...sensing a brief pause, and then letting it go...allowing the breath to carry us inward to the Wholeness that is always the Truth about us...feeling that Wholeness fill every cell, every atom, and all space in between...right here...right now...(Pause) sensing the Peace that is our native state...grounding even more deeply into the silence, and sensing an opening, of the heart, of the mind, of the Spirit within...preparing the soul for deep listening...for receiving the gift of this time together.

We take a moment to honor our connection with all that is. Together, we envision a web of consciousness...a Life Force...a Holy Presence... that surrounds and infuses the planet...each of us, a point of Light, reflecting our Radiance to the many beings that share this space and time with us...every human, every other-than-human creature, every plant...the rocks and minerals, water and wind, stars and planets...alive...in relationship...forever connected by our co-existence at this time, in this place...forever one in Spirit.

As we share time in prayer and meditation, we are leaving an imprint of Peace on the world...a ripple of Harmony whose effect we will never know...but we trust that it is felt. Take a moment to feel the atmosphere we are creating...

As we come together, we set an intention...that each of us is a beneficial presence on the planet...that each feels, embodies, and lives from our connection with all beings...and that as a community, we use this time to move the world toward a more Kind, Just, Harmonious expression...we walk as Peace in action.

This morning we ground ourselves in a Truth that our hearts and souls already know... ***That Was Then, This is Now***. No matter what is happening, no matter when or where we find ourselves...there is only Now. And everything that has ever occurred in our lives is a beautiful and necessary part of what brought us to this moment.

As human beings come to planet earth, we begin as infants...newborn babies...and we have ahead of us what we call a life span...a Parenthesis in Eternity...in which to fulfill whatever we are here to do. Sometimes we think of our lives as a continuum...a timeline from birth to death. And this is one way to approach the understanding of our experience here.

This morning, I invite you to look at your life span as a circle...even a spiral. Journey back with me now, to your human beginnings. You were born with certain characteristics and traits already in place. You may have your own story about how and why this occurs. We will not go further along these lines this morning. Because you were also born with qualities that we seem to *share* as part of the human life cycle. As an infant, it is likely that you did not know yourself as a separate being. From your newborn perspective, you were one with the mother, and with everything around you. You had not yet learned about *the other*. You were still experiencing your Oneness with God...with all that is...although you had no language or cognition of such things.

As you progressed into toddlerhood, you came to recognize your own body as something you could control. And the adults around you may have clapped and encouraged your independence. There is nothing wrong with this...as human expressions of God, living a human life in the material realm, it is helpful to be able to care for ourselves. And at this stage, and for a few more years, you had a sense of wonder...curiosity...about everything. There was a sense of awe...of possibility...that filled your days.

Growing further on, you were taught many things...some through direct instruction, some through trial and err...but step by step, the process of domestication occurred. You were shaped by your family and the cultures you were born into...by your teachers and friends at school...and later by your bosses and co-workers...partners...and perhaps your own children.

Throughout this process of living your life, you learned what was acceptable and what was not...which behaviors got the results you wanted, and which did not...you learned whether or not you measured up, and in what ways. If you are like most adults, you lost some (or all) of your curiosity. Distracted by the process of living up to society's expectations, you lost your sense of wonder. You were taught that many things are impossible, and you may have believed it. You forgot to stop...to be in awe of the miracles that surround you in every moment. And most of all, you lost your sense of Oneness...with others, with the world around you, with your own Divinity.

Again, there is nothing wrong with this process...it is a common story...the story of coming from birth to middle adulthood in our world at this time.

Now we turn a corner. Let us not forget the Real Story...that each of us is one way that God is expressing and experiencing Themselves. We may have forgotten Who and Whose we are, but In Their omniscience, Great Spirit forgets nothing. The Light of Spirit is still shining within you...maybe covered by years of human experience, but still burning bright. Sometime in later adulthood (maybe sooner for some), you may have experienced a wake-up call...an experience that called you to begin to question once again.

What is really going on here? Who Am I? Why Am I here? What is my Purpose? How, then, shall I live? It is through these questions that curiosity returns...that you begin to sense the wonder and awe, the gift and blessing that is your lifetime. This is where your deepest longing...to know your oneness with Source, with all that is...makes itself known. And if you choose to open your mind and heart to the voice of your soul, you will find Peace. As at birth, you will have a natural sense of connection...you will know that all is well...always. All that you choose to do from this point forward is chosen consciously, by Divine Guidance and Appointment. And no matter what happens, you will choose Peace...you will choose Love.

Chris – Guided Meditation

As human beings mature, we go through many developmental stages... each phase building on the cumulative experiences of previous stages... We learn to crawl... then to walk... then to run... each skill incorporating earlier competencies... And as we develop new abilities, we retain the earlier ones... we can now run, but we can still crawl, too...

