

Compassionate Heart

December 17th , 2023



An Independent Interfaith Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Chris Johnson, RScP

Taizé


Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

Chris – Opening Prayer

Rev. Diana – Welcome...if you're new with us here this morning, my name is Rev. Diana Johnson, and I am the Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystical Heart Spiritual Center. We are an Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. I welcome you home to our Spiritual Community (should you choose it). And I welcome you home to the Guidance and Wisdom that lie within your own Mystic Heart.

Rev. Diana & Chris – Taizé Chants

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

 ***Come, Holy Spirit Come***, written by Daniel Kopp and Sarah Liberman

Rev. Diana – Settling into this sacred moment, we breathe, allowing the Presence of Spirit, to fill our being, bringing us awake even as we settle into this precious moment...grounded in the here and now...allowing every out breath to be an expression of Love. In the Silence, breathing in Presence, breathing out Love...

We share this time of reflection...making time for prayer and meditation, opening ourselves to the Voice of Spirit...opening ourselves to Loving Presence...

We take a moment to remember...to feel and know our connection with all of Life. We envision a web of consciousness that surrounds and contains all that is...eternal, no beginning, no ending...all-knowing...Infinite Light...and seeing each of us as an individual expression of Light in that web. Every human...every creature...the plants and the soil...all shining with the Light of Spirit...the rocks and minerals...water and wind...all that lies below and that which stretches into the heavens... All of Life aglow with One Radiant Light. We take a moment to sense, feel, and know that we are connected to All That Is...

As human expressions of the Divine, we are caretakers, in Sacred Service to one another...to all life forms...and to the planet that sustains us all.

We trust and know that we are leaving an imprint of Lovingkindness on the world...a ripple of Compassion that Comforts all who are in need. By the joining of our hearts and minds, Wholeness is being revealed here and now.

This month we are considering what it means to ***Wake Up to the Light*** and this morning, we'll be spending time in contemplation of what it means to have a ***Compassionate Heart***.

Today is the third Sunday of the Season of Advent. In the lighting of the Love candle, we remember that each of us, as an intentional expression of the Creator, is an expression of Love. We are called to embody and express the Love that we are.

In whichever Spiritual Tradition we explore, we find similar ideas. Let us take time for reflection:

From the Franciscan tradition -

Love is not really an action that you do. *Love is what and who you are, in your deepest essence.* Love is a place that already exists inside of you, but is also greater than you. That's the paradox. It's within you and yet beyond you...Your True Self, God's Love in you, cannot be exhausted...You get more Love by letting it flow through you...If you Love, you will become more loving...Love is your very structural and essential identity—created in the image of God. When you are living in conscious connection with this Loving Inner Presence, you are in your True Self. God is forever united to this Love within you; it is your soul, the part of you that always says yes to God.

(Fr. Richard Rohr)

From the Buddhist tradition:

Unselfish Love, Loving-kindness...this is the meaning of Love. It is a natural quality that we all have latent inside us. We can cultivate Loving-Kindness—and even perfect it—as the foundation of a happy, meaningful life.

From the Sikh tradition:

God is Love and Love is God. As God cannot be confined, restricted, or limited to any particular creed, cult, or race, similarly a Religion of Love cannot be restricted or confined in geographical limits and boundaries. God is all...Love is all.

From the Mormon tradition:

“Love is the very essence of life. It is the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Yet it is not found only at the end of the rainbow. Love is at the beginning also, and from it springs the beauty that arched across the sky on a stormy day. Love is the security for which children weep, the yearning of youth, the adhesive that binds marriage, and the lubricant that prevents devastating friction in the home; it is the peace of old age, the sunlight of hope shining through death...Love, like faith, is a gift of God. It is also the most enduring and most powerful virtue.” (*Standing for Something*, Gordon B. Hinkley)

From the Toltec tradition:

Love is unconditional...Love is everything that exists. It is the energy that allows us to create a bond with other beings and within ourselves. (excerpted from don Miguel Ruiz)

From the Unity tradition:

Born of the One, we have the same features and carry the same character as the One. Our atoms carry the binding signature we call Love, our True Nature. Love is of God and is God. Our hearts are full of Love, which must be lived and expressed.

From the New Thought/Ancient Wisdom Tradition:

Love is the self-givingness of God. Human Love is our own giving of ourselves, in the image and likeness of the One Source. (Ernest Holmes)

And

There is no difficulty that enough love will not conquer, no disease that enough love will not heal, no door that enough love will not open.

(Emmet Fox)

In this Season Advent, we look to the teachings of the Rabbi Yeshua in his two great commandments:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.

