

Precious Time

Sunday, November 12th, 2023



An Independent Interfaith Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Lucinda Alton, RScP, Chris Johnson, RScP, & musician Gary French

Taizé

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

Lucinda - 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, & Gary – Taizé Chants

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

 **Thank You God**, written by Eddie Watkins, Jr.

Rev. Diana –

Letting go of all that has come before this moment, we begin by taking a slow, deep, cleansing breath, bringing our awareness to the Presence of the One...remembering that we are filled to overflowing, and completely enveloped in Spirit, now and in every moment...there is nothing else. So we can relax and simply be. (Pause)

You have chosen this time to be here, in Communion...in Community...slowing down the pace of life...giving yourself the gift of **Precious Time**...time to breathe...time to reflect...time to listen...time to feel. (Pause)

Together, we honor our connection with all of Life as we envision a web of consciousness...a Holy Presence...that surrounds and infuses the planet, giving Life to all that is. Each one of us is a Spark of the Divine...a perfect expression of the One Source. We take a moment to envision the One Light shining in and from every human...expanding our vision to include every other-than-human creature...every plant...the soil that brings nourishment and the network of life that lives beneath the surface, invisible to the naked eye...the rocks and minerals...water and wind...the heavenly bodies...

...all aglow with the Light of Spirit. We know that there is no separation between us...we feel our inherent interconnectedness with all of life. As a human family, with unique gifts

to offer, we acknowledge our role as caretakers...in Sacred Service to one another...to all life forms...and to the planet that sustains us all.

As we share this time, we set a prayerful intention...we are leaving an imprint of Peace on the world...a ripple of Compassion that Comforts all who are in need...we consciously offer our time together to the Well-being of the Whole. (Pause)

This month we are considering what it means to **Take More Time, Cover Less Ground**, and this morning, we'll be sharing our **Precious Time** in Communion, in Community.

In distilling our beliefs as a Spiritual Community, the following statement was created: We believe in a Living Universal Presence, expressing as all of creation. We believe this Presence to be eternal, infinite, uncaused, unchanging, and indestructible. It has no beginning and no ending, never appears or disappears...it simply is. This we believe to be the Ultimate Reality.

Each of us is a perfect and intentional expression of the One, born into human form. Our lives have a beginning and an ending. We appear at what we call birth and disappear at what we call death.

Beginning and ending require time. Appearance and disappearance require space. Time and space are not inherent in reality. They are modes of knowledge and perception, respectively. Time and space are how the one, eternal infinite reality appears when it is known through the localized perspective of a finite mind.

(The Heart of Prayer, Rupert Spira)

For anything to exist, to come into form, time and space are necessary. And so, in this life, we are given **Precious Time**.

We are blessed by the moments, hours, and days, which lead to years if we are fortunate, in which to experience life on the planet earth as a human being. The poet, Mary Oliver asks us to consider, "What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

Our most common experience of time is linear time, measurable, chronological time...the clock ticking, moving us through our days, through our lives. Our culture is driven by the clock. While they are useful tools for helping us to organize our lives, they can get in the way of experiencing a different aspect of time...Sacred Time. We sometimes call this being in the Flow.

Sacred time is what we experience when we step outside the quick flow of life and luxuriate...in a realm where there is enough of everything, where we are not trying to fill a void in ourselves or the world, where we exist for a moment at both the deepest and the loftiest levels of our existence and participate in the eternal life of all that is...(where there is) an underpinning of calm, peace, and sufficiency."

(Gary Eberle, Sacred Time and the Search for Meaning)

We thrive, and our spirituality blossoms, when we create balance between measurable time and Flow in our daily lives...allowing the numbers on the clock to guide, rather than control us...and following the flow of Sacred Time as we move organically from one moment to the next. How do we attain such a balance?

There is a beautiful rise and fall found in every breath we take, the rising and setting of the sun each day, the balance between work and Sabbath time each week, the waxing and waning of the moon each month, the flowering and releasing of the earth through her seasons, the seasons of our lifetimes, and the larger rhythms of ancestral and cosmic time.
(Christine Valters Paintner, *Sacred Time*)

Yes, we can use these cycles to mark the passing of time...and as the outer changes occur, we can turn our attention inward to reflect on the inner movement of the soul.