Human development – as all evolution – ascends in a spiral from lesser to greater complexity... transcending the limitations of the previous level, while retaining the experiences... We use our basic math skills to simplify parts of a complex algebraic equation... we use simple reading skills for more advanced research...

And as all this is going on, we are being socialized... taught how to interact with society... We learn the story we were born into... the *Dream of the Planet*¹... or the *Story of Separation*²... We are told what is expected of us... how to make people like us... And it may take us a long time to awaken from that dream... to opt out of that story...

When Rabbi Yeshua of Nazareth said, “You have heard it said... but I say to you...”³ he was calling his disciples into a higher level of spiritual evolution... to observe a more complex interpretation of Spiritual Law... An understanding which included, yet transcended the Law of Moses... As we know better, we are held to a higher standard...

All of us are here to grow in spiritual understanding... to evolve into a more perfect expression of the Divine... As we share our three minutes of Silent Meditation, I invite us to consider our next stage of spiritual development... Where is your growing edge?... Choose a Spiritual Law to contemplate, such as Cause and Effect, Correspondence, Attraction, or another... How are you interacting with it now?... What might be the deeper implications of that principle?... How might you observe it at a higher level?...

Silence – 3:00

As we allow the music to bring our awareness back into our surroundings, we express our deep appreciation for this time of Blessed Communion with the Divine and with our Beloved Community... Thank you, God, for everyone and for everything...

Our understanding of Divine Law will continue to grow and expand... and as it does, we will find more and more subtle nuances in them... Our Spiritual Evolution will demand of us that we obey not just the *letter* of the Law, but also the *spirit* of the Law...

As Rev. Diana continues her inspired teaching this morning, we allow ourselves to be transformed and made new in Spirit... We are not who we were yesterday... or even when we got up today... After all, *That Was Then, This Is Now*...

Rev. Diana – In the book of 1 Corinthians of the Christian Bible, Paul tells us:

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.⁴

I read this passage to say that in childhood, my speech, my thinking, and reasoning, had a certain set of qualities to them. I was still in touch with my heart...with what is Good and True. I was still filled with the Wonder and Awe of Spirit. And then, as I grew up, society taught me to cover over my innately curious tendencies...reflected back to me that these were somehow wrong.

If I am open, I will see that there is more to learn. Where in middle adulthood I see through society's filters, if I am willing to admit that everything I thought I knew could be wrong, I become open to what is True. "Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

If I Am truly willing to delve deeply into this Journey of Life, questioning always, and with faith in Goodness unfolding, I will come fully 'round...full circle...from Unity, through the illusion of separation...and back into Unity.

I close today with a prayer given through one of my teachers, Rupert Spira. It is a prayer that he has spoken daily for more than 40 years...and that speaks deeply to me, and to our reflections today:

Oh, my Lord, my whole being is yourself, and this mind which has been given me is your consort. The Life Force, Breath, and Energy which you have given me are your attendants. This body is the temple in which I worship you. Whatever I eat, or wear, or do, is all part of the worship I keep on doing at this temple. Even when this body goes to sleep at night, I feel like I Am in union with You. Whenever I walk, I feel like I Am going on Pilgrimage to You. Whatever I speak is always in Praise of You. In fact, whatever I do in this world in any way is aimed at You. So there is no duality in this life of Unity with Yourself.⁵

Closing Prayer

Musical Meditation – *Spirit's Prayer*, by Gary Lynn Floyd

May all that has been offered this morning speak to my soul...may it have its way with me...working on me, *in* me...soaking into every fiber of my being. May it fill my heart, mind, and soul as I move into the coming week. May it remind me of the perfection of my own lifetime...of my own goodness, and of the Light that shines in the world. May it guide my thoughts, words, and actions so that I become a more Peaceful presence on the planet. And may it remind me that we are One...have always been One...there is nothing else.

That Was Then, This is Now...the story of your lifetime is perfect...has always been perfect. There are no mistakes in God. Loving Spirit dwells in me, AS me, in you, AS you...this has forever been true.

Coming back into the awareness of our bodies...our senses...the atmosphere in the room, we open our eyes and allow our gaze to take in whatever is before you.

Feel free to look around and say good morning to everyone 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 and 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 your financial good in support of the work we do should you choose to do so. If you're joining us online, you can find a Donate Button and our mailing address at mysticheart.org. And we thank you in advance for your gifts.

Offertory Video – *On the Day That You Were Born* by Carrie Newcomer

https://youtu.be/cqC0gGsjO1U?list=OLAK5uy_mqoddG-xfMN03bsQohNXqbHNMajC-Gdjk

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Rev. Diana & Chris - Closing Song

A Soul's Blessing, written by Chris Johnson


Conscious Conversation

Sherri – 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 Mystic Heart Spiritual Center. We are an Independent Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. Welcome home to our Gathering Place, to our Spiritual Family, and to the

answers that lie within your own Mystic Heart. I invite you to get on your feet and join the music.