And to the teachings of Paul:

Let all that you do be done in love. (1 Corinthians 16:13)

And finally:

Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. (1 John 3:18)

Love is truly the greatest Medicine the world has ever known. It takes life from a passive state, being alive, to an active state, truly living. Our very Life Force is activated by Love. Love has the uncanny ability to transform everything it touches. Things become infinitely possible when Love is present.

As Light has the Power to overcome darkness, so Love has the Power to overcome fear.

Imagine standing in the darkest cave, or the darkest night of the new moon...the darkness is complete, you cannot see anything. And then, someone lights a single match. Suddenly there is Light. No matter how much darkness there is, Light overcomes it. Darkness cannot persist in the presence of something as Powerful as Light.

In the same way, Love overpowers fear...always. In the presence of Love, fear cannot persist. And so, in every moment, we are faced with a choice. Will we direct our attention toward Love or fear?

We are born to Love. The only True Power we have is Love. The only thing that will bring True and lasting healing to our lives and to our world is Love...Fellowship...Compassionate Connection...all of the Divine Qualities of Spirit expressing through us.

Chris – Guided Meditation

We are Beloved Community... but what does that mean?... Beloved means especially loved... cherished... held dear... In Beloved Community we are beloved of each other... we strive to love one another as we imagine our Creator loves us... freely... unconditionally... wholeheartedly... and with genuine authenticity...

Philosopher Josiah Royce developed the concept of Beloved Community... He realized the great importance of community in spiritual development... He wrote, “My life means nothing, either theoretically or practically, unless I am a member of a community...” Community stretches us... believes in us... and supports us on our spiritual journey...

Our pilgrimage to God cannot be a solitary trek... We are interdependent... we *need* one another’s support along the way... As we pray, study, and worship together in Beloved Community, the Great Mystery is revealed to us, little by little... I am healed by your kind words... you receive encouragement from another... and together we grow...

God be in my heart... O Ever Compassionate Beloved, grant me the grace to love like *you*... grow my capacity to express Divine Love... Make of me a worthy vehicle to serve as Your Heart in human form... Guide my thoughts and emotions... Reveal to me how I can best use my Gift of Love this Precious Day...

We *feel* God’s Love most powerfully when it flows *through* us to another... when we lose ourselves in service to them... when we get out of the way and let Infinity flow through us unimpeded... As we share our three minutes of Shared, Sacred Silence, I invite you to consider times when your heart was filled with Divine Love... until it overflowed out from you... Remember that experience with your whole body... and ask, “What is mine to do today”... Who needs my Love in this moment?...”

Silence – 3:00

Mmmm... still basking in Divine Love and in the support of Spiritual Family, we give thanks... thanks for this Beloved Community that holds us accountable to our potential... and helps us get back up when we fall... Grateful for the fellowship as we travel The Way together... Thank you, God, for everyone and for everything...

The goal of Beloved Community is to help build the ultimate Beloved Community: Heaven on Earth... or what we refer to here as a *Love-Soaked World*... As we sing of Love and Peace this season, it *feels possible*... because it *is*... This year, let your Love overflow into the world... Share Your Light...

With profound receptivity to Rev. Diana's inspired Taizé message, we allow ourselves to be re-created in the Image and Likeness of Divine Love... we are transformed by the renewing of our *Compassionate Heart*...

Rev. Diana – We bring our Taizé to a close by calling to mind the ancient Sarum Prayer, “God be in my head, and in my Understanding.” May I discover a more Enlightened Understanding as I move through the world.

“God be in my eyes, and in my looking.” May I set my expectations high...may I see the Goodness of God in everyone and everything.

“God be in my mouth, and in my speaking.” May my words serve only to express Compassion, Kindness, and Generosity. May they be used consciously as tools for building bridges. May they always promote Peace.

“God be in my heart, and in my thinking.” May my *Compassionate Heart* lead to Peaceful thoughts. May I become a more Peaceful presence on the planet.

“God be at my end, and at my departing.” May the world be a better place because I was here.

Closing Prayer – We close our Taizé this morning allowing ourselves to settle into That Which is Eternal...knowing this Truth for yourself as I speak it aloud...

There is One Life, forever giving of Itself as all of Creation...

I trust and give thanks for my own perfection as an expression of the One, even as I seek to align more closely with the Creator...

I feel and know my Connection with All That Is...

I trust in the Eternal Nature of Life, the Eternal Nature of Spirit...

I give thanks for this beautiful season, and its reminders...to slow down, pay attention, breathe, and allow the Spirit within to do the Work...