We don't have to go anywhere in particular to experience time as sacred. We don't have to give up our lives in the world to be immersed in the holiness of time's unfolding. We need only to shift our perspective...to give our attention to the sacredness of every moment...to cross a threshold into deeper awareness...to look at time as unfolding, rather than running away from us...as offering invitations rather than making demands. We allow time devoted to the heart, to things that matter, to wonder and beauty, to catching glimpses of eternity.

One of the most basic, the most primal, the most intimate cycles we experience as humans is the movement of air into and out of our lungs. The breath is a powerful tool...it can bring us fully present, anchoring us in the now. It invites us to be here, and only here, in this once-in-a-lifetime moment.

Again, from Mary Oliver: "Listen – are you breathing just a little and calling it a life?" Might she be suggesting that by deepening and attending to our breathing, we are deepening and more closely attending to our life?

Join me in bringing awareness back to the breath...with every inhale, remember that life is a gift, given freely of the One Source.

Pause, filled with gratitude, and fill the Spirit of God fill your being. Creator is all around us, but also within us.

Then, with gratitude, breathe out, sharing the gift freely given with others. We join in the Creative Act when we give to others.

Pause again, resting into the emptiness. Acknowledge the need to stop and rest before we can be ready to begin again.

Chris – Guided Meditation

We hear lots of ideas about what *Time* is... the rate at which change occurs... the duration of an event... a continuum of past, present, and future... the precise location of Earth in her orbit and rotation... or maybe even a human construct... something we just made up... Whatever it is, Time affects all creatures on the planet...

Einstein said that Time is relative... that our experiences of it differ... Mystic poet Henry Van Dyke agrees... he wrote, "Time is too slow for those who wait, too swift for those who fear, too long for those who grieve, too short for those who rejoice, but for those who love, time is eternity."...

Time plays no favorites... we each get twenty-four hours per day... We can spend it, invest it, or waste it... We may *spend* time pursuing hobbies or watching movies... we *invest* it in our spiritual practices, exercise, and being with loved ones... but we can't recover *wasted* time... As Shakespeare's King Richard lamented, "I wasted time, and now doth time waste me."

Quaker mystic Thomas Kelly wrote that we are "miracles of Eternity breaking into Time..." Divine, eternal souls entering into physical experience... and the *Time* in which we break through is *Now*... *Now* is when we experience our humanity... and when we decide what we shall do with the time we have been given...

Time is a Divine Gift, freely given... and yet it is invaluable... our most essential resource... and we all have a limited amount of it left... In our three minutes of shared, Silent Meditation, I invite us to contemplate how we use the time we are given... how much we share... spend... invest... and waste... We might ask ourSelf, "Am I being a good steward of my time?... Are there habits I could change to make better use of it?... What is the *best investment* I might make with my *Precious Time*?..."

Silence – 3:00

As the music gently brings our focus back to this moment, we are grateful for this wise investment of our Gift of Time... Thankful for time shared in Beloved Community... Grateful for the inspiration received in Sacred Communion with our Creator... Thank you, God, for everyone and for everything...

don Miguel Ruiz encourages us to embrace the *Angel of Death*... to remember that we live on borrowed time... We cannot fully accept our *Life*, if we cannot accept the truth that it will one day end... The best way to show our gratitude for the Gift of Life is to be *fully alive* while we're here...

As our Taizé continues, we gratefully receive the Love and Inspiration of Rev. Diana's message... Thankful for the reminder that every moment of every day is a Divine Gift of *Precious Time*...

Rev. Diana – It is important to remember that our *Precious Time* unfolds in cycles. Nature Herself expresses as periods of activity and periods of rest. The existence of nature's seven-day cycle was expressed clearly and beautifully in the first chapter of Genesis. In this first Jewish Creation Myth, we are told that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," (v.1) and he accomplished this in six days. "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day."(v.31) There was a time of darkness and rest, and there was a time to awaken, to begin again.

And chapter two begins: “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array...Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”

There is a message here for us...whatever we have accomplished by our creative effort is very good...it is enough...sufficient unto itself for this moment.