Rev. Diana & Chris – Opening Music

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

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

 **How Can I Serve** written by Ricki Byars Beckwith

Rev. Diana – Calling Awareness to the Presence of Spirit in the body...join me in the co-creation of a **Love-Soaked World...**

...where all humans embody Compassion, Generosity, Love, Peace, and Justice...where all people everywhere 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 gracefully...easily...where all beings are well-fed, and have the safety and comfort of home...where mental/physical health, education, and healthy relationships are promoted and supported by social systems grounded in Wellness and Wholeness...

...a world where every being Serves the greater community doing whatever feeds their souls and are well supported for their time and talent...and by their Service, each one finds meaning...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...a story in which there is no greed, and abundance means having all that is required for physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual thriving.

We *do not* lower our Vision, no matter the appearances in the world, knowing with our whole hearts that such a world is *inevitable*. We align our actions to support our Vision, and a new world is being born.

Our hearts, minds, arms, and doors are open in Radical Welcome. All lines and feelings of separation have been erased. In keeping with the Vision, our community is open and loving...all people who seek belonging find it here.

With deep faith in the Great Mystery that I call God, we trust that our prayer is acted upon...we prepare for its Graceful unfolding in the world...we feel a deep sense of gratitude...we release it to the Holy Presence and give thanks that it is done...And so it is...Amen!

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 our topic this month is Ease on Down the Road, and our topic of Conversation this week is ***That Was Then, This is Now***. We spent time this morning reflecting on the human life cycle, and the idea that it is, indeed, a cycle...rather than a timeline. We contemplated the process of domestication that each of us experienced as we grew up, and then found our way back to the Truth... that each of us is one way that God is expressing and experiencing Themselves, and that sooner or later, you will (or have) experienced a wake-up call...

...an experience that calls you to begin to ask bigger questions...and that these questions, if given sincere time and attention, will lead us home to Spirit. We begin our lives free of separation, and ideally, we end our lives knowing we are part of all that is. In other words, we find our way home to Spirit.

I'd like to use this as a jumping off point for our conversation this morning. If you want the whole experience of Taizé, you can find it on our website tomorrow. I highly recommend it 😊

So, how many of you know who Ken Wilbur is? (an American philosopher and teacher of Integral Theory, and I would call him a prophet and a mystic)

Some people call him 'the smartest man you've never heard of.'

Does anyone know what Integral Theory is? ("a philosophical framework which seeks to integrate all forms of human experience and wisdom into one coherent 'theory of everything.' From development psychology to Neoplatonism to Vedanta, IT provides a 'map' whereby each unique theory or tradition can be valued and understood in light of its relation to all others." – Shane Fenwick, medium.com)

Integral Theory is way too broad a topic for one Conversation. So this month, we'll be taking a look at one small piece of what Ken Wilbur is calling us to at this time in human history. And my goal is for us to make connections from Integral Theory to the Spiritual Journey.

Here is a quote from the man himself: "There's an urgency now, no excuses. As the wisdom holders, we need to help people find what's important — to Grow Up by moving through the early stages of emotional maturing, Clean Up by doing shadow-up, Wake Up by doing spiritual practice, and Show Up by serving humanity in the world." Pretty direct...grow up, clean up, wake up, and show up. I like this guy!

When I say that humanity is being called to grow up, what do you think that means? (Growing Up is about levels of adult development. There are some stages that almost all humans go through while growing up, but most get stuck at one level or another and becomes ineffective at meeting the complexity of today's world.)

What do you think an adult that is *growing up* looks like? What are some of the behaviors we would expect to see? (treating another fairly rather than taking advantage of another's ignorance; owning our mistakes rather than blaming and criticizing others; standing in one's own truth rather than conforming to another's

expectation; listening to others, hoping to learn something new rather than being a know-it-all; trusting in one's own value rather than seeking recognition through achievement; being a self-starter, a catalyst for positive change; and working cooperatively in co-creating a more loving and peaceful future for our world.)

Paramahansa Yogananda would call it "Learning to behave ourselves."

So if this is *growing up*, what do you think Wilber means by *cleaning up*? (understanding the filters through which we see the world, including distortions and blind spots. It includes both positive and negative qualities in ourselves that we tend to not see. We often hear these referred to as our *shadow*. Cleaning up means bringing the shadow into the light of consciousness so that we can integrate it - not deny it, push it away, or fix it, but acknowledging it and working with it consciously)

Who can give me an example of a negative shadow quality? (I am really irritated by controlling people...I am unaware that my own behavior is run by a need to control, a fear of being out of control, or a tendency to let others have control. I'm projecting my own qualities outward onto another.)