I give thanks for the many blessings that shower my life...

And I give thanks for the Guidance of Spirit as I ask...God be in my head, and in my Understanding...God be in my eyes, and in my Looking...God be in my mouth, and in my Speaking...God be in my heart, and in my thinking...God be at my end, and at my departing.

Giving thanks for the Grace that moves so freely through my life, I Joyfully and gratefully receive, releasing my word, calling all that unfolds from this moment on *answered prayer*...calling it *all* Good and calling it *done*...And So It Is! Amen!

I invite you to Come back into the awareness of your body...notice the atmosphere in the room, and when you feel ready, gently opening your eyes and allowing your 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.

Rev. Diana – Love 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.

Offertory Video – *Breath of Heaven* by Amy Grant

<https://youtu.be/RyNZVMxd2nM>

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Please consider grabbing a cup of something warm next door and come back to join in the Conscious Conversation. We'll close the Taizé portion of our morning with **A Soul's Blessing**.

Rev. Diana & Chris – Closing Song

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

Conscious Conversation

Chris – 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

Rev. Diana – Calling Awareness to the Presence of Spirit in the body...join me in the co-creation of a **Love-Soaked World**...sending your Healing Energy through this Powerful Vision .

We're creating a world where all humans embody and live from Compassion, Generosity, 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 Mother Earth with us.

We are creating a world where all needs are met naturally...where all beings are well-fed, and have the safety and comfort of home...where health, education, and healthy relationships are supported by social systems grounded in Wellness and Wholeness...

...a world where every being Serves the greater community in a way that brings Peace and fulfillment to their lives; each is well supported, and by their Service, finds purpose...

In this world of our creation, all beings are valued and respected for their uniqueness...Authenticity and Integrity are the norm...Peace and Kindness are cultivated within every human heart and show up as a world free of hatred or violence.

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...a world in which we see the sacred in everything and everyone, and we walk in reverence and gratitude for all that we have been given.

We maintain this Vision day by day, moment by moment; we are not swayed by appearances. We work to align our actions with our Vision, living these changes first in our own lives, with our families, friends, and neighbors...and a new world is born.

The hearts, minds, arms, and doors of this Community stand open in Radical Welcome. In keeping with our Vision, we are open and loving...all people who seek belonging find it here.

By the power of our deep faith, this prayer is acted upon, answered even before it is spoken. In full expectation of its Graceful unfolding in form and experience...we release it to the One that gets it done...And so it is...Amen! Sathu...Selah...Ashay...Aho!

It's good to be a little bit playful with our prayer. I think Spirit has a sense of humor, don't you? Go ahead and look around to say good morning to your Spiritual Family if you haven't already.

If you were with us at Taizé this morning, you know that our topic of Conversation this month is ***Waking Up to the Light***. And the topic for today's Gathering is ***Compassionate Heart***.

This topic comes as a continuation of my sitting with the Sarum Prayer each morning.

Does anyone recall the prayer we've been weaving into our conversations this month? (God be in my head, and in my understanding. God be in my eyes, and in my looking. God be in my mouth, and in my speaking. God be in my heart, and in my thinking. God be at my end, and at my departing.)

Has anyone spent any time in your personal practice with this prayer?

I find it interesting that the prayer does not say God be in my heart and in my *feeling*, but in my *thinking*.

How do you make sense of that? (May my ***Compassionate Heart*** lead the way to Peaceful thinking. May I not let the reactive tendencies of the brain have their way.)

This is the third week of Advent, and we have lighted the candle of Love. During Taizé we spent time reflecting on the many ways that different spiritual traditions define and talk about Love. These Qualities of Advent...Faith, Hope, Peace, and Love...seem to run as Common Threads through all of the religious teachings, particularly when we look at the mystical end of the spectrum.

In our Visioning a Love-Soaked World, we talk about everyone being well-supported by doing work that they Love. I'd like to share a couple of quotes that speak to listening to your heart...and then let's talk about what comes up.

The first is from Howard Thurman...you may have heard it before, but it bears repeating: "Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

The second one is from American Theologian Frederick Buechner: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's hunger meet." This one might be less familiar, and maybe even more powerful. Let me repeat it: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's hunger meet."

What does that mean to you? (It would mean that I absolutely *love* what I'm doing, and it is filling a particular niche...serving a specific purpose)

Do you believe in Love as a Power? What do you mean when you say Love is a Power?

Could we go so far as to say that the only True Power is Love? (That would depend on our definition of Love. If we say that Love is the self-givingness of God, then yes. Our only True Power comes from our connection with the Divine by whatever name we call it.)