Does our creative process stop because we pause to rest? No. The resting is part of the process. We see this in nature. Does the cycle of Life cease when the trees lose their leaves, appearing bare and dormant? No. Winter is a time for trees to replenish their nutrients, drawing nourishment up from the ground through their roots. It is a time for animals to hibernate, or to stay close to the nest, in preparation for the emergence of new life in the spring.

It is important that we learn to stop...to rest for a time...to rejuvenate our bodies, minds, and souls...bringing new life to the world as we thoughtfully choose how to make the best use of our ***Precious Time***.

Closing Prayer – We close this morning’s Taizé in Prayer and Musical Meditation.

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Gary – Musical Meditation

 ***Borrowed Time***, written by David Friedman

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.

10:08 Diana – Offering

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.

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Gary – Offertory Music

 ***Reckless Love***, written by Cory Asbury

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Gary – Closing Song

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

Conscious Conversation

Lucinda – 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, & Gary – Opening Music

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

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

 **Spirit, Run My Life** 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.

By the power of our faith, this prayer is acted upon, answered even before it is spoken. In preparation for its Graceful unfolding in the world...we feel a deep sense of gratitude...releasing to the One and giving thanks that it is done...And so it is...Amen!

Let's take a moment to bask in that creative and powerful energy...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 of Conversation this month is **Take More Time, Cover Less Ground**...a phrase attributed to Thomas Merton. At this morning's Gathering, we acknowledged **Precious Time** as our most valuable gift...recognized the benefit of allowing the clock to *guide* our flow of activity and rest rather than making demands. And we looked to Nature and Scripture as examples of Flow, of Sacred Time.

Now I'd like to look at another aspect of today's topic.

Do you ever see people walking down the street, phone in hand, eyes glued to the screen, texting?

It's become a pretty normal behavior.

Does anyone here text while walking down the street?

It's almost like we're becoming addicted to our phones...that message or reply can't wait until we're home, or at least sitting still.

I heard someone the other day say that, as a society, we have an even greater addiction than texting. Do you know what it is? *Nexting*.

What is *nexting*? (allowing our thoughts live in the future, looking ahead to the next moment)

We are nexting ourselves out of this moment, and into the next one. We are not here...not present. We're already in the next moment.

Why do we do this? (We feel as if this moment, as it is, isn't enough...isn't *it*...it's not satisfying, isn't fulfilling because it doesn't fit our picture of how we think it should be. It's a habitual pattern, an addiction.)

Why are we addicted to our thoughts? (We get an identity from the thinking. Most of my thinking is about me...it gives me a sense of myself as an individual.

We each have our own little story, and no one else is privy to it.

Is it a true story? Is it real? The thoughts are real, but the content isn't. It's not happening. We live in a virtual reality, in the shallows of reality.

What happens when we spend our lives *nexting*? (We miss it altogether; Our life becomes a horizontal experience)

What do I mean by a *horizontal experience*? (we skim across life, wanting to get to the next activity, dream, fantasy, preoccupation, fad; We've left home)

What do I mean by this? (We've left our heart, our breath, our awareness, and gone into our heads)

Is this a satisfactory way to live? Will it ever make us happy? (No)

Why not? (because there's no depth)

What do we mean by depth? (We want to be fully engaged, present with life while it's happening)

Why do we crave depth? (we are expressions of Divinity, God in form; depth is part of our nature.)

How do we bring depth to our lives? (connection...as physical beings we need social connection, emotional connection; as spiritual beings, we need connection with something bigger than ourselves, with our Source, our Spirit. This gives our lives meaning and purpose. We seek connection with one another and with God as a means of finding our way Home to the Truth of Who and Whose we are)

How do we begin to change this habit of *nexting*? (Meditation...recognizing that we are thinking; prayer...asking for strength, awareness, and guidance; Practice)

Everything needs nourishment to survive. We need to practice noticing and acknowledging our thoughts, and not believing in them. Our belief in them keeps them alive. And we need a regular prayer practice to consistently guide ourselves Home.

Does anyone here have a Prayer Practice that helps guide you home?

Would you mind sharing your Practice with us?

I leave you with some thoughts from an online teacher that goes by The Happy Buddha. He says,

Thoughts carry an energy in the body. They carry an urge to be out of this moment. Our thoughts are imposters, invaders...they steal our peace. Get out of your head and into your body and into your life... Thoughts are the false world, come back to the real world. That's where the joy is...in the moment that's happening, as it's happening.