How about a positive shadow quality? (I tend to place people on pedestals, projecting my light onto others as a way of denying my own strength, beauty, capacities, etc. This is a way of playing small by making others larger than life.)

So, here's the conundrum – we are where we are. From our own vantage point, it looks like we're fine and everyone else is a mess. Right?

So the big question is, how do we consciously move forward in our development, in our emotional growth and intelligence? (We must be willing to spend time in honest self-reflection, self-inquiry, and shadow work; as we look at the people and circumstances of our lives, what are they reflecting back to us? In the interest of self-awareness, are there situations that keep repeating themselves in our experience? Do I react or respond? Are there people and behaviors that really flip our triggers? Why? Where might this live in me? It takes a high level of emotional maturity to be willing to ask these questions.)

The process of growth, or evolution, is *transcend and include*. **What do I mean by that?** (Transcend the limitations of yesterday and include that which is healthy or valuable as you move forward in life.)

Okay, how does this apply to our Spiritual Life? (As long as I am caught up in the drama of conditions, I forget who and Whose I Am. As long as I am blaming or criticizing another, I disempower myself to remedy the situation.)

As Long as I am looking outside of myself for answers, I Am closed off from the Deeper Wisdom burning within me. As long as my vision is clouded by the illusion of separation, I cannot see the Light of Truth...that we are brothers and sisters in Spirit, holding up mirrors for one another, so that we all might know and express our Beauty...and that we are One with our Creator, uniquely expressing here and now, on purpose.

Is there anything else that wants to be spoken at this time?

In the coming weeks, we'll be looking more deeply at *Waking Up*...the direct experience of the Divine...and *Showing Up*...being in *Sacred Service* in our world. But for now, I'd like to wrap up by sharing a prayer offered by one of my teachers, Rupert Spira. It is a prayer that he has spoken daily for more than 40 years...and that speaks deeply to me as a reminder of who I Am and why I'm here. I trust that it will speak to you, as well:

Oh, my Lord, my whole being is yourself, and this mind which has been given me is your consort. The Life Force, Breath, and Energy which you have given me are your attendants. This body is the temple in which I worship you. Whatever I eat, or wear, or do, is all part of the worship I keep on doing at this temple. Even when this body goes to sleep at night, I feel like I Am in union with You. Whenever I walk, I feel like I Am going on Pilgrimage to You. Whatever I speak, is always in Praise of You. In fact, whatever I do in this world in any way is aimed at You. So there is no duality in this life of Unity with YourSelf.⁶

Love 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 budget and plan for our growth. Those who engage in committed giving are helping to create stability to our community, and we are most grateful. You can find more information on our website...please consider pledging your support.


As we move into this time of giving, I want to express my gratitude for each one who takes part in the Mystic Heart Family, and for all that is offered here today and every day. And thank you, Beloveds, for dedicating your lives to growth and evolution, peace, and unity. Together, we're gonna' **Ease on Down the Road**.


Offertory Music Video – *Ease on Down the Road*, by Diana Ross and Michael Jackson





<https://youtu.be/uNKmKOjGUbw>

Sherri – Blessing for the Offering

Sherri – Invitations

 **The Mystic Heart Book Club** is reading *Soul Boom* by Rainn Wilson. Tuesdays, 3-5 pm. Drop-ins are welcome.

 **Fast Track to Wellness, Thursdays 12:30-2:30 pm**. This is a support circle for physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

-  **Metaphysical Bible Study** with Chris Johnson, Thursday from 3 – 5 pm.
-  **Friday, October 6th, *Music is Medicine Circle*** led by April Jimenez- WinterSky and hosted by Laurie and James Massengale.
-  **Saturday, October 7th, another Mystic OAKS Adventure to the Abbey at New Clairvaux.** Check the website for details. Please RSVP to Chris Netto at nettowoman@gmail.com.
-  **Sunday, October 8th, during and after our Sunday Gathering –** We will be celebrating all of you who have completed accredited classes in the past two years. Rev. Diana has certificates to present as we acknowledge your accomplishments. We'll have live music that day, as well...In2it+! Then, following the services, it's Octoberfest!!! Our Food and Fellowship will be Brats and Beer...and other good stuff. You won't want to miss it!

There is more information about all of our events and activities in your Bulletin and on our website.

Prayer Requests, Practitioner available after service

Information Cards if new people

Rev. Diana & Chris – Closing Song

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



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Notes:

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- ¹ don Miguel Ruiz
 - ² Charles Eisenstein
 - ³ Matthew 5:21-45
 - ⁴ 1 Corinthians, 13:11-12
 - ⁵ Rupert Spira
 - ⁶ Rupert Spira