We tend to give power to a lot of things, don't we? Our governments and other systems, money, what we own, where we live, our jobs. But they only hold power in our lives because we say they do...we allow them to. These things don't hold True Power...only temporal power.

What is temporal power? (things that influence us, separate us from one another, and can shift at any time...and do)

We have a tendency to make the temporal powers in our lives into gods. And when that happens, we are unfulfilled. Something is always missing, broken, out of place. We're always searching for something more.

What is the Truth about us? (There is nothing missing or broken in us.)

We are created in the image and likeness of the One Source. Our apparent brokenness is our own misunderstanding...it may be what society, our families, and others have told us, and we believed it. We forget that we are the children of God, forever Loved by the Creator, made perfect *by that Love* in all of our human imperfection.

So how do we shift our beliefs? (By practicing compassion with ourselves, forgiving ourselves for believing we were somehow broken...for things we may have done in the past; by engaging in Spiritual Practices that reinforce the Power of Love in our lives...prayer, meditation, reflection, and communing with the Divine in whatever ways make you feel connected.)

And guess what...as more and more, you allow your **Compassionate Heart** to lead you to forgiving, accepting, loving, and honoring yourself, you will be better able to forgive, accept, and Love others.

This is nothing new...we've heard it before, maybe read it again and again...but we need to be reminded. It's so good to have a safe place where we can be reminded of our Goodness, of our Loving Nature and Compassionate Heart. In healthy spiritual community, we are **Waking Up to the Light** that we are, that we shine in the world. What a great conversation!

Shall we close in prayer?

Join me in knowing this Truth for yourself as I speak it aloud:

Infinite Spirit, Loving Presence...You are All in All...You are All That Is. Every part of creation, from the smallest of the small to the vastness of the cosmos, is an expression

of Your Light, Your Love, Your Power. And so, I Am That! I Am an individualized expression of Spirit.

In knowing this as the Truth of my existence, I can relax my heart and mind...relax my need to control...and surrender to the flow of Spirit in my Life. In this Holy Moment, I acknowledge the Loving Presence and Power of that which is beyond all names, trusting in Divine Order and Timing as It guides my life.

I approach each new day with wonder and curiosity, listening deeply for what is mine to do. I allow your Grace to lift and empower me...to be my strength and compassion...to guide my thoughts, words, and actions. God be in my head, in my eyes and mouth, in my heart, so that at my end of days, I know that I have lived fully and well.

Thank you, Spirit, for all that you have given me...for my life and everything in it. I trust and know the power of the word, the power of deep feeling, and so I know that this prayer is being acted upon even now. In gratitude, I release it fully, calling it done. And so it is! Amen!

Thank you so much for joining me here today. We're going to bring this part of the morning to a close, but before we do, we'd like to...

Love Offering

...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.

I want to help us get into the Holiday Spirit. Please enjoy...


Offertory Video – *It Feels Like Christmas, & Joy to the World*, by the Muppets

<https://youtu.be/WIRpGj7LWS4>

<https://youtu.be/CHlx6ViBplo>

Chris – Blessing for the Offering and Invitations

Remember...

 Wednesday, December 20th , 7:00 - 8:30 pm, join us to *Share the Light*. This will be Mystic Heart's Candle Lighting Service for 2023. It is turning into a blended Holiday Celebration filled with Story and Music. Join us at 6:30 in Suite H for a before-service Cider and time to wish friends and family a Happy Holy-Day Season!

Mark your calendars...Check your bulletins...

- ♥ Michael's Book Club begins again on January 9th with *The Delight in Being Ordinary* by Roland Merullo.
- ♥ **Fast Track to Wellness begins again with guest presenter Dr. Sharon Brisolara on January 11th** . She'll be offering a set of tools to help us improve our health and wellness, Body, Mind, Spirit.
- ♥ Metaphysical Bible begins again on Thursday, January 11th from 3-5 pm.
- ♥ Prayer Practitioner Lucinda Alton will be offering *Relaxing into 2024* on Saturday, January 13th .
- ♥ Prayer Practitioner Lucinda Alton will be offering a new class, Neuro Darma (book by Rick Hanson) beginning on Wednesday, January 17th .
- ♥ A presentation will be given on January 18th by Mary Davis to discuss the Mormon tradition and the Common Threads of Truth it shares with other faith paths.

Prayer Requests: Chris J is (I am) available after service – We invite everyone to help us make a private space for prayer here in the Sanctuary by joining us next door for lunch.

Rev. Diana & Chris – Closing Song

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



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