I offer this poem by Wendy von Oech as a closing prayer:

Closing Prayer - Come Home to Your Heart

When everything feels uncertain, And every thought causes distress,
STOP...Stop spinning stories. Stop chasing answers.

Stop spiraling down with your fear.

When a crisis arises unbidden with chaos, confusion, and pain,
Stop feeding the fire with anger and blame.

Come home to your Heart with your breath.

Settle your bones and your belly, as you breathe and relax and slow down.
Quiet your mind. Let go of your fear of the past, of the future, of now.
Go for a walk or sit by a tree. Clear everyone out of your space.
Listen and wait. Let go of control. Come home to your Heart with your breath.
Go deeper into the stillness where wisdom and courage arise.
Expand your awareness beyond the horizon.
Connect to your Soul and your Source. Ask for support from Creator.
Open your heart to this Love. Listen for guidance from your higher self.
Come home to your Heart and reset. Choose to create with compassion.
Give voice to your vision and power.
Trust yourself. You will find your next step. At home in your Heart, all is well.

Trusting and knowing that this is the Truth for all who are listening...with faith that all beings are already at home in God. Coming home to the heart is the best way to use the **Precious Time** we've been given. It is an act of consciously remembering...acknowledging what is already so. There is actually nowhere to go...only the diving down into the depths...an acceptance of what is, of what has always been, and will forever be. I give thanks that this is so.

And so it is! Amen!

Welcome back! So good to have you here this morning...such a blessing to have time with Spiritual Family.

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.


You'll recognize this song...

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Gary – Offertory Music

 It'll Happen in Its Own Sweet Time, written by Chris Johnson

Lucinda - Blessing for the Offering

Lucinda –Invitations

 The normal weekly groups are meeting this week: Tuesday, The Mystic Heart Book Club with Michael Bordeaux on Tuesday, 3-5 pm; and on Thursday, Fast Track to Wellness from 12 – 2 pm and Metaphysical Bible Study with Chris Johnson from 3 – 5 pm, Thursday. Drop-ins are welcome.

- ♥ **Friday Evening, from 6:00 – 7:30 pm, Common Threads of Truth, with Rev. Helen Cummings** of the Redding Zen Buddhist Priory. She will explore the parallels between the lives and teachings of Jesus and the Buddha.
- ♥ **Sunday, November 19th, 7:00-8:30 pm, Shasta Interfaith Thanksgiving Service** at St. Joseph's...Rev. Diana will be presenting for the first time on behalf of Mystic Heart. Please consider joining us for this beautiful Interfaith Experience of Gratitude in the Season of Thanksgiving.
- ♥ **12 Days of Kindness** is underway for 2023! Please bring socks, instant coffee packets, and toothbrushes for the month of November. We'll add new items when we reach 150 of each.

Looking Ahead...

- ♥ **Our next Mystic Heart Fun-raiser - Saturday, December 2nd, 11:00 am – 1:30/2:00 pm, Dr. Sharon Brisolaro** will be leading ***Playing with Words***, a poetry workshop. She is funded by a grant and will be donating all of the proceeds to Mystic Heart. Snacks will be provided. Suggested Donation: \$20, all offerings gratefully accepted.
- ♥ **Saturday, December 9th, 1:30 - 4:00 pm, Ellie Thompson** will be leading a ***Holiday Whimsy Wreathmaking Play Shop***. 10 seats available. Snacks will be provided. Suggested Donation: \$20 – RSVP required to attend.
- ♥ **Saturday, December 16th, 1-4 pm - April Jiménez WinterSky** will be leading a ***Medicine Wheel Workshop***. Snacks will be provided. Suggested Donation: \$20 – RSVP required to attend.
- ♥ **Wednesday, December 20th, 6:30 - 8:00 pm, Mystic Heart Holy Day Service**, a Taizé-Style Journey of Music, Meditation, and Prayer, shining our Light on the world...more information to come soon!
- ♥ There is more information about all of our events and activities in your Bulletin and on our website.
- ♥ Prayer Requests, I am available after service, Information Cards if new people

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Gary – Closing Song

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